City of Toronto
Program to Promote Economic Revitalization through Local Capacity Building

July 2017
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  • Animate vacant storefronts
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  • Arts district
  • Increase community space
  • Oakwood-Vaughan as a comprehensive neighbourhood
  • Lack of area activities
  • Oakwood Village BIA not effective
  • Crime and safety
  • Review of unneighbourly liquor license holders
  • Communication and technology gaps
  • Park improvements
  • Streetscape improvements

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Road Map for Activating Neighbourhood Change

- Business recruitment
- Animate vacant storefronts
- Transit
- Arts district
- Increase community space
- Oakwood-Vaughan as a comprehensive neighbourhood
- Lack of area activities
- Oakwood Village BIA not effective
- Crime and safety
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Oakwood-Vaughan – Program to Promote Economic Revitalization through Local Capacity Building
The Oakwood-Vaughan community is a low-density, low-rise residential area with small-scale retail, service, and office uses located on Oakwood Avenue and Vaughan Road. The area is characterized by a moderate degree of disinvestment: a lack of economic development including vacancy rates at 15%, high storefront turnovers, and issues of high unemployment and petty crime. With a growing residential population, a review was needed to determine how best to encourage and support economic development in this community.

In 2015, in response to two City reports: “Program to Promote Economic Revitalization in Distressed Retail Areas” and the “Oakwood-Vaughan Strategy” City Council directed staff, in collaboration with neighbourhood stakeholders, to develop an Oakwood-Vaughan strategy that would aim to revitalize the neighbourhood by improving social and economic opportunity and overall community well-being. Oakwood Avenue was one of two areas selected as a pilot project area.

In 2016, the Toronto BIA Office commissioned an economic scan of the Oakwood-Vaughan commercial area to identify opportunities for growth. A working group of local stakeholders was formed and subsequently identified key issues and strategies to address them.

Next steps: Toronto City Council to consider the pilot project recommendations.
Oakwood-Vaughan Area

Commercial Area
Oakwood Avenue, from Bude Street to Earlsdale Avenue & Businesses within the first block east and west of Oakwood Avenue

Market Area
Davenport Road, Spadina Road, Caledonia Road, and Glencarin Avenue

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**Oakwood-Vaughan Market Area 2016 Economic Scan**

**Businesses Today**
Based on a street audit, there were approximately 77 stores in the study area
- 29% Cafes, restaurants, bars, fast food
- 15% Business and professional services
- 7% Education
- 15% Vacant

**Potential Shoppers Identified**
- 15,921 Daytime population
- 23% Work from home
- 24% Work part-time
- 35,000 Public Transit Users

**Retail Types to Prioritize**
- Business and professional services
- Ethnically diverse foods and groceries
- Home office

**Business Opportunities**
Attract a younger demographic, families with children and pets
Encourage over 15,000 daytime workers in the area to shop locally
Encourage local shopping by residents on foot, bike, and transit

**Business Attraction & Retention**
Encourage local stores to cross-promote and collaborate as clusters; promote area as a whole
Collaborate with property owners and brokers to spark appropriate tenant recruitment

**Global Trends to Consider**
- Capture young workforce
- Appeal to diverse populations
- Offer authentic, unique retail experience
- Appeal to multiple generations
- Be technologically relevant
Pilot Project: Oakwood-Vaughan

In 2016, the Oakwood-Vaughan area was selected as a pilot for the City’s economic revitalization program for disinvested commercial areas. The program seeks to build local capacity and partnerships to establish a community-leading, highly-effective BIA with the capacity to implement sustainable economic revitalization strategies complimented by its own program. Although the program is targeted at Neighbourhood Improvement Areas, a similar approach can be used in the Oakwood-Vaughan area.

Oakwood-Vaughan – Program to Promote Economic Revitalization through Local Capacity Building
A Brief Overview of Oakwood-Vaughan

In 1924, the construction of a new street railway along Oakwood Avenue brought significant development to this residential area in the former York Township. Small-scale commercial shops and offices serving the local community soon emerged.

Elements for a thriving main street continued to be seen throughout the twentieth century to the present day: Oakwood Avenue is still a busy thoroughfare containing low-rise, mixed use buildings interspersed with various residential, low-rise forms. The Oakwood-Vaughan Working Group’s objective is to continue the trajectory of Oakwood as a bustling neighbourhood serving its local community, visitors, and the broader residents of this City.

Figure 1: Oakwood, North of St. Clair, 1924. City of Toronto Archives
Figure 2: Oakwood at Eleanor, South of Vaughan, 1984. City of Toronto Archives

Oakwood-Vaughan – Program to Promote Economic Revitalization through Local Capacity Building
The Oakwood-Vaughan Neighbourhood Today

In 2016, the Toronto BIA Office commissioned an economic scan of the Oakwood-Vaughan area to explore opportunities to improve the public realm and pedestrian experiences as a way to support local economic development. The following overview highlights key findings:

- 100,000 people live in the study area
- 39% are people between 35 and 54 years of age
- 61% are 1-2 persons household
- 11% speak Portuguese as mother tongue; 6.3% Italian; 5.8% Spanish
- $97,966 is the average household income
- 53% Own; 47% Rent
- 32% have a university degree
- 17% work in sales and service
- 12% work in education, law and social, community, government
- 45% commute by car; 47% public transit; 4% walk; 3% bike
- 84/100 on a walk score (a neighbourhood walkability measure)
The following issues and strategies identified by the Oakwood-Vaughan Working Group are summarized and prioritized as key actions in the subsequent table.

- Business recruitment
- Animate vacant storefronts
- Transit
- Arts district
- Increase community space
- Oakwood-Vaughan as a Comprehensive Neighbourhood
- Lack of area events
- Oakwood Village BIA not effective
- Crime and safety
- Review of unneighbourly liquor license holders
- Communication and technology gaps
- Park improvements
- Streetscape improvements
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business Recruitment</strong></td>
<td>• General retail, grocery stores, fresh deli markets, gyms&lt;br&gt; • Work with real estate agents and broker community&lt;br&gt; • Co-working spaces&lt;br&gt; • Promote Toronto Hydro energy efficient programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Animate Vacant Storefronts</strong></td>
<td>• Art - &quot;This could be your store painting&quot; program&lt;br&gt; • Art - &quot;Gallery City&quot; - storefront installations&lt;br&gt; • Incentives to upgrade interior of businesses&lt;br&gt; • Vacancy - provide penalty rather than incentive&lt;br&gt; • Prohibit at-grade commercial to residential conversion in CR zone: provide info kit to property owners&lt;br&gt; • Pop Up shops&lt;br&gt; • Develop Façade Program Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transit</strong></td>
<td>• Audit request&lt;br&gt; • Promote parking lots, on-street spaces, and new signage&lt;br&gt; • Introduce bus shelters at select locations&lt;br&gt; • Introduce Bike Share stands&lt;br&gt; • Develop “Day of Free Parking” promotion&lt;br&gt; • Promote “walk the neighbourhood” day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recommendation**

*Develop a business recruitment strategy to address vacancies and retail mix.*

*Develop a strategy that encourages active use of commercial storefronts.*

*Develop a strategy that enables and encourages walking, transit use, and cycling, but also meets the needs of drivers.*
## Arts District

**Recommendation**
Encourage and promote initiatives and land uses that support the area’s designation as the “Oakwood Avenue Arts District” (approved by City Council in 2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Confirm status</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Arts District</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Develop Oakwood Library theatre troupe residence program</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Develop art crawl</td>
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<td>• Garden tour, Canada Blooms tour, Culture tour</td>
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## Increase Community Space

**Recommendation**
Support initiatives that build and maintain community-oriented spaces.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Extend library hours</td>
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<td>• Extend and promote recreation programs in library</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Promote NIA space availability</td>
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<td>• Vaughan Road Academy Community Hub proposal in development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) Satellite Service proposes to bring in health services to 501 Oakwood Ave.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Work Towards Oakwood-Vaughan as a Comprehensive Neighbourhood

**Recommendation**
As various divisions undertake area initiatives that they recognize Oakwood-Vaughan as a complete neighbourhood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Safety audit</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Clean up day in 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Address current boundaries that divide Oakwood-Vaughan into separate service areas (i.e. ward boundaries)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Define and treat Oakwood-Vaughan as one area</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Equalize service levels regardless of city boundaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of Area Events</td>
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**Oakwood Village BIA Not Effective**

- Oakwood-Vaughan Working Group provide support to the BIA in partnership with other City divisions

**Crime and Safety**

- Enhanced police enforcement and engagement while remaining considerate to local concerns for the potential of over-policing
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Issues</strong></th>
<th><strong>Strategies</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Review of Unneighbourly Liquor License Holders** | • Zoning process for good operators  
• Licensing process for good neighbours |
| **Recommendation** | For short-term issues, work with the City of Toronto Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) to address area liquor licensing issues. Work with City Planning and MLS to address long-term issues. |
| **Communication and Technology Gaps** | • Neighbourhood WiFi  
• Digital Main Street  
• Neighbourhood App |
| **Recommendation** | Work with Digital Main Street and recruit member businesses to take advantage of the various program elements to benefit small businesses. |
| **Park Improvements** | • Charles Brereton Park Improvements  
  - Improve/animate Oakwood frontage  
  - Add playground equipment  
  - Elements to encourage greater use  
  - Pumpkin parade  
• Farmers market, crafts, etc.  
• Dog friendly  
• Splash pads  
• Holland Park Block Party |
| **Recommendation** | That a local residents association or the non-business members of the Oakwood-Vaughan Working Group consider pursuing park improvement issues. |
Streetscape Improvements

Recommendation
That the Oakwood Village BIA consider the streetscape improvements prioritized by the Oakwood-Vaughan Working Group and laid out in the streetscape appendix of this report.

- General greening - add more trees on public and private properties, planters, hanging baskets
- Street cleaning more frequently
- Pedestrian scale lights
- Benches at select locations
- Public art, murals, "arts district" street signs, Bell box murals, recorded music on light poles; holiday decorations
- Green P lot frontage improvements
- Beer store and fire hall improvements
- Consider branding the Oakwood-Vaughan intersection as “five points”

THE FOLLOWING FOUR PAGES PROVIDE ADDITIONAL STREETSCAPE DETAILS PRIORITIZED BY THE WORKING GROUP
The Oakwood-Vaughan revitalization area has many opportunities for streetscape improvement. There are many existing BIA assets within the area which have fallen below acceptable maintenance standards. There are multiple options for immediate projects to make a significant impact along Oakwood Avenue and Vaughan Road.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Murals</th>
<th>Existing Condition</th>
<th>Example from Parkdale BIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murals create a distinctive feature for the neighborhood and activate an otherwise blank wall.</td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Existing Condition" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Example from Parkdale BIA" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Priority 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parkettes in flanking street Right of Way</th>
<th>Existing Condition</th>
<th>Example from the Dundas West BIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unused City right of way space can be converted to usable space for patrons and members of the community.</td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Existing Condition" /></td>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Example from the Dundas West BIA" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Priority 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public art</th>
<th>Existing Condition</th>
<th>Example from Grange Park</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public art brings life and character to the neighborhood.</td>
<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Existing Condition" /></td>
<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Example from Grange Park" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Priority 1**

*Oakwood-Vaughan – Program to Promote Economic Revitalization through Local Capacity Building*
Pedestrian light renewal

*Repairing and restoring existing pedestrian lights to fully functioning standards.*

Priority 1

**Existing Condition**

**Example from Mt. Denis BIA**

Increased street furniture

*To request more benches, bus shelters and waste receptacles be placed along Oakwood Ave.*

Priority 1

**Existing Condition**

**Example from the Little Italy BIA**

Painting of bike rings and utility boxes

*The introduction of colour and art on utilitarian features within the public realm.*

Priority 2

**Existing Condition**

**Example from Trinity Bellwoods BIA**

*Oakwood-Vaughan – Program to Promote Economic Revitalization through Local Capacity Building*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Banners</th>
<th>Existing Condition</th>
<th>One of two properly hanging banners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Replacing existing BIA banners</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>which have fallen into disrepair.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Priority 2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hanging Baskets</th>
<th>Existing Condition</th>
<th>Example from the Upper Village BIA</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existing hardware on pedestrian</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>lighting can be used to install</td>
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<tr>
<td>decorative flower baskets.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Priority 2</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planters</th>
<th>Existing Condition</th>
<th>Example from Grange Park</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Installation of flower planters</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>within the right of way will help</td>
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<tr>
<td>green and beautify the street.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Priority 3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Pole Wraps

*Installation of pole wraps to prevent graffiti and clutter from flyers.*

Priority 4

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Gateway Feature

*Installation of a gateway feature to identify the entrances to the area.*

Priority 5

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Revitalization of Charles Brereton Park

*Creating a more inviting and interesting frontage for the park along Oakwood Avenue and general improvements to the park.*

Long Term Priority 1
Participants

Roark Andrade
Christina Bastone
Suzanne Bergen
Heather Caplap
Paul Correia
Novelyn Drayal
Sheliza Esmail
Danny Fernandes
Jacelyn Hajash
Lincoln James
Nadia Kuzmicz
Sarah Lockett
Panco Mete
Christella Morris
Nawar Naji
Laure Nolte
Elizabeth Pinter
Patrick Racile
Jenny Rothschild
Paul Santaguida
Anna Sottile
Anne Sorrenti
Josh Tizel
Jeanette Turner

Working Group

Miia Dechef-Tweedle
Michelle Fleischman
Sarah Lockett
Barbara L. Snow
Anna Sottile

Councillors’ Offices & City Staff

Councillor Josh Colle
Councillor Cesar Palacio
Mike Kari
Mike Major
Sean McMutcheon
Ron Nash
Geno Orsi
Stas Ukhanov

Special thanks to the Downtown Yonge BIA who provided data for the Economic Scan.

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