



City of Toronto

Danforth Avenue (Coxwell Avenue to Victoria Park Avenue) Urban Design Guidelines

District Guideline Title online:

<https://www.toronto.ca/danforthstudy>

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Danforth Avenue is composed predominately of lower-scaled buildings with retail units at grade and residential units above. This character is similar to many main streets in the City of Toronto.

Mandate

On July 8, 2014, City Council adopted a motion to request the Chief Planner and the Executive Director, City Planning to undertake a planning study of Danforth Avenue in two segments, from the Don River to Coxwell Avenue and from Coxwell Avenue to Victoria Park Avenue. City Planning commenced the first segment of the Danforth Avenue Planning Study (Coxwell Avenue to Victoria Park Avenue) in June 2016 by discussing a terms of reference with the local community and ward Councillors. The purpose and mandate of the study was established as follows:

The purpose of the study is to conduct a review of the study area to identify the existing and planned character, including heritage resources and character-defining features, which will inform future development opportunities, guide new development proposals and enhance the public realm.

As part of this study, City Planning has developed Urban Design Guidelines ("the Guidelines") for this portion of Danforth Avenue. The Guidelines are intended to support vibrant, high-quality, appropriately scaled mixed-use development within the Study Area. The Guidelines are consistent with the Official Plan, OPA 420, and Site and Area Specific Policy (SASP) No. 552 for the Study Area. The SASP states that the Guidelines will be used as a tool to evaluate proposed development in the

area and ensure that such development is consistent with the Official Plan. The Guidelines will implement the Official Plan policies, provide an understanding of the area's local character and its planned context, promote an animated and walkable public realm supported by well-scaled buildings and new public and private open spaces, provide built form guidelines, identify buildings of heritage interest, and provide options for improving transportation conditions based on a principle of complete streets.

The Official Plan provides a long-term vision for the City that is intended to be supported by implementation plans, strategies, and guidelines. These supporting documents, including the subject guidelines, provide detailed implementation guidance that is consistent with the Official Plan.

Executive Summary

The Danforth Avenue Planning Study was a multi-disciplinary study that analyzed a portion of Danforth Avenue, from Coxwell Avenue to Victoria Park Avenue, for the purposes of articulating the planned character, identifying built form and public realm objectives, and providing various policy directions to manage and direct the appropriate growth of the Study Area.

Goals

City staff, in consultation with the community, developed the goals of the study process:

- Implement a new site and area specific policy for the study area;
- Create new Urban Design Guidelines that support the implementation of a site and area specific Official Plan policy and that will supplement the existing Avenues and Mid-Rise Building Guidelines;
- Identify specific public realm and streetscape improvements that use local character-defining features to enhance the public realm of Danforth Avenue;
- Determine area demographics, existing community services and facilities inventory, and growth projections;
- Outline areas for future investment to support growth; and
- examine potential future rights-of-way for Danforth Avenue that are based on a principle of Complete Streets.

Key Findings

The following summarizes the key findings from the study work program:

- Mid-rise, incremental intensification on Danforth Avenue is an appropriate form to accommodate new housing and employment opportunities. There are also areas within or adjacent to the Study Area to explore other opportunities for mixed-use development that supports complete communities, including the community asset at Coxwell TTC Barns and the area near Danforth Avenue and Main Street that is adjacent to two transit stations (TTC and GO);
- Encouraging additional residential and non-residential

growth will ensure Danforth Avenue continues to evolve as a mixed-use corridor that supports vibrant, main street retail and new housing and employment;

- Opportunities to incentivize or encourage the specific development of non-residential uses within mixed-use buildings should be explored;
- A minimum 4.8 metre sidewalk width should be achieved adjacent to all new development to provide greater space for accessible pedestrian movement, seating and landscaping opportunities, and bicycle parking that will emphasize the walkability of the Study Area. It is acknowledged that this may not be achieved where buildings with heritage value will be retained as part of new development;
- Public realm improvement opportunities should not be restricted to Danforth Avenue, and should be encouraged on flanking streets as well;
- Variable retail opportunities should be encouraged, focussed primarily on including small-scale retail storefronts that support independent retail and active uses at grade;
- Opportunities for new publicly-owned parks and open spaces, within especially large development sites, should be pursued, in addition for opportunities for new privately-owned and publicly accessible open spaces (POPS) within the Study Area;
- Mid-block connections in key locations should be identified and secured in future development to provide better pedestrian access to the existing transit stations and to introduce pedestrian permeability through larger street blocks;
- Danforth Avenue should be reviewed moving forward as an "Avenue and Neighbourhood Main Street" as established in the City's Complete Streets Guidelines;
- Outcomes from the Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment (CHRA) that detail a historic context statement and overview should be leveraged to identify place-making opportunities and reinforce built form recommendations within the Urban Design Guidelines; and
- Growth in community services and facilities, along with residential and non-residential intensification, is necessary to ensure a principle of complete communities is achieved.

The findings support the evolution of Danforth Avenue, based on the vision established by the community. Intensification can support an active, walkable, diverse, and green Danforth Avenue that will continue to play a key role, and act as a major destination, for this community and the City at-large.

Guidelines

The Guidelines and standards reflect the area's existing and planned context, good planning standards based on achieving contextually-appropriate built form, walkability and a sense of place for Danforth Avenue.

Built Form

Mid-rise built form is appropriate for the Study Area where land is sufficiently assembled to allow for a viable mid-rise development. Further study will assess lands within the Main Street Planning Study area for potential tall buildings.

The built form for new mid-rise buildings will be guided by appropriate angular planes and transitions to the existing Neighbourhoods north and south of the Avenue. Setbacks at grade will support wider sidewalks where required. Stepbacks will be required to create an appropriate streetwall height, create a generally consistent scale to the streetscape, and allow for light penetration and sky views.

Lower-scale intensification is also appropriate within the Study Area. This can include modest infill buildings that rise above the existing 1- to 3 storey buildings that currently exist for the majority of the study area, up to a maximum height of 4 storeys.

Height

Height restrictions have been informed by the existing context, discussions with the community, and the existing policy and guideline directions for the *Avenues*. Mid-rise buildings will generally be limited to 7 or 8 storeys depending on the lot depth and size. Certain locations may accommodate larger mid-rise buildings as an incentive to encourage office use development as part of mid-rise buildings. These buildings will be limited to a height of 10 storeys and will be evaluated against the front streetwall and rear transition requirements established for mid-rise buildings within these guidelines. Areas for additional increase in height will be examined through further study.

Density

Appropriate density will be determined on a case by case basis when development applications are made. Such applications will need to be consistent with the intensification policies for *Avenues* and the Site and Area Specific Policy for the Study Area.

Land Use

Mixed-use development is encouraged throughout the Study Area to contribute to an active streetscape and public realm and a place where people can live, work, and play. Single-use development is discouraged within the Study Area. Street-related retail at grade is desirable throughout the study area, and 2nd floor office spaces are encouraged within Office Priority Areas (Refer to Section 4.2.2) as part of mixed-use development.

Public Realm

Sidewalk sizes of a minimum of 4.8 metres are encouraged throughout the study area to ensure safe and accessible sidewalks that can also accommodate sufficient space for landscaping, seating, bike infrastructure and active spaces such as patios. Certain locations within the study area are also recommended for wider sidewalks, where feasible.

New parks and open spaces are encouraged in key locations throughout the Study Area with Privately-Owned Publicly Accessible Spaces (POPS) as additional opportunities to enhance and increase the amount of open spaces. Public art is also encouraged within the Study Area on specific sites that can benefit from potential public art opportunities. (Refer to Map 7)

Mid-block connections are recommended in key locations within the study area, primarily adjacent to existing transit stations, to reduce existing block sizes and provide for greater access to existing transit stations. Improvements to the pedestrian connections between Main Street TTC and Danforth GO transit stations should be considered.

Active uses at grade will be crucial to support the consistent retail growth of Danforth Avenue. Small-scale retail opportunities will be encouraged within the study area based on the existing and planned context. The existing BIAs will be involved within the development application process to ensure contextually appropriate retail opportunities are designed within new development.

Heritage

New development will retain, enhance, and commemorate the heritage attributes of buildings and the history of the area. Buildings identified as "Main Street Typology" buildings will require a nuanced built form approach based on the height of the existing building. Intensification opportunities and heritage conservation will be reviewed together to ensure development on heritage buildings respects the cultural heritage value of the existing building. Specific guidelines are provided for built form on heritage buildings.

Complete Streets

Danforth Avenue will be recognized as an Avenue and Neighbourhood Main Street consistent with the City's Complete Streets Guidelines. The Danforth Avenue right-of-way is 27 metres wide, which is wider than most traditional main streets within the Toronto and East York District. Opportunities for future right-of-way redesign that encourage a principle of complete streets will be explored through a future Major Corridor Study of Danforth Avenue.

Community Services and Facilities Strategy

City staff reviewed the types and number of community agencies and City divisions serving the area. These Guidelines and the associated SASP describe a strategy to ensure that various community services and facilities ("CS&F") are provided to serve the growing population. Ongoing monitoring of CS&F needs and priorities is also recommended.



Coxwell TTC Barns close to the Danforth Avenue and Coxwell Avenue intersection.



Danforth Avenue has a main street character with retail at grade in low-scaled mixed use buildings.

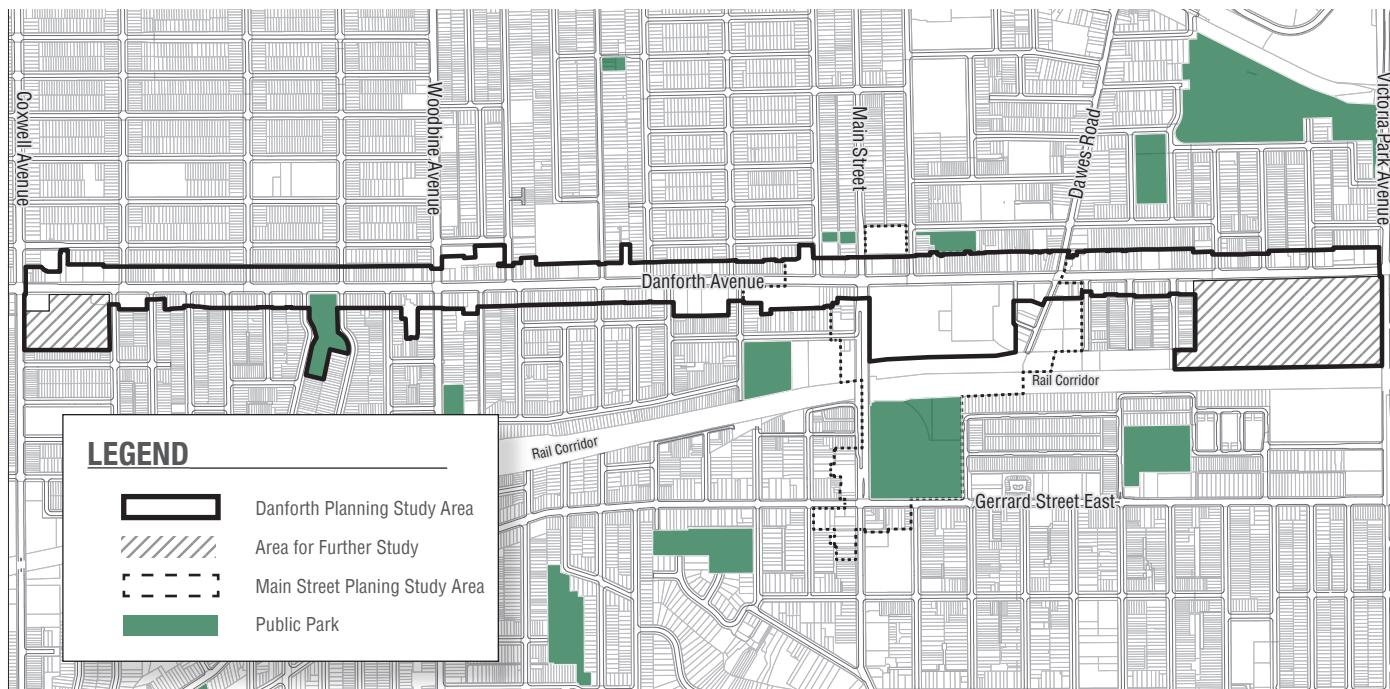


Danforth Avenue and Drayton Avenue looking west towards downtown Toronto.

1.0 Introduction

Danforth Avenue is a diverse, mixed-use area that is evolving. Danforth Avenue maintains a similar scale to many of Toronto's other main streets, but with more direct access to multiple forms of higher-order transit, and is identified for future growth. The guidelines in this document provide part of a planning framework for redevelopment and growth management within this area and must be read in conjunction with the policies in the Official Plan and Site and Area Specific Policy No. 552. These guidelines are a tool to implement the policies within the Official Plan and Site and Area Specific Policy No. 552.

- 1.1 Study Area**
- 1.2 Purpose**
- 1.3 Study Process and Consultation**
- 1.4 Area Profile Report**



Map 1: Study Area Map

1.1 STUDY AREA

The Study Area includes all properties fronting Danforth Avenue, between Coxwell Avenue and Victoria Park Avenue (the Study Area). The Study Area is approximately 3 kilometres in length, with properties generally ranging in depth from 30 to 45 metres. The width of the Danforth Avenue right-of-way (ROW) is 27 metres.

The Study Area itself is large and encompasses varying building typologies and lot patterns. Moving from west to east within the Study Area there is significant variation in built form, public realm, and city block and lot sizes.

1.2 PURPOSE

The purpose of the study was to conduct a review of the study area to identify the existing and planned character, including heritage resources and character-defining features, which will inform future development opportunities, guide new development proposals, and enhance the public realm.



Danforth Avenue has a diverse mix of retail and cultural uses creating a vibrant community.

1.3 STUDY PROCESS AND CONSULTATION

To initiate the Danforth Avenue Planning Study, Coxwell Avenue to Victoria Park Avenue (the Study), City Planning staff prepared and finalized a terms of reference, including a detailed scope of work.

As outlined in the terms of reference, City Planning staff were directed to undertake the a scope of work that included review of the following topic areas:

- Character and place;
- Built form;
- Public realm;
- Retail/commercial vitality;
- Complete streets;
- Transit stations;
- Community services and facilities; and,
- Heritage and historic character.

To complete the scope of work, Community Planning staff worked with other staff in City Planning (Urban Design, Heritage Preservation Services, Transportation Planning, and Strategic Initiatives, Policy, and Analysis), and staff in various related divisions (Parks, Forestry, and Recreation, Transportation Services, and Economic Development) to ensure the Study remained multi-disciplinary.

The Study involved an extensive review of the existing character of Danforth Avenue, from Coxwell Avenue to Victoria Park Avenue. An analysis of built form, land use, cultural heritage resources, streetscape and public realm, parks and open spaces, community services and facilities, complete streets, and a review of applicable Official Plan and Zoning By-law policies was undertaken to ensure staff were aware of the key matters that comprise the Study Area. This review formed the basis of an Area Profile Report.

Based on this information, City staff conducted a lot analysis of the Study Area. The analysis identified opportunities for incremental mid-rise intensification throughout the Study Area, as well as challenges to intensification, including ensuring appropriate transition to existing low-rise neighbourhoods adjacent to the Study Area. The study process also identified other opportunities to build complete communities, including the Coxwell TTC Barns, the lands near Danforth Avenue and Main Street, and the large retail site near Victoria Park Avenue (Shopper's World).



Community meeting at Hope United Church in June 2016.

This analysis helped staff to begin to identify other community needs, such as parks and community services, which will be required over time to support new development and growth. City staff also consulted with the community throughout the Study process.

The final deliverables for the Study include the preparation of:

- An area profile report (available on the study website at www.toronto.ca/danforthstudy);
- A final staff report to council;
- An official plan amendment, in the form of a site and area specific policy; and,
- Urban design guidelines.

The area profile report was completed and posted on the study's website in February 2017.

Community Consultation

The Study process included a robust community consultation program. A key goal of the Study was to fully engage and work with the community directly. The City retained an independent facilitator, Lura Consulting, to assist with community engagement.

The local community, including residents, land owners, business owners, community members, ratepayer associations, and business improvement areas, participated in the consultation process and provided substantial input and feedback throughout the Study process.

Five community meetings, as well as five stakeholder advisory committee meetings, were held during the Study.



Vision Word Cloud

The community meetings were well attended, averaging approximately 150 people per meeting. In addition, feedback was gathered via online surveys (which garnered approximately 350 responses throughout the course of the study) and e-mail correspondence. City staff also hosted two Planners in Public Spaces (PiPS) events at the East Lynn Park Farmer's Market in the fall of 2016 and 2017. In total, it is estimated approximately 1,300 individuals were consulted or provided feedback throughout the Study process.

Community Visioning

Through this discussion, staff learned of important community assets within the Study Area that are valued by members of the community. These assets include various public spaces (i.e. public parks, like East Lynn Park, and community spaces, like the TTC Danforth Garage and the Main Square Community Centre), and the small, independent, and diverse retail within the Study Area.

In addition, the community articulated values and visionary ingredients for the future context of the Study Area. The results are displayed in the word cloud above (the size of the words represents how often they were heard in feedback). The word cloud captures the community's vision of the Study Area, with a clear emphasis on ensuring the Study Area evolves as a walkable, cyclist-friendly, diverse, dense, green, and vibrant area. These values helped guide the work completed by staff, ensuring that the policy framework and future Urban Design Guidelines are based around this vision.

Built Form

A major focus of the study was creating built form guidelines. Part of the discussion with the community included the reasons to plan for intensification within the Study Area, both from a Provincial and municipal policy perspective, and what shape that intensification should take.

City staff heard that most participants were generally satisfied with the proposed mid-rise focus for intensification. Most participants found 7- to 8 storeys to be an appropriate height for incremental intensification within the Study Area and understood why Danforth Avenue needs to intensify. Some community members did have concerns with the mid-rise building heights. With proposed modifications by staff to the Avenues and Mid-rise Guidelines (based on streetwall height and scale), the community found the modified built form to be acceptable and complementary to the existing character of the area.

Public Realm

City staff engaged in a detailed discussion on public realm matters, including appropriate streetscape solutions for an intensifying area, and the need for new public (Parks and Open Spaces) and private (POPS) spaces within and adjacent to the Study Area. City staff heard generally positive responses for the proposed sidewalk spaces and for supporting smaller, fine-grain store fronts that lead to a more walkable and active streetscape.

Land Use

On issues of land use, it is clear that members of the community support the provision of more residential and employment uses to ensure Danforth Avenue continues to be a lively, vibrant, and successful destination. Beyond typical retail/commercial opportunities at grade in existing and new developments, the community expressed a desire to see more non-residential development that would bring employees and visitors during the day-time hours.

Economic Development

Throughout the engagement process the community regularly expressed interest in seeing considerations for economic development in the Study. These considerations include some of the themes already mentioned, such as requirements for developers to maintain opportunities for small independent retailers and policy that would encourage office space development (employment opportunities) in new mixed-use buildings. The community requested that city staff consider how the Study could also support the economic development of the Study Area.

Complete Streets

There was strong support from the community for bringing forward Complete Streets principles and policies to the Study Area. Community members generally described their most desirable future ROW of Danforth Avenue as one that maximizes sidewalk widths, provides bicycle infrastructure (e.g. separated, protected bicycle lanes and bicycle parking), reduces auto lane widths to ensure safer, lower speeds, and provides street parking. Wayfinding signage, bicycle infrastructure (protected bicycle lanes and bike parking), and wider sidewalks with amenities (e.g. street trees and benches) were mentioned as the Complete Streets amenities the community would most like to see on Danforth Avenue. The community also expressed the desire for stormwater management infrastructure.

Heritage

The community in general was very interested in learning about the heritage of the Study Area and had a general appreciation for the existing scale and age of its buildings, built form, and streetscape. Some participants noted that not all “old buildings” should be identified as heritage sites with concerns that too many properties will receive heritage designation.

Several individual buildings were cited by the community of having special meaning and potential heritage value. These



Community art projects in the Study Area.

buildings include the TTC's Coxwell Barns (1627 Danforth Avenue), the Hydro One building (2357 Danforth Avenue), and the area's places of worship (Danforth Mennonite Church and Hope United Church, 2174 Danforth Avenue and 2550 Danforth Avenue, respectively).

Metrolinx

While the City's study was ongoing, Metrolinx staff were in the process of moving forward with an environmental assessment for the Lakeshore GO East line to review the addition of a new railway track to support express rail. As well, Metrolinx staff also engaged in a specific review of Danforth GO station, from a design and connectivity perspective (Metrolinx Connectivity Study).

City Planning and Metrolinx staff worked together to share the Connectivity Study with the community and collect feedback. There was a strong consensus from the community of the need to improve the pedestrian connection between the Main Street TTC station and the Danforth GO station.

Bangladeshi Community

According to the most recent available demographic statistics within the City of Toronto ward profiles, the Bangladeshi community represents approximately 5 to 6% of the total community population. They are the second largest demographic group within the study area. It was noted throughout the course of the study that the Bangladeshi community was not actively engaging with the consultation



Small-businesses and retail spaces create a sense of community on Danforth Avenue.

process. In order to ensure that all members of the community were consulted, City Planning made a concerted effort to reach out directly to this affected community within the study area.

On March 6, 2018, City Planning, with both local Councillors, held an information meeting specifically to update the Bangladeshi community within the Study Area with the purpose of the study and to listen to their thoughts on their community. 45 members of the community attended and shared their feedback and vision for their community.

Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC)

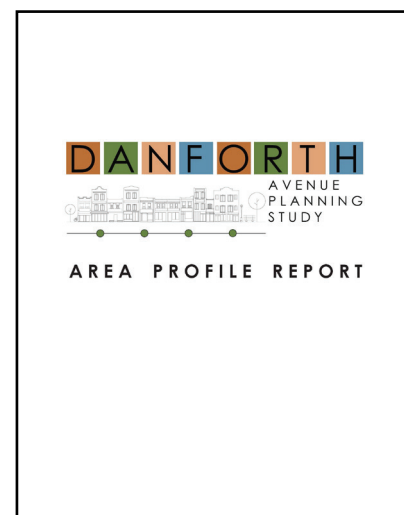
The SAC for the study consisted of 18 members that were selected by the independent facilitator in consultation with the Ward Councillors. The SAC included interested and affected residents, members of stakeholder organizations and businesses/BIA's. Some of the SAC members were also local professionals with skills/experience in urban planning, urban design or architecture. The SAC meetings were generally held in advance of the community meetings. The members provided constructive feedback that resulted in revisions to the presentations that were given at the community meetings.

1.4 AREA PROFILE REPORT

City staff prepared an Area Profile Report in the early stages of the planning study. The report provides a comprehensive overview of the study area with particular focus on current demographic, employment and other trends, and describes the existing transportation, employment and community services

and facilities context. The report further informed City staff on the study area and assisted in the progression of long-term planning for the study area. The report contains information on the policy framework, demographics, employment, land ownership, urban design, parks, heritage, transportation and infrastructure for the study area.

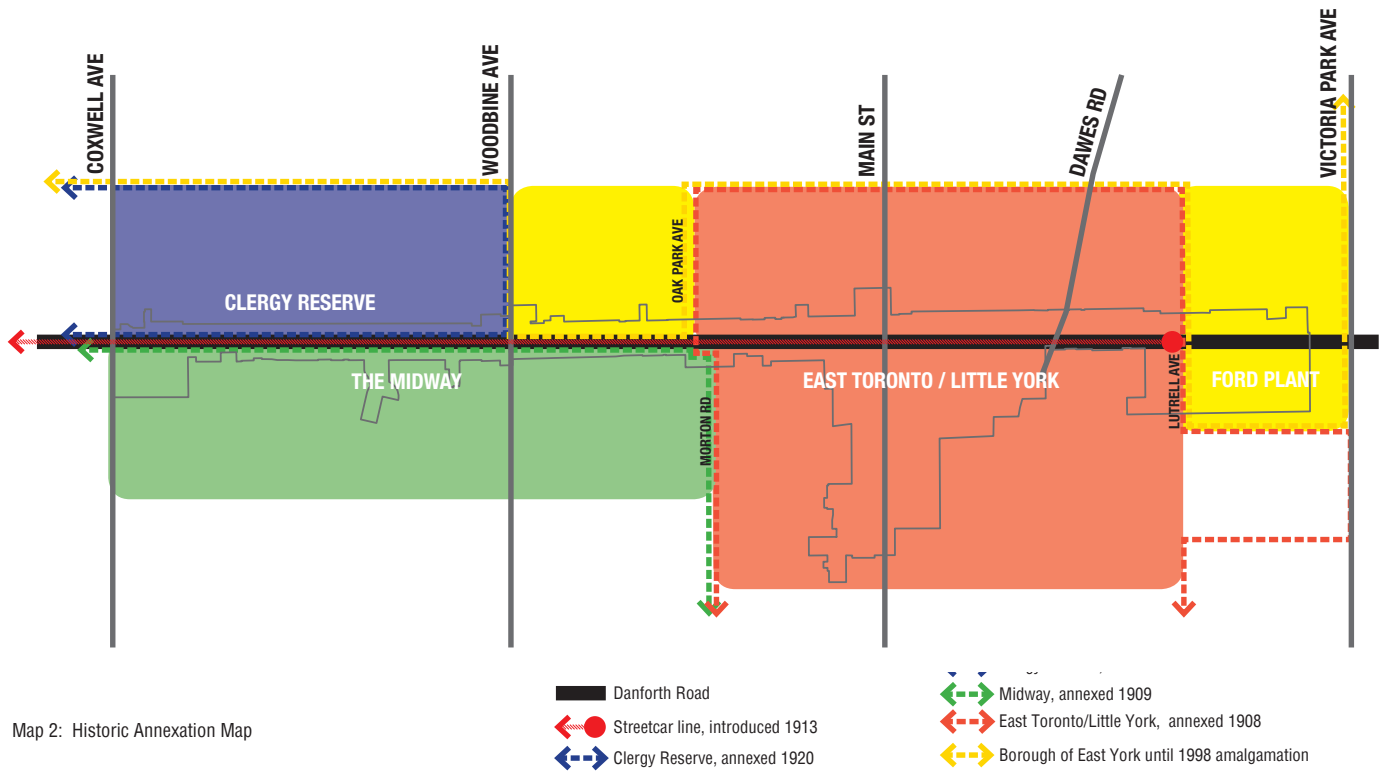
The Area Profile Report was prepared by City staff from divisions including City Planning; Economic Development; Parks, Forestry and Recreation; Transportation Services; and Toronto Water. A copy of the report can be found online at www.toronto.ca/danforthstudy.



The Danforth Avenue Planning Study Area Profile Report

2.0 Heritage

- 2.1 Historic Context Statement
- 2.2 Heritage Register
- 2.3 Heritage Inventory
- 2.4 Heritage Conservation



Map 2: Historic Annexation Map

2.1 HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

Clergy Reserve and the Midway

The western half of the Study Area, west of Oak Avenue and Morton Road, is defined by a largely intact early twentieth-century streetscape, characterized by a predominantly two-storey streetwall with rows of brick commercial buildings articulated by intermittent three-storey commercial buildings. The buildings are predominantly brick, with decorative masonry along cornice lines, and with some decorated parapets.

The consistency of this streetscape is a result of its rapid development over a short period of time in the 1910s and 1920s. Prior to that period, development was limited in this area by at least three factors. First, Danforth Avenue remained a rural road in character, cut off from the City of Toronto by the Don Valley and a lack of transit connections. Second, the north side of Danforth was defined both by its history as a Clergy Reserve, which delayed development, and by the location of an animal processing plant in the centre of the lot in the early 1900s. Third, this portion of the Danforth Avenue remained outside of the City of Toronto (and therefore without City investment in roads and services) until 1909, when it was annexed under the name of Midway.

The annexation in 1909, the expansion of streetcar service to the area in 1913, the sale and subdivision of large parts of the Clergy Reserve in the same year, and the completion of the Prince Edward Viaduct over the Don River in 1919, all sparked a wave of commercial development along the Danforth Avenue - and residential development north and south of Danforth Avenue - between 1913 and 1930. Along with the consistent commercial streetwall of predominantly 1920s buildings, legacies of this period are the Coxwell TTC Barns, a landmark at the western end of the study area, Toronto Hydro's Danforth Avenue Substation, the East Toronto Masonic Lodge and Hope United Church.

A unique feature of this area are the longer blocks on the north side of Danforth Avenue. This built form condition is a result of the subdivision of the former Clergy Reserve lands after 1913. The plan of subdivision followed the east-west orientation of the preceding lots delineated in the late 18th century to facilitate the settlement of the region. Blocks on the south side of the street are shorter, based on earlier development plans that reflected similar lot sizes west of Coxwell. The longer blocks on the north side of Danforth mark a significant difference from the portion of Danforth Avenue to the west of Pape Avenue, west of the Study Area, where shorter, north-south oriented blocks contribute to the walkability and vibrancy of the street.