

Woodside Square Planning Review – Proposals Report

Date: April 4, 2022

To: Scarborough Community Council

From: Director, Community Planning, Scarborough District

Ward: 23 Scarborough North

Planning Application Number: 19 182375 ESC 23 TM

Related Applications: 20 151730 ESC 23 OZ

SUMMARY

This report provides a status update on for the Woodside Square Planning Review (the "Planning Review") and presents policy directions for a future Site and Area Specific Policy (SASP) for the site to be used in upcoming public consultation.

The Planning Review responds to current policy direction for the subject lands at 1571 Sandhurst Circle (Woodside Square Mall). The lands are designated a Special Policy Area and as provided for by Site and Area Specific Policy 236, no uses other than Places of Worship or commercial uses are permitted until a planning review has been completed to Council's satisfaction.

In 2019, after the landowner indicated a desire to redevelop the parking areas around the mall with residential and other uses, City Council formally directed City Planning staff to initiate a Planning Review for the subject lands. The purpose of the Planning Review is to determine the appropriateness of providing additional land use permissions and establish a policy framework necessary to implement any future redevelopment of the site. Shortly after the Planning Review was initiated, a Zoning By-law Amendment application was submitted by the owners of the subject lands and is being reviewed concurrently with the work undertaken as part of the Planning Review.

The Planning Review has advanced through three of its intended four phases. Phases 1 and 2 (Preliminary Consultation and Study Initiation & Visioning) were completed in 2019 and 2020 and developed a vision for the subject lands. Phase 3 (Design, Testing & Analysis) has been underway since the initiation and visioning phase, including community and stakeholder consultation as well as two presentations to the City's Design Review Panel. The Planning Review process has included numerous public engagement events through all phases, and community engagement techniques were necessarily modified in order to comply with public health guidelines with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This Proposals Report represents the culmination of engagement, design, testing and analysis to date through the development of draft policy directions that will inform the creation of a new Site and Area Specific Policy (SASP) for the Woodside Square lands. The draft policy directions advance the vision developed through early stages of the Planning Review to introduce residential intensification onto the site, retaining the existing mall building in the near term while not precluding the important city building components that would need to be secured over the long term if and when the mall building is reduced in size or removed completely. The near term intensification would be supported by the creation of new public streets and blocks, public parkland, public realm enhancements and improved connectivity and pedestrian safety.

A final round of consultation is planned to confirm the draft policy directions as presented in this report and assist with crafting a new SASP for the subject lands. The final SASP will establish a planning framework for future development on the Woodside Square site that sets out a long-term vision for a comprehensive and orderly development of these lands into a complete community that retains a distinct identity while integrating into the existing community, building on the current function of Woodside Square as an economic, social, and community services centre within the Agincourt North community.

This report recommends that the draft policy directions be used as a basis for staff to undertake additional stakeholder and public consultation. In addition, it is recommended that the draft policy directions be used to review development applications for the subject lands. Following consultation in the spring of 2022, staff propose to bring forward the recommended Official Plan Amendment for the SASP to a statutory meeting at the Scarborough Committee Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. City Council direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to use the draft Woodside Square Policy Directions, beginning on page 9 within this report dated April 4, 2022 as the basis for stakeholder and public consultation.
2. City Council direct that any rezoning applications within the Woodside Square Lands be considered and reviewed in the context of the draft policy directions.
3. City Council request the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to report back to Scarborough Community Council with a final report and recommended Official Plan Amendment, including a Site and Area Specific Policy, for the subject lands at 1571 Sandhurst Circle.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The City Planning Division confirms that there are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations included in this report in the current budget year or in future years.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on October 2, 2019, City Council adopted a report initiating the Woodside Square Planning Review. Official Plan policy for the subject lands requires a planning review to be completed to Council's satisfaction prior to allowing any additional uses beyond places of worship and commercial uses. Through a thorough public consultation process and comprehensive analysis, the Planning Review is intended to determine the appropriateness of providing additional land use permissions for the site and establish the policy framework necessary for implementation of any redevelopment.

Council's decision and the staff report can be found here:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.SC8.5>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Site and Surrounding Context

Since it first opened in 1977, Woodside Square has continued to evolve as a retail and commercial centre at the northwest corner of Finch Avenue East and McCowan Road. As shown in **Attachment 1**, the subject site, municipally known as 1571 Sandhurst Circle, comprises the entire block bound by Finch/McCowan and Sandhurst Circle, and is nearly 10 hectares (24.5 acres) in size.

Woodside Square is located at the centre of the Agincourt North neighbourhood and serves as the neighbourhood's primary retail and community services hub. The three other corners of the intersection of McCowan Road and Finch Avenue East as well as lands to the west along Finch Avenue East contain high-rise residential buildings surrounded by generous amounts of green space. Albert Campbell Collegiate Institute and Brimwood Junior Public School border the property at the central portion of Sandhurst Circle on the west. Low-rise residential uses (townhomes) border the northern portion of the site on the opposite side of Sandhurst Circle and McCowan Road. The orthographic image in **Attachment 2** shows the existing context surrounding the subject lands.

McCowan Road and Finch Avenue East are both identified on Map 3 of the Official Plan as major streets with 36-metre right-of-ways. Finch Avenue East and McCowan Road south of Finch are also identified as transit priority segments on the Surface Transit Priority Network (Map 5). The site is currently not served by higher order transit; however, McCowan Road may have bus or light rail rapid transit in the future, as outlined in Metrolinx's 2041 Regional Transportation Plan (2018).

Policy Context

The subject lands are designated on Official Plan Map 19 as a *Special Policy Area* and subject to Site and Area Specific Policy 236. Pursuant to this SASP, the only permitted uses are "Places of Worship, and commercial uses designed to provide a population of 50,000 to 125,000 within an approximate 4 kilometre radius with a wide range and variety of goods and services, especially comparison shopping goods and services (department store type merchandise)." SASP 236 goes on to state that "No other uses are permitted until a planning review of the area has been completed to Council's satisfaction."

PLANNING REVIEW PROCESS

The Planning Review is advancing through four phases as illustrated in **Attachment 3**. Phases 1 and 2 (Preliminary Consultation and Study Initiation & Visioning) were completed in 2019 and 2020 with a public open house, planning charrettes and other consultation as well as the formation of a Local Advisory Group. The Planning Review process, including engagement methods, was modified in order to comply with public health guidelines with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Phase 3 (Design, Testing & Analysis) has been underway since the initiation and visioning phase, including community and stakeholder consultation as well as two presentations to the City's Design Review Panel. This Proposals Report represents the culmination of engagement, design, testing and analysis to date through the development of policy directions. A final round of consultation is planned to test and confirm the draft policy directions presented in this report. Phase 4 is expected to culminate in a final report and a new Site and Area Specific Policy (SASP) for the subject lands.

As it has progressed through its various phases, the Woodside Square Planning Review has been guided by eight themes and associated study goals:

Land use and Density

- Determining the appropriateness of adding new uses to the site, including residential and additional commercial retail uses, as well as the level of intensification the site can accommodate while still maintaining its retail/commercial function;

Housing

- If residential uses are to be recommended, providing for a range of household types - including families with children, seniors, and affordable housing - consistent with Official Plan policies for large sites;

Public Realm

- Supporting an attractive, vibrant, and robust public realm through identifying appropriate locations for public parkland and open spaces;

Transportation

- Securing a network of streets, blocks, and active transportation connections to improve multi-modal access within the site as well as to and from the surrounding community while improving safety for all modes;
- Reducing parking demand and encouraging transit and active transportation to, from and within the site;

Built Form

- Identifying appropriate built form types, building heights and densities;

Environment and Servicing

- Ensuring adequate servicing infrastructure and capacity is planned for to support future growth;
- Reducing the environmental impacts of development through securing sustainable design measures;

Community Services and Facilities

- Preserving the function of the site as the retail and community services centre of the Agincourt North community;

Phasing

- Ensuring orderly development through a phasing strategy to guide implementation of any infill development on the existing surface parking lot, while ensuring any comprehensive redevelopment of the site in the long-term is not precluded.

Engagement and Consultation

Public Consultation has occurred through all phases of the Woodside Square Planning Review. Staff have met with key stakeholders, local high school students, and members of the local community through an open house, charrettes, surveys, pop up consultation events, public meeting, and online engagement. All Planning Review materials, including public meeting summaries, are posted on the Woodside Square Planning Review website: <http://www.toronto.ca/woodsidesquarereview>

The public engagement and consultation process can be summarized as follows:

- Prior to the formal launch of the Planning Review, staff held three Planners in Public Spaces (PiPs) events to engage with mall users to better understand how the mall is

used, typical travel experiences using the mall, and public perception of the mall's strengths, constraints and opportunities.

- The Planning Review was formally launched via an open house event in late 2019, and following this, a Local Advisory Group (LAG) was formed comprising of a range of representatives from the community to provide input at key junctures in the Planning Review process. Staff also hosted planning charrettes at Albert Campbell C.I. as part of World Town Planning Day to engage students from the high school and conducted an online survey which was posted on the Woodside Square Planning Review website alongside a brief informational video.
- A Public Consultation meeting on the development application was held virtually in May 2021, and community feedback from this meeting jointly informed staff's review of the development application as well as the Planning Review.
- Two presentations were made to the City's Design Review Panel in spring and fall 2021 to identify feedback from private sector design professionals.
- The LAG has met two times since the initiation of the Planning Review, in August 2020 and July 2021. The LAG has provided key feedback on the goals of the Planning Review as well as the emerging policy directions that have emerged through analysis of feedback received to date and other research and analysis on the part of City staff.
- A third and final LAG meeting is planned to confirm whether the draft policy directions align with the community's expressed priorities and vision and to provide further input on the priorities for community benefits that have been identified through this process.

Summary of Feedback

There is general community support for the goals of the Planning Review. City staff have been working with the applicant and consulting with the local community and the LAG to better understand any potential concerns around the perceived or real impacts of additional density and the introduction of new land uses to the site.

Feedback received through community consultation can be summarized into the following themes:

Pedestrian Safety & Mobility

- Residents consider the Finch and McCowan intersection to be one of the most dangerous in the city. Many people access the mall by walking, including students at the nearby schools as well as seniors. Pedestrian safety is a key concern.
- The community requested the Planning Review consider those walking, rolling, cycling and taking transit to the site - ensure that there is safe, dedicated cycling infrastructure, modifications to the nearby streets to make them safer - such as

signal changes, intersection modifications, increased pedestrian crossing times, etc.
- and improving bus service and access to the site from transit stops.

- Safety and mobility for all users was something raised through all forums as it was felt that streetscape design for the new development must prioritize safety for pedestrians and cyclists and ensure walking is convenient to reduce the number of vehicles on site.

Traffic & Transportation

- Local stakeholders looked for the Planning Review to ensure any additional traffic generated through development does not negatively impact the community, such as through increased congestion, vehicle infiltration into surrounding neighbourhoods, pollution, or safety concerns.
- Many residents noted that busses serving this area are already at or near capacity. There are concerns about additional strain on the transit system, and the community feels transit service needs to be improved.
- Many community members had questions about parking, including if mall parking would still be available for those who choose to drive to the site. It was also noted that the mall currently has uses that typically generate higher parking demand, such as the cinemas and banquet halls.

Sustainability & Environment

- Many community members provided feedback on the importance of sustainable design and environmental protection; any new development should contribute positively to the natural environment and there should be measures in place to mitigate negative environmental impacts.
- Specific issues of concern/interest include stormwater management, tree coverage, and air quality.

Community Services & Facilities

- The community identified many needs for community services and facilities on site or in the nearby area. Services and facilities identified include: seniors' services, recreation and fitness facilities, health services, community agency space, childcare facilities, improvements to the public library, and other types of community spaces for gathering and/or activities. City staff are undertaking further engagement to confirm priorities for community services and facilities that can be provided through the proposed development.
- The community has also noted that all services, facilities, and community spaces should be accessible.

Public Realm & Public Space

- Feedback received through community consultation noted that parkland and open space are important to the community, and any development should include adequate parkland and open space.
- The community repeatedly expressed the significance of public space; the mall currently functions as a low-barrier gathering space for many people, including

students, seniors, and low-income community members. Any future development should incorporate public and publicly-accessible indoor and outdoor spaces for people to gather, recreate informally (for example, walking in groups around the mall), and access services.

- A welcoming public realm and streetscape is important - feedback identified the importance of adequately-sized outdoor amenities as well as a positive experience for pedestrians using the street network.

Housing

- The community has identified a need for a range of housing options in the area, including affordable, accessible, rental, and senior's housing.
- Support for introducing new residential uses has been mixed, with some members of the community expressing concern about the impacts of additional density on the site, such as on the capacity of local schools or other services. For others, the introduction of residential uses presented an opportunity for revitalization of the subject lands and additional amenity through new parks, land uses and open spaces.

Built Form

- Feedback included the need to ensure that any proposed development does not have negative shadow impacts on nearby parks, or negative wind impacts.
- The importance of adequate setbacks was also identified, to acknowledge the existing high-rise built form adjacent to the site across Finch, as well as ensuring a positive streetscape experience and access to natural light.
- Concern was expressed about the ability of existing infrastructure to accommodate an increase in density on the site.
- It was also noted that any development should ensure transition to nearby low-rise neighbourhoods.

Phasing & Construction Impacts

- There is support for a phased approach to any new development.
- Questions were raised on how potential impacts of construction would be mitigated, especially considering impacts to seniors as well as traffic and road safety.

Woodside Square Mall as Community Hub

- Many members of the community identified Woodside Square mall as an important community hub. While the development proposal currently being reviewed by City Planning intends to retain the mall on site, any potential long-term redevelopment of the site must consider the significance of the mall and the function it serves in the community. This includes a central place to access services, a free and low-barrier place to gather, a meeting space for seniors, a community "entertainment hub," and a place with culturally important events and spaces that are meaningful to the entire community - such as outdoor tai chi, Chinese banquet halls and annual Lunar New Year events, festivals and celebrations such as Asialicious, film festivals, and Woodside Square Cinemas which shows Hindi and Tamil films. This sense of a

community hub, providing entertainment, cultural events, a variety of community services, and spaces to gather and build community, should guide the long-term vision for the site.

1571 Sandhurst Circle Development Application

In mid-2020, a development application was submitted proposing to amend the Zoning By-law for the subject lands in order to permit a mixed-use development on the surface parking areas surrounding Woodside Square mall. Following staff review and community consultation, a revised proposal was resubmitted in December 2021.

The proposed development would retain the existing mall building and develop a diverse mix of residential uses, commercial space, community uses and new grade-related uses on the existing surface parking areas comprising an area of 3.94 hectares, and is proposed to occur over five phases. The proposal includes 2,556 residential units, of which 217 are proposed for seniors housing, with a total proposed residential GFA of 191,287 square metres. The proposal also includes 12,621 square metres of non-residential uses, which would include a combination of office, retail, and community uses. The total proposed GFA, inclusive of the mall building is 248,117 square metres. The proposal includes mid-rise and high-rise buildings with heights ranging from 4 to 33 storeys. Parking to serve the existing mall is proposed to be located on the mall roof, with parking for residential uses to be located below grade. A total of 2,509 parking spaces are proposed to serve the existing mall and proposed development.

The proposed development includes the addition of a new street network, with 4 new public streets proposed, including a connection from Finch Avenue East.

The proposal includes two public parks, one to be provided in Phase 1 with the second proposed to be provided as part of Phase 5 for a total of approximately 0.8 hectares of public park space. Five smaller privately-owned, publicly-accessible open spaces (POPS) are proposed along the site corners and key midblock points.

Detailed project information including most recent submitted application materials can be found on the City's Application Information Centre at:

<http://app.toronto.ca/AIC/index.do?folderRsn=OPnnbAjShamZH26geBlqHw%3D%3D>

DRAFT POLICY DIRECTIONS

A New Site and Area Specific Policy (SASP) for Woodside Square

In order to achieve the Woodside Square Planning Review study goals and community priorities identified through public consultation, the following draft policy directions have been developed to inform a future SASP for the subject lands. Upon confirmation of the policy directions identified in this report, staff intend to advance through Phase 4 of the Planning Review and conduct a final round of public engagement in order to incorporate refinements prior to a final report and recommended SASP.

The final SASP will provide a policy framework to ensure the evolution of the site over time as a complete community that has a distinct identity which contributes to and enhances the surrounding neighbourhoods. As residential uses emerge on site around the retained mall building, the policy directions ensure site will maintain its function as an important economic, social and community services centre of the Agincourt North Community. Through appropriate and orderly phasing, these draft policy directions ensure that development of the lands around the existing mall building would not preclude the future longer term city building opportunities for the subject lands should the mall building be reduced in size or removed entirely.

Policy Directions

The final SASP will be structured according to the following draft policy directions:

1. Vision and Guiding Principles

The overall policy vision is to facilitate the evolution of a complete community on the subject lands that:

- Has a distinct identity that is integrated with and contributes to the existing surrounding community with the Woodside Square mall as a central hub;
- Maintains the site's function as the economic, social and community services centre of the Agincourt North community as residential uses emerge;
- Is organized by a vibrant, green and interconnected public realm;
- Supports transportation network users of all ages and abilities by creating a safe, multi-modal network;
- Includes a mix of building types that define and support the adjacent streets and parks with good proportion, fits within the surrounding context, implement appropriate transition, and limit shadow impact.

2. Land Use and Built Form

New land use designations for the lands will be necessary to guide the deployment of new built form and ensure future development on site is well organized as follows:

- Residential uses would be permitted on site through the introduction of *Mixed Use Areas* and *Parks* land use designations. To guide short- to medium-term as well as long-term implementation, two distinct policy areas are proposed to be identified as shown in **Attachment 4**. Near term intensification of mixed use development will occur first in "Area A" with the mall building maintained within "Area B".
- Policies will support a mix of building types suitable for a range of household types and residential tenures. The types and locations of buildings should be planned in relationship to the surrounding existing and planned context.
- Non-residential uses will be encouraged at grade to provide a positive pedestrian experience, and should provide for retail, commercial and community uses.
- Any future redevelopment of the lands in Area B, currently occupied by the existing mall building, should be organized to provide significant retail and commercial functions in addition to opportunities for public use and gathering.

3. Structure and Public Realm

Near term and long term development opportunities will be structured through the emergence of a vibrant, green and interconnected public realm supported by the future policy framework as follows:

- Policies in the SASP will the creation of public realm structure for the site for the short and long term as conceptually illustrated in **Attachment 5**.
- Public parks will be required as part of any redevelopment of the subject lands. Privately Owned Publicly-accessible Open Spaces (POPS) and other open spaces should be provided at key locations. Considerations for lands to be designated *Parks and Open Spaces* or identified as POPS will include the provision of recreational uses, access to green space, and flexible, programmable space intended for gathering, entertainment and community events.
- Safe and attractive streetscape design will accommodate sidewalks, pedestrian amenities, soft landscaping and Green Streets elements.
- Site planning should incorporate community cultural and focal points, key views, and relevant public art. The existing mall building should be integrated with new development through mall façade improvements and landscape enhancements.

4. Mobility and Safety

The following policy directions are intended to build on the key mobility and transportation considerations identified through community feedback and stakeholder conversations:

- A new public street network will emerge over time, and will enhance connectivity and mobility options for all users, prioritizing pedestrian safety. Provisions for a connected cycling network within the site are to be included in the design of planned right-of-ways.
- Improvements to the existing roads and intersections surrounding the subject lands is to be a requirement of any redevelopment of the site and is to include pedestrian, cycling and transit infrastructure improvements to ensure a safe and comfortable environment for non-auto users travelling to, from and through the site.

5. Housing and Community Benefits

Policy directions around housing and community benefits are required to support livability, responding to community feedback related to opportunities and concerns with the introduction of residential uses to the subject lands:

- A range of housing options should be provided to accommodate different household types, including seniors and families with children. Housing types should also recognize new ways of working, including accommodating a shift towards increased home office needs that has emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Priority community benefits will be provided through any redevelopment of the site, including consideration for: affordable housing, seniors' services, recreation and

fitness facilities, health services (including mental health services), community agency space, childcare facilities, library improvements/replacement, and publically accessible indoor and outdoor community gathering spaces.

- As a large site as defined by Section 3.2.1.9 of the Official Plan, affordable housing is required to be provided on-site as part of any redevelopment as a first priority community benefit. Other community benefits identified in this report are also to be secured. The priority of affordable housing provision should be defined in the SASP along with other potential community benefits, and secured through the Zoning By-law Amendment application should it be approved prior to the Community Benefit Charge regime coming into effect.

6. Sustainability

To ensure sustainability over the near, medium and long term, a policy direction strongly encouraging low-impact development (LID) measures and low-carbon building energy strategies will be advanced to support City sustainability policies and targets, including the TransformTO Net Zero Strategy.

7. Implementation

As a multi-phased repositioning of the site to include residential uses is provided for by a new SASP, clear policies related to implementation are required to ensure that development is properly deployed and intensification of the site does not outpace the available infrastructure necessary to service it:

- Infrastructure and servicing upgrades are to be identified and secured to support any phase of development.
- Any redevelopment of the subject lands is to be phased, with phasing to include key public realm improvements. Development within the Woodside Square lands will be subject to site plan control, and it is anticipated that site plan approval will occur in phases and over time. An application for draft plan of subdivision is also required for comprehensive development of the lands, including the creation of public roads and development and park blocks.
- Urban Design Guidelines will provide detailed guidance on the design and organization of the built environment within the Woodside Square Planning Review area. They will include specific recommendations on site planning, building massing and design as well as public realm improvements.
- The mall building is considered an important asset to the community and is intended to remain in place for a considerable amount of time. However, in the long term should the mall building within Area B be reduced in size or removed entirely, development in the near term should not preclude the important city building components necessary for a complete community to be implemented on the Area B lands.

Next Steps

Woodside Square continues to serve the Agincourt North community well as a local, community-focused shopping mall. As a retail and community services hub that was originally built with a focus on private automobile access and separated retail and

residential uses, the site's large areas of paved parking surrounding the mall represent an opportunity to meet key city-building objectives while supporting a shift towards a safe, multi-modal mobility network and provision of a range of housing options. The community has continually expressed the significance of the mall - including its function as a gathering space, community services centre, retail space, and entertainment and cultural hub.

The Woodside Square Planning Review has provided an opportunity for the City to explore ways to recognize the importance and utility of this site to the local community while evaluating and responsibly introducing new land uses and densities. The draft policy directions presented in this report lay out a vision for the development of a complete community that will build on Woodside Square's role as a distinct centre for the Agincourt North community, and a phased approach to guide future growth. A final round of public engagement on the draft policy directions with the local community, businesses and landowners is recommended to incorporate refinements before a Final Report with the recommended Official Plan Amendment containing the Woodside Square Site and Area Specific Policy is brought forward to a statutory public meeting at Scarborough Community Council.

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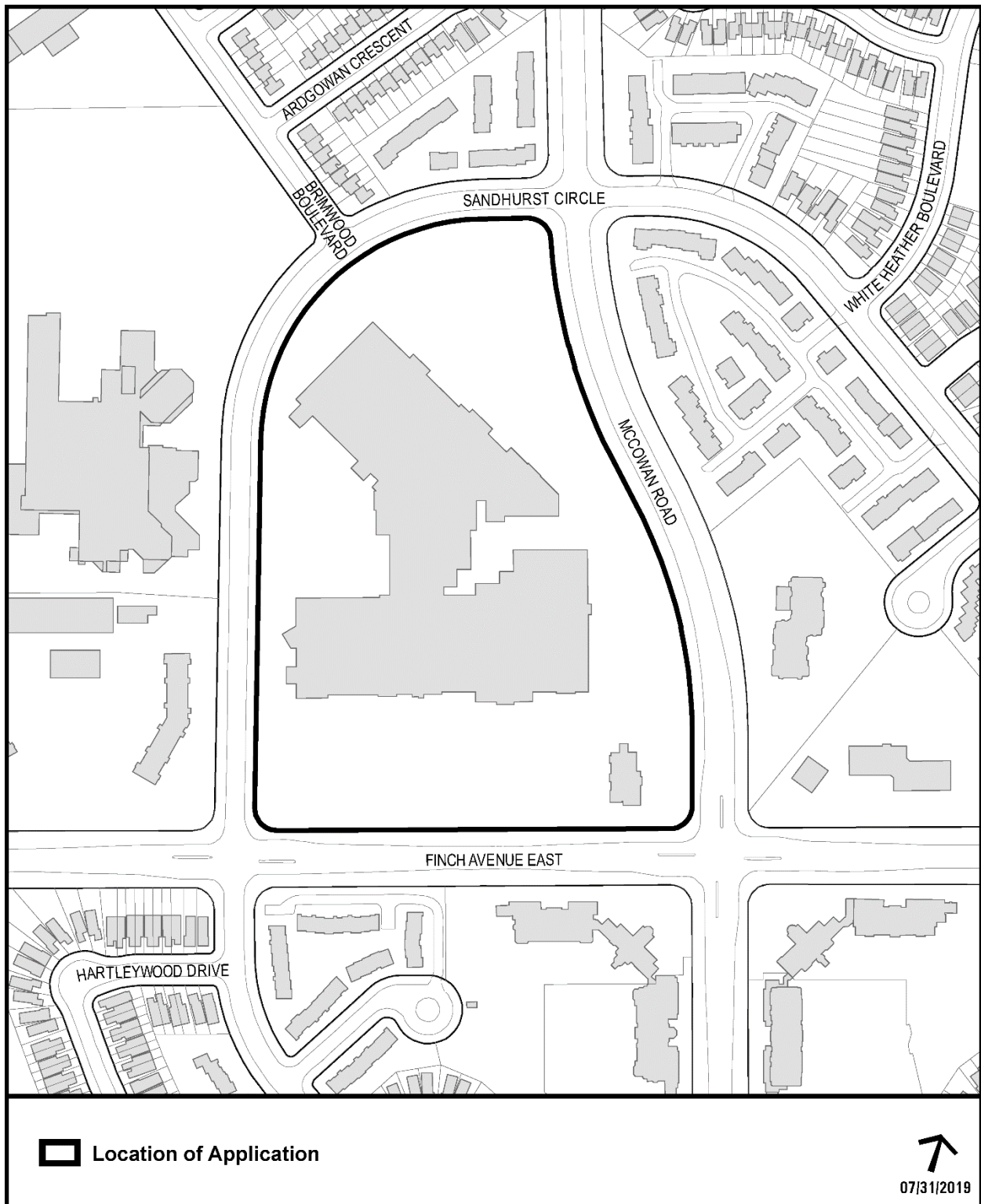
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Paul Zuliani, Director
Community Planning, Scarborough District

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Location Map
Attachment 2: Existing Site Context
Attachment 3: Woodside Square Planning Review Process
Attachment 4: Mixed Use Development Areas
Attachment 5: Conceptual Structure and Built Form

Attachment 1: Location Map



Attachment 2: Existing Site Context



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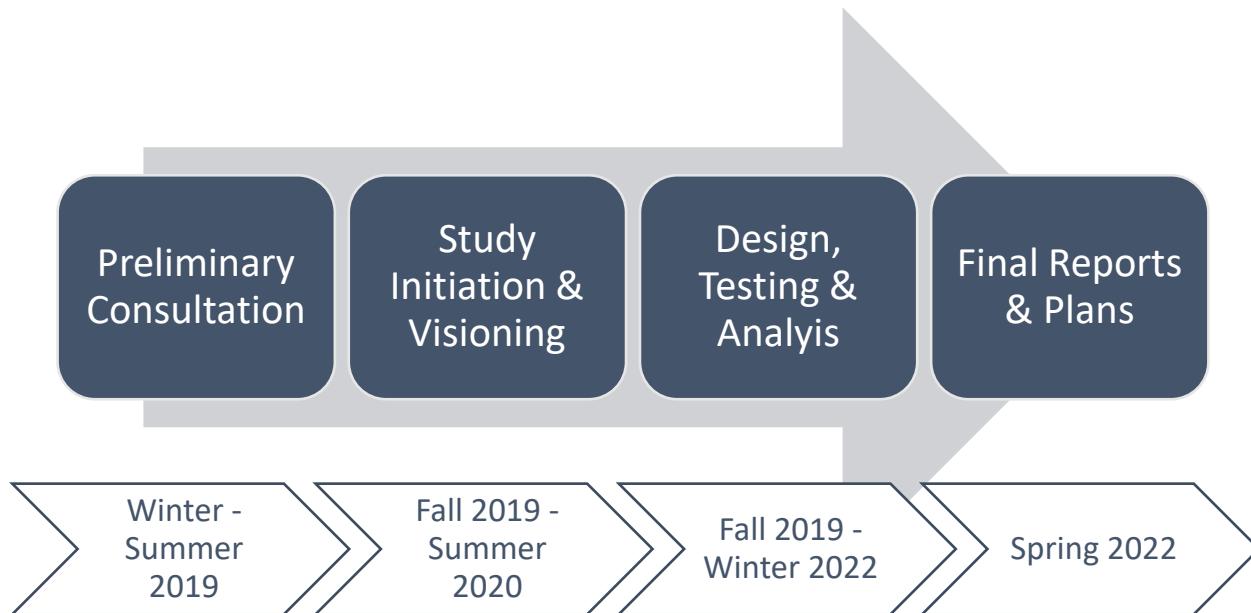
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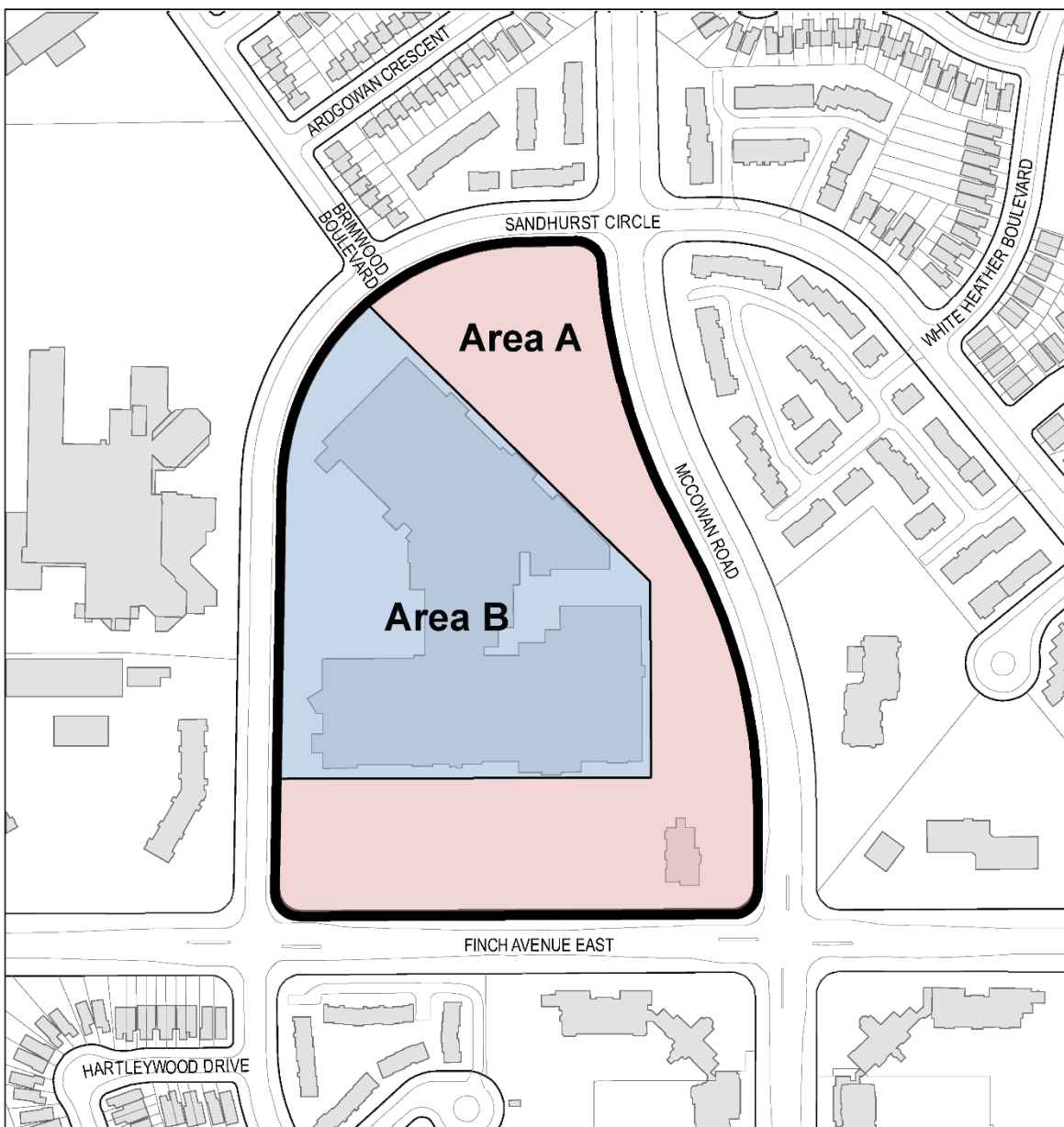
 Location of Application


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Attachment 3: Woodside Square Planning Review Process



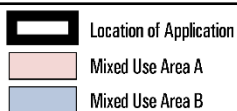
Attachment 4: Mixed Use Development Areas



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Mixed Use Areas

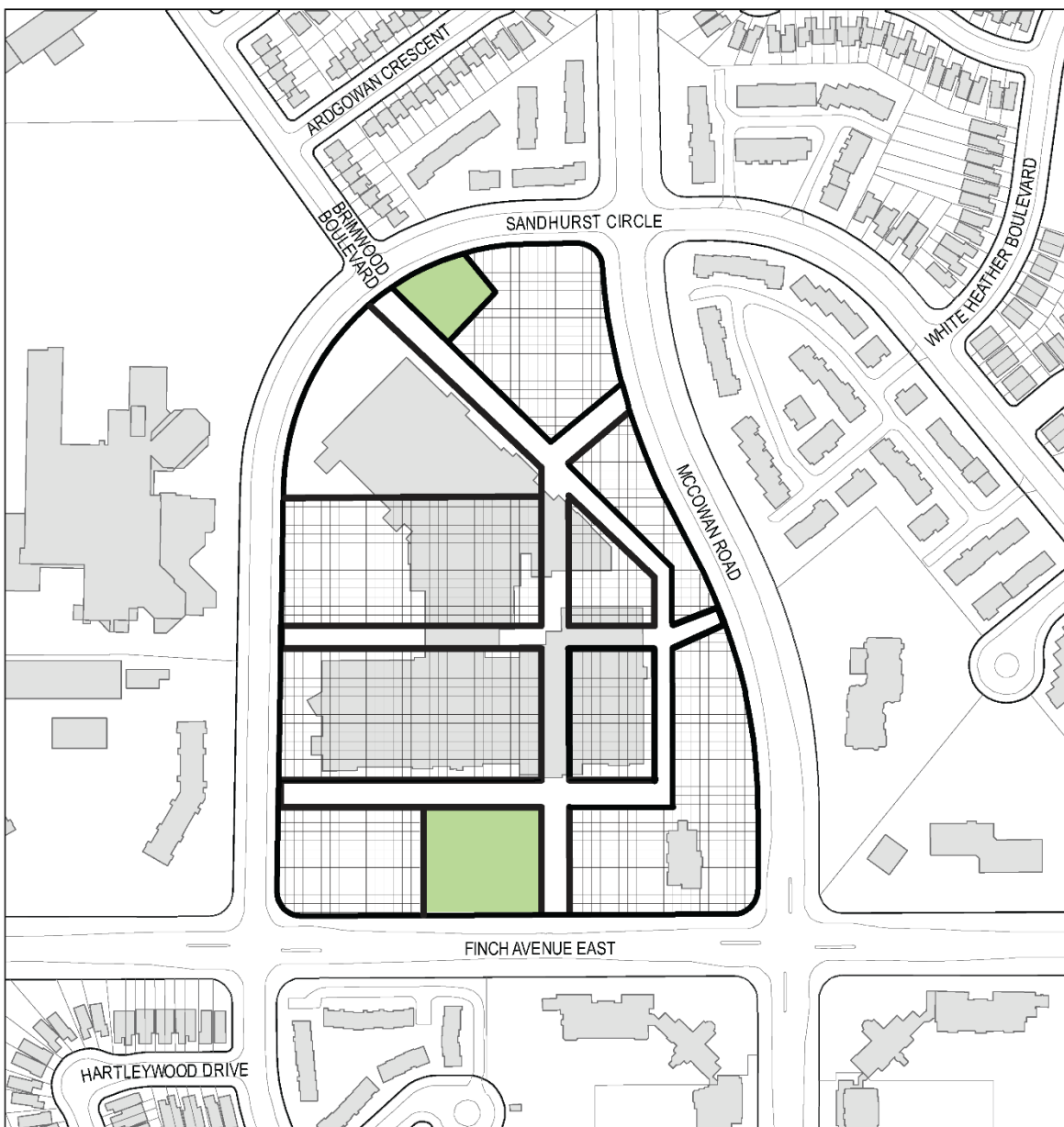
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Attachment 5: Conceptual Structure and Built Form



Structure and Built Form

1571 Sandhurst Circle

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-  Location of Application
-  Conceptual Mixed Use Development Zones
-  Conceptual Public Parks

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