



# Setting the Stage:

Encouraging Transit Supportive Places on the Finch West LRT Corridor



**METROLINX**

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The “Setting the Stage: Encouraging Transit Supportive Places on the Finch West LRT Corridor” report was prepared by:

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

The Finch Avenue West corridor rests at the threshold of significant change. The proposed LRT will deliver convenient and reliable higher-order transit to area residents, businesses and institutions – improving connections across the corridor and beyond. This investment will create a generational opportunity to reimagine the shape and character of the corridor, address long-standing issues, and welcome new residents and businesses.

Demographically, the area is changing. The population is aging and households are getting smaller. Employment is shifting away from traditional manufacturing and while average private household incomes are increasing across the corridor, they are still lower than the city average. The corridor also has concentrated areas of high social need. Neighbourhoods along the corridor have been identified as Neighbourhood Improvement Areas and face a range of issues including above average unemployment and low income rates.

The corridor hosts a mature real estate market with strong demand for single-family grade-related homes and a developing market for high-rise building types. Construction of the LRT is expected to accelerate the demand and eventually lead to the creation of a market for high-rise buildings in the corridor.

## Goals and Objectives of the Study

The Study purpose is to identify approaches to maximizing the benefits of investment in LRT infrastructure along the Finch Avenue West corridor. It includes a detailed analysis of the real estate market conditions along the corridor and a review of the existing planning framework, physical conditions, and demographic trends. A series of case studies from jurisdictions across North America highlight approaches to leveraging LRT investments. Together, this analysis and these case studies aim to identify those areas along the corridor that may experience market pressure, provide planning and public realm considerations to support reinvestment and to remedy social need along the corridor.

## Key Considerations for the Finch Avenue West Corridor

Below is a summary of the key considerations from this study for the overall corridor. The considerations are a result of information gathering and analysis, a detailed real estate market conditions analysis, case study review, collaboration with City Staff, and a review of existing conditions along the Finch Avenue West corridor.

### Market

- The market demand for residential uses, and to lesser extent office and commercial uses, are expected to improve with the new LRT service. Demand will be strongest in the areas that are within walking distance of a station, typically 500 metres.

- Strong increases in the value of single family homes, and other ground oriented housing types along the corridor, as well as land transactions and high density development applications and activity, are all early signals that demand may be maturing for higher density residential formats in Emery Village and at the intersection of Finch Avenue West and Keele Street.
- The Thistletown site, Albion Mall, and Humber College also offer opportunities to respond to market influences generated by new transit investment, however these sites are less advanced in their planning and more complex from an ownership and development perspective.
- Not all areas along the corridor will respond in a similar or consistent manner due to other issues such as the existing land use and ownership pattern.
- Overall, the Finch Avenue West corridor market is maturing at a steady rate. The LRT will have the impact of accelerating the market in terms of pricing and demand but only in the areas where the development and ownership patterns are aligned with planning and market forces.

### **Physical/Public Realm**

- The public realm along the Finch Avenue West corridor is often deficient where many stretches of the corridor are abutted by 'back-lotted' residential properties that offer little amenity to passers-by, sound walls have been added to mitigate noise caused by vehicle traffic, and pedestrian bridges have been installed in some areas to cross wide arterial roads. The corridor would benefit from the preparation of a detailed public realm plan in tandem with LRT design to identify streetscape improvements along Finch Avenue

West, with regards to pedestrian crossings, improved comfort, landscaping, street furniture, way-finding, tree canopy and integration with active retail and/or residential uses.

- In addition, given that neighbourhood streets typically follow a broken grid pattern that defers to the contours of the landscape, resulting in a deficient public realm, it would be beneficial to conduct a detailed public realm analysis that identifies opportunities to improve connections between proposed LRT stops and neighbourhood destinations (area schools, institutions, community centres, or parks) by upgrading pedestrian and cycling infrastructure as required.
- To further complement the proposed LRT, there should be consideration for ways to implement safe and continuous cycling infrastructure throughout the corridor and to the broader cycling network.
- The Finch Avenue West corridor includes generous amounts of preserved natural open space; however these lands are not considered parkland. A key consideration for the corridor includes the potential exploration of opportunities to better use the hydro corridor in ways that provide added amenities to areas where intensification is anticipated, including parks and pedestrian and bicycle trails.
- Currently, access to the ravines along the corridor remains inconsistent. Enhancing these connections will promote access to ravines within the corridor, providing more public amenities to residents.

## Socio-Economic

- The corridor faces increased rates of unemployment, low income rates, and reduced affordability and also has reduced walkability to community meeting places, green spaces, and healthy food stores. Generally, the issues that may be most directly resolved as a result of the LRT are related to access (i.e. proximity to green spaces, employment opportunities, walkability, etc.).
- The corridor will benefit most through comprehensive planning and the extension of connections into the adjacent neighbourhoods including feeder bus routes, pedestrian connections to the Humber River Valley, parks, mixed use areas, and community spaces. The coordination of this comprehensive planning and the provision of a planning and public realm framework which serves to support the LRT and surrounding neighbourhoods will better address the issues faced along the corridor.
- In addition to larger-scale initiatives, a number of key considerations identified in the study analysis can also address these issues. They include: making Community Benefit Agreements mandatory for all infrastructure projects over a certain dollar value; consideration for local business supports (e.g. free advertising on transit vehicles, design contests and other forms of outreach to schools, seniors' centres, community groups etc.) and provision of support during construction.

## Planning

- **Establish a Vision for the Finch Avenue West Corridor:** The establishment of a strong vision for the corridor could help shape related decisions surrounding built form, character, density, capital improvements, public realm improvements, community service facilities and parkland dedication.
- **Ensure Appropriate Density, Form, and Character of Development:** Future intensification along the corridor would benefit from a careful consideration of the unique physical characteristics of the Finch Avenue West corridor, which include: unique topography with prominent ravines and natural features; wide right-of-way (Finch Avenue West has a planned ROW of 36m); LRT stop spacing that is wider compared pre-war streetcar routes; tower-in-the-park sites that share the characteristics outlined in the Mayor's Tower Renewal report; and, surrounding stable neighbourhoods.
- **Consider Transit-Supportive Densities:** Consider transit-supportive densities in certain locations along the corridor which could include minimum heights and/or densities. There is also the potential to reserve areas along the corridor for higher density built forms (e.g. mid-rise and taller buildings) once the market becomes favourable for this type of development.
- **Opportunities for Infill or Redevelopment:** There are opportunities for increased density and intensification through infill and/or redevelopment, particularly around existing malls, in Mixed Use Area sites (first priority) and some apartment sites (second priority). Recent residential intensification

efforts in the city have led to increased benefits for existing and future residents.

- **Provision of a Robust Public Realm:** A comprehensive Public Realm Plan that considers key origins and destinations within 500m of the corridor would provide a framework for the full integration of the LRT into the existing and planned communities. A Public Realm plan can provide guidance on the design of streets, parks, open spaces, bicycle routes, public art and community buildings so that they are responsive to the local context and to community interests and needs.
- **Integrate Open Space Planning:** Intensification within the corridor would need to be supported by appropriate public parks and open spaces that provide amenity to existing and new residents. Acquiring new parkland through development, investing in existing parks and open space, and providing better access to existing natural spaces and/or schoolyards are all options that could be considered.
- **Support of Employment Uses:** The preservation of existing and creation of new employment uses within the Finch Avenue West corridor should be supported. To achieve this support, a comprehensive review of existing and projected uses should be conducted, along with combined recommendations for how the related transportation, public realm, urban design, and economic development initiatives considered for the corridor can be tailored.
- **Area-Specific Considerations:** Given the scale of transportation infrastructure investment planned for the Keele-Finch intersection, market interest and private development interest is anticipated to be higher at this location. Comprehensive planning exercises could help shape and support this investment, review of the surrounding land-uses, transportation network, open space system, servicing, and community services and facilities required to support this investment.



# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Finch Avenue West corridor rests at the threshold of significant change. The proposed LRT will deliver convenient and reliable higher-order transit to area residents, businesses and institutions – improving connections across the corridor and beyond. This investment will create a generational opportunity to reimagine the shape and character of the corridor, address long-standing issues, and welcome new residents and businesses.

The Finch Avenue West corridor was largely planned, subdivided and developed in the 1960s and is now approaching 50 years in age. The planning of the time set out neighbourhoods that relied heavily on private automobiles for transportation, but also benefited from generous parks and open spaces. Neighbourhoods along corridor are shaped by the topography, in particular the ravines of the Humber River that wrap around individual neighbourhoods.

The corridor consists of an almost equal split between single detached homes and modernist “towers-in-the-park” that contribute to Toronto’s stock of affordable housing. A number of neighbourhood-scale commercial centres are located at major intersections, and major cluster of employment uses can be found along the Highway 400 interchange, at Emery Village and at Highway 27. The area is well serviced by a grid of arterial roads that also support a network of well-used and frequent buses.

Demographically, the area is changing. The population is aging and households are getting smaller, resulting in low enrolment at certain schools (Appendix B). Employment is shifting away from traditional manufacturing and while average private household incomes are increasing across the corridor, they are still lower than the city average. The corridor also has concentrated areas of high social need. Neighbourhoods along the corridor have been identified as Neighbourhood Improvement Areas and face a range of issues including above average unemployment and low income rates.

Infrastructure and community facilities along the corridor are approaching the end of their life cycles and are often unable to cope with increased traffic demands and/or extreme weather conditions. Major capital investments will be needed over the coming decades to maintain infrastructure and community facilities in a state of good repair and to accommodate anticipated growth and demographic change.

The corridor hosts a mature real estate market with strong demand for single-family grade-related homes and a developing market for high-rise building types. Construction of the LRT is expected to accelerate the demand and eventually lead to the creation of a market for high-rise buildings in the corridor.

## Goals and Objectives

The Study purpose is to identify approaches to maximizing the benefits of investment in LRT infrastructure along the Finch Avenue West corridor. It includes a detailed analysis of the real estate market conditions along the corridor and a review of the existing planning framework, physical conditions, and demographic trends. A series of case studies from jurisdictions across North America highlight approaches to leveraging LRT investments. Together, this analysis and these case studies aim to identify those areas along the corridor that may experience market pressure, provide planning and public realm considerations to support reinvestment and to remedy social need along the corridor.

# 2.0 THE FINCH AVENUE WEST CORRIDOR TODAY

## 2.1 EXISTING TRANSIT EXPERIENCE

The Finch Avenue West corridor is currently serviced by the 36 Finch West bus route which sits among the top three busiest routes in Toronto.

As per the Finch West LRT Environmental Assessment Report (2010), the 36 Finch West bus route experiences a ridership of approximately 42,600 passengers per weekday. The frequent bus service along Finch Avenue West operates within mixed traffic and close together, causing back-to-back buses or “bunching”. As a result, the bus service has become unreliable and effectively created longer wait times for some passengers. There is also a severe issue of overcrowding of buses along this route. The projected ridership for the Finch Avenue West corridor is 2,800 passengers per hour in the peak direction by 2031. Forecasted demands would require 32 to 39 ‘articulated’ buses or 45 to 55 ‘standard’ buses per hour to meet ridership requirements.

The Finch West LRT represents a significant investment in expanded and improved transit in the City of Toronto. It is a light rail transit line that will run along the surface of Finch Avenue West from the planned Finch West subway station at Keele Street to Humber College. An Environmental Assessment was completed in 2010 by the City of Toronto for the replacement of bus service on

Finch Avenue West from Finch Station at Yonge Street on the Yonge-University-Spadina Subway line to Humber College. The project is fully funded and approved and will include:

- 11 kilometres of light rail transit along Finch Avenue West from the planned Finch West subway station at Keele Street to Humber College
- Up to 18 surface stops along the alignment along with one below grade interchange station at Keele Street that will be integrated with the future Spadina Subway station
- Rapid Transit Connections: Finch West Station to the new Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension



Finch West LRT Route (Source: Metrolinx)

- Total capital costs: \$1 billion (\$2010)
- Project Ridership: 2,800 people per hour in the peak direction by 2031
- The Finch maintenance and Storage Facility at York Gate Boulevard is part of the Finch West LRT Alternative Finance Procurement package

The new LRT will bring speed, convenience and accessibility to daily commutes. The new Light Rail Vehicles (LRVs) carry approximately three times the number of passengers as a bus, which will reduce overcrowding. The LRT will provide increased speed over local buses. It is estimated that the LRT will provide service that is over 20% faster than buses in mixed traffic today. The introduction of the Finch West LRT will relieve gridlock through the replacement of 35 morning and 29 afternoon peak period buses from existing lanes of traffic. The existing 36m ROW along the majority of Finch Avenue West will be able to accommodate the addition of the LRT trackway and maintain two lanes of through traffic in either direction. The LRVs will remain accessible with multiple entrances and low floors to ensure fast and accessible boarding.

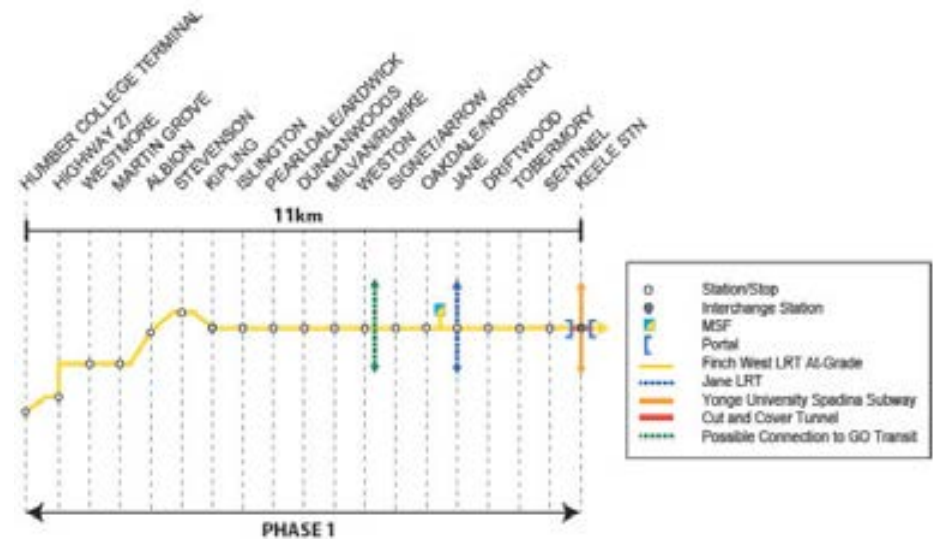


Figure 1. Finch West LRT - Station Stop Locations (Source: Metrolinx)

## 2.2 EXISTING PHYSICAL CONTEXT

The Finch Avenue West corridor is largely defined by its topography. The 11 km route is bisected by two major branches of the Humber River, Black Creek and a number of smaller tributaries. The watercourses generally flow from the north-west to the south-east and have carved wide ravines that shape the landscape.

Many roads in the area, such as Albion Road, Rexdale Boulevard or Weston Road follow diagonal paths along the high ground in the tablelands between the ravines, while Concession Roads, such as Sheppard Avenue are interrupted by

the ravines (stopping at Weston Road). Railroads in the area also follow similar routes. Together, this road network reinforces the north-west to south-east path of travel established by the ravines. Finch Avenue West is the one Concession Road between Steeles and Eglinton Avenues that passes continuously between Keele Street and Highway 27.

Albion Road was first surveyed through the area in 1799 and early communities were established at Claireville in the late 1830s and Thistletown in the 1840s. Few remnants of these historic settlements remain. The Grand Trunk Railroad passed through the area in the 1850s and the land was cleared for farms by the 1870s. Transit first arrived in the corridor in 1914, when an extension of the Toronto Suburban Railway passed through Thistletown, on the way to Woodbridge



Jane Finch Mall in 1968 (left) and 1972 (right) (Source: Northway-Photomap Inc.)



Finch Street looking east towards Black Creek in 1959 (left) and Jane Street and Finch Avenue West in 1962 (right) (Source: Toronto Public Library)

(but was abandoned by 1926). Farms in the area began to be subdivided in the 1950s, and the corridor was largely developed by the 1960s.

The developments of the 1960s define much of the present experience along the corridor. The arterial road network is built upon the grid of the original concession surveys and focused on wide streets designed for high volumes of traffic. The neighbourhood streets typically follow a broken grid pattern that defers to the contours of the landscape. The resulting public realm along the arterials is often deficient – embankments have been carved out of the landscape to accommodate Finch Avenue West, many stretches of the corridor are abutted by ‘back-lotted’ residential properties that offer little amenity to passers-by, sound walls have been added to mitigate noise caused by vehicle traffic, and pedestrian bridges have been installed in some areas to cross wide arterial roads. The arterial road network supports a well-used network of bus routes that feed into the City’s subway network.

Neighbourhoods along the corridor are generally deficient in parkland. Although there are generous amounts of preserved naturalized open space, primarily in the ravines that bi-sect the corridor, these lands are not considered parkland. Access to the ravines also remains inconsistent. The Finch Hydro Corridor runs through the eastern portion of the study area and acts as an informal green space hosting a range of recreational trails, community gardens and sports facilities. These areas are augmented by a network of local parks, schools and community centres.

Residential areas along the corridor are almost equally split between single detached homes and modernist “towers-in-the-park” that contribute to Toronto’s stock of affordable housing. A number of neighbourhood-scale commercial centres are located at major intersections, and major clusters of employment uses can be found along the highway 400 interchange, at Emery Village and at Highway 27.

As a whole, the corridor demonstrates high levels of public ownership, including institutions such as Humber College, Etobicoke General Hospital, and York University, local schools, TCHC properties, the Finch Hydro Corridor, and surplus sites such as the Thistleton lands.

In general terms, the corridor is characterized by a nodal structure where individual neighbourhoods, concentrated around commercial and/or institutional uses at major intersections, are separated from each other by large natural features. In some cases, Finch Avenue West offers the only connection to these smaller neighbourhoods including portions of the Humbermede neighbourhood east of Islington Avenue and south of Finch Avenue West.



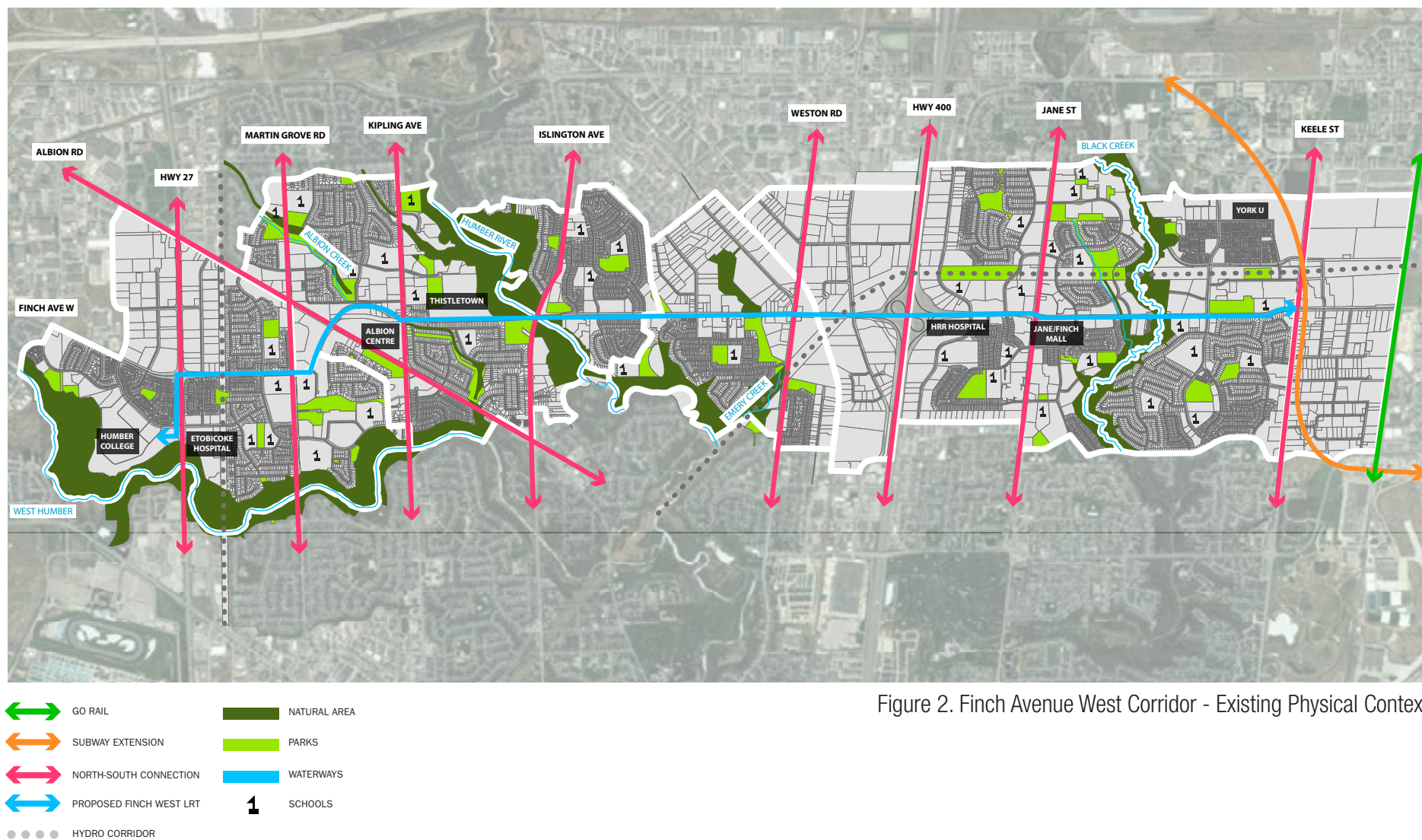


Figure 2. Finch Avenue West Corridor - Existing Physical Context

## 2.3 EXISTING DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

The *Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020*, has identified 31 Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIA) in the City that fall below the strategy's Neighbourhood Equity Index (NEI) score. Due to the high concentration of disadvantaged populations that occupy the older apartment buildings nearly all of the neighbourhoods along the corridor have been identified as a NIA. However, these concentrations are in relatively compact geographic areas along the corridor, and the NIA designation itself overshadows the stability and positive market context associated with the majority of these communities. Some of the key findings of the census profile for the Finch Avenue West corridor are as follows.

- Overall, the corridor has experienced modest population growth and stagnant housing starts. The population had decreased between 2001 and 2006 and then increased by 7% from 2006 to 2011. This is a result of larger household sizes and a larger proportion of multi-family households, resulting in a higher average person per household.
- The corridor has lower average household incomes (\$64,687) compared to the City as whole (\$87,038) combined with high unemployment and lower participation rates. Lower levels of education completed, including a higher rate of persons without a high school education are also reported. However, as noted above, these populations are concentrated in areas where supportive housing is offered.

- The proportion of recent immigrants is high along the corridor, with 61% of the population being immigrants to Canada, compared to 49% for the City as a whole.
- The population is also younger than the rest of the City, with a high proportion of persons under 19 years of age.
- In terms of housing tenure, the corridor was almost equally split between those that own homes and those who rent, consistent with the City's rate of 51%.



## 2.4 EXISTING SOCIAL EQUITY CONTEXT

Neighbourhoods along the Finch Avenue West corridor were analyzed from a social equity perspective, in an effort to identify opportunities where the transit infrastructure, and associated investment, could improve existing conditions in the corridor.

The social baseline relied upon by this study is grounded in work completed for the *Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020*, in particular the Neighbourhood Equity Index and associated indicators which were used to identify Neighbourhood Improvement Areas. The NEI score for each

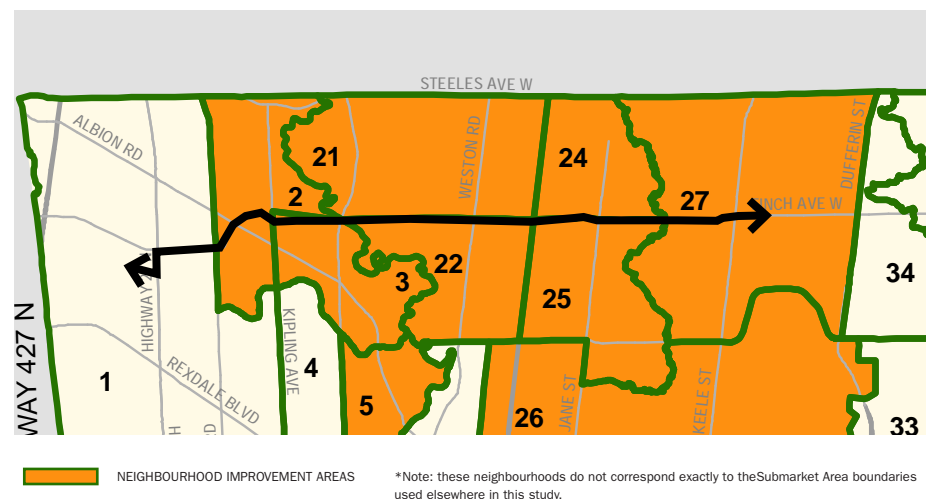


Figure 3. Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (Source: City of Toronto)

neighbourhood is derived from indicators of neighbourhood inequity which describes how neighbourhoods in Toronto are faring relative to others. These indicators are listed in Table 1. Further information regarding the indicators can be found in the *TSNS2020 Neighbourhood Equity Index: Methodological Documentation* report<sup>1</sup>. Benchmarks for each indicator were used to determine whether neighbourhoods met or fell below established targets.

The following neighbourhoods were analyzed along the Finch Avenue West corridor:

- Neighbourhood No. 1: West Humber-Clairville
- Neighbourhood No. 2: Mount Olive-Silverstone-Jamestown
- Neighbourhood No. 3: Thistletown-Beaumont Heights
- Neighbourhood No. 21: Humber Summit
- Neighbourhood No. 22: Humbermede
- Neighbourhood No. 24: Black Creek
- Neighbourhood No. 25: Glenfield-Jane Heights
- Neighbourhood No. 27: York University Heights

Neighbourhoods along Finch Avenue West often fall below meeting benchmarks set out in the *TSNS2020 NEI: Methodological Documentation* report (Table 1). The following is a summary of the key characteristics of these neighbourhoods:

<sup>1</sup> Social Policy Analysis and Research, City of Toronto. *TSNS2020 Neighbourhood Equity Index: Methodological Documentations*. March, 2014. <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2014/cd/bgrd/backgroundfile-67350.pdf>

- High incidences of diabetes and low post-secondary completion rates across all neighbourhoods
- Average to low score for walkability, proximity to healthy food stores, unemployment rates and low income rates
- Neighbourhoods between Jane and Keele have higher rates of unemployment and low income rates (Neighbourhoods 24, 25 and 27)

Table 1. Finch Avenue West Corridor Indicator-Benchmark Results

Indicator	1	2	3	21	22	24	25	27
1. Unemployment	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
2. Low Income	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
3. Social Assistance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
4. High School Graduation	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
5. Marginalization	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
6. Post-Secondary Completion	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
7. Municipal Voting Rate	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
8. Community Places for Meeting	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
9. Walkability	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
10. Healthy Food Stores	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
11. Green Space	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
12. Premature Mortality	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
13. Mental Health	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
14. Preventable Hospitalization	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
15. Diabetes	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

- Below Benchmark
- In Between/Average
- Meets Target

## 2.5 EXISTING PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The Finch Avenue West corridor is characterized by a varied planning framework that responds to the nodal character of the existing built form, and surrounding context. This planning framework was largely established in tandem with the original development of the corridor, and generally envisions a series of stable neighbourhoods along its length.

### Provincial Policy

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) provides policy direction on matters of Provincial interest related to land use planning and development. The PPS contains a number of transit-supportive planning policies that all Ontario communities must be consistent with which include: integrating transportation and land use considerations at all stages of the planning process; identifying growth areas, nodes and corridors; an emphasis on intensification and the creation of a more compact urban form; promoting a land use pattern, density and mix of uses that minimize the length and number of vehicle trips and support transit as a viable mode choice; and, protecting corridors and rights-of-way for transit and transit-related facilities.

The Growth Plan provides municipalities with a 25-year framework to manage growth, promoting intensification and transit-supportive densities. The Growth Plan requires that Intensification Corridors, which include Finch Avenue West, are

planned to achieve increased residential and employment densities that support and ensure the viability of existing and planned transit service levels. Further, the Growth Plan requires that by the year 2015 and for each year afterwards, a minimum of 40% of all residential development (annually) will be within the built-up area.

The Growth Plan also emphasizes the creation of complete and livable communities. The objective is to create communities with a better mix of uses that are walkable and transit-oriented, while preserving employment areas for future economic development. In support of the Growth Plan, the Finch West LRT will provide connections between transportation modes; contribute to a balance of transportation choices; reduce reliance on a single mode; and promotes transit, cycling and walking as viable means to access to jobs, housing, schools, cultural, and recreational opportunities.

In concert with the Growth Plan, The Big Move provides a common vision for transportation in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area which includes building a comprehensive regional rapid transit network. The Big Move builds on the direction and policies set out in the Growth Plan. In support of Intensification Corridors, The Big Move provides new transit service along several corridors including Finch Avenue West. The future LRT will promote development and connect communities to employment and training opportunities throughout the GTHA.

Further, a priority action of the Big Move (Big Move #7) is to create a system of connected mobility hubs. Mobility hubs are places where multiple modes of transportation will intersect seamlessly. These hubs will be locations for major destinations including office buildings, hospitals, educational facilities, and government services. They will offer amenities to travellers which include cafes or restaurants, heated waiting areas, info centres, and grocery stores.

Gateway mobility hubs are those which occur at key intersections in the regional rapid transit network that provide access to the larger system. Gateway hubs occur at major transit station areas that are located at the interchange of two or more current or planned regional rapid transit lines, and have a combined forecasted minimum 4,500 boardings and alightings by 2031 in the morning peak period. The Finch West LRT corridor includes two Gateway Hubs: Jane-Finch and Finch West (located at Keele Street and Finch Avenue West). The Jane-Finch Gateway Hub would include both the Finch West LRT and the planned Jane Rapid Transit route along Jane Street. The Finch West Gateway Hub would include the Finch West LRT as well as the TTC's future Finch West subway station on the Yonge-University-Spadina Line.

The Transit Supportive Guidelines are province-wide in scope and are intended to assist municipalities in implementing the policies and objectives of the PPS and the Growth Plan. The guidelines were developed by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and provide strategies related to transit-supportive planning, design and best practices in transit operations, and ridership growth strategies

for implementation across communities of all sizes. The guidelines include illustrative diagrams on intensification over time along intensification corridors and station areas.

### City of Toronto Policies

At the municipal level, a number of plans and guidelines apply including the City of Toronto Official Plan (OP) and Avenue and Mid-Rise Buildings Performance Standards.

The Toronto Official Plan encourages development described in the Growth Plan and The Big Move through a number of policies that contribute to creation of a comprehensive, high quality and affordable transit system, and vibrant complete communities that have integrated open spaces and recreational opportunities. Through the identification of an Urban Structure and land use designations, the OP encourages the preparation of planning studies, context-sensitive infill development, improved streetscape and pedestrian environments, a variety of housing types and tenures, the preservation and support of employment areas and a broad range of commercial, residential, and institutional uses.

*Avenues* have been identified at the intersection of Weston Road and Finch Avenue West, and Jane Street and Finch Avenue West. One Avenue Study has been completed at Weston Road and Finch Avenue West. To facilitate and shape growth, these studies set out investments in community improvements (streetscape, transportation, parks and open space, infrastructure) and

contextually appropriate zoning and other regulations (permitted uses, maximum density and heights, parking standards, appropriate massing, scale, siting and organization of buildings, etc.).

Geographically, the majority of the Finch Avenue West corridor is characterized by *Neighbourhoods*, *Apartment Neighbourhoods*, *Employment Areas* and *Natural Areas* land use designations (Table 2). The *Neighbourhoods*, *Apartment Neighbourhoods* and *Natural Areas* designations are generally stable land uses where the intent of the Toronto OP is to protect and preserve these areas.

The *Neighbourhoods* designation dominates the length of the corridor with concentrated pockets of *Mixed Use* and *Apartment Neighbourhoods* at key intersections including: Albion, Weston, Jane, and Keele. *Employment Areas* are distributed along the corridor, mainly adjacent to highway and rail infrastructure. Further, *Natural Areas* bisect the corridor in several locations.

On *Neighbourhoods* designated lands lower scale buildings such as detached houses, semi-detached houses, townhouses as well as four-storey walk-up apartments are permitted. *Neighbourhoods* also provide for parks, low scale local

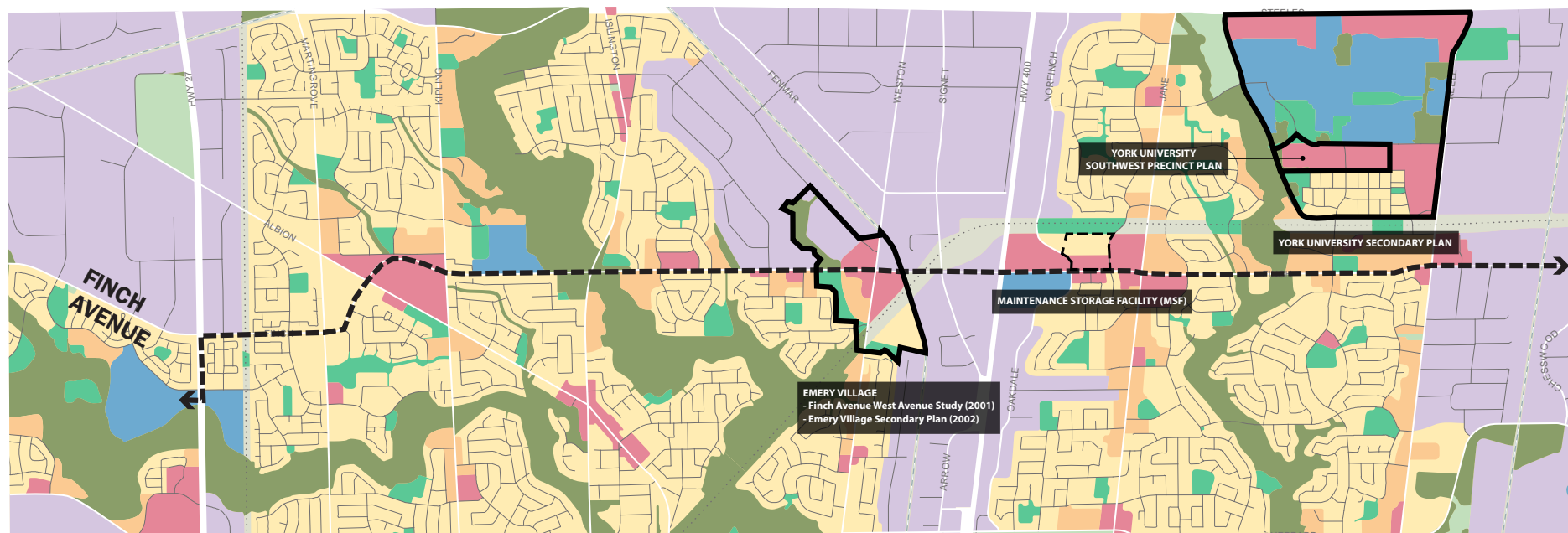


Figure 4. Finch Avenue West Corridor - Existing Planning Framework

institutions, cultural and recreational facilities and small-scale retail, service, and office uses. Proposals for intensification on major streets in *Neighbourhoods* are not encouraged by the policies of the Official Plan.

Similarly, *Apartment Neighbourhoods* are considered stable areas with limited opportunities for infill development, where appropriate. On *Apartment Neighbourhoods* designated lands, apartment buildings, parks, local institutions, cultural and recreational facilities, and small-scale retail, service, and office uses are permitted.

On *Employment Areas* designated lands, offices, manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, research and development facilities, utilities, parks, hotels, and ancillary retail uses are permitted. Land uses that detract from the economic function of employment lands will not be permitted to locate in *Employment Areas*.

On *Mixed Use Areas* designated lands, growth and change may be encouraged. A broad range of residential, commercial and institutional uses are permitted on *Mixed Use Areas* lands. Development criteria include: appropriate transition in massing near lower intensity areas, particularly near designated *Neighbourhoods*; limiting shadow impacts; framing of street edges and parks; and provision of good site access, circulation, and adequate supply of parking.

Table 2. Finch Avenue West Corridor Land Use Proportions

Land Use	Proportion of Corridor
Neighbourhoods	35.18%
Apartment Neighbourhoods	7.63%
Mixed Use Areas	5.36%
Natural Areas	14.92%
Parks	5.44%
Other Open Space Areas	0.04%
Institutional Areas	2.92%
Employment Areas	25.14%
Utility Corridors	3.38%
Regeneration Areas	0%

The corridor includes two Secondary Plans, the York University Secondary Plan and the Emery Village Secondary Plan. The Emery Village plan centres on Finch Avenue West at Weston Road, whereas the York University plan falls along the northern edge of the corridor. The Emery Village Secondary Plan (2002) was developed after the completion of the Finch Avenue West Avenue Study (Weston and Finch) was completed in 2001. The York University Secondary Plan divides the campus into seven precincts, including the Southwest Precinct which is included within corridor. A draft Southwest Precinct Plan has been prepared to address the northern portions of the Southwest Precinct.

Overall, the Finch Avenue West corridor has a varied planning framework that includes a Secondary Plan and a suite of stable land use designations. Within this context, however, there are major areas of potential growth and change in nodes across the corridor including: Humber College and Etobicoke General Hospital, Albion Mall, Thistletown, Jane and Finch, and Keele and Finch. Further planning study is required to determine the extent of change in these areas.

Corridor-wide considerations for the planning framework along Finch Avenue West can be found in Section 4.0.

## 2.6 EXISTING MARKET CONDITIONS

Overall, despite the socioeconomic indicators identified in Section 2.4 of this report, the market characteristics for real estate in commercial and residential classes have been generally positive with modest year over year increases. A number of commercial retail centre transactions, infill residential developments, a tight rental vacancy rate and a positive rate of growth in residential property values over the past 10 years all point to relatively stable conditions along Finch Avenue West. Industrial development and reinvestment has lagged behind other sectors despite efforts of the City in terms of both policy and financial incentives.

### Residential Resale Market

- Over the past year, the average sale price for a freehold detached home, semi-detached or townhome within the corridor was \$510,000 compared to \$690,000 for the City as a whole in 2014. More specifically, the average price of a detached home was approximately \$522,000 and an attached/townhome averaged \$438,000. The sales to listing ratio (SLR) for freehold residential properties across the corridor was 79%, indicative of a seller's market. In addition, the following highlights are noted.
- While the pricing of ground oriented homes is relatively affordable, especially when compared to the average detached housing price in

Table 3

Finch West Corridor Resale Transactions February 2014 - February 2015							
Product Type	Listings	Sales	SLR*	Average List Price	Average Sold Price	SLP**	Average DOM***
Attached/Row/Townhouse	29	27	93%	\$451,043	\$437,893	97%	26
Detached	459	351	76%	\$559,443	\$521,827	93%	35
Semi-Detached	244	198	81%	\$520,883	\$498,561	96%	30
<b>Freehold Total/Average:</b>	<b>732</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>\$542,295</b>	<b>\$509,895</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>33</b>
Condominium - Apartment	683	437	64%	\$214,910	\$205,284	96%	85
Condominium - Townhome	162	120	74%	\$251,972	\$251,829	100%	51
<b>Condominium Total/Average:</b>	<b>845</b>	<b>557</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>\$222,312</b>	<b>\$215,312</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>77</b>
*SLR = Sold to List Ratio **SLP = Sold to List Price Ratio ***DOM = Days on Market Source: Toronto Real Estate Board, Multiple Listing Service							



Toronto of \$934,000 , the value of detached homes in the corridor area have risen by approximately 80% over the past 10 years (Table 4). This suggests the area is highly attractive to many purchasers.

- The continued increasing value of ground oriented homes will play a critical role in the market for higher density forms of housing. As single family detached homes and townhome become increasingly expensive, demand will begin to shift to more affordable housing forms.

In comparison, the resale condominium market is less mature and has not shown the same indications of growth and market acceptance as ground oriented homes. Key factors for this include:

- The condominium resale market consists almost entirely of buildings typically 30 years old. Many suffer from heavy maintenance requirements which, in many cases, have put significant pressure on fees and have driven down the resale value of these properties.
- These properties service an affordable price point, with average properties transacting for \$215,000 after 77 days on market, with a sales to listing ratio of 66%, which continues to represent a seller's market.
- The negative value noted for condominium townhomes in W05 is a reflection of the wide range in quality of this type of housing. Several condominium developments in this sector have significant quality and maintenance issue. However, while the condominium townhomes that sold in January 2015 were mostly below \$200,000, the previous month (December 2014) noted the



Figure 5. MLS Zones

Table 4

City of Toronto Residential Price Increase (%): 2005 - 2015			
Product Type	Toronto	W10	W05
Detached	102%	81%	86%
Semi-Detached	97%	47%	73%
Town/Att/Row	108%	93%	52%
Condo Townhouse	71%	32%	-17%
Condo Apartment	68%	34%	63%
Source: TREB, N. Barry Lyon Consultants Ltd.			

average resale price for this housing type was \$310,000, which represents a price increase of 43% from the January 2005 value.

- Table 4, in addition to the more focused results of Table 3, show indications of a healthy housing market that is experiencing increases in value, although at a slower rate than other areas of the City. As the market matures and real estate values continue to increase, a stronger market for high density residential development will begin to develop.

### Active Marketing (New) Medium and High Density Residential Projects

- Across the corridor there are currently two high and two medium density residential development projects actively marketing, although most of these projects are actually located just outside of the submarket boundaries identified by this study. These projects are nevertheless important evidence of a slowly emerging demand for higher density formats of housing. NBLC has also surveyed recently sold-out and cancelled medium and high-density residential projects within the study area. Figure 6 illustrates the location of these projects, with detailed summary data available in the Appendix of this report.
- There are two high-rise condominium apartment developments that are currently actively marketing. The Lexington is a 17 storey building by Royale Grand Woodbine which will contain 171 units and Cloud9 is a 12 storey and 260 unit development project by Lash Development Corp.

- Overall, affordability has played a key role in the success of these developments; both of which offered units priced below \$250,000, with most units below \$350,000. The current average index price for these projects is approximately \$439 per square foot (PSF). Both projects experienced a slow pace of sales.
- There are two active stacked townhouse projects currently selling just south of the corridor's study area. Both projects are located at Sheppard Avenue and Weston Road, in Lindvest's Westown master planned community. Westown contains 110 units and the The Brownstones at Westown offers

Table 5

Active Condominium Apartment Overview	
# of Projects	2
# of Units	431
# of Sales	337
% Sold	78%
Min. Price	\$229,000
Max. Price	\$1,100,000
Min. Home Size (SF)	515
Max. Home Size (SF)	2508
Average \$PSF(Curr)	\$439
Absorption	4.9
Source: Realnet Canada and N. Barry Lyon Consultants	

Table 6

Active Stacked Townhouse Overview	
# of Projects	2
# of Units	262
# of Sales	155
% Sold	59%
Min. Price	\$194,900
Max. Price	\$379,900
Min. Home Size (SF)	635
Max. Home Size (SF)	1016
Average \$PSF(Curr)	\$362
Absorption	2.0
Source: Realnet Canada and N. Barry Lyon Consultants	

152 two bedroom units that are all similarly positioned between 942 and 1,016 square feet and priced between \$194,900 and \$379,900.

- The slow sales currently experienced at the Brownstones at Westown is more reflective of the project's pricing rather than a lack of demand for stacked townhomes along the corridor. Evidence of this are the two stacked townhouse projects within the study area, Harmony Village and The Winds, which sold out in 2011 and 2004 respectively.
- Harmony Village by Willowfield Homes is located on the south side of Finch Avenue West at Islington. The 308 stacked townhouse units sold out in roughly six years, although it reached 97% sales in only 3.5 years, with the larger 3 bedroom units taking longer to sell. The Winds by Jaymor Group is located at Finch Avenue West and Sentinel Road, and contained 112 units that sold out in only nine months.
- It is also worth noting that two residential projects have been cancelled in the study area since 2004, the latest occurring in 2013. Both projects were located on the same site, the northwest corner of Finch Avenue West and Weston Road. The corridor has at times struggled to gain market traction, with the market for new residential development focused on affordable product types.



Figure 6. Active, Sold Out and Cancelled High and Medium Density Residential Projects (Source: DTMI Spatial, N. Barry Lyon Consultants Ltd.)

### Purpose Built Rental Apartment Market

- In terms of new purpose-built rental apartment supply, Medallion Corporation is currently developing the first phase of a 1,400 unit development marketed as Casa. This initial phase received funding from the City's Investment in Affordable Housing program and is planned to include 154 new affordable rental homes. The remainder of purpose built-rental housing along the corridor are buildings built prior to 1991 and as such, are subject to rent controls. Vacancies are particularly low (<1%) in the west end of the corridor and near the Jane Street and Finch Avenue West intersection.

### Commercial Market Assessment

- The Finch Avenue West corridor is home to major employers such as Home Depot and LG, as well as major institutional uses in Humber College, Etobicoke General Hospital, and York University, among others. However, the area's commercial building stock is primarily comprised of older industrial buildings with substandard ceiling/racking heights and struggles with higher vacancies. While more modern and flexible developments seem to prosper, the average rental rates vary widely and are typically below replacement value for the older buildings.
- From a retail perspective, the study area is almost exclusively serviced with local population-serving retail such as that found at the Albion Mall at Albion and Finch, as well as the Jane-Finch Mall and Yorkgate Mall near the Jane Street and Finch Avenue West intersection. Retail demand is a function of

population growth and income. With only modest population growth over recent years, this sector within the study area has remained relatively stable.

- The existing office space along the corridor is primarily located throughout low or mid-rise buildings, where monthly rents range between \$2 and \$10 per square foot (PSF), averaging closer to \$5 PSF. A small number of larger office buildings are earning comparatively higher rents, ranging between \$8 and \$20 PSF, with some office buildings closer to Finch Avenue West and Keele Street collecting between \$25 and \$35 PSF. Generally, rents for all product types are observed to stay relatively low along the entire corridor and begin to increase near the Finch Avenue West and Keele Street intersection where the Spadina Subway and Finch West LRT will intersect below grade.
- A review of the City of Toronto's employment survey data has also been utilized to help quantify employment growth trends and demand along the corridor and the rise/fall of growth in various sectors of employment. Overall, as illustrated in Figure 7, the total number of jobs in the corridor as of 2011 is approximately 38,300. Some growth has been observed, about 7% between 2006 and 2011 primarily within the institutional and office sectors.
- As part of Toronto's strategy to attract businesses and foster growth, the City has established the Imagination, Manufacturing, Innovation, Technology (IMIT) Incentive Program to help reduce business costs and attract new building construction and/or building expansion in targeted sectors and areas across the City. The program commenced in 2008 for eligible projects that

includes a wide range of employment uses and sectors. Eligible projects receive a grant of 60% of the increase in the municipal taxes attributable to the eligible development over a 10 year period. The grant is increased to 70% when located in an Employment District or other designated Employment Area and can be further increased to 77% when combined with the Brownfield Remediation Tax Assistance program. Overall there have been 26 applications under this program that represents a total investment of over \$1.9 billion with potential grants up to \$163 million.

- Of the 26 applications, two of these projects have been completed just outside of Submarket 8. From a market perspective this a good signal, as it indicates that the area is desirable and just needs assistance while it matures. Higher-order transit along the corridor will accelerate this process, with interest expected to slowly improve in the employment lands surrounding the Finch Avenue West and Keele Street intersection and the employment lands near Emery Village.

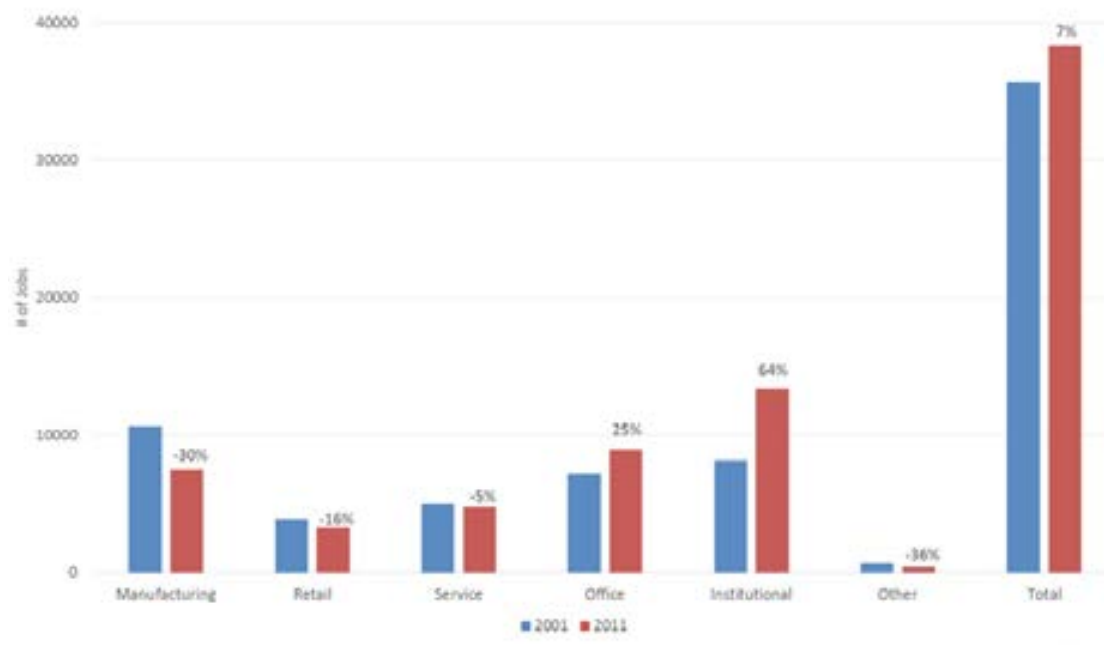


Figure 7. Job Growth/Loss by Sector of Employment for the Finch West Corridor 2001-2011  
(Source: City of Toronto Employment Survey, N. Barry Lyon Consultants Ltd.)

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## 3.0 LESSONS LEARNED

### 3.1 MINNEAPOLIS HIAWATHA LINE

The Blue Line LRT (formerly known as the Hiawatha line) runs between downtown Minneapolis, the airport, and the Mall of America in Bloomington. The Blue line was the first light rail project to be built in the Minneapolis area since the dismantling of the streetcar network in the 1950s. Construction began in 2001 and the line opened in 2004. The Blue Line runs for 19 km and has 17 stations.

#### Planning

Three Station Area Master Plans were in place by 2001 (for Lake Street, Franklin and 46th Street stations) but none of the station areas had been re-zoned when the line opened. In 2005, the year after the line opened, the City re-zoned the Lake Street station area, followed by the Franklin station area in 2007<sup>2</sup>.

While station area re-zoning has been slow, the City did create a new Transit Station Area land use category and pass public realm standards for the areas

<sup>2</sup> Centre for Transportation Studies. The Hiawatha Line: Impacts on Land Use and Residential Housing Value. 2010. <http://www.cts.umn.edu/Publications/ResearchReports/reportdetail.html?id=2266>. 65.



Hiawatha Line Route Map (Source: iridetheharlemline.com)

within ½ mile of LRT stations.

Bloomington updated its zoning around the LRT line near the airport, increasing the permitted density for commercial uses, setting a minimum residential density of 30 units/acre and restricting surface parking<sup>3</sup>.

## Real Estate

A study by the Centre for Transportation Studies at the University of Minnesota demonstrated that single family houses near the line increased in value after the opening of the transit line and that proximity to LRT stations increases value. Properties on the east side of the line did not increase in value because the LRT abuts a 4-lane arterial road with a strip of industrial land. Residential properties east of the LRT are therefore 200m away from LRT line with a visual barrier between them. The LRT line is credited with producing an increase of \$47.1 million in residential property value between 2004 and 2007<sup>4</sup>.

The number of building permits for station areas show little change before and after the LRT line except for significant increases in permits around three stations; two of which had updated zoning. The greater rate of investment and building activity may be a result of completed planning processes in those station areas.<sup>5</sup>

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3 Centre for Transportation Studies. The Hiawatha Line: Impacts on Land Use and Residential Housing Value. 2010. 68.

4 Center for Transportation Studies. The Hiawatha Line: Impacts on Land Use and Residential Housing Value. 2010. Executive Summary.

5 Center for Transportation Studies. The Hiawatha Line: Impacts on Land Use and Residential Housing Value. 2010. Executive Summary

## Business Supports

The City of Minneapolis includes all LRT station areas in its Great Streets Neighbourhood Business District Program. Through this program, businesses can access business support grants, façade improvement matching grants, real estate development gap financing loans and small business loans<sup>6</sup>.

## Community Engagement

At least one business improvement association along the LRT line offers discounts to shoppers who hold a transit pass or a current transfer. This serves to reinforce the transit accessibility of the corridor<sup>7</sup>.

The transit agency recruits volunteer Community Advisory Committees to act as community liaisons for more detailed public engagement work and to advise on initiatives such as public art at LRT stations<sup>8</sup>.

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6 City of Minneapolis. Great Streets Neighborhood Business District Program. [http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/ba/cped\\_great\\_streets\\_home](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/ba/cped_great_streets_home)

7 City of Minneapolis. Case Study 1: East Lake Street. [http://www.minneapolis.mn.gov/www/groups/public/@cped/documents/webcontent/convert\\_283242.pdf](http://www.minneapolis.mn.gov/www/groups/public/@cped/documents/webcontent/convert_283242.pdf)

8 Mill City Times. Volunteers Needed to Serve on Community Advisory Committees. March 24, 2015. [https://www.minneapolis.parks.org/news/2015/03/24/302/volunteers\\_needed\\_to\\_serve\\_on\\_community\\_advisory\\_committees](https://www.minneapolis.parks.org/news/2015/03/24/302/volunteers_needed_to_serve_on_community_advisory_committees)



### Lessons for the Finch Avenue West Corridor

Development activity around the Blue Line stations increased first around stations where updated zoning was in place. This offers a lesson for the Finch Avenue West corridor: when new transit infrastructure is going in, putting zoning in place to support transit-oriented scales of development as early as possible is a strong driver of new development. Where market interest is low, the addition of transit infrastructure alone may not be sufficient to incent new development. Removing the obstacle that the need for re-zoning presents is important for these areas to be redeveloped.

In Minneapolis, all businesses in station areas have access to economic development supports. Toronto may wish to examine its businesses support programs to ensure that existing businesses in the Finch West LRT station areas, as well as new businesses that may locate there, are able to access appropriate public supports so that their businesses will thrive.

## 3.2 MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL GREEN LINE

The Green line LRT connects downtown St. Paul and downtown Minneapolis. It opened in June 2014. At 18 km and 23 stations, the trip between the two downtowns takes about 45 minutes. The ride took over an hour when the line first opened but was reduced through improved signal and traffic coordination.



Minneapolis-St. Paul Green Line Route Map (Source: metrotransit.org)

## Planning

Before the Green Line opened, station area plans and new downtown plans for Minneapolis and St. Paul were in place. A new zoning code was created for St. Paul which allows for greater height and density, as well as eliminating minimum parking requirements in certain areas around light rail stations<sup>9</sup>.

St. Paul approved plans in 2008 for the proposed station areas. Each area plan includes building scale standards for ¼ mile areas around the stations and public realm standards including identifying areas for public art and more green space. Each plan identifies and considers how to strengthen pedestrian, bicycle and bus access to each station including breaking up ‘superblocks’<sup>10</sup>.

## Increased Real Estate Market Activity

In 2013, the year before the LRT opened, building permit activity along the Green line’s route showed a considerable increase over previous years. The value of building permits granted in 2013 represented a 49% increase since 2008<sup>11</sup>.

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9 Mianulli, Kyle. Beyond The Rails: Mapping the Development, Cultural and Community Impact of the New Green Line. The Line. June 11, 2014. <http://www.thelinemedia.com/features/greenlinedevelopment06112014.aspx>

10 City of Saint Paul. City of Saint Paul’s Central Corridor Development Strategy: Plans for Seven University Avenue Station Areas. <http://www.stpaul.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/7504>

11 City of St. Paul. Economic activity along Green Line reaches 5-year high as construction nears end. <http://www.stpaul.gov/index.aspx?nid=5261>

## Funding for TOD

Using funding from the national Livable Communities Act, the regional Metropolitan Council makes grant and loan awards available to projects along the LRT corridors. Projects have included a \$1.5 million grant for a new four-storey, mixed-use building adjacent to the Hamline Avenue LRT transit station, and \$612,000 for clean-up of the Else Warehouse site in Minneapolis’ warehouse district, which is now attracting mixed-use development<sup>12</sup>.

Build-out along the transit corridors is also being supported by the three-year Corridors of Opportunity program which is funded by two national programs beginning in 2011 (a \$5 million HUD Sustainable Communities grant, and \$2.7 million in grants and \$13 million in loans from the Living Cities Integration Initiative)<sup>13</sup>. Corridors of Opportunity financed seven affordable housing projects (creating 637 housing units), and supported eight mixed-use projects. It also funded community engagement initiatives. The program resulted in changes to the way the Metropolitan Council will plan higher-order transit including earlier and more substantial involvement of local residents and businesses<sup>14</sup>.

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12 Metropolitan Council. Metro Green Line Helps Attract at Least \$2.5 Billion In Development. May 14, 2014. [http://metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Projects/Current-Projects/Central-Corridor/News-Display-Page/METRO-Green-Line-helps-attract-at-least-\\$2-5-billion.aspx](http://metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Projects/Current-Projects/Central-Corridor/News-Display-Page/METRO-Green-Line-helps-attract-at-least-$2-5-billion.aspx)

13 Corridors of Opportunity. Partnership for Regional Opportunity: Growing a prosperous, equitable, and sustainable region. <http://www.corridorsofopportunity.org>

14 Wilder Research. Corridors of Opportunity: Final evaluation report summary. April 2014. <http://www.wilder.org/Wilder-Research/Publications/Studies/Corridors%20of%20Opportunity/Corridors%20of%20Opportunity%20Final%20Evaluation%20Report,%20Summary.pdf>

## Local Business Support

To help local businesses survive the construction phase of the LRT line, the regional Metropolitan Council contributed \$2.5 million of \$4 million to a small business forgivable loan fund being administered by the City of St. Paul. The loans supported 210 businesses and only 10 closed during the two-year construction phase. Loans are forgiven for businesses that stay open for five years after construction. The Metropolitan Council also offered a marketing campaign valued at \$1.2 million that included free bus side ads and billboards for corridor businesses and print and online business directories<sup>15</sup>.

Business was lost during construction but was reported to be bouncing back six months post-construction. Businesses in the Little Mekong neighbourhood are using the transit line as a branding tool<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> On the Green Line. [www.onthegreenline.com](http://www.onthegreenline.com)

<sup>16</sup> Melo, Frederick. The Green Line at 6 months: How's it doing? TwinCities.com December 16, 2014. <http://www.twincities.com/transportation/ci27151192/green-line-at-6-months-hows-it-doing>

## Community Benefits

When the Green Line was first planned its central section between Saint Paul and Minneapolis included only four stops, spaced about 1.6 kilometres apart. In 2007, a coalition of community groups began the Stops for Us campaign that successfully advocated for three additional stops (Hamline, Victoria, and Western) between those four; reducing the spacing of the stations by half to about 800m and improving equitable access to high-order transit for more economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods<sup>17</sup>. The campaign to add more stations also prompted the Federal Transit Administration to alter its performance measures criteria – which had been focused on cost-benefit ratios that made these stations ineligible – to give equal weight to considerations like economic development, environmental sustainability, and social benefit<sup>18</sup>.

After the successful Stops for Us campaign, community groups began to work to harness the economic opportunities that would come with the new LRT stations. The Old Home Foods distribution centre, a block-sized building next to the Western LRT station stood vacant. The Aurora/St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation (ASANDC) aimed to redevelop the site for affordable housing. They had pro bono planning support but no early funding for community engagement. ASANDC bought the property for \$1.2m but couldn't

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<sup>17</sup> Joan Vanhala, How the Stops for Us Campaign leveraged Federal Funding for local benefit. Alliance for Metropolitan Stability. <http://grandaspirations.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Stops-for-Us-Presentation-Joan-Vanhala.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Aurora/St. Anthony Neighbourhood Development Corporation. Community Celebrates "Stops for Us" Success! <http://www.aurorastanthonynh.org/stops-for-us.html> . See also Stops for Us! Organizing and Equity Along the Corridor. <http://dcc-stpaul-mpls.org/sites/dcc-stpaul-mpls.org/files/images/u5/Stops%20For%20Us%20Booklet.pdf>

get financing. The Twin Cities Community Land Bank bought the property to hold on its behalf. Within a year, ASANDC had partnered with a developer who could finance the project (Sand Companies Inc.) and received a TOD grant through the Metropolitan Council to redevelop the property<sup>19</sup>.

A neighbourhood coalition in the Hamline Midway neighbourhood (mid-way between Minneapolis and St. Paul on the LRT corridor) where development interest has been low, is forming a Community Investment Cooperative to promote investment, particularly in commercial development. Initial efforts include the formation of a working group to research cooperative structures, draft a mission statement and bylaws for the new organization, and set up a Community Investment Cooperative<sup>20</sup>.

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19 Corridors of Opportunity. Old Home Plaza. <http://www.corridorsofopportunity.org/activities/LIC/oldhome>, Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation. <http://www.aurorastanthy.org/index.html>

20 The Hamline Midway Community Investment Cooperative. July 9, 2014 , <http://hamline.stylefish.com/content/hamline-midway-community-investment-cooperative>

## Youth Engagement and Job Creation

Several innovative events and programs were organized prior to construction to maximize local engagement and employment. These included a one-day retreat for community organizations, construction firms, trades-people, and local businesses. From the retreat came initiatives such as a local website (LRTWorks.org) for construction jobs, and a community-based oversight committee, chaired by the Metropolitan Council and made up of contractors, local agencies, and representatives from federal and state funders<sup>21</sup>.

The oversight committee hosted a construction career expo to introduce interested community members to construction career opportunities. The expo featured information sessions including Women in Construction, and Getting and Maintaining a Job in Construction. Construction contractors posted jobs on LRTWorks.org and held interviews at the expo.

Other initiatives included a “Dream Design Build” event on the college campus. Local unions, light rail contractors, and community members worked together to create the event where students were introduced to transit-oriented construction and engineering career options.

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21 Metropolitan Council. Central Corridor Green Line DBE and Workforce Story, June 2014. <http://www.metrocouncil.org/METC/files/33/33ed5e20-3bec-451c-8f88-e49867368058.pdf>

### Lessons for the Finch Avenue West Corridor

Development activity along the Green Line increased considerably even before the LRT line was complete. This is partly due to the early station area planning and re-zoning undertaken by the City of St. Paul. Considerations for the Finch Avenue West corridor include ensuring that station area plans, including public realm improvements and plans for improved bus, pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to stations, are in place before the trains start running.

Initial plans for the Green Line failed to consider the needs of some residents along the line. Following an intensive community campaign, three new stations were added. While the social and historical realities that contributed to this situation in Minnesota are not directly applicable in Toronto, planners for Finch Avenue West would do well to ensure that community voices are heard early and throughout the planning process.

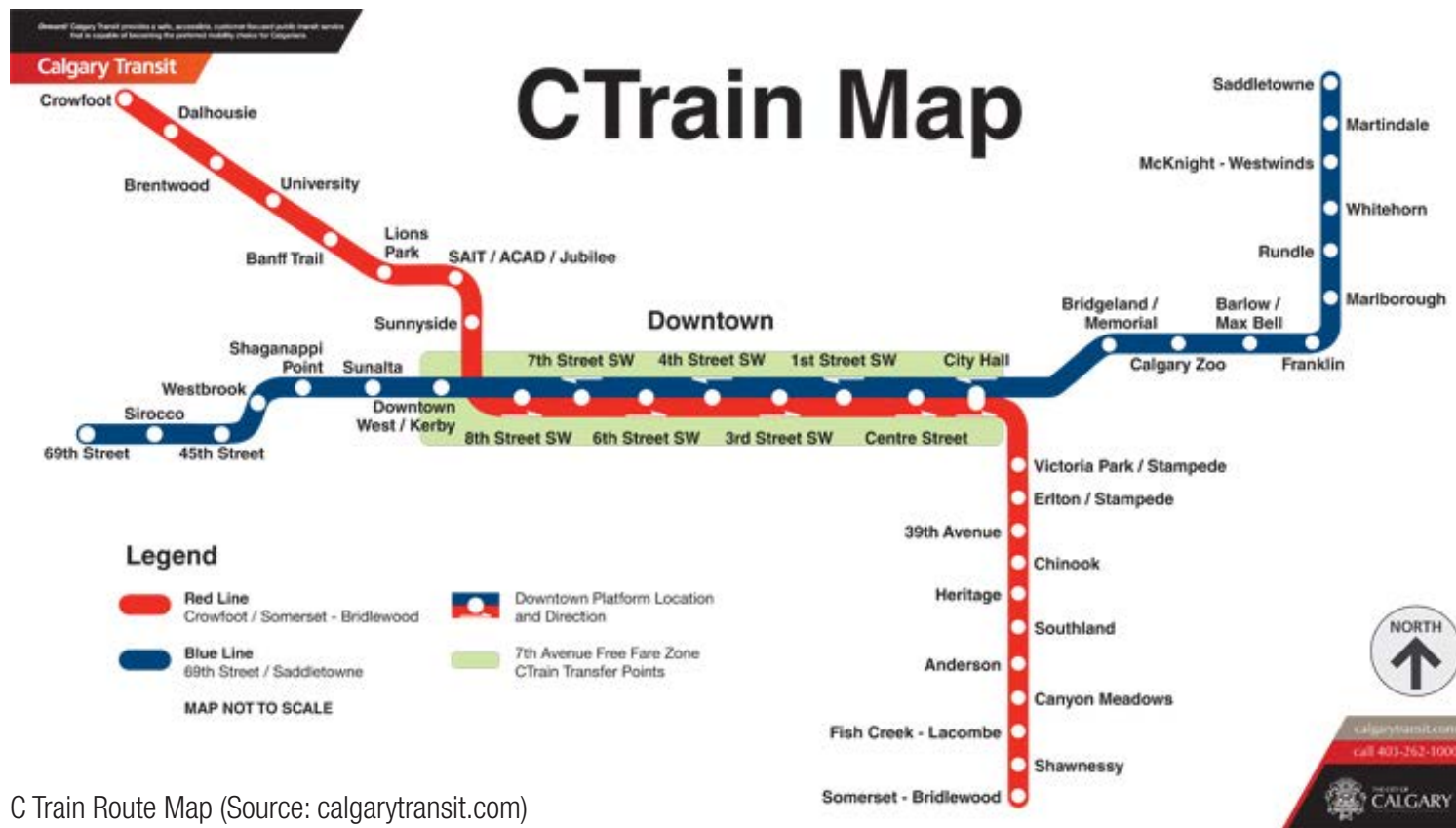
While station areas may be already set, ensuring that local communities are involved in decisions around bus service changes, pedestrian and bicycle links, and public art initiatives will help to build community pride in the new line.

Planners for the Green Line ensured that local businesses were supported during construction. The City and Metrolinx should ensure the same for the Finch West corridor which can include offering promotional support to local businesses during construction.

Local employment and education were part of the Green Line initiative. Similar initiatives can be put in place for the Finch Avenue West corridor including entering into Community Benefit Agreements that will ensure training and employment for local residents.

### 3.3 CALGARY C-TRAIN

Calgary's C-Train has been in operation since 1981. It has two lines covering 58 km. The West line, an 8.2km, 6-station extension, opened in 2012; the first addition to the system in 25 years. New trains have been purchased and will begin running this August.



C Train Route Map (Source: calgarytransit.com)

## Planning for Transit-Oriented Development

While most of Calgary's LRT system is not new, there has been a renewed focus in planning for transit-oriented development around existing stations and transit corridors. Calgary has had plans in place to promote transit oriented development around some stations for 30+ years. However, market conditions appear to be more favourable now for TOD to take place and the City has implemented many more TOD plans in recent years. It passed Transit Oriented Development Policy Guidelines in 2004 and included provisions for TOD in its 2009 Municipal Development Plan and Calgary Transportation Plan<sup>22</sup>. Land use studies and station area plans are in place for selected corridors and stations. Six stations are undergoing Station Area Planning to create more effective use of the existing transit infrastructure<sup>23</sup>.

The eight hectares around Anderson LRT station are owned by the City and are primarily used for surface parking. A new design for TOD in place that reduces parking spaces from 1750 to 500 over 10 years as the area is developed to include mid- and high-rise buildings, parks, and walkable mixed-use streets. The plan is currently undergoing revisions following a public consultation process and

is expected to go to the Calgary Planning Commission and City Council in the fall of 2015<sup>24</sup>.

## Fare Reductions

In 2005, Calgary council approved the introduction of a monthly pass for low income residents. In 2013, Calgary Transit reduced the requirements to qualify for a pass and expanded the program to offer passes to youth in low income families. Ridership by low income pass holders currently makes up just over five percent of all transit customers<sup>25</sup>.

In addition, a pass for seniors is available for \$95/year. Since 2003, Calgary Transit has had agreements with five post-secondary schools to provide all full time students (and faculty at one institution) transit passes at a negotiated price for the school semesters. The program is revenue neutral for Calgary Transit as the fare revenue that was previously received from individual students using transit is spread over the whole student body allowing a lower individual rate. Schools collect a transit fee as part of their tuition cost and then make payments to Calgary Transit based on enrolment<sup>26</sup>.

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22 City of Calgary. Anderson Station Open House. <http://www.calgary.ca/PDA/pd/Documents/Publications/anderson-tod-status-of-area-plan.pdf>

23 Megan Fernandes, iTRANS Consulting Inc., David Patman, City of Calgary, Ryan Vanderputten, City of Calgary. Transit Oriented Development From Both Sides of the Tracks: How the City is Promoting It and How Developers are Building It. Paper prepared for presentation at the 2009 Annual Conference of the Transportation Association of Canada. 7

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24 City of Calgary. Anderson Station (TOD) Transit Orientated Development Outline Plan and Land Use Application process update.

25 Calgary Transit. Calgary Transit Funding and Fare Strategy Review. February 2014. <https://www.calgarytransit.com/sites/default/files/content/PDF/transit-fare-strategy-review-final-report-feb-2014.pdf> p.2; 12.

26 Calgary Transit. Calgary Transit Funding and Fare Strategy Review. February 2014. <https://www.calgarytransit.com/sites/default/files/content/PDF/transit-fare-strategy-review-final-report-feb-2014.pdf> p.13-14



An analysis of the value of providing low-income transit pass users in Calgary revealed that access to the pass increased transit use substantially, allowing people to attend school or get to work, medical appointments, or volunteer opportunities. Users expressed that having access to the pass improved their lives and half of the low-income pass holders do not use any other form of transport<sup>27</sup>.

### Lessons for the Finch Avenue West Corridor

In Calgary, many stations have been in place for decades operating as commuter stations with large parking lots. Transit-oriented development has not been pursued until recently. Considerations for the Finch Avenue West corridor to avoid similar long delays include limiting surface parking near stations, putting zoning in place for transit-supportive densities, and developing any publicly owned lands along the corridor as showcase sites with transit-oriented developments.

Calgary has several options for reduced fare cards to make transit more accessible. As the Finch West LRT will pass through several neighbourhood improvement areas, ensuring that the transit fare is affordable for everyone will increase ridership, and improve the lives of those who may have few other transportation options.

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27 Vibrant Communities Calgary. Social Return On Investment (SROI) Case Study: Low Income Monthly Transit Pass. <http://vibrantcanada.ca/files/fairfaressroi.pdf>

### 3.4 VANCOUVER SKYTRAIN

Translink operates the Skytrain LRT system in Metro Vancouver. There are currently three lines with an extension through Coquitlam expected to open in 2016. The 19km, 16-stop Canada Line runs from downtown to the suburb of Richmond with a spur line serving the airport. It opened in 2009 ahead of the 2010 Olympic Winter Games.

#### Planning

There has been considerable transit-oriented development in Richmond along the transit line. Planning was underway as soon as the transit line was announced and the City had a new City Centre Area Plan to encourage mid- and high-density redevelopment before the line opened<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> Bula, Frances. Vancouver's Canada Line is a model of transit-oriented development, too. Citiscope. February 18, 2014. <http://citiscope.org/story/2014/vancouver-s-canada-line-model-transit-oriented-development-too>



Vancouver SkyTrain Route Map (Source: translink.ca)

## Private Funding for Extensions and New Stations

In Metro Vancouver, private investment by TOD developers is supporting station upgrades and the construction of new stations<sup>29</sup>. A new Canada Line station at Capstan Way, between two existing stations, will be funded through an agreement between TransLink and the City of Richmond, with the cost being fully funded by development. Money for the new station will be collected by the City from developers building new residential units in Richmond's City Centre. Once the estimated \$25 million required for the new station's construction is collected, the City will pass the funds to TransLink, who will have 30 months to build the new station. The fee amounts to about \$8,000 per new dwelling unit, paid at the time permits are issued.

In Coquitlam, along the Evergreen Line that is currently under construction, the owners of the Coquitlam Centre shopping mall have agreed, in partnership with City of Coquitlam, to pay for a new LRT station that had not been part of the original provincial funding plan<sup>30</sup>.

In both of these cases, the market demand for units in transit-oriented development projects is strong enough to support the private sector's involvement in station funding.

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29 Bula, Frances. Vancouver's Canada Line is a model of transit-oriented development, too. Citiscope. February 18, 2014. <http://citiscope.org/story/2014/vancouver-s-canada-line-model-transit-oriented-development-too>

30 Bula, Frances. Dear developer: Want to build us a transit station? Globe and Mail. May. 15 2014. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/industry-news/property-report/dear-developer-want-to-build-us-a-transit-station/article18610232/>

## Mall Lands Redevelopment

Throughout the Metro Vancouver area, malls with large surface parking lots near Skytrain stations are being redeveloped into mixed-use transit-oriented developments. Significant projects include the redevelopment of Oakridge mall in Vancouver which is being positioned as a new town centre with 14 residential and office towers and nine acres of public open space. Plans for the site claim to bring \$228.3-million in privately funded public amenity benefits including a community/senior's centre, a library, a daycare, and 290 units of social housing<sup>31</sup>.

The Brentwood Town Centre mall in Burnaby, adjacent to a Skytrain station, will be redeveloped to include 10 mixed-use towers over the next 20 years. The site is envisioned as a new Town Centre for Burnaby and council has approved a conceptual master plan for the area<sup>32</sup>. Burnaby also identifies the Lougheed mall area as a Town Centre which will be redeveloped with mid- and high-density mixed-use development over the next 15 to 25 years. Lansdowne Centre, on the Canada Line in Richmond, is also believed to be considering extensive redevelopment that would include high rises although details are not yet public.

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31 Bula, Frances. Vancouver's Canada Line is a model of transit-oriented development, too. Citiscope. February 18, 2014. <http://citiscope.org/story/2014/vancouver-s-canada-line-model-transit-oriented-development-too>;

Chan, Kenneth. Massive \$1.5-billion Oakridge Centre redevelopment approved by Vancouver City Council. VanCity Buzz. March 14, 2014. <http://www.vancitybuzz.com/2014/03/oakridge-centre-redevelopment-approved/>

32 Chan, Kenneth. Brentwood Mall redevelopment to include 10 towers up to 60 storeys tall. VanCity Buzz. January 28, 2014 <http://www.vancitybuzz.com/2014/01/brentwood-mall-redevelopment-the-amazing-brentwood/>

The potential for mall parking lots to be redeveloped is driven by supportive city plans which call for new urban centres, high land values which off-set the cost of building underground parking, and proximity to transit.

### Lessons for the Finch Avenue West Corridor

Much of the development along Vancouver's Skytrain system is driven by high land values and strong development pressure. In addition, mall lands that are being redeveloped are in locations deemed by the municipalities to be new urban growth centres. These conditions are not comparable to the conditions along the Finch Avenue West corridor. However, in order for lands along Finch Avenue West with large surface parking lots, such as mall lands, to be redeveloped for more transit-intensive uses in the future, putting zoning, parking and public realm standards in place early will help to make the redevelopment of those lands more viable. This will also ensure that land uses such as surface parking lots or large-format shops do proliferate in areas where more transit-supportive scales are desired.

In the long term, should land values increase to the point where larger-scale developments are feasible, Metrolinx may consider levying new building permit fees for station upgrades or new station connections.

### 3.5 PHOENIX VALLEY METRO LIGHT RAIL

The Valley Metro light rail system serves Phoenix, Mesa, and Tempe, Arizona. It runs for 32 km with 28 stops and opened in 2008. The line was funded by a 0.5% sales tax increase approved by voters in 2000. The system has an average of 44,000 weekday riders and takes one hour of travel time from end-to-end<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> Valley Metro. Economic Development Highlights Brochure. [http://www.valleymetro.org/publications\\_reports/economic\\_highlights](http://www.valleymetro.org/publications_reports/economic_highlights)

#### Planning

Areas along the LRT are divided into six districts and transit-oriented development policy plans are being created for each district. The plan for the Downtown district was adopted in 2008 and is now part of the Zoning Ordinance<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> Reinvent Phoenix. <http://www.reinventphx.org>



Phoenix Valley Metro Light Rail Route Map (Source: valleymetro.org)

Developing transit-oriented projects in Phoenix is gaining traction. Reinvent PHX is a collaborative partnership between the City of Phoenix, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Arizona State University and St. Luke's Health Initiatives which aims to promote the development of walkable communities connected to light rail. Reinvent PHX will create action plans for districts along the light rail system and identify investment strategies in an effort to establish a new, transit-oriented model for urban planning and development along the LRT system<sup>35</sup>.

Reinvent PHX is a planning initiative. Working with funding from HUD, it is doing visioning workshops, traffic and parking analyses, and updating the land use regulations to permit transit-oriented development and improve walkability. Funds also support public outreach campaigns to help TOD gain support in a very car-oriented region<sup>36</sup>.

### Impacts on Land Value

The LRT line traverses three municipalities and many dis-similar neighbourhoods. Land value changes since the announcement of the LRT and its opening in 2008 vary widely across the system. The highest land value increases were in Phoenix and Tempe but other areas saw no change<sup>37</sup>.

There is evidence, however, that the LRT has improved the resilience of land values during the economic recession. Tax revenues in downtown Phoenix rose in stark contrast to less dense areas during the recession<sup>38</sup>.

### Street Revitalization and TOD

Apache Boulevard in the City of Tempe was a languishing main street. The LRT opened along the boulevard in 2008 and Apache is once again flourishing. The street now boasts new student housing (Campus Suites on the Rail), apartment developments (Apache ASL Trails) and new housing developments (Newberry Terrace) which have revitalized the once struggling area with new residents<sup>39</sup>.

One example of transit-oriented development along Apache Boulevard is a 450-unit apartment complex that includes a park-and-ride garage. The site was

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<sup>35</sup> Reinvent Phoenix. <http://www.reinventphx.org>

<sup>36</sup> Reid, Betty. Reinvent PHX eyes development on light-rail system. The Arizona Republic. <http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/phoenix/2014/05/05/reinvent-phx-eyes-development-light-rail-system/8742745/>

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<sup>37</sup> Center for Neighborhood Technology. The New Real Estate Mantra: Location Near Public Transportation. March 2013. 9. [http://www.cnt.org/sites/default/files/publications/CNT\\_TheNewRealEstateMantra.pdf](http://www.cnt.org/sites/default/files/publications/CNT_TheNewRealEstateMantra.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Smart Growth America. How Phoenix, AZ is using transit-oriented development to reinvent downtown. August 13, 2013. <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/2013/08/13/how-phoenix-az-is-using-transit-oriented-development-to-reinvent-downtown/>

<sup>39</sup> Apache Boulevard. City of Tempe, AZ. <http://www.tempe.gov/city-hall/community-development/neighborhood-revitalization-redevelopment/apache-boulevard>

originally planned to serve as a transit station parking lot, but as the market for transit-oriented development became favourable, a developer proposed providing the planned parking within a garage and developing the rest of the site with apartments and shops<sup>40</sup>.

### Funding for Transit-Oriented Development

Since July, 2011 the Sustainable Communities Fund (initially capitalized by the Local Initiatives Support Corp. and Raza Development Fund) has provided \$20 million of loan funds leveraging almost \$200 million in additional private investment for 20 developments connected to the light rail corridor including 1155+ affordable, workforce, market rate, and mixed-use housing units. Projects include the adaptive reuse of the vacant, iconic Beefeater's building into a locally owned bookstore, a job incubator, restaurant and wine bar, and the Native American Connections Office Building<sup>41</sup>.

### Affordable Housing

Developed by Native American Connections, a non-profit corporation serving the urban Native American population of Phoenix, and financed by the City of Phoenix (which deferred development fees), the Arizona Department of Housing, Federal Home Loan Bank, and the U.S. Department of Housing, Devine Legacy was the first transit-oriented development to open along the LRT line. Developed on the site of a vacant former charter school, the site offers 65 rental units, 90%

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40 Groff, Garin. Apache Blvd. grows from seedy to chic. East Valley Tribune. November 5, 2007. <http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/news/article9292b3e4-711b-5144-b1b9-b2437f7f613b.html>

41 Sustainable Communities Collaborative. Our Accomplishments. <http://www.sustainablecommunitiescollaborative.com/our-accomplishments/>

affordable and 10% market rate housing<sup>42</sup>. The city's main public high school is across the street. Parking was reduced due to the site's location on the LRT line. The project is oriented toward Native American working families in Phoenix but houses anyone who meets the income requirements. Affordable units rent for 10% to 45% below market rate<sup>43</sup>.

Grace Community Church owns a two-acre site where it runs a thrift store. A proposal is in place to demolish the thrift store and build a residential building that would include retail space for Gracie's. Gracie's Village would be open only to residents with low or moderate incomes, between about \$18,000 and \$52,000. The developer notes that the project is geared to provide housing for people such as teachers, food service workers and others who work in Tempe but cannot afford to live there. The project faced considerable neighbourhood opposition and was scaled down from an original six-storey proposal to the existing 50-unit, four-storey development<sup>44</sup>.

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42 Sustainable Communities Collaborative. Case Studies: Native American Connections. Devine Legacy. <http://www.sustainablecommunitiescollaborative.org/fieldnews/2013-case-studies/>

43 Smokey, Sadie Jo. Former offices will become low-income housing. The Arizona Republic. February 25, 2010. <http://archive.azcentral.com/community/phoenix/articles/20100225legacy-affordable-housing.html>

44 Groff, Garin. Even after changes, Tempe neighborhood opposes low-income housing. East Valley Tribune. June 5, 2012. <http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/local/tempe/article5ae2fae-ae9d-11e1-b9e5-001a4bcf887a.html>



## Outreach and Marketing

Because transit represents a new form of transportation for parts of greater Phoenix, Valley Metro operates an extensive transit education program. Education teams offer workshops in schools to teach kids about the public transit system. It also offers free group passes and field trip planning for elementary school student groups<sup>45</sup>. Valley Metro also runs sessions on how to use the transit system for new residents and refugees and monthly training sessions at the Disability Empowerment Centre which include an all-day transit pass and instructions on how to use the system for those with mobility constraints<sup>46</sup>.

To help spread awareness and a sense of pride in the transit system, Valley Metro runs transit-themed art contests for kids and an annual contest for high school students to design a transit-positive message. Winning designs are wrapped onto a transit vehicle<sup>47</sup>.

Public art is integrated into the stations. Following a nationwide call for artists, five artistic teams were selected and were paired with five architectural teams to create the visions for the stations. Public art at many stations incorporate local histories into the design<sup>48</sup>.

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45 Valley Metro. School Outreach Program: Designed for students, educators and administrators. [http://www.valleymetro.org/transit\\_education/school\\_outreach](http://www.valleymetro.org/transit_education/school_outreach)

46 Valley Metro. Community Outreach Program. [http://www.valleymetro.org/transit\\_education/community\\_outreach](http://www.valleymetro.org/transit_education/community_outreach)

47 Valley Metro. Glendale Student Wins 2015 Design a Transit Wrap Contest. [http://www.valleymetro.org/transit\\_education/bus\\_wrap](http://www.valleymetro.org/transit_education/bus_wrap)

48 Valley Metro. Metro Art 2008. [http://www.valleymetro.org/images/uploads/misc\\_reports/METRO-Art-Book.pdf](http://www.valleymetro.org/images/uploads/misc_reports/METRO-Art-Book.pdf)

## Reduced Fare Passes

Arizona State University students are eligible to receive a transit pass for \$200 for the academic year. Passes are paid for by ASU Parking and Transit Services, a self-funded auxiliary unit of the university. Employer passes are available to employers with at least five participating employees. The employer is charged for each employee's actual number of rides up to a maximum of \$64 per month. In addition, the City of Phoenix's Homeless Service Provider Program may purchase passes at half price for their clients<sup>49</sup>.

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49 Valley Metro. Fare Options. [http://www.valleymetro.org/paying\\_your\\_fare/fare\\_options/](http://www.valleymetro.org/paying_your_fare/fare_options/)

### Lessons for the Finch Avenue West Corridor

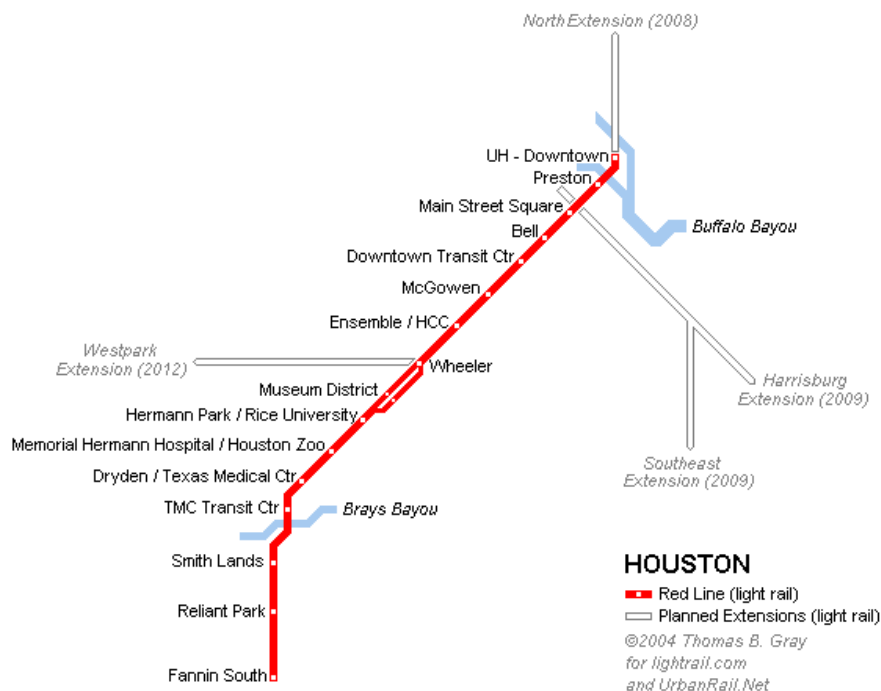
Valley Metro has done some innovative outreach in the Phoenix area to help people become more acquainted with using transit. Similar initiatives may be beneficial around the Finch Avenue West corridor. In areas that are not currently well-served by higher order transit, people may be unfamiliar with the system and therefore reluctant to embrace it once it arrives; particularly when new vehicles and fare payment systems are involved. Outreach to seniors, schools, neighbourhood associations and other community groups to demystify the transit and fare system can help to increase ridership and build local pride in the new lines.

Integrating public art into the stations is also an opportunity to build local awareness and pride. Hiring local artists, design teams and installers; and ensuring local input into design selections are all outreach initiatives that have been demonstrated to work elsewhere.

Phoenix has several reduced fare pass options including reduced fare passes for post-secondary students, employee groups, and community support organizations. The Finch West LRT line will serve post-secondary institutions and areas of concentrated employment. Offering reduced fare passes to students and employee groups, through agreements with the colleges and employers, will support higher ridership and revenue levels; and may offer the necessary motivation for people to switch from using private cars for daily commutes.

### 3.6 HOUSTON METRORAIL

Houston's MetroRail Red Line consists of a 12km, 16-station line that opened in 2004 and a 8.5 km, nine-station extension that opened in 2013. It is run by the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (Metro). The lines radiate from downtown connecting university campuses, a museum district, a soccer stadium and a baseball stadium.



Houston MetroRail Route Map (Source: lightrail.com)

The transit agency faced considerable opposition with two referendums over 20 years, funding cuts, and funding blocks. The original line was therefore built with no federal funding although the extension line received \$9m in federal funds.

#### Transit-Oriented Development Planning

Houston created a new Transit Corridor Ordinance to regulate development and street design along the light rail corridors. The new ordinance applies to six streets where LRTs are in place or planned. It identifies transit corridor streets, along which the LRT runs, and “A” streets which intersect the transit corridor streets within walking distance of an LRT station and sets pedestrian realm and streetscape standards for those sections of streets in an effort to create conditions that will support higher density development close to the rail stations.<sup>50,51</sup>

Market conditions are making transit-oriented developments more feasible although using transit represents a cultural shift for a region where 9 out of 10 people drive to work. Plans are in place for an eight-block transit-oriented redevelopment “University Place” around the LRT line and between two universities.

50 City of Houston, Proposed Transit Corridor Ordinance. [http://www.houston.tx.gov/planning/\\_urban/PC\\_presentation.pdf](http://www.houston.tx.gov/planning/_urban/PC_presentation.pdf)

51 City of Houston, Urban Corridor Planning Houston. [http://www.houston.tx.gov/planning/\\_urban/urban\\_cor.html](http://www.houston.tx.gov/planning/_urban/urban_cor.html)

## Public Art

MetroRail commissioned artwork for the light rail transit stations. The artists who were selected worked closely with local communities to develop the artistic vision for each station. Many acknowledge the neighbourhoods' unique histories. Stops along the line in the 3rd Ward feature designs paying homage to African-Americans in Houston while in the East End, stops feature murals of Mexican-American life.<sup>52,53</sup>

## Preserving Affordability

Houston's Third Ward, adjacent to downtown, is facing considerable gentrification that threatens to displace low-income, mainly African American residents. Metro's Green line, scheduled to open this year, is helping to create renewed development interest in the neighbourhood.

State Representative Garnet Coleman, who hails from the Third Ward, did not want long-time homeowners pushed out by rising property values and taxes. He has spearheaded an unorthodox use of tax increment financing to buy up land in the Third Ward and hold it for development as low-income rental housing. Nearly two million square feet have been bought up so far.<sup>54</sup> Houston's City Council has designated 22 tax increment reinvestment zones (TIRZs), each with its own

governing board. One TIRZ, in a neighbourhood known as Midtown, is acting a little differently. Midtown, just east of the Third Ward, is a revitalized mixed-use neighbourhood with a strong re-development market. The board of the Midtown TIRZ, influenced by Coleman, has chosen to use almost all of its revenues to buy and hold land in the Third Ward.<sup>55</sup>

### Lessons for the Finch Avenue West Corridor

Houston's unconventional use of tax increment financing to preserve affordable housing in the Third Ward is not easily replicated elsewhere. However, other initiatives that have proven successful in Houston such as community-led public art at transit stations can be applied to the Finch Avenue West corridor. And, while the mechanism of preserving affordable housing in Houston does not fit the Toronto context, it is an important reminder that property values often rise following new infrastructure provision and that mechanisms may be needed to preserve affordability where it exists along Finch Avenue West.

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52 Rodriguez, Frank. Houston's METRO Rail and Implications for Gentrification. 2013, [https://www.academia.edu/4594398/Houstons\\_METRO\\_Rail\\_and\\_Implications\\_for\\_Gentrification](https://www.academia.edu/4594398/Houstons_METRO_Rail_and_Implications_for_Gentrification). 10.

53 Glentzer, Molly. MetroRail commissions art for new light-rail stations Houston Chronicle. August 7, 2013. <http://www.houstonchronicle.com/entertainment/arts-theater/article/MetroRail-commissions-art-for-new-light-rail-4716046.php>

54 Wrigley, Deborah. New development surging in Houston's Third Ward area. ABC13. March 11, 2013. <http://abclocal.go.com/story?section=news/local&id=9023392>

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55 Buntin, John. Land Rush. Governing. March 2006. <http://www.governing.com/topics/politics/Land.html>

### 3.7 DENVER FASTRACKS

Denver's LRT covers 31 km with 13 stops. A southeast extension was completed in 2006 and further expansion plans are in place. The system runs in a spoke pattern outward from downtown Denver.

Denver's transportation plan, FasTracks, is being funded by sales tax revenues, federal grants and the first transit-related public-private partnership in U.S. history.<sup>56</sup> The transit plan includes six new commuter and LRT lines and three extensions to existing lines.

#### Land Acquisition for TOD Development

The \$15 million revolving Denver Regional TOD Fund is funded by a partnership of 13 organizations and the City of Denver.<sup>57</sup> The fund purchases sites near planned transit stops and holds them until financing can be arranged, or market conditions become favourable to develop affordable housing. The fund has enabled the construction of over 600 permanently affordable homes, over 100,000 square feet of commercial space, a public library, non-profit office space, and a day care facility, all within walking distance of transit.<sup>58</sup> Also in use in Denver are the federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) which uses

<sup>56</sup> see RTD Eagle P3 Project: [http://www.rtd-fastracks.com/ep3\\_2](http://www.rtd-fastracks.com/ep3_2)

<sup>57</sup> Denver TOD Fund Investors/Partners: City of Denver Office of Strategic Partnerships, City of Denver Office of Economic Development, Colorado Division of Housing, Enterprise Community Partners, Colorado Housing and Finance Authority, The Denver Foundation, The Ford Foundation, The Gates Family Foundation, The MacArthur Foundation, The Rose Community Foundation, Mercy Loan Fund, Mile High Community Loan Fund, Enterprise Community Loan Fund

<sup>58</sup> Enterprise. Our Work in Denver. <http://www.enterprisecommunity.com/where-we-work/denver>



Denver FasTracks Route Map (Source: rtd-fastracks.com)

HUD funding to acquire and redevelop foreclosed and abandoned properties. Denver received \$19 million in NSP-2 funding dedicated to multifamily housing preservation in transit corridors.<sup>59</sup>

Several affordable housing projects used this funding to acquire land near transit prior to prices going up. These resulted in projects such as Mercantile Square – a mixed use development including affordable rental units in 1886 former industrial buildings.<sup>60,61</sup>

### Fare Reductions

Several reduced fare passes are available for the Denver area's transit system. The EcoPass and FlexPass are employer-sponsored passes for employees that offer tax deductions for employers and tax savings for employees (because passes are paid for using pre-tax dollars).<sup>62</sup>

The Neighbourhood EcoPass allows neighbourhood associations to buy bulk passes for its residents. The cost is based on the current amount of transit revenue already coming from a neighbourhood, spreading the cost between more people and increasing transit affordability for residents.

### Lessons for the Finch Avenue West Corridor

The Denver Regional TOD Fund is a partnership of 13 agencies including the City of Denver. The fund has facilitated the development of affordable transit-oriented development along the transit lines. The City of Toronto can explore partnership options to facilitate affordable development along the Finch Avenue West corridor.

Denver's EcoPass system shows the range of fare reductions that a transit agency can explore. It offers not only discounts for bulk purchases to employers, it also has a neighbourhood-based pass that helps make transit a more viable choice for those who may not have sought it out before.

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59 Quigley (ed). Preserving Affordable Housing Near Transit: Case Studies from Atlanta, Denver, Seattle and Washington, D.C. <http://www.ctod.org/portal/sites/default/files/preservingAffordableHousingNearTransit2010.pdf> p.6

60 Enterprise. Denver Regional Transit-Oriented Development Fund. <http://www.enterprisecommunity.com/denver-tod-fund>

61 Quigley (ed). Preserving Affordable Housing Near Transit: Case Studies from Atlanta, Denver, Seattle and Washington, D.C. <http://www.ctod.org/portal/sites/default/files/preservingAffordableHousingNearTransit2010.pdf>

62 RTD. Eco Pass for Employees. <http://www.rtd-denver.com/EcoPass.shtml>

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# 4.0 KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE CORRIDOR

## 4.1 MARKET

Overall, the market demand for residential uses, and to lesser extent office and commercial uses, are expected to improve with the new LRT service. Demand will be strongest in the areas that are within walking distance of a station, typically 500 metres. Strong increases in the value of single family homes, and other ground oriented housing types along the corridor, as well as land transactions and high density development applications and activity, are all early signals that demand may be maturing for higher density residential formats in Emery Village and at the intersection of Finch Avenue West and Keele Street.

Based on the trend of increasing residential property values since 2005 and the expected transit influenced appreciation of housing, it is not unreasonable for a single detached house to range between \$700,000 and \$750,000 by 2025. This will put pressure on affordability and increase demand for higher-density forms of housing especially within close proximity to rapid transit.

However, all areas will not respond in a similar or consistent manner as other issues such as the existing land use and ownership pattern. The motivating interests of the land owners will also influence the future direction of the development of these lands. In general, the greatest value up-lift will impact higher density developments, where owners/tenants are more likely to make use of and benefit from transit services on a day-to-day basis.

In the near term, it is expected significant development interest at the Finch Avenue West and Keele Street intersection that could have transformative impacts on the area if properly planned. Development interest and applications are already in play in this area. Emery Village may also see significant near term investment as result of transit investment due to its highway accessibility as well as current projects in the “pipeline”. The Thistletown site, Albion Mall, and Humber College also offer strong opportunity to respond to market influences generated by new transit investment, however these sites are less advanced in their planning and more complex sites from an ownership and development perspective.

In general, over the long term it is expected that given the current and projected market context of the area, the new Finch West LRT will support increasingly significant reinvestment along the corridor, particularly in the residential market place.

While the loss of manufacturing jobs is not expected to be reversed as a result of the LRT, the increase in population associated with higher density housing formats may allow the opportunity for increased activity and jobs in other sectors of employment such as institutional and population serving office uses, commercial services, and retail. Early signals of strength in the office market is evident in key locations surrounding the hospitals and the Finch Avenue West and Keele Street intersection where rents are high relative to other locations in the corridor.

Overall, the Finch Avenue West corridor market is maturing at a steady rate. The LRT will have the impact of accelerating the market in terms of pricing and demand but only in the areas where the development and ownership patterns are aligned with planning and market forces.

## 4.2 PHYSICAL/PUBLIC REALM

Key considerations for the physical/public realm for the Finch Avenue West corridor include:

- Prepare detailed public realm plan in tandem with LRT design to identify streetscape improvements along Finch Avenue West, with regards to pedestrian crossings, improved comfort, landscaping, street furniture, way-finding, tree canopy and integration with active retail and/or residential uses. Particular care should be taken to develop public realm designs that respond to the unique requirements of Employment Lands as these areas have different requirements compared to residential areas or urban streets (e.g. truck traffic, light industrial uses, etc.).
- Conduct detailed public realm analysis that identifies opportunities to improve connections between proposed LRT stops and neighbourhood destinations (area schools, institutions, community centres, or parks) by upgrading pedestrian and cycling infrastructure as required.
- Consider ways to implement safe and continuous cycling infrastructure throughout the corridor and to the broader cycling network.
- Explore opportunities to better use the hydro corridor in ways that provide added amenities to areas where intensification is anticipated, including parks and pedestrian and bicycle trails.
- Enhance connections and promote access to ravines within the corridor.

## 4.3 SOCIO-ECONOMIC

Overall, the corridor faces increased rates of unemployment, low income rates, and reduced affordability and also has reduced walkability to community meeting places, green spaces, and healthy food stores. Several of the key issues faced within the corridor cannot be addressed directly through the implementation of the Finch West LRT. These include: high school graduation rates, preventable hospitalizations, and post-secondary completions rates. However, other indicators can directly and indirectly benefit from LRT investment, including: unemployment and low income rates, community places for meeting, proximity to green spaces, and healthy food stores, as well as decreasing the incidence of diabetes.

Generally, the issues that may be most directly resolved as a result of the LRT are related to access (i.e. proximity to green spaces, employment opportunities, walkability, etc.). However, to maximize the benefits of transit infrastructure to address issues related to economic development, public health and affordability along the corridor, there is a need to look beyond the immediate Finch Avenue West right-of-way.

There is an opportunity to magnify the impact of the LRT and related transit infrastructure beyond the right-of-way. That is to say that the corridor will benefit most through comprehensive planning and the extension of connections into the

adjacent neighbourhoods including feeder bus routes, pedestrian connections to the Humber River Valley, parks, mixed use areas, and community spaces. The coordination of this comprehensive planning and the provision of a planning and public realm framework which serves to support the LRT and surrounding neighbourhoods will better address the issues faced along the corridor.

In addition to larger-scale initiatives, a number of key considerations identified in the study analysis (Section 3.0) can also address these issues. They include:

- Consideration of re-zoning for transit oriented design including reduced parking standards prior to the completion of the LRT to determine compatible built form, open space and parking standards.
- Put public realm requirements in place for the length of the corridors and along parts of intersecting streets.
- Make Community Benefit Agreements mandatory for all infrastructure projects over a certain dollar value.
- Consider local business supports (e.g. free advertising on transit vehicles, design contests and other forms of outreach to schools, seniors' centres, community groups etc.).
- Provide support during construction which can include free advertising to local businesses during the construction period.

- Ensure that businesses in transit corridors are eligible for supports through other municipal or BIA programs like facade improvement programs.
- Develop publicly owned lands with showcase transit oriented design and development.
- Support community involvement in initiatives like public art at stations.
- Offer discount fare programs for post-secondary students, employers and low-income residents. Make eligibility requirements simple.

## 4.4 PLANNING

Many opportunities exist to develop strong transit-supportive neighbourhoods along the LRT corridor; however the transit infrastructure, market demand and planning framework(s) will need to be brought into alignment to best realize these opportunities. The market analysis identified a demand for residential, and to a lesser extent office and commercial uses, in the following sub-markets:

- Keele-Finch;
- Emery Village;
- Thistletown;
- Albion Mall; and
- Humber College.

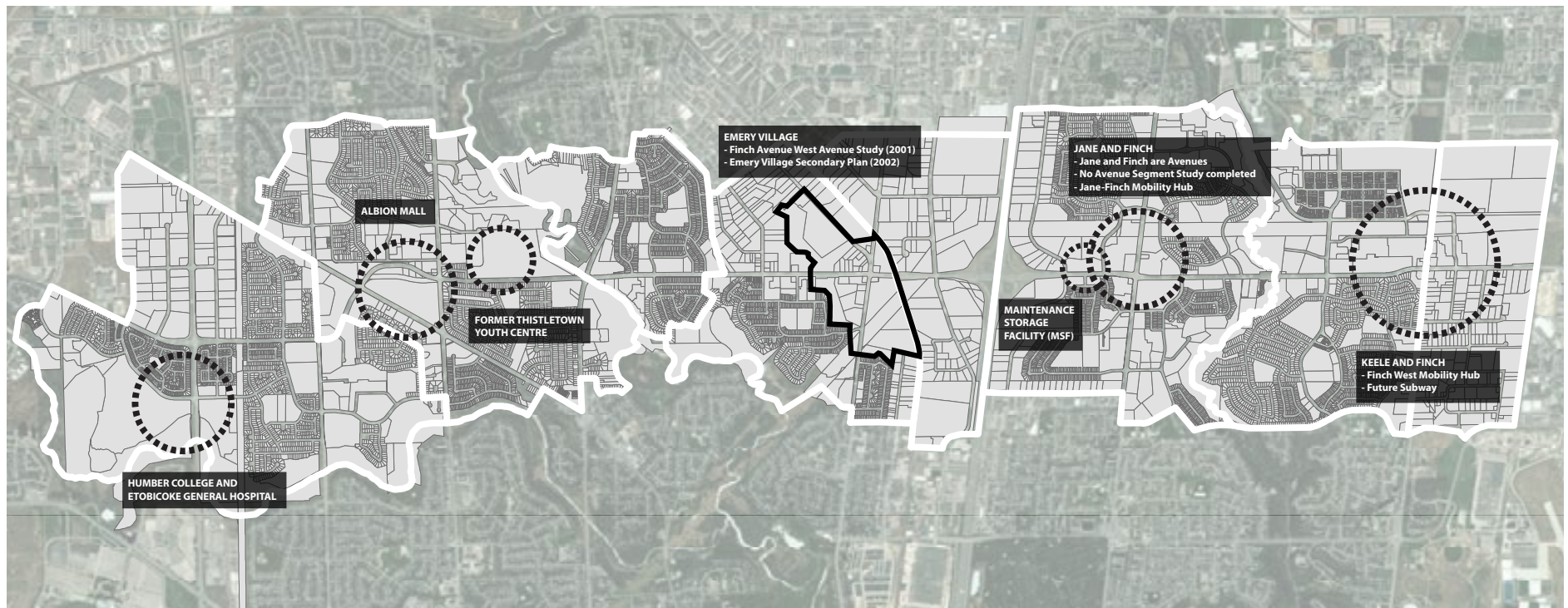


Figure 8. Finch Avenue West Corridor - Key Areas of Planning Focus

The following summary identifies key planning considerations for the corridor:

### 1. What is the 'Vision' for the Finch Avenue West Corridor?

Currently, the Finch Avenue West corridor lacks a strong corridor-wide identity comparable to that of Eglinton Avenue or Hurontario Main Street – corridors that were the subject of recent corridor studies in support of LRT investment. The articulation of a strong vision for the corridor could help shape related decisions surrounding built form, character, density, capital improvements, public realm improvements, community service facilities and parkland dedication. Questions to consider when developing a vision include:

- How does Finch Avenue West relate to the topography of the Humber River and its ravines?
- How does the east-west vs. north-south movement shape the corridor?
- Will the LRT be an extension of the existing centripetal system of higher-order transit (taking people from Finch Avenue West downtown and back) or the genesis of an east-west network that connects Finch Avenue West to Scarborough?
- Can Finch Avenue West capitalize on its landscape and become a “green corridor”?
- What is the relationship with existing Employment Lands to the surrounding community as well as to transit, open space and active transportation network?
- How to strengthen the existing retail nodes?

### 2. Appropriate Density, Form, and Character of Development

Outside of the two Secondary Plan areas and the short segments of Finch Avenue West identified as *Avenues*, the majority of the corridor lacks detailed built form guidelines. If intensification is to occur in any of these areas, it would benefit from a careful consideration of the unique physical characteristics of the Finch Avenue West corridor, which include:

- Unique topography with prominent ravines and natural features;
- Wide right-of-way (Finch Avenue West has a planned ROW of 36m);
- LRT stop spacing that is wider compared pre-war streetcar routes;
- Tower-in-the-park sites that share the characteristics outlined in the Mayor's Tower Renewal report; and,
- Surrounding stable neighbourhoods.

Additionally, transit-supportive densities should be considered in certain locations along the corridor which could include minimum heights and/or densities. There is also the potential to reserve areas along the corridor for higher density built forms (e.g. mid-rise and taller buildings) once the market becomes favourable for this type of development.



### 3. Opportunities for Infill or Redevelopment

There are opportunities for increased density and intensification through infill and/or redevelopment, particularly around existing malls, in *Mixed Use Area* sites (first priority) and some apartment sites (second priority). Recent residential intensification efforts in the city have led to increased benefits for existing and future residents.

The City of Toronto's *Toward Healthier Apartment Neighbourhoods* report outlines a number of site specific strategies to consider to better support the health of apartment residents and of the residents in the surrounding communities. These strategies may be applicable to other sites that can accommodate infill or redevelopment including malls sites and other *Mixed Use Area* sites. These strategies support successful intensification and can help to achieve improved access, increased housing options, and a better built environment for residents and the surrounding community. These strategies contribute to successful infill development and include:

- Provision of access to green space, parks and natural areas through the removal of obstacles and providing linkages (e.g. walking paths and entry points)
- Improved opportunities for gathering by providing a variety of intimate to community-scaled gathering spaces, connected by well-defined path systems
- Removed physical barriers to active transportation to provide a better

experience for pedestrian travel

- Improved cycling networks and infrastructure by formalizing existing ad hoc trails; providing bike storage and parking
- Provision of amenities to support diverse households in high-rise living including fresh food shops, community kitchens, children's play areas, etc.
- Adapted units for growing families and changing households which can include providing balcony enclosures, ground floor terraces, and larger units
- Expanded housing choice: tenure options and a variety of infill housing forms which can serve to diversify the housing stock, allowing people to 'age in place'

Further, successful infill development should generally be developed in a comprehensive fashion to ensure benefits are directed to new and existing residents. Infill and/or redevelopment should improve and better define the open space network; create space for new retail or amenity functions; and also be linked to transit by a clearly defined public realm network.

### 4. Robust Public Realm

The existing public realm along the Finch Avenue West corridor is often deficient with regards to current standards for pedestrian infrastructure, urban tree planting, storm water management, and cycling infrastructure. Many segments of the corridor lack 'active frontages', while crossings are often far apart and access to the ravines is inconsistent. Opportunities exist to address these deficiencies,



while also improving local connections and overall networks in ways that support both the existing communities and new LRT infrastructure.

A comprehensive Public Realm Plan that considers key origins and destinations within 500m of the corridor would provide a framework for the full integration of the LRT into the existing and planned communities. A Public Realm plan can provide guidance on the design of streets, parks, opens spaces, bicycle routes, public art and community buildings so that they are responsive to the local context and to community interests and needs.

### 5. Integrated Open Space Planning

The Finch Avenue West corridor is deficient with regards to City parks, but does benefit from natural open spaces, largely in the form of ravines forming part of the Humber River network, as well as a number of schools with publicly accessible open spaces.

Intensification within the corridor would need to be supported by appropriate public parks and open spaces that provide amenity to existing and new residents. Acquiring new parkland through development, investing in existing parks and open space, and providing better access to existing natural spaces and/or schoolyards are all options that could be considered.

### 6. Support of Employment Uses

The City's recent Municipal Comprehensive Review confirmed the preservation of existing Employment Lands within the Finch Avenue West corridor. The review identified the changing nature of employment in the city, including the shift away from traditional manufacturing and warehousing, to other sectors.

The preservation of existing and creation of new employment uses within the Finch Avenue West corridor should be supported. Additionally, the exploration for employment intensification within existing Employment Lands should also be supported. To achieve this support, a comprehensive review of existing and projected uses should be conducted, along with combined recommendations for how the related transportation, public realm, urban design, and economic development initiatives considered for the corridor can be tailored.

### 7. Area-Specific Considerations

Given the scale of transportation infrastructure investment planned for the Keele-Finch intersection, market interest is anticipated to be higher at this location. Comprehensive planning exercises could help shape and support this investment, review of the surrounding land-uses, transportation network, open space system, servicing, and community services and facilities required to support this investment.

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## 5.0 SUBMARKET AREAS

The Finch Avenue West corridor has been divided into eight Submarket Areas. They include:

- Submarket Area 1: Humber College
- Submarket Area 2: Albion
- Submarket Area 3: Finchdale
- Submarket Area 4: Emery Village
- Submarket Area 5: Highway 400
- Submarket Area 6: Jane and Finch
- Submarket Area 7 + 8: Keele and Finch

Submarket Areas 7 and 8 fall at the intersection of Keele Street and Finch Avenue West. Due to the future subway extension and the integrated LRT station at Keele and Finch, this study will look at both Submarket Areas as a whole.

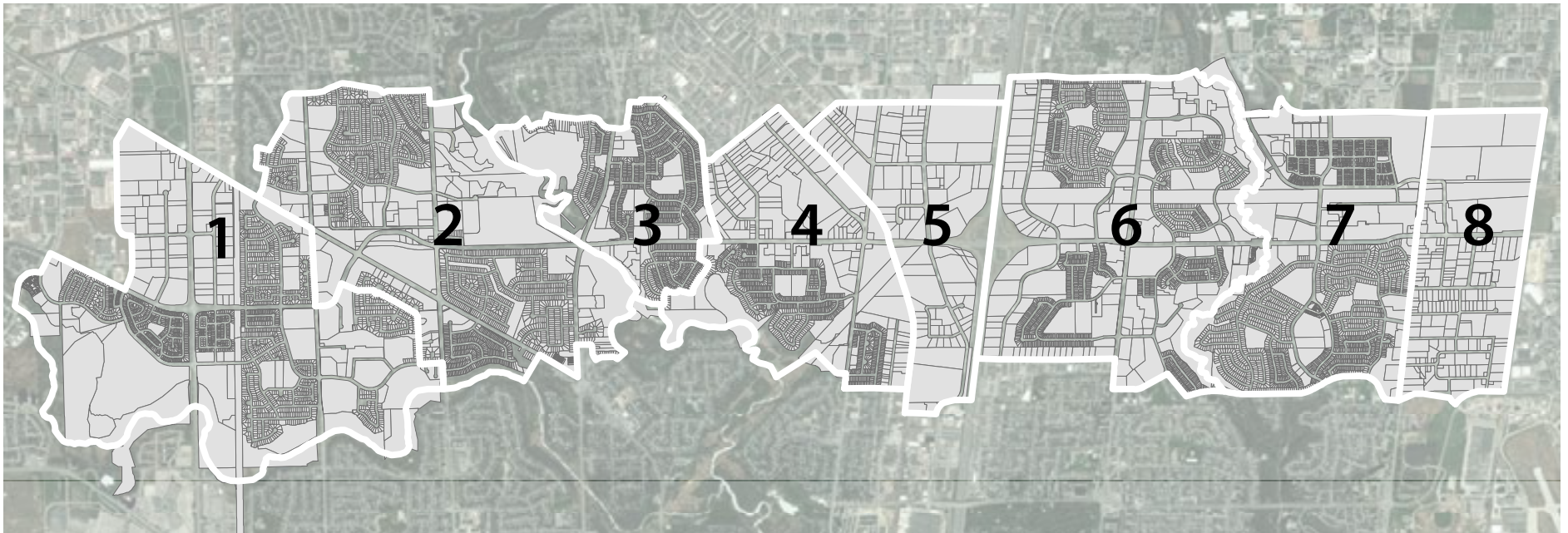


Figure 9. Finch Avenue West Corridor - Submarket Area Key Map

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## SUBMARKET AREA 1: HUMBER COLLEGE

### Existing Physical Context

- Submarket Area 1 is centered on Finch Avenue West and Highway 27, bordered by Albion Road to the north, Kipling Avenue to the east, the Humber River to the south, and Humberline Drive to the west.
- The area is primarily a residential neighbourhood comprised of stable low-density housing in the form of single and semi-detached dwellings, with some townhouses. Many of the homes are one-to-two storeys and built in the 1960s. The residential areas served by community parks, including the southern portion of the area adjacent to a large natural area, the Humber River.
- Major Institutional uses include the Humber College North Campus, the University of Guelph-Humber, and Etobicoke General Hospital. There is also a concentration of seven elementary and secondary schools located within the submarket area.
- Two TCHC properties are located adjacent to Masseygrove Park, one of the larger community parks, which consists of a community centre that serves nearby residents. The park is irregular in shape and lacks street frontage.
- The north-west quadrant of the area (west of the hydro corridor and north of Finch Avenue West) is characterized by low-rise employment uses that form part of the larger employment area to the north-west.
- There is a deficiency of park space (lands that are not natural areas, recreational fields, floodplain lands, etc.)
- Some neighbourhoods adjacent to the Hydro Corridor, Highway 27, and Humber River Valley are isolated in terms of land use and connectivity to the pedestrian realm.
- Finch Avenue West consists of a long stretch of road with few intersections and pedestrian crossings. The majority of Finch Avenue West in this submarket area is also characterized by backlotted housing. Interspersed between long stretches of backlotted housing are large lot Institutional uses including: Father Henry Carr Catholic School, Elmbank Junior Middle Academy, and New Apostolic Church. On the north side of Finch Avenue West between Woodbine Downs Boulevard and Westmore Drive, there are retail uses in the *Employment Areas*.

- The Humber River Valley system provides continuous multi-use pathways along the river and connection points into the surrounding neighbourhoods. However, there is poor wayfinding to existing parks and the Humber River Valley trail network.
- Humber College acts as a major transit hub, offering bus connections to York and Peel Regions, the TTC, and GO Transit. Traffic concerns around the campus are a common concern and plans for the LRT are expected to change travel patterns by offering new choices for accessing the campus.

### Existing Policy Framework

- The existing conditions in the Humber College submarket area include a variety of land uses, largely consisting of stable low-density residential *Neighbourhoods* and large *Employment Areas*. There are a number of parks located around the residential neighbourhoods, and natural areas surrounding the Humber River. In addition, the submarket area also consists of *Institutional*, *Mixed Use*, *Utility Corridor*, and *Apartment Neighbourhoods* designations at a smaller scale.
- There is one Site and Area Specific Policy (no. 288) in the submarket area, regarding a parcel north of Finch Avenue West between Highway 27 and Westmore Drive. Site and Area Specific Policy 288 states that a five storey senior citizen apartment building with ancillary commercial facilities is permitted.
- Future development along Finch Avenue West includes: Humber College implementing a Master Plan with significant intensification planned, and Etobicoke General Hospital (William Osler Hospital) expansions. It will be important to understand how this growth will affect surrounding communities.
- There was an Employment Land Conversion Request at 6620 Finch Avenue West (between Highway 27 and Westmore Drive), which was refused by City Council. An earlier application for residential uses on these lands was also refused in 2007.

### Market Outlook

Submarket 1 surrounds Humber College at the western terminus of the LRT corridor. Overall, there are limited development opportunities in the submarket as it is heavily characterized by stable neighbourhoods, employment, and environmental areas. Aside from a few locations, the LRT will pass by parcels that are small and reverse-lotted onto Finch Avenue West. Due to the relatively low supply of sites that can accommodate significant intensification, it is believed the expansion and intensification surrounding Humber College and the Etobicoke General Hospital will be the most significant opportunity to capture the value generated by the LRT in this area.

### Key Considerations

#### Short Term (<5 Years)

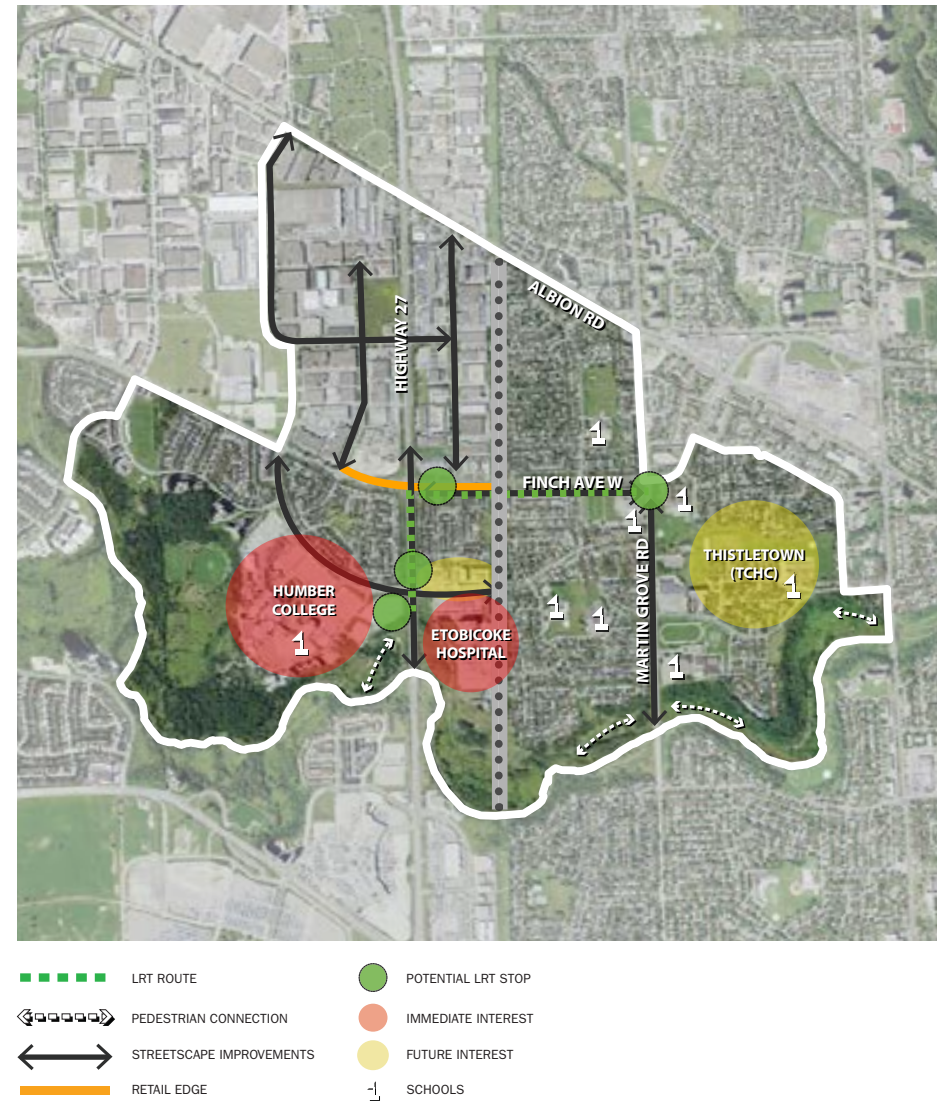
- Consider opportunities for better integrating school green spaces to address parkland deficiencies in the area.
- Consider improved access and connections to Masseygrove Park.
- Explore potential for employment intensification along the north side of Finch Avenue West in Employment Lands where there are currently existing retail uses.
- Investigate streetscape improvements along Finch Avenue West in regards to pedestrian crossings, improved comfort, landscaping, street furniture; tree canopy, etc. (e.g. Highway 27 and Humber College Boulevard intersection). Further, develop streetscape improvements along Highway 27 into the Employment Areas.
- Consider improving connections between proposed LRT stops and neighbourhood destinations (area schools, institutions, community centres, or parks) by upgrading pedestrian and cycling infrastructure as required.
- Identify opportunities for enhanced wayfinding from LRT stops to existing large parks (e.g. Masseygrove Park), community uses, and the Humber River Valley multiuse trail system.



- Enhance connections and promote access to ravines within the submarket area.

#### Longer Term (>5 Years)

- Conduct planning studies to better understand anticipated changes and growth within the following areas: Humber College, Etobicoke General Hospital, Employment Areas, and other public properties. Studies should consider: traffic and how the LRT can help address these issues; improved access and connections to ravines; potential transit oriented development; and, the unique topography of the area.
- Consider the Humber Submarket Area together with the adjacent Albion Submarket Area (residential neighbourhoods east of the hydro corridor, for example, may be better considered together with plans for the Albion Mall precinct).
- Ensure diversity of housing options, including TCHC, student, and apartment towers.



Submarket Area 1: Humber College Key Considerations

## SUBMARKET AREA 2: ALBION

### Existing Physical Context

- Submarket Area 2 is centred on the intersection of Finch Avenue West and Kipling Avenue which includes the Albion Centre shopping mall. The submarket area is bounded by Silverstone Drive to the north, the Humber River to the east and south, and Albion Road to the west.
- The existing land uses in the submarket area consist primarily of residential *Neighbourhood* uses, along with several *Apartment Neighbourhoods* located along main arterial roads. In addition, there are community parks serving the residential areas, as well as a large *Natural Areas* on the eastern boundary accounting for the Humber River, which also splits and runs through other areas within the Albion submarket area. There is a parcel designated as Institutional which includes the Thistletown Regional Centre for Children and Adolescents (a former youth centre), and a large *Mixed Use Area* occupied by the Albion Mall.
- The Albion Mall serves as a large central anchor to the neighbourhood. It draws residents from within the submarket area and surrounding areas. There are a number of community facilities located around the Albion Mall, including a library, arena, a pool and health club, and the Rexdale Community Hub, between Martin Grove Road and Kipling Avenue. The Albion Mall is a large parcel with large setbacks and surface parking lots, where potential for redevelopment exists.
- Multiple higher order roads traverse the area including: Albion Road, Martin Grove Road, Kipling and Islington Avenues, indicating that thoroughfare traffic is prevalent in the submarket area. Together with the Humber River Valley, these physical elements serve to isolate pedestrian movements along the Finch Avenue West corridor.
- Access to the former Thistletown Youth Centre property is limited to a single access drive off of Kipling Avenue.
- Large sound walls are located east of Kipling Avenue, where there is no active street frontage and no sidewalk on the south side of Finch Avenue West. East of Kipling Avenue, there is one pedestrian connection across Finch Avenue West via a pedestrian bridge.
- The submarket area has limited public park space (lands that are not natural areas, recreational fields, floodplain lands, etc.).

## Existing Policy Framework

- A cluster of *Mixed Use Areas* is located centrally within the submarket area including the Albion Mall. In addition to the *Apartment Neighbourhoods* along Finch Avenue West, there is a concentration of lands designated as *Apartment Neighbourhoods* along Martin Gove Road and Kipling Avenue. The submarket area is also bordered by Natural Areas to the southeast.
- There is a large *Institutional* area that consists of the former Thistletown Youth Centre lands, which are currently undergoing an ongoing Master Plan led by Infrastructure Ontario and Urban Strategies.

### Market Outlook

Submarket 2 contains five of the 18 LRT station stops and consists of a mix of residential, commercial, and green space. Submarket 2 is generally considered one of the more affluent segments of the corridor and contains a healthy mix of both ground-oriented and high-density housing, in both condominium and rental ownership tenure.

The significant opportunity in this segment is the provincial Thistletown lands which are large and undeveloped. However, this site is not currently planned with a nearby transit station. Albion Mall also has several parcels that appear underutilized that might support intensification in the future. Transit could certainly make development on these parcels, in higher density formats, viable in the future.

## Key Considerations

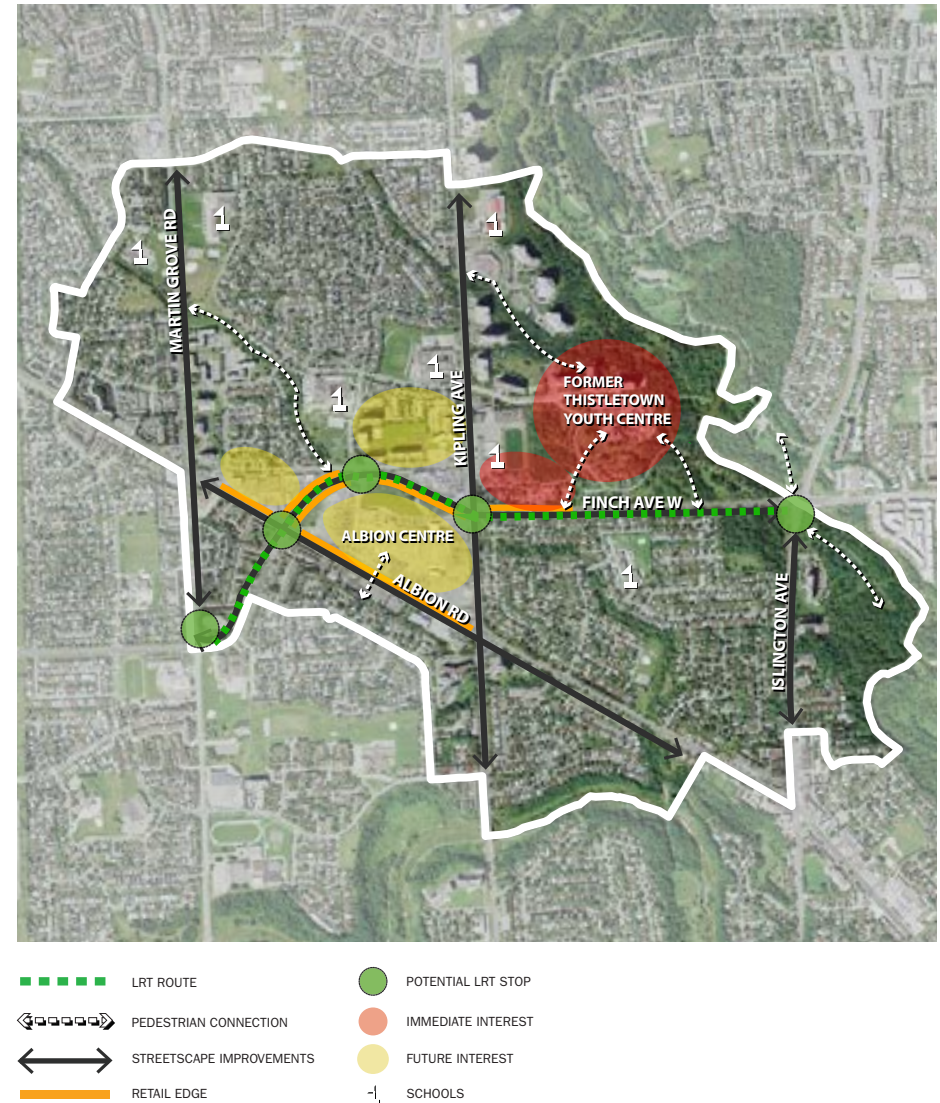
### Short Term (<5 Years)

- Consider opportunities for better integrating school green spaces to address parkland deficiencies in the Area.
- Potential redevelopment of the former Thistletown Youth Centre should result in an improved street presence and activity along Finch Avenue West. This should include streetscape improvements that address/remove the sound wall east of Kipling Avenue and integrate appropriate lighting, screening, and planting designs.
- Enhance connections and promote access to ravines within the submarket area.

### Longer Term (>5 Years)

- A coordinated, pro-active planning exercise that considers both the Albion Mall and the former Thistletown Youth Centre lands would ensure that anticipated long-term market interest in intensification of these properties proceeds in an orderly fashion.
- The transportation network should be assessed to consider impacts of potential intensification, including improved access into the Thistletown property and potential improvements to the irregular grid network.

- Consider the Albion Submarket Area together with the adjacent Humber Submarket Area (the western portion of the Humber Submarket area - east of the hydro corridor - for example, may be better considered together with plans for the Albion Mall precinct).



Submarket Area 2: Albion Key Considerations



## SUBMARKET AREA 3: FINCHDALE

### Existing Physical Context

- Submarket Area 3 is bounded by Rowntree Mill Road to the north, Cherrylawn Avenue to the east, the Humber River to the south and west.
- The existing conditions surrounding Finchdale include of a variety of land uses, with a plurality of the submarket area consisting of semi-detached homes. There are three parks and lands designated as *Apartment Neighbourhoods* along Finch Avenue West and Islington Avenue. Finchdale Plaza is located between Pearldale Avenue and Gracedale Boulevard and includes a Coffee Time, Subway, Shoppers Drug Mart, Beer Store, TD Canada Trust, among other retail uses. A retaining wall exists along the southern boundary of the Finchdale Plaza along Finch Avenue West.
- At the intersection of Finch Avenue West and Islington Avenue, there are stacked townhouses at the south-east corner, a park and community centre (Gord and Irene Risk Community Centre) on the north-east corner, and *Natural Areas* on the north-west and south-west corners.
- The Finchdale community is serviced with existing Parks including the Rowntree Mills Park, Islington Park, Gracedale Park, Gold and Irene Risk Park.
- Schools within the boundary include the St. Roch Separate School, Gracedale Public School, and Humber Summit Middle School.

### Existing Policy Framework

- The majority of the land is designated as *Neighbourhoods*, and contain semi-detached homes. Humber River to the west is designated a *Natural Area*. Three community Parks are located throughout the submarket area. *Apartment Neighbourhoods* are clustered around Finch Avenue West, which also has a *Mixed Use Area* occupied by the Finchdale Plaza. There are no Secondary Plan or Site and Area Specific policies in the area.

### Market Outlook

Submarket 3 is characterized by a strong low density residential context, consisting mostly of semi-detached homes with a single commercial retail plaza, the Finchdale Plaza. Submarket 3 contains relatively high average household incomes and the lowest unemployment rate across the entire corridor. The Finchdale submarket is one of the most stable and mature residential market segments along the corridor.

Submarket 3 displays limited potential for development, with the Finchdale Plaza representing the only viable opportunity for significant development. The plaza will likely not redevelop to a more transit-supportive use in the near term given the economic success it is currently experiencing.

While Submarket 3 is a more mature real estate market relative to other segments of the corridor, especially in terms of residential house values and the market acceptance of new investment in the form of stacked townhomes. This is largely attributed to the stable neighbourhood context, abundant amount of green space, location of schools, and the close proximity of the Humber River.

## Key Considerations

### Short Term (<5 Years)

- Stronger connections to the ravines should be considered in order to encourage pedestrian links to nature.
- Require streetscape improvements along Finch Avenue West to address the retaining wall at the southern end of Finchdale Plaza as well as improve the user experience along the corridor.
- Streetscape improvements and connections between the proposed LRT stop and neighbourhood destinations north and south of Finch Avenue West should be considered as part of a coordinated public realm network.
- Investigate potential trails, paths, and connections to *Natural Areas* along the west and southern edges of the submarket area that may enhance local amenities for residents.

### Longer Term (>5 Years)

- It is advantageous to plan for intensification within *Mixed Use Areas*, in particular, the Finchdale Plaza. This can include explorations into revised height and density permissions.



Submarket Area 3: Finchdale Key Considerations



## SUBMARKET AREA 4: EMERY VILLAGE

### Existing Physical Context

- Submarket Area 4 is bounded by the Deer Park Collision Center to the north, CP rail corridor to the east, Humber River to the south, and a residential neighbourhood to the west.
- The portion north of Finch Avenue West consists primarily of large employment blocks that were designed to serve the primarily auto-dominated industry of the day and therefore lack connectivity and present poor pedestrian connections.
- The northwest corner of Finch Avenue West and Weston Road is comprised of a mix of uses including a five storey residential building with retail at grade.
- The southern portion of the submarket area is characterized by single detached homes, townhouses, and apartment buildings along Finch Avenue West.
- A utility corridor runs through the southeast corner of the submarket area. West of the corridor there are employment lands located adjacent to the CPR.

- There are several existing community facilities, including parks within the site: Bluehaven Park, Lanyard Park, Lindy Lou Park, and Habitat Park to the south. Schools within the area include the Daystrom Public School, and Emery Adult Learning Centre. One arena is located in Emery Village, the Habitat Arena.

### Existing Policy Framework

- The areas north of Finch Avenue West are dominated by *Employment Areas* with a *Mixed Use Area* at the intersection of Weston Road and Finch Avenue West. South of Finch Avenue West is designated mostly *Neighbourhoods*, and is bounded by the Humber River (*Natural Areas* designated) to the south, and an *Employment Area* in the most south-eastern corner. *Mixed Use Areas* and *Apartment Neighbourhoods* are located along Finch Avenue West and Weston Road.
- The Finch Avenue West Avenue Study was prepared in 2001.
- The Emery Village Secondary Plan was adopted by Council in 2002, encompassing the lands within the Emery Village submarket area. The Secondary Plan includes a public realm plan which will need to be reconciled with the broader public realm vision for Finch Avenue West.

- There is potential for a future GO station stop at the southwest corner of Finch Avenue West and Weston Road.
- The Emery Village Transportation Master Plan was completed in 2009 and recommended that the transportation network include: a new road connecting Toryork Drive with Finch Avenue West; a new road connecting Weston Road to Arrow Road; a new road connecting Rivalda Road to Deerhide Crescent; pedestrian and cycling connections; and improved pedestrian connections from Finch Avenue West to Emery Collegiate Institute; and two pedestrian bridges as part of the Pedestrian and Cycling Connections.
- The area around Finch Avenue West and Weston Road are part of a Community Improvement Project Area. The City of Toronto does not have a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) specific to the area; however a CIP is in place that administers the Community Façade Improvement Program for the Emery Village BIA.
- A Streetscape Master Plan is currently used for community and public realm improvement direction in the Emery Village BIA.

### Market Outlook

Emery Village is a mix of older industrial commercial uses as well as new residential development. From a market standpoint, Emery Village is considered well situated for development, especially the Weston Road and Finch Avenue West intersection that is already showing signs of development interest. East and west of this intersection, limited redevelopment and intensification is expected due to the industrial nature of the area. While parcels display redevelopment potential from a physical perspective in these areas, the limited market for office and other more intensive forms of commercial development will likely be attracted to other more strategic locations along the corridor or elsewhere in the city. It is expected that the LRT will significantly improve the prospects for development in this area.

### Key Considerations

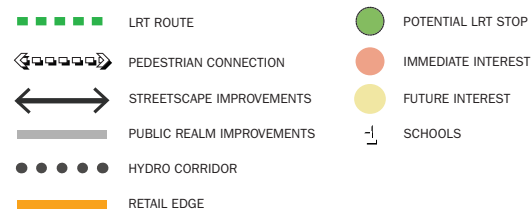
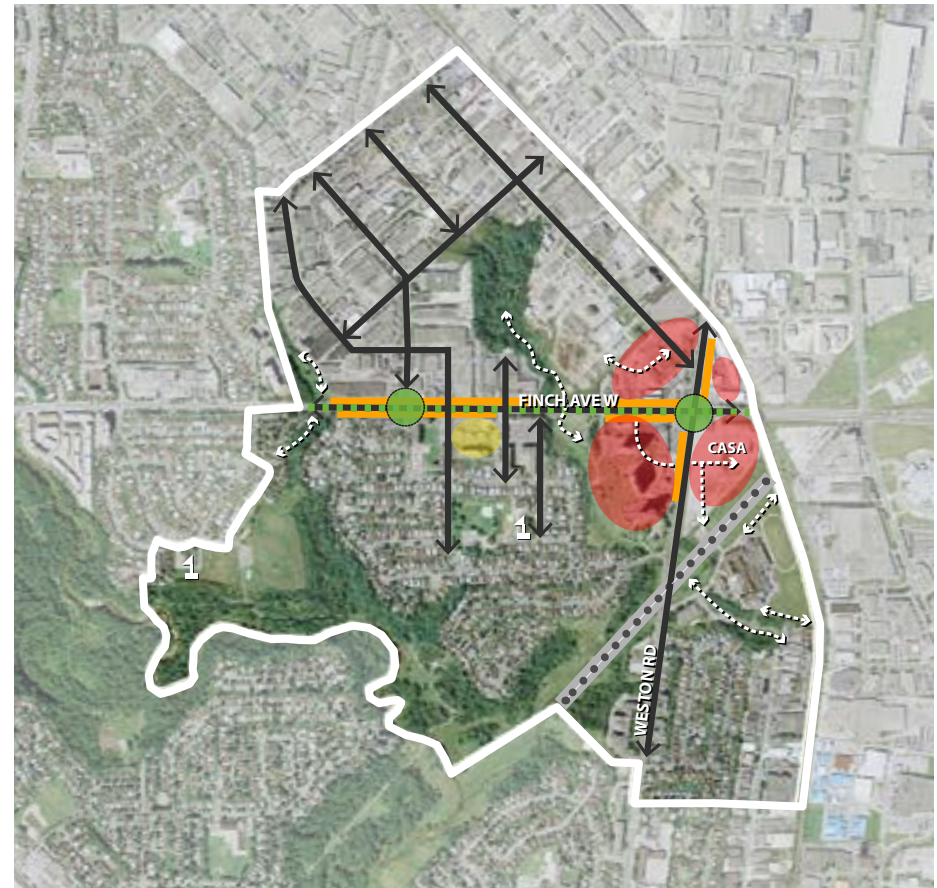
#### Short Term (<5 Years)

- Public realm improvements, consistent with the mixed-use development anticipated in the Secondary Plan, Avenue Study and Emery Village Streetscape Master Plan should be developed and implemented in tandem with the LRT infrastructure and private redevelopment at the intersection of Weston Road and Finch Avenue West.

- Public realm improvements that support *Employment Areas* and related uses should be considered for areas north of Finch Avenue West, including better pedestrian access to LRT stops.
- The public realm plan in the Emery Village Secondary Plan will need to be reconciled with the broader public realm vision for Finch Avenue West.
- Pedestrian and cycling routes between the new intensification and the existing Humber River Valley trail system should be considered to ensure access to area amenities.
- Provide cycling facilities in line with the Toronto Bike Plan.
- Reduce vehicular and pedestrian conflict points in *Employment Areas* and major roads.
- Explore opportunities to better utilize the hydro corridor in ways that provide added amenities to areas where intensification is anticipated, including playing fields, recreational trails, playgrounds, and/or allotment gardens.

#### Longer Term (>5 Years)

- Better understand the implications of the changing nature of employment and its effect on the employment lands within Emery Village including impacts of OPA231.



Submarket Area 4: Emery Village Key Considerations

## SUBMARKET AREA 5: HIGHWAY 400

### Existing Physical Context

- Submarket Area 5 is bounded by Kenhar Drive to the north, Highway 400 to the east, Lido Road to the south, and the rail corridor to the west.
- The existing conditions around the Highway 400 submarket consist exclusively of employment lands, with a Hydro Corridor running diagonally through the area.
- The submarket area is characterized by large industrial and manufacturing blocks. As a result of this physical context, the road network is poorly connected and does not contribute to a pedestrian-friendly environment.
- The Prayer Palace Church is located on the south-east corner of Finch Avenue West and Arrow Road, which includes large setbacks from Finch Avenue West.

### Existing Policy Framework

- The entire submarket area is designated as *Employment Areas* with a portion of Utility Corridor crossing diagonally in an east-west direction.
- The properties are subject to existing *Employment Area* policies in the OP. The employment lands should be protected for future economic opportunities.
- The Emery Village BIA represents most of the Sub Market Area and has developed detailed priorities for the area including a Capital Improvements Master Plan.

### Market Outlook

Due to the limitations of the hydro corridor and the disconnected road network, limited development activity is expected in this submarket. It should be noted that lands adjacent Highway 400 are typically in high demand for commercial and office uses. However, in the case of this submarket, the lands south of Finch Avenue West have been developed for a place of worship and to the north are occupied by a transmission corridor. This situation is limiting and reduces the benefits to the land from the LRT.



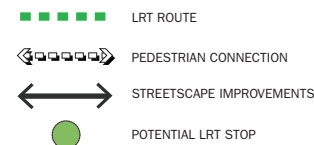
## Key Considerations

### Short Term (<5 Years)

- There are no *Natural Areas* or *Parks* located within the submarket area. Consideration for integrating green and open space will be beneficial for those working in the area.
- Public realm improvements should be considered in tandem with the BIA's Capital Improvements Master Plan and identify streetscape improvements that support the unique uses and functions of the *Employment Area*.
- Ensure that appropriate access into the *Employment Areas* will be achieved through different modes of transportation including pedestrian and cycling routes.

### Longer Term (>5 Years)

- Understand the long-term projections of the employment lands, and how the uses of the existing buildings may change over time.
- Protect lands for employment uses, but look to provide amenities within buildings, including the potential for local, business serving, and service retail.



## Submarket Area 5: Highway 400 Key Considerations

## SUBMARKET AREA 6: JANE AND FINCH

### Existing Physical Context

- Submarket Area 6 is centred at the intersection of Jane Street and Finch Avenue West, bordered by Black Creek Parkland and Derrydowns Park to the east, Highway 400 to the west, Shoreham Drive to the north and Frith Road and Grandravine Drive to the south.
- The Submarket Area contains residential areas consisting of single and semi-detached houses, townhouses, low rise and high rise apartments. Townhouses, low-rise and high-rise apartments are predominantly concentrated along the Jane Street corridor. The architectural styles of the homes were typical of those built in the 1960s, with a majority of them bungalows. The high-rise apartment buildings were built in the 1960s in a concrete slab style form with generous open space at the base of each.
- The commercial core of this area is Jane-Finch Mall and Yorkgate Mall, both situated at the intersection of Jane Street and Finch Avenue West. There is another commercial and institutional node situated at the intersection of Highway 400 and Finch Avenue West that consists of hotels and the Humber River Regional Hospital. Light industrial uses are concentrated adjacent to Highway 400.
- The area was developed from a master plan and is served by a network of secondary roads that create a network through all four quadrants of the Jane-Finch intersection. Surrounding the main intersection is a finer grain

of local streets as well as secondary and tertiary parks and trails results in a fine-grained network of connections. Schools and community facilities are evenly distributed across the four quadrants.

- There is a significant system of parks and open spaces within this neighbourhood. Running east-west, north of Finch Avenue West, there is an existing hydro corridor which includes parkland and trail linkages to the adjacent neighbourhoods to the west. Running north-south on the eastern edge of the neighbourhood is the Black Creek ravine system and associated parks. Neighbourhood parks and school-related open spaces are distributed across this neighbourhood.
- The maintenance storage facility (MSF) for the Finch West LRT is proposed for the north side of Finch Avenue West, between York Gate Boulevard, and Norfinch Drive.

### Existing Policy Framework

- About 46% of the submarket area is designated as *Neighbourhoods*. Most of the *Apartment Neighbourhoods* are situated along Jane Street, and *Mixed Use Areas* are on Finch Avenue West between Jane Street and Highway 400. Employment Areas are concentrated along Highway 400.
- Areas around the intersection of Jane Street and Finch Avenue West are identified as *Avenues* in the Official Plan. No Avenue Study has been conducted.

- The Jane Street and Finch Avenue West intersection is also identified as a Mobility Hub (Gateway) in Metrolinx's The Big Move. This hub is planned to integrate the Finch West LRT line, local bus service, and the planned Jane Rapid Transit Link (not currently funded) at the intersection of Finch Avenue West and Jane Street. No Mobility Hub Study has been conducted.

### Market Outlook

The Jane and Finch submarket, similar to the Albion submarket, contains a significant amount of retail commercial and high-rise residential space, including a concentration of older apartment buildings and TCHC properties that are popular among low income individuals and recent immigrants. The introduction of the LRT into Submarket 6 could have a significant impact on development in the future. While no near term interest has been expressed by the owners of the retail centres for intensification, the LRT will help set the stage for more urban mixed-use development. Due to the relative success of these retail centres, the market will need to mature beyond its current condition to allow these sites to intensify or redevelop. There are also few vacant parcels in the area.

### Key Considerations

#### Short Term (<5 Years)

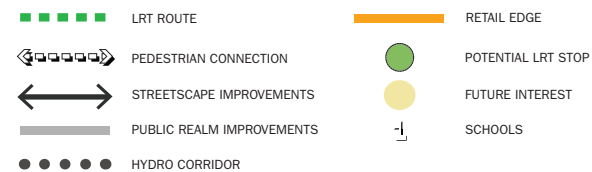
- Public realm improvements, consistent with anticipated development in the *Mixed Use Areas* should be developed and implemented in tandem with the LRT infrastructure and private redevelopment at the intersection of Jane Street and Finch Avenue West. Additional streetscape improvements should be considered as part of the MSF design and future plans for the Humber River Regional Hospital lands.
- Pedestrian connections between the proposed LRT stops and the existing Finch Hydro Corridor Recreational trail and the Black Creek ravine and trail system should be developed to best leverage transit investments.
- Assess connectivity between the LRT station and nearby employment areas, hotel cluster, and the Humber River Regional Hospital and ensure that these connections are direct, accessible and pedestrian-friendly.
- Consider opportunities for better integrating school green spaces to support potential intensification in the Area.

#### Longer Term (>5 Years)

- The design of the Maintenance and Storage Facility (MSF) should support the policy objectives for the area by integrating appropriate mitigation strategies that do not limit development potential of surrounding properties including ensuring noise and vibration impacts are minimized.



- The Jane Street and Finch Avenue West commercial node is surrounded immediately by stable low-density residential neighbourhoods, and future intensification should take into consideration the appropriate transition between the station area and the low-density neighbourhoods.
- Future consider the preparation of a Mobility Hub Study that reflects current implementation schedule for the Jane Rapid Transit Link and addresses any gaps in the planning framework necessary to address anticipated intensification.



Submarket Area 6: Jane and Finch 400 Key Considerations

## SUBMARKET AREA 7+8: KEELE AND FINCH

Submarket Areas 7 and 8 fall at the intersection of Keele Street and Finch Avenue West. Due to the future subway extension and the integrated LRT station at Keele and Finch, this study will look at both Submarket Areas as a whole.

### Existing Physical Context

- Submarket Areas 7 and 8 are centered on Keele Street and Finch Avenue West. They are bordered by The Pond Road to the north, the CN rail corridor to the east, Grandravine Drive to the south, and the Humber River to the west.
- Submarket Area 7 has a range of land uses on the north side of Finch Avenue West, where there is a large area of *Mixed Use Areas* as part of York University's Southwest Precinct Plan. This area is currently occupied by a parking lot and open space. South of these lands include residential townhouses.
- There is a Utility Corridor that runs east-west that separates the apartment towers in the south from the lower density neighbourhoods to the north.
- On the south side of Finch Avenue West, the lands are occupied mostly by single detached bungalows, with high-rise apartments located along Keele Street and along Finch Avenue West.

- Submarket Area 8 is comprised primarily of employment lands, with a mixed-use area at the intersection of Keele Street and Finch Avenue West. The physical context of the employment lands is characterized by increased setbacks, large building footprints and big blocks.

### Existing Policy Framework

- Submarket Area 7 reflects a variety of land uses, ranging mostly from *Neighbourhoods* with some *Apartment Neighbourhoods* and *Mixed Use Areas* served with *Parks* and *Open Space*. There is also a *Utility Corridor* running east-west that extends to Submarket Area 8. Submarket area 8 is predominantly Employment Areas with a small portion of *Mixed Use Area* in the intersection of Keele Street and Finch Avenue West.
- The Keele-Finch Mobility Hub (Finch West) is identified as a Gateway Hub, and will integrate a future subway extension and the Finch West LRT. The Big Move outlines that mobility hubs are generally forecasted to achieve or have the potential to achieve a minimum density of approximately 10,000 people and jobs within an 800m radius.
- Submarket Area 7 is partially encompassed within the York University Secondary Plan which establishes a framework to guide future development and redevelopment of the York University area. The Secondary Plan divides the campus into seven precincts, including the Southwest Precinct which is included within this submarket area.

- A draft Southwest Precinct Plan has been prepared to address the Southwest Precinct. The Plan is intended to provide a framework for the long-term evolution of the precinct by: identifying a pattern of streets, development blocks and opens spaces; ensuring appropriate transitions to the surrounding built-up areas; providing detailed guidance for new development; and establishing urban design guidelines.

### Market Outlook

Due to the future subway extension and the integrated LRT station at Keele Street and Finch Avenue West, this intersection will attract the greatest market interest for both office and residential intensification. This area will have access to both subway and LRT service, which is high in demand from both office and residential developers. This, combined with its location near York University, is likely to drive significant and near term market demand to all four quadrants of this intersection.

Given the nature of the market demand and development activity in the area there is a need to develop detailed planning policies to help guide new investment and protect existing neighbourhoods.

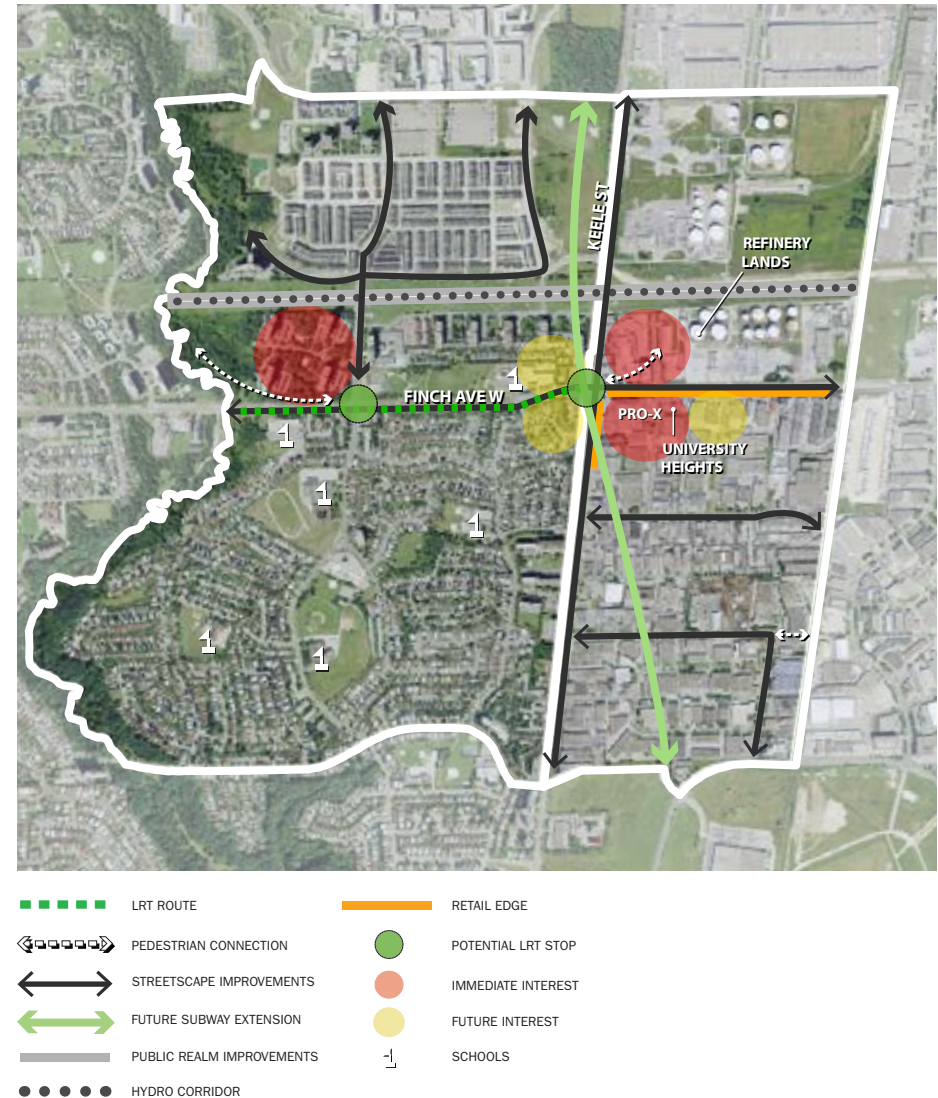
## Key Considerations

### Short Term (<5 Years)

- Submarkets 7 and 8 have different land uses that should be well integrated along Keele to enable appropriate transition between the neighbourhoods.
- Submarket Area 8 is deficient in *Parks* and *Natural Areas*. It would be beneficial to introduce some aspect of open space to these areas for recreation.
- With its adjacency to Humber River to the west, there is immense potential to develop a trail network that explores the area's natural heritage.

### Longer Term (>5 Years)

- Opportunity to create a sense of place/identity along Finch Avenue West in terms of articulating frontages, increasing density, providing higher density land uses, streetscape improvements including public art, street furniture, signage/branding, lighting, etc.
- Understanding the impact of future expansion in transportation (LRT and subway) and how it may affect surrounding neighbourhoods as well as planning for the area's role as a Mobility Hub.



Submarket Area 7+8: Keele and Finch Key Considerations