

Scarborough Centre Focused Review (SCFR) Draft Preliminary Public Realm Plan Design Workshop Summary Report



Photo Credit: Cheryl O'Brien, Canadian Architect, 2011.

Prepared by **The Planning Partnership**
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The Scarborough Centre Focused Review (SCFR) was initiated as part of an update of the Scarborough Centre Secondary Plan. The Study will articulate a clear and compelling vision and planning framework in support of the development of Scarborough Centre as a vibrant urban node. The Study's recommendations will also help ensure that new development is leveraged against the significant public investment in the Scarborough Subway Extension (SSE) for the benefit of existing and future residents and employees.

Within this context an internal design workshop was held on the morning of Tuesday, November 27th, 2018 to consider the Draft Preliminary Public Realm Plan for Scarborough Centre. Various City divisions and other government agencies were present along with the consultant team, The Planning Partnership (TPP). TPP presented key interventions ("Big Moves") and three preliminary design options for the public realm plan. The feedback provided during the roundtable discussions will inform subsequent stages of the study.

Participants

SCFR Project Management Team:

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Parks, Forestry and Recreation:

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John Stuckless, *Planner, Parks & Recreation*
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Cycling Infrastructure (Transportation Services):

Daniel Samson, *Cycling Infrastructure Engineering and Construction Services/ Transportation Services*
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Toronto Transit Commission:

Dragana Jaksic, *Permits and Approvals Co-ordinator*

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority:

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Create TO:

Mia Baumeister, *Senior Development Planner*

Workshop Format

The workshop started with a brief overview of the SCFR by City Planning staff. Subsequently, TPP outlined the purpose of the workshop and presented an analysis of the study area, the Big Moves and three design options for the Draft Preliminary Public Realm Plan. This was followed by a series of round-table discussions where the merits of the proposed options were discussed. Each table was comprised six to eight participants with the discussion facilitated by a TPP member. The workshop concluded with each group summarizing the key takeaways from their discussions.

Study Area

The Study Area (180 Ha) is established by the Scarborough Centre Secondary Plan bounded by Highway 401 to the north, Ellesmere Road to the south, Bellamy Road North to the east and the employment lands to the west. It is divided into four precincts:

- (i) the Civic Precinct, (ii) the Brimley Precinct,
- (iii) the Town Centre Commercial Precinct, and
- (iv) the McCowan Precinct.

Workshop Purpose

The Draft Preliminary Public Realm Plan builds on the approved Scarborough Centre Transportation Master Plan (SCTMP) and the significant opportunity presented by the Scarborough Subway Extension. The purpose of the workshop was:

- To review and evaluate the 'Big Moves' envisioned for Scarborough Centre; and
- To evaluate three preliminary design options and the manner to which streets, parks and other public spaces facilitate an emerging vision for the area.

The consultant team will reference these evaluations in subsequent stages of the **Scarborough Centre Focused Review Study**.

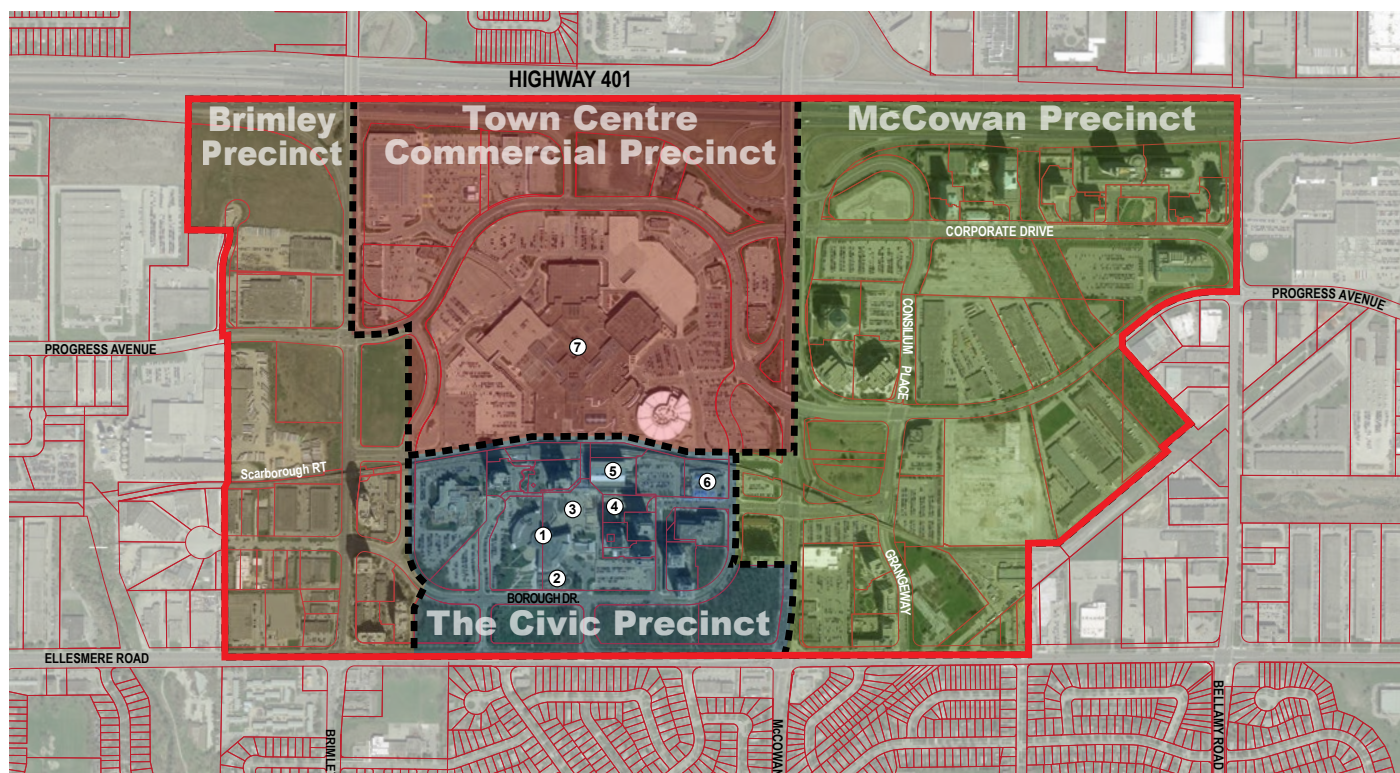


Figure 1. The Scarborough Centre Focused Review Study Area identifying the 4 precincts.

LEGEND

 Study Area Boundaries

 Precinct Boundaries

① Civic Centre

② Scarborough Centre Branch Library

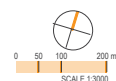
③ Albert Campbell Square

④ Albert Campbell Park

⑤ Service Canada Centre

⑥ YMCA

⑦ Scarborough Town Centre Mall



The 'Big Moves'

The Planning Partnership presented nine 'Big Moves' for Scarborough Centre Public Realm Framework:

Big Move 1: Revitalization of Albert Campbell Square

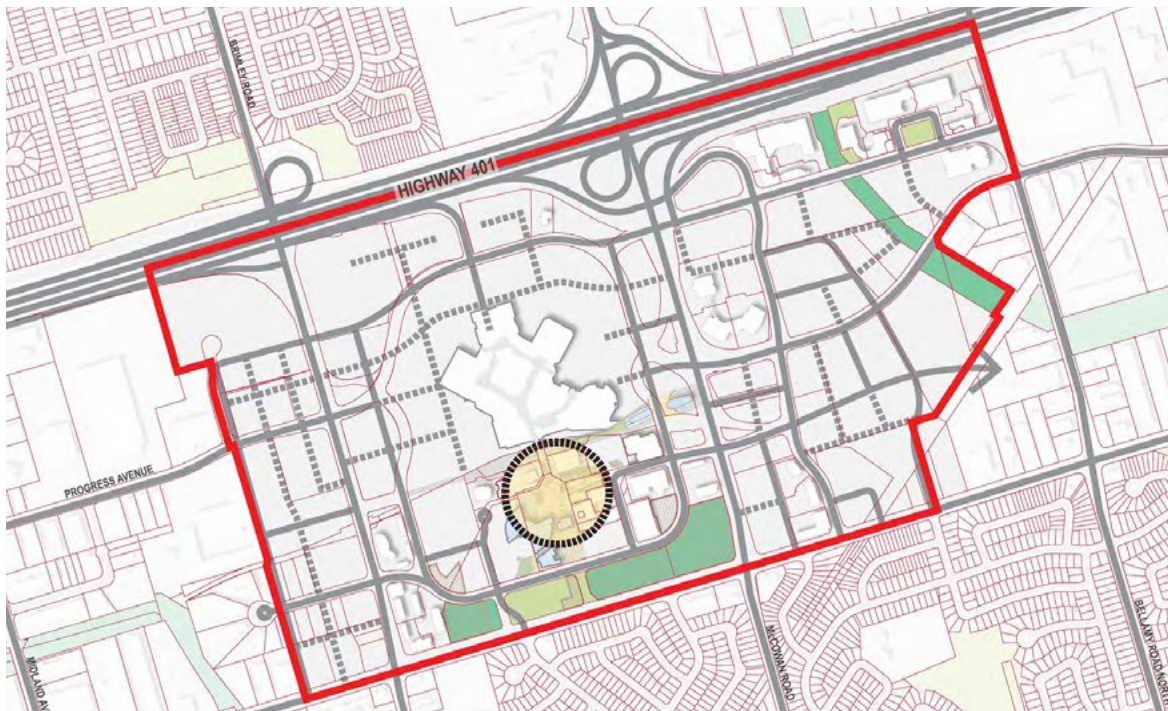


Figure 2.

Big Move 2: New Civic Focal Point

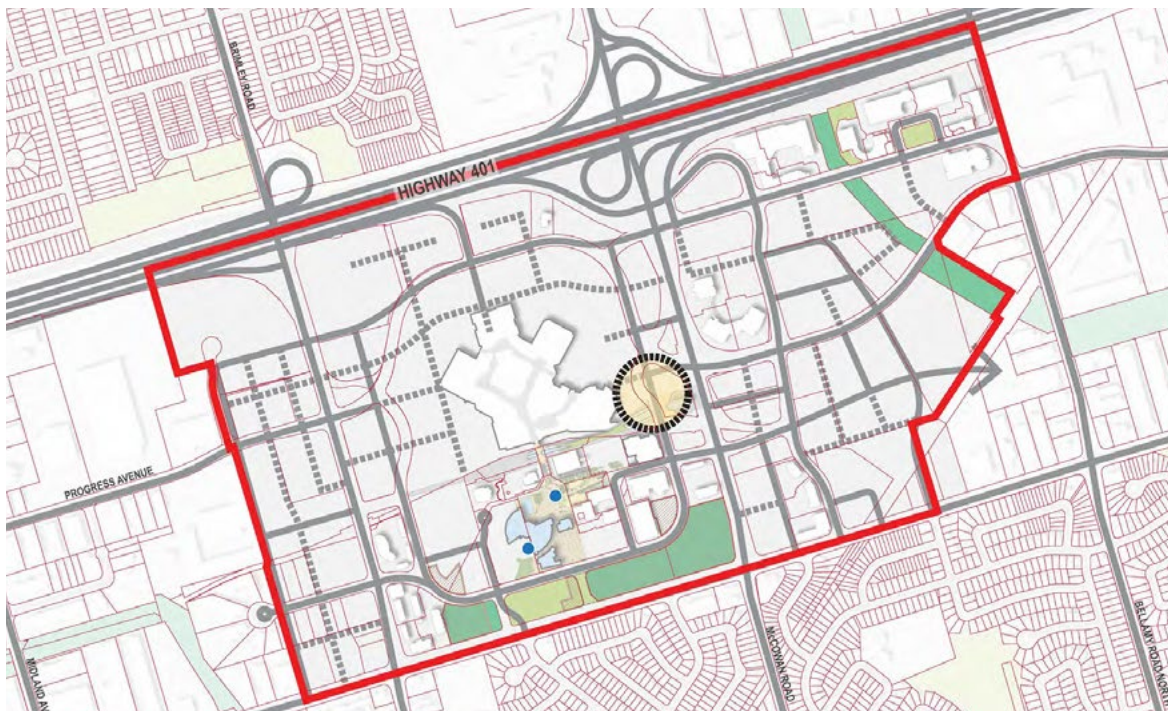


Figure 3.

Big Move 3: Enhanced East/West Connections

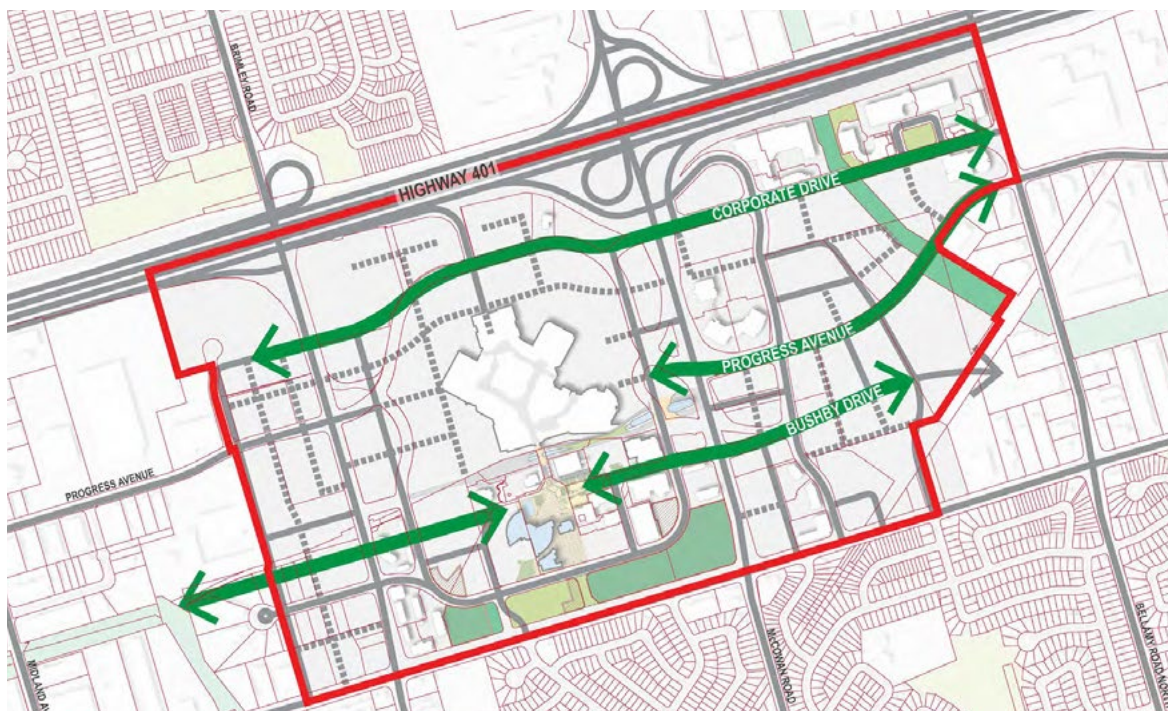


Figure 4.

Big Move 4: Create North/South Connections

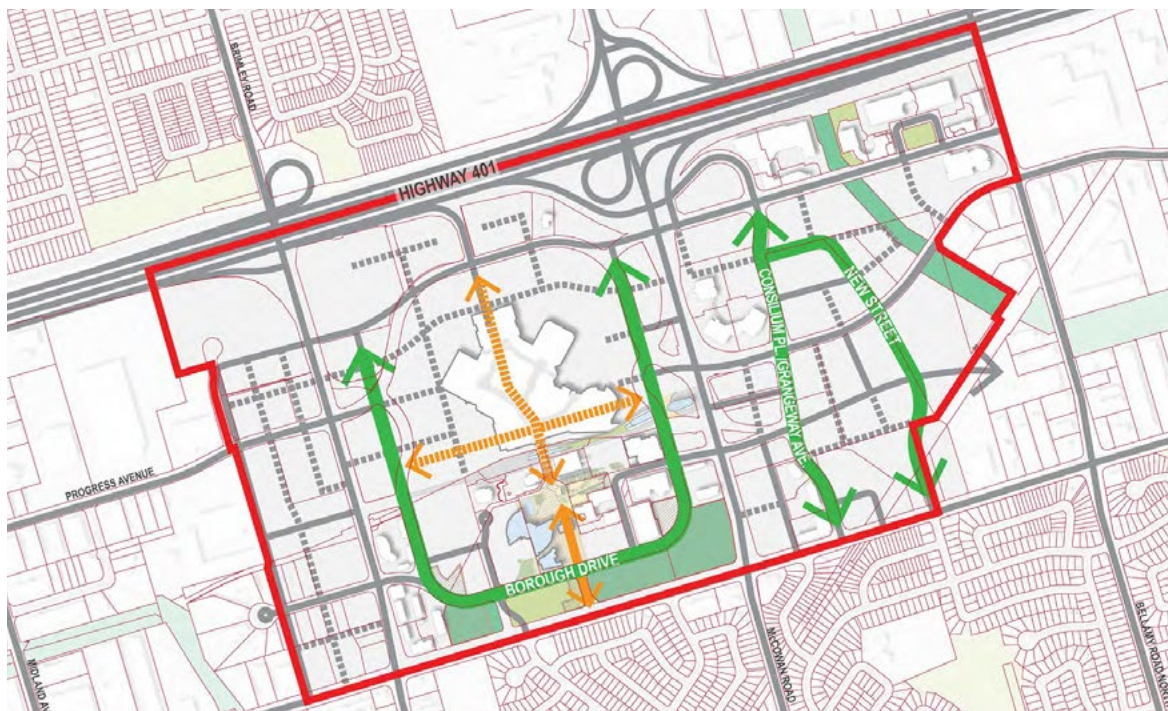


Figure 5.

Big Move 5: Extend Connections into Neighbourhoods

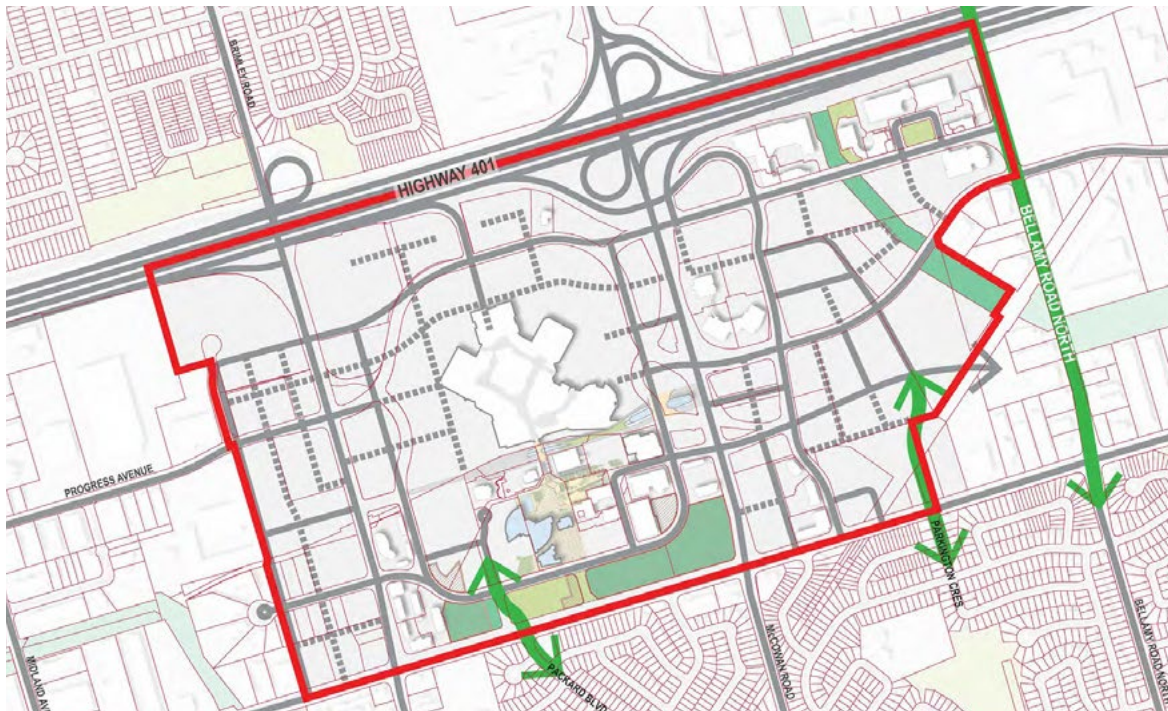


Figure 6.

Big Move 6: Enhance and Integrate with Natural Systems

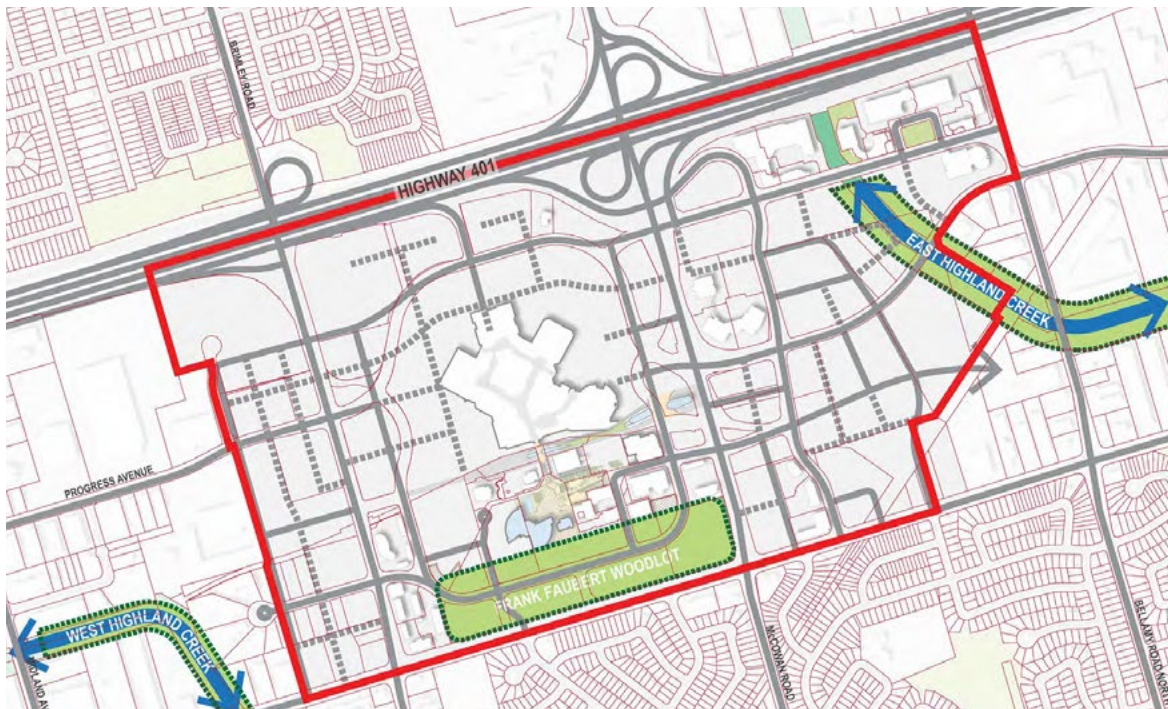


Figure 7.

Big Move 7: Create Destination Parks

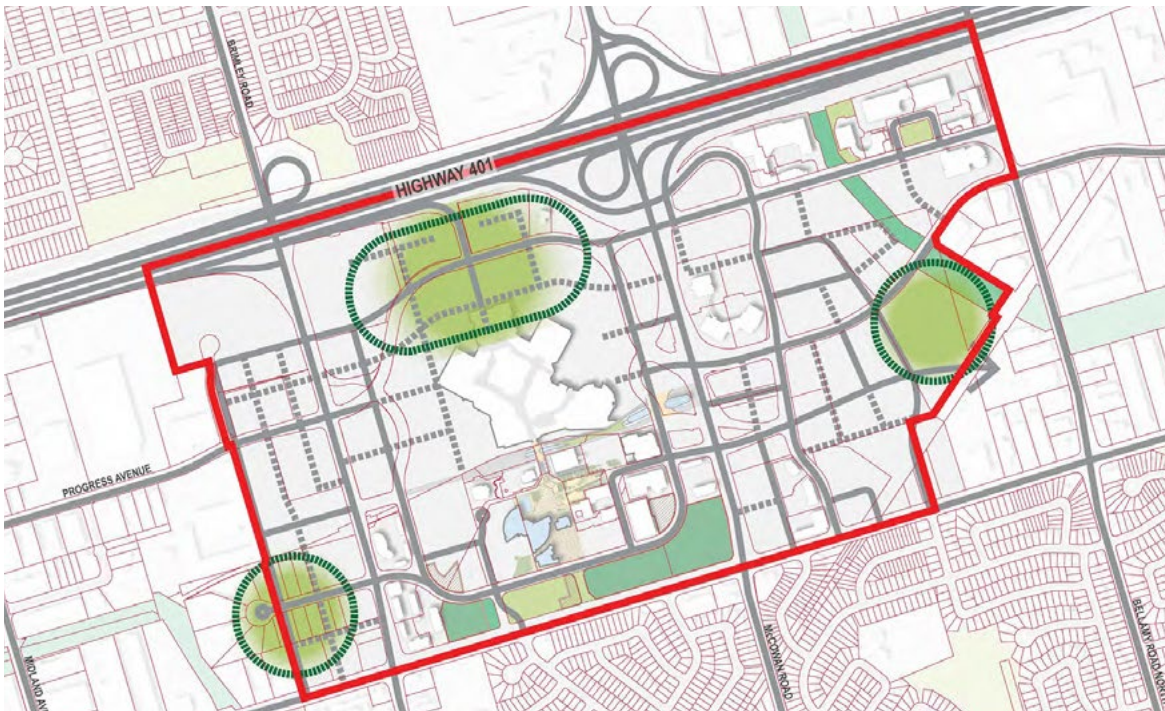


Figure 8.

Big Move 8: Create Local Parks



Figure 9.

Big Move 9: Create and Integrate POPS+ other Open Spaces into Public Realm

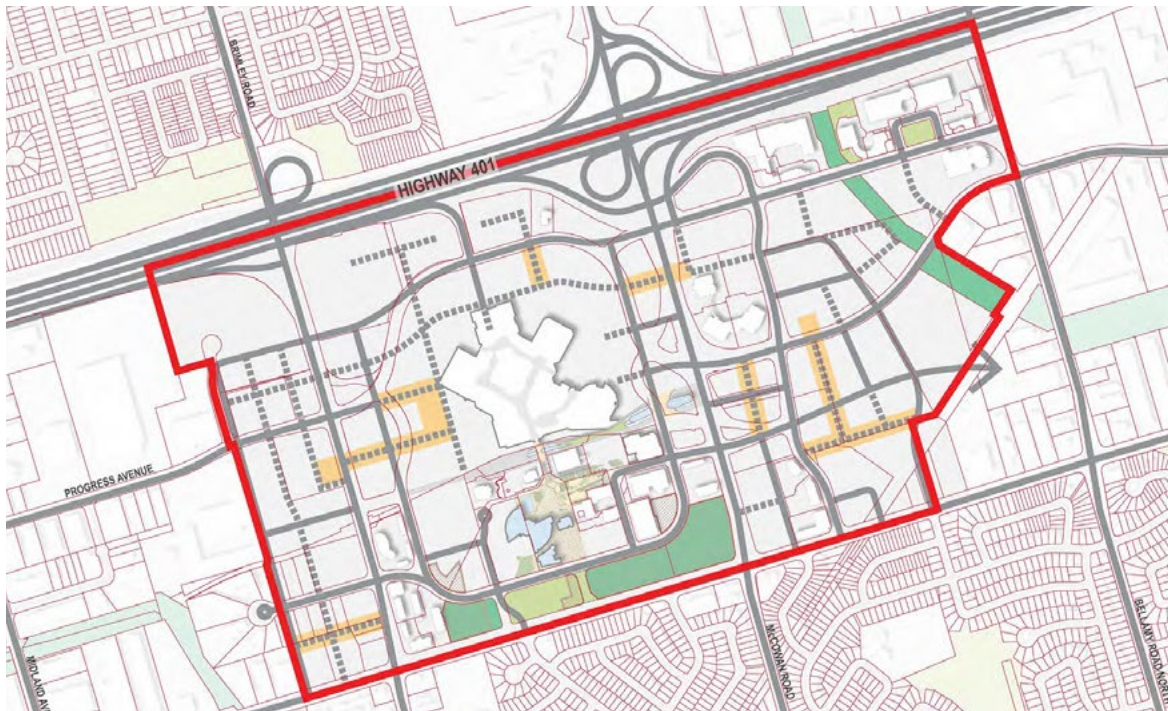


Figure 10.

Each table was allotted twenty minutes to evaluate the nine 'Big Moves' with a focus on particular issues of each precinct. TPP posed the following questions for discussion purposes:

- Do the 'Big Moves' create an appropriate framework for achieving a high-quality, pedestrian focused public realm for Scarborough Centre?
- What should be changed? Are there additional 'Big Moves'?

The Three Options

TPP outlined three options as part of their introduction presentation:

Option A: Continuous park connections on the west and east side of Scarborough Centre;



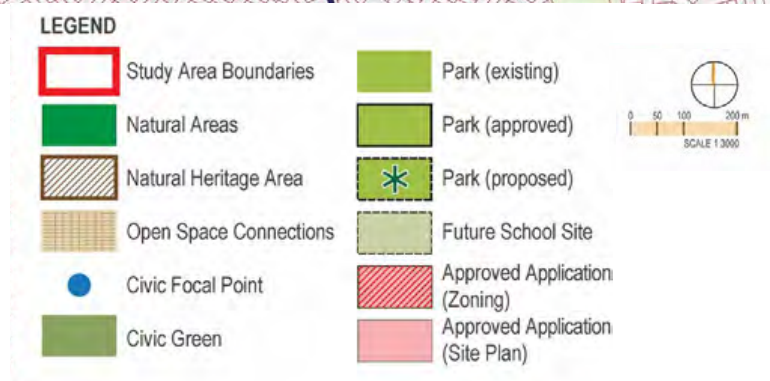
Figure 11.



Option B: Clustered or stand-alone parks on the west side; smaller parks and enhanced natural systems on the east side; and,



Figure 12.



Option C: Re-use of the Scarborough Rapid Transit corridor as green connection; reconfiguration of both the 705 Progress Avenue and 1750 Brimley Road parks.



Figure 13.



Each round-table had 25 minutes to comment on the 'Big Moves' and review each option. The following three themes with accommodating questions were used as a guide for discussing each of the options:

1. Connections

Questions:

- How is the overall Public Realm Framework connected and how do its component parks relate to the whole?
- How will appropriate pedestrian and cycling linkages to existing natural features and existing/proposed parks be created?
- How can linkages be achieved on the streets? Is there space on the streets? How should streets be designed? Are there off-street linkage opportunities?

Criteria/Considerations:

- Connections to the Subway;
- Supports a new civic focus around the subway;
- Quality of pedestrian experience within the available right of way;
- Ability to secure connections outside of study area to natural features (e.g. through employment lands); and,
- Integration with adjacent communities.

2. Parks/Types/Distribution

Questions:

- What are the types of parks and where should they be located?
- The City has a desire to provide a variety of park types and sizes within Scarborough Centre, including the provision of large footprint active parks. What are the merits of each option?
- If there is a new community facility at the subway station, what are the implications for Scarborough Centre and the broader community?

Criteria/Considerations:

- Located near resident population;
- Safe routes for kids and seniors (e.g. number of road crossings, traffic volume)
- Ability for City to provide facilities;
- Urban design qualities (publicly visible, placemaking, etc.);
- Acquisition process (timing of development, dedication/ cash, land banking etc.);
- Phasing; and,
- Ability to provide an indoor community facility, including the possibility of a new facility right at the subway station.

3. Placemaking: Focus on the Civic Precinct

Questions:

- How can existing places be enhanced, and new ones created?
- How can public places be created through a network of parks and open spaces?
- How can safe, accessible routes be provided from the subway to destinations (existing and new residential, the mall, employment areas, etc.)?
- What is the relationship of a new subway station plaza with the surrounding lands, communities and services that can be accessed?
- How can the existing assets (Albert Campbell Square and Park, library plaza, woodlots, etc.) be leveraged and improved?

- **Criteria/Considerations:** Direct, continuous routes from the subway to the Civic, Brimley, Town Centre Commercial and McCowan Precincts;
- Quality of pedestrian experience along those routes;
- Timing/achievability of those routes;
- Integration of existing public destinations with the subway (the Town Centre shopping mall, YMCA, etc.);
- Bus operations impact on the public realm; and,
- Impacts of high-volume roads.

Workshop Summary

General Conclusions:

- “Connectivity” and the concept of creating an ‘emerald necklace’ comprised of streets and park spaces was identified as an important component of the open space system;
- Agreement of a continuous east-west connection between West and East Highland Creeks comprised of streets, walkways, parks, and public squares with enhancements to the creeks’ public realm;
- Shopping Mall has a role to play as part of the connectivity system within Scarborough Centre;
- Wayfinding, and general clarity in the movement system, was deemed an important element of any public realm plan;
- Utilize spaces between Highway 401 and off-/on-ramps as opportunities for tree and/or meadow plantings;
- General preference for Option 1 with a continuous north-south park system along Borough Drive between Triton Road to north of Corporate Drive;
- Built form should be considered when developing a public realm strategy in order to determine the character of open space areas and the functionality of streets;
- Maximize development density around the subway station;
- Consider a community centre in close proximity to the subway station and the YMCA;
- Establish the City Centre as a ‘city wide’ destination;
- Identify short- and long-term planning objectives;
- Consider extending the study area boundaries westward to include West Highland Creek.

‘Big Moves’:

- Consolidate ‘Big Moves’ 1 and 2 and include connection between two areas;
- Combine ‘Big Moves’ 3 & 5 and 4 & 6.

Connections:

- Creek connections and affiliated open spaces need to be useable: utilize the SRT corridor as a linkage; expand the valley system where possible;
- Promote a strong pedestrian linkage between Albert Campbell Square & Park and the Subway Station.

Parks/Types/Distribution:

- Focus on ecological enhancements of Frank Faubert Woodlot;
- Provide various park sizes and types: include pocket parks and parkettes that needn’t necessarily be ‘green’;
- Provision of a larger park within each of Brimley, Town Centre Commercial, and McCowan Precincts;
- Require additional event/flexible public outdoor space.

Placemaking:

- Albert Campbell Square requires greater attention as a focal point with additional amenities, programming, and expansiveness/connectivity.

Option A:

- Strengthen 'Emerald Necklace' (i.e. 'enhanced' streetscapes);
- Provide appropriately sized park spaces;
- Prefer north-south park layout along Borough Drive on west side of Oxford's land;

- Recommend no plaza space west of subway station; instead, consider community facility; and,
- Consider shadow impacts from tall buildings on proposed open spaces.



Figure 14. Sketch overlay prepared by workshop participants indicating potential of connecting larger open spaces with existing natural systems.

Option B:

- Large park as proposed on Oxford's land is difficult to achieve;
- Utilize parks as gateway features;
- Precincts are too disjointed: require open space linkage

- Provide a connection between Triton Road and West Highland Creek; and,
- Provide programming for public open spaces.



Figure 15. Sketch overlay prepared by workshop participants indicating finer grain of connections and landscaping around Highway 401 interchange.

Option C:

- North Park (located on Oxford's land) is poorly connected to surroundings, and is located too close to traffic (Highway 401, off-ramps, etc.);
- Approval of park orientation at 705 Progress Avenue (adjacent to East Highland Creek);
- Preferred parks adjacent to natural features; and,
- Study adaptive re-use of heritage building (Old Scott House).



Figure 16. Sketch overlay prepared by workshop participants indicating key views towards civic centre and opportunity for green roofs on shopping centre.

Next Steps

The Planning Partnership, while taking into consideration the inputs from participants at the workshop, will proceed with the development of the Draft Preliminary Public Realm Plan. The consultants will work closely with the SCFR Project Management Team in preparing the draft plan as well as identifying appropriate next steps/considerations for subsequent phases of the study. In addition to the plan TPP will prepare perspective views that illustrate the character and potential of two key public realm areas.



Photo Credit: Cheryl O'Brien, Canadian Architect, 2011.