



# Mount Dennis Economic Development Study

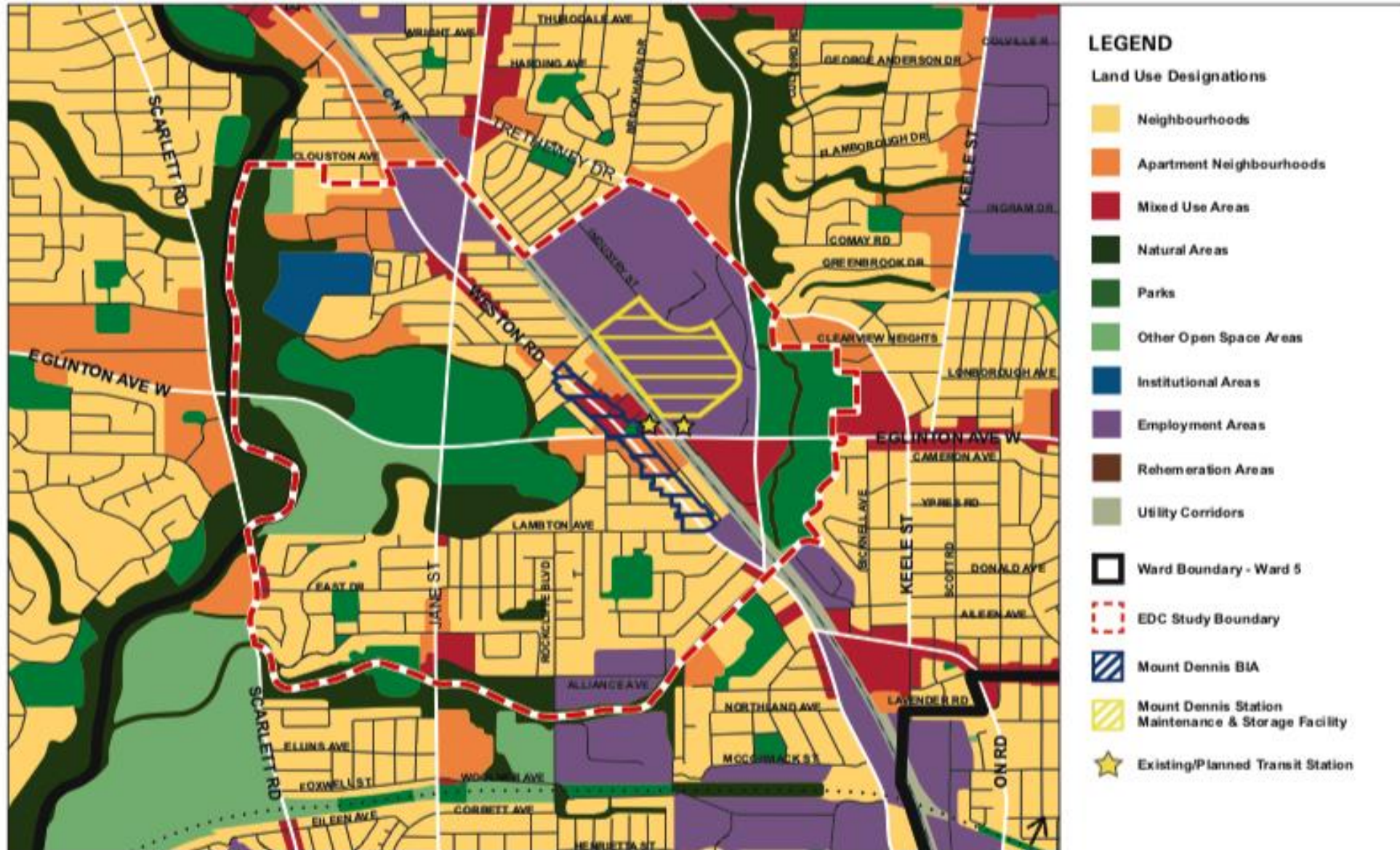
## *Phase 2 Draft Action Plan*

### **REPORT**

December 2019



TCI Management Consultants



# Recap of the Phase 1 Work

- **What we did:**

- *Extensive review of background reports, studies, policies...*
- *Several meetings with a Stakeholder Advisory Group*
- *Review of demographics, economics, real estate trends*
- *Benchmarked other (similar) economic development strategies*
- *Survey of businesses*

# Recap of the Phase 1 Work

- **What we found:**

- *Significant opportunities seen with transit and connectivity improvements*
- *Key sectors (public benefit corps, health care, green tech, transportation, construction) give boost to area*
- *Also developable parcels throughout area*
- *Businesses and organizations generally quite optimistic about change*
- *Some areas of competitive advantage: sustainable transportation, eco-tech*
- *Other areas where there is significant interest: arts & culture*

# Recap of the Phase 1 Work

- **But at the same time:**

- *Lower levels of income and expenditure in area*
- *Perception of poor image*
- *Lack of awareness on part of businesses about support available*
- *Lack of post-secondary education institution in area*
- *Some concerns about safety*



# SWOT Assessment from Phase 1

- **S**trengths
- **W**eaknesses
- **O**pportunities
- **T**hreats

# Strengths

- *access to public transportation*
- *access to highway network*
- *centrally located in the GTA*
- *an active Business Improvement Area (BIA) and a traditional 'main street'*
- *a historically strong industrial / manufacturing presence*
- *underutilized employment lands*
- *wide range of green space*
- *good community amenities*
- *availability of diverse and inexpensive real estate and housing*
- *availability of commercial space*
- *existing sectors of economic activity*
- *an active and engaged community*
- *lack of 'not-in-my-backyard' (NIMBY) attitude*
- *relative predominance of not-for-profit and public benefit corporations*

# Weaknesses

- *lower income*
- *disconnected community*
- *perception of lower safety and security:*
- *noise pollution*
- *improper use of zoning areas*
- *lack of skills training*
- *lack of awareness of business supports available*
- *is a food desert*
- *lack of strong positive identity*
- *resistance to change*
- *small retail business district and BIA*



# Opportunities

- *increasing residential density presents major opportunities*
- *branding of the area as an eco-neighbourhood*
- *growth in the health care sector*
- *former Kodak Building*
- *inexpensive housing in a very strategic location*
- *evidence of developer interest*
- *transit infrastructure and connectivity*
- *available developable spaces*
- *opportunities for more cultural events and creative activities*
- *relatively low/affordable rents for businesses of all types*
- *opportunities for more tech-related businesses*
- *educational opportunities*

# Threats

- *area vulnerable to what happens to large employers*
- *conversion of employment areas*
- *mixed-use Kodak plant redevelopment proposal*
- *possible disconnection of transit flow from community*
- *gentrification and displacement*

# Conclusion of Phase 1: A Framework for Action

- **Purpose:**

- (1) to develop a **vision** for economic development in the Mount Dennis area

- (2) to begin to **structure** the Action Plan according to the major areas of initiative

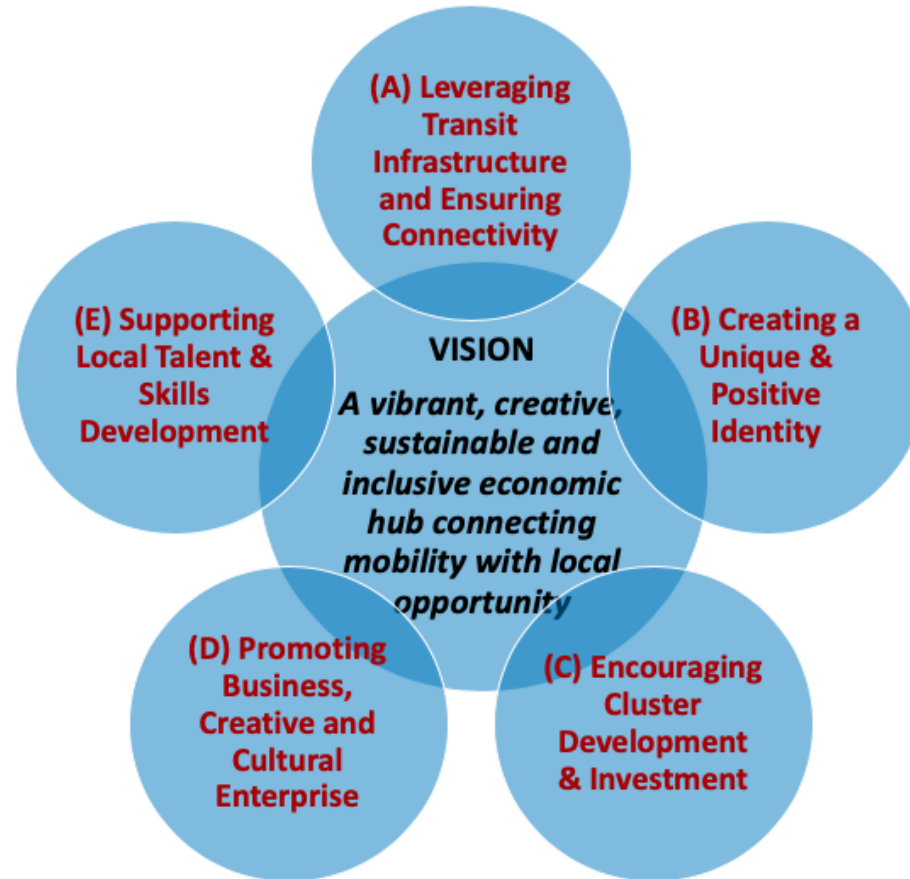
# Vision

***“ A vibrant, creative, sustainable and inclusive economic hub connecting mobility with local opportunity”***

# Unpacking the Vision

- **Vibrant:** new, innovative, growing, thriving businesses
- **Creative:** attractive to the creative sector: artisans, craftspeople, expression of new ideas
- **Sustainable:** environmentally friendly, clean, encourages economic, environmental and social development to meet existing and future needs
- **Inclusive:** welcoming of and responsive to, diverse cultures & traditions; barrier-free
- **Economic hub:** focus on existing & new businesses, new jobs for residents; attracting new investment and energy
- **Connecting mobility:** Leveraging the transit connectivity
- **Local opportunity:** A key focus is upon people who live here now: satisfying their economic wants & needs

# Vision Gives Rise to 5 Integrated Action Areas







# Framework Generates the Strategy

- 16 'supporting themes' were identified across the 5 Action Areas
- In turn these gave rise to **85 (!)** individual detailed initiatives
- Each initiatives is detailed in terms of who will be responsible, what is its priority, and when should it happen

# Priorities

- A** – High-priority recommendation, *must* be part of the Economic Development Strategy
- B** – Medium-priority recommendation, *should* be part of the Economic Development Strategy (EDS), to help support high-priority recommendations
- C** – Lower-priority recommendations, would be nice to implement but only after A and B have been dealt with
- D** – Important recommendation, but should be requested to be considered by City Planning as part of the Planning Framework Study or other City Planning initiatives
- E** – Recommendation that can be supported by the EDS, but belongs elsewhere and should be requested to be considered by other Divisions or organizations

# Timing

- **O** – Ongoing – is happening *now* and needs to be validated, supported
- **S** – Should be initiated in the Short-term, 2020 – 2021
- **M** – Should be initiated in the Medium-Term, 2022 – 2024
- **L** – Should be initiated in the Longer-Term, 2025+

# The Top 20: How Identified?

1. Support **over-arching City objectives**.
2. Focus on actions that are **within the City's mandate**.
3. **Concentrate on drivers versus symptoms** and focus on actions with a strong likelihood of success.
4. **Don't duplicate** other ongoing studies or initiatives.
5. **Build on, leverage and fill** gaps in current service delivery.
6. Focus on actions that can be researched and developed **within study timeframe and budget**.
7. Focus on actions that promise to be **cost effective to implement**.
8. **Visibility:** actions that have prominence and are noticed to signal positive change by residents and businesses.
9. **Short term:** at least some actions should be short-term in nature, resulting in positive change relatively quickly.
10. **Community-building:** at least some actions that involve partnerships or some form of joint action that help to build trust and community

# (A) LEVERAGING TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY

1. ***Actively promote Mount Dennis area for business investment and development:*** (to maximize impact of transit investment)
2. ***Improve access to commercial space:*** (e.g. programs that enable temporary use, access to vacant or underutilized space, 'meanwhile leases' etc.)
3. ***Encourage commercial development through land use planning tools:*** (e.g. commercial zoning provisions, greater commercial densities, etc., as appropriate)
4. ***Promote active transportation connecting to Mount Dennis transit hub:*** (e.g. pedestrian, bicycle, scooter, etc.)
5. ***Identify and pursue opportunities for community benefits:*** (through the City's Community Benefits Framework support local organizers to establish mechanisms to mitigate displacement and negotiate agreements with developers)

## (B) CREATING A UNIQUE AND POSITIVE IDENTITY

6. ***Initiate streetscape improvement projects:*** (using specific urban design guidelines improve the attractiveness of City streets throughout Mount Dennis)
7. ***Further promote BIA façade improvement program:*** (private sector investment to improve facades will complement local public realm improvements)
8. ***Support and promote public art in Mount Dennis:*** (public art sends a message about community pride and improvement and the importance of the creative sector)
9. ***Continue to promote community safety in the Mount Dennis business area:*** (promote community safety and maintain evidence-based safety and security measures)

# (C) ENCOURAGING CLUSTER INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

- 10. *Support the development of a sustainable transportation sector:*** (a growing sector where Mount Dennis is anticipated to have a competitive advantage)
- 11. *Assess potential for an urban agriculture opportunity and create a farmers' market:*** (e.g. a community-led farmers' market/urban agriculture project)
- 12. *Promote Mount Dennis as a film location:*** (e.g. through documenting potential locations for shoots and ensuring film-friendly streets)
- 13. *Establish an innovation hub:*** (the combination of available space, relatively low rent, and transit access supports the development of an innovation hub to incubate new businesses)



## (D) PROMOTING BUSINESS, CREATIVE AND CULTURAL ENTERPRISE

- 14. *Promote local art, music and other cultural activity in Mount Dennis:*** (encourage additional arts, culture and creative activity to build on the growing creative sector in the area)
- 15. *Establish new/extended festivals in Mount Dennis (e.g. Nuit Blanche):*** (bring Nuit Blanche to Mount Dennis, and support other festivals and events)
- 16. *Promote existing supports for business in Mount Dennis:*** (actively creating awareness and uptake of City programs that support businesses such as property tax incentives)
- 17. *Encourage and facilitate Mount Dennis business networking and collaboration:*** (e.g. in addition to BIA encourage establishment of a broader-based industry association for the area)

# (E) SUPPORTING LOCAL TALENT AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- 18. *Identify job/supplier opportunities with West Park Healthcare Centre:*** (West Park's major expansion presents potential local job and supplier opportunities for qualified participants)
- 19. *Support sector-specific access to job opportunities and talent/skills development (e.g. hospitality and tourism, film, music sectors):*** (through job fairs, information sessions, etc.)
- 20. *Initiate effort to attract a post-secondary institution/satellite facility in Mount Dennis:*** (with a significant population of post-secondary aged residents establishing a post-secondary institution of some type, ideally supporting the types of sectors seen in the area.)

**Post-Secondary Institutions and Youth Population Density in Toronto**

Legend

- Post-Secondary Institutions
- TTC Subway Lines
- Youth Population Density by Neighborhood (age 15-24)

160 - 436
436 - 707
707 - 1159
1159 - 2204
2204 - 3749
3749 - 5393

City of Toronto Economic Development and Culture  
April 2019

2.5 0 2.5 5 7.5 10 km

# Table Discussion

- Which of the Top 20 do you feel has the greatest potential for positive economic development change and why?
- From a public relations and awareness-building perspective, which of the Top 20 has the most potential for recognition and awareness-building for Mount Dennis?
- Which initiative will be best for ***local businesses***?
- Which action will result in the most positive change for ***residents***?
- Which will be the hardest and how might any difficulties be overcome?