

A black and white photograph of a building facade. The wall is heavily textured with peeling paint and visible cracks. A street lamp with a circular shade is mounted on the wall. The text 'NORTHWEST TRIANGLE PRECINCT PLAN' is overlaid in large, bold, blue letters. Below it, 'SWOT | Students Working for an Original Toronto' is written in a smaller, blue font. At the bottom right, the authors' names are listed in a smaller, black font.

NORTHWEST TRIANGLE PRECINCT PLAN

SWOT | Students Working for an Original Toronto

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The NorthWest Triangle is an area north of Queen Street and West of Dufferin Street in Toronto, Ontario. The area is bounded by CN Railway line, Queen Street West, Peel Avenue, Dufferin Street, Florence Street and Brock Avenue.

The NorthWest Triangle has been described as a “desirable place to live and work” due to its proximity to Downtown Toronto. The Dufferin Jog Elimination Project is currently under construction and upon completion will result in Dufferin Street being extended south under the railroad tracks. This connection will provide greater access to the area increasing the pressure to develop.

The area is in a transition phase of new development with increasing density. The City of Toronto, in response to the province of Ontario’s Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, has designated growth targets to be achieved by the year 2031. The City of Toronto, in response to these targets, will direct growth to lands that are currently underdeveloped.

In addition, the subject land is currently zoned for employment uses. In order to meet the targets of the Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the City of Toronto will need all of its current supply of land contained in Employment Districts. This means that protecting employment uses such as those currently taking place in the NorthWest Triangle, will be a priority for the city. The conversion of employment lands to residential use is only permitted by Provincial policy subject to a comprehensive review. The community together with Active 18 have started the process of creating a precinct plan for the area. On November 18th, 2009 a community design charette was held at the Gladstone Hotel together with Active 18, York University MES planning students, and professionals in the field. This precinct plan outlines the development principles and guidelines for the area that are reflective of the community’s vision for the neighbourhood.

1.1 Purpose of the Precinct Plan

This proposed precinct plan is intended to guide future development and regeneration as well to improve the overall quality of life for the residents of the NorthWest Triangle. This precinct plan has been developed to work in conjunction with the current Official Plan of the City of Toronto. Outlined in this plan are proposals to redevelop the current built and natural environment, while strengthening a positive sense of community. This proposal for the precinct plan has been created to be implemented over a 25 year period. Although, the precinct plan is focused on the NorthWest Triangle area, it is imperative to take into consideration the surrounding neighbourhoods and regions in order to achieve cohesion on a larger scale.

1.2 Duration

This precinct plan is meant to address growth and development within the NorthWest Triangle area over time periods for 5, 10, 15 and 25 years. This plan was created to be flexible and adaptive to different situations that may arise during the projected timeline of 5-25 years.

1.3 Interpretation of the Plan

This plan is intended to be a guiding document which will achieve the vision set out for the NorthWest Triangle. The plan illustrates ideas and concepts which serve as a flexible framework to achieve the vision. Exact standards for the development of buildings are outlined in the City of Toronto Zoning By-law, and standards for the development of public infrastructure are outlined through Environmental Assessments.

1.4 Current Policy Framework

The land within the NorthWest Triangle is zoned as part of the city’s Employment Areas. According to the City’s Official Plan,

development in Employment Areas should enhance the areas competitiveness, attractiveness, and function. Furthermore, the City's Long Term Employment Lands Strategy specifies that there be no net-loss in the City's employment land stock. This means that when residential development occurs, it should not be at the expense of the lands currently designated for employment, unless new employment lands are created elsewhere in the city. Although clustering of economic activity is encouraged in this area, excessive car and truck traffic should be avoided.

Parking and loading areas should be carefully located to allow ease of access for businesses, the sharing of driveways, and the mitigation of noise, vibration, dust, odours, and particulate matter (see section 4.6 of Official Plan). Attractive streetscaping can occur through landscaping in front of industrial uses, and through aesthetic improvements to older buildings. Boundaries between employment uses and other uses should be blended in an aesthetically pleasing manner that minimizes nuisance effects. Meanwhile, outside processing should be limited and located at the rear of properties.

Toronto's Official Plan also has a New Neighbourhoods policy (Section 3.3) that specifies that each new neighbourhood will have a comprehensive planning framework that will cover the pattern of streets, blocks, open spaces and infrastructure and ensure connections with surrounding neighbourhoods. New streets should be built in a manner that provides short blocks, enhanced public access to buildings, maximum connectivity for users of roads, sidewalks and trails, as well as ease of access for transit and emergency vehicles. Accordingly, land uses in the NorthWest Triangle should ensure a mix of uses that provide a connected system of parkland and natural heritage. New retail uses "must also suit the local context", which in this neighbourhood means enhancing the artistic and industrial character of the area. Developments should be street-oriented or oriented towards the neighbourhood's public parks, and should be phased in incrementally.

Despite the lack of parkland in the surrounding area, the official plan policies regarding parks and open spaces provide an opportunity to build natural heritage corridors within the NorthWest Triangle, especially along the railway line. The railway corridor represents an opportunity to create new park spaces that promote habitat connectivity with other areas of the city. In addition, it is city policy for new parks to provide a setting for community events, recreational pursuits, and the emphasis of unique assets of the community. These spaces should also front onto a street to provide for visibility, and thus public safety.

According to Section 3.1.2. of the Official Plan neighbourhood built form should blend with the surrounding character. This means locating buildings along park edges or streets, with prominence given to corner developments. It also means locating building entrances in clearly visible locations. Massing of new buildings should be appropriate and harmonious with surrounding land uses. Given the lower densities of surrounding residential areas, massing of new developments in the NorthWest Triangle should represent an appropriate transition from the neighbourhood's boundaries, with increasing densities towards the interior of the site. Not only does this result in appropriate built form, it also minimizes shadow effects on established residential areas.

Section 3.1.1. of the Official Plan contains policies to enhance and protect the architectural, landscape, urban design and construction quality in order to enhance the public realm. This means ensuring that funding is available for high quality streetscapes and public buildings. Sidewalks in the neighbourhood should be designed in a manner that enhances public safety and aesthetic appearances to promote a pedestrian character.

There is one heritage property listed under the Inventory of Heritage Properties, the Gladstone Hotel. Official Plan policies surrounding heritage properties stress the need to preserve such structures, but also for adjacent public works projects to use appropriate mitigation strategies that minimize any risk on the property.

The city's Official Plan also stresses the need to provide a full range of housing to residents. Tenures should meet the needs of a wide range of population and should include home ownership as well as rental housing, including affordable housing. In the NorthWest Triangle, developments will live up to and surpass official plan policies surrounding the provision of affordable housing in order to ensure that an inclusive, socially sustainable neighbourhood is created. Tax measures, regulatory, administrative policies and a range of incentives will be used to ensure specific targets of affordable housing in the neighbourhood are achieved. In addition, housing for the neighbourhood's senior population will be provided.

Official Plan policies governing the provision of community services are also relevant to the NorthWest Triangle. Provision of community service facilities and local institutions is provided for in section 3.2.2. of the Official Plan. This section also supports the use of schools for community purposes, which was a key theme of importance in discussions with community members. As such, the sharing of school space, religious space and other lands for community services will be provided within the neighbourhood. Neighbourhood services should be shared between different blocks (i.e., laneways and driveways). Surface parking should be avoided and placed underground. Design of parking structures should be integrated in appearance with neighbouring structures.

Urban Design Guidelines

The urban design goals of the Official Plan and zoning bylaw are outlined in Toronto's Urban Design Guidelines. The City has guidelines for various types of developments. Relevant urban design guidelines for this site include infill townhouse design guidelines, and design criteria for tall building proposals. There are also district or area based design guidelines, which guide development on an area-wide level or for large sites to be developed in phases. The NorthWest Triangle would be a good candidate for inclusion in the City's District and Site-Specific Guidelines.

Green Development Standard

As a new neighbourhood, developments within the NorthWest Triangle have the opportunity to be leaders in environmentally friendly building design. The city's Green Development Standard applies to new low-rise non-residential, low-rise residential and mid to high rise residential, commercial, industrial and institutional buildings. The standards will deal with solid waste disposal, local ecology, as well as with solid waste disposal, local ecology, and air and water quality.

Green Space System

The Official Plan recognizes that the green space system performs significant ecological, aesthetic, and economic roles. This system connects a variety of natural heritage features throughout the city. According to section 2.3.2 of the Official Plan, this network should be protected and enhanced, and linkages restored wherever possible by local agencies and Torontonians.

Provincial Policy Statement 2005

The Ontario government's Provincial Policy Statement sets a political direction to focus urban growth in existing settled areas. Land use patterns should "mix of housing, employment, parks and open spaces, and transportation choices that facilitate pedestrian mobility and other modes of travel."¹ Land use decisions should promote "healthy, liveable, and safe communities" while promoting efficient use of land. Land uses in the NorthWest Triangle will be set out in a manner that reflects these policy goals. New developments will use principles of smart growth to locate a mix of residents, employment uses and services in a close proximity to one another, in an area already served by city infrastructure and public transit, where residents can choose to travel in a variety of ways including active transportation.

2.0 VISION

SWOT Student Consulting's vision in this process is to be reflective of the diverse population, engage the public in a meaningful way, respect local knowledge and include the public early on in the process. We are committed to creating opportunities for the public to play a role in the planning process by being active in the decision making process. Following the public design charrette, we have created the following vision statement based on the results of the community's input:

“To create a complete sustainable community that enhances the physical, economic and social environment for the residents and employees of the NorthWest Triangle, and that is an ideal place to live, work and play. The community will contain employment lands, retail, living, public space, natural heritage, services and amenities that are connected by an extensive network of streets, trails, walkways and parkways.”



3.0 LAND USE

Purpose

The land use policies in this precinct plan are meant to ensure that development occurs in a way that will be beneficial to the community and residents. Land use policies will indicate which type of development is suitable according to the goal and objectives. The land use policies are meant to ensure sustainable growth of the community.

Goal

Preserve and enhance the employment areas while introducing various mixed use developments into the subject area to create a more vibrant and sustainable community

3.1 EMPLOYMENT

Context

The subject site is currently designated an Employment District in the City of Toronto Official Plan, and Employment Light Industrial in the City of Toronto Zoning bylaw. These areas of employment are places of business and economic activity consisting of offices, manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, research and development facilities, utilities, media facilities, parks, hotels, retail outlets ancillary to the preceding uses, and restaurants and small scale stores and services that serve area businesses and workers. The City of Toronto Long-term Employment Land Strategy indicates that the entire supply of land in the City's Employment Districts is required to to achieve growth targets contained in the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the City of Toronto Official Plan. In addition, significant new space will need to be added through intensification and redevelopment.

Goal

The employment uses in the NorthWest Triangle will therefore be preserved and intensified in order to meet the City's Long-Term Employment Land Strategy. A broad range of employment opportunities will be promoted, including employment that serves the regional and local economy. Employment areas will also take on a form and design that is compatible with surrounding uses.

Objectives

- Protect employment areas using legislative tools such as the Planning Act, Provincial Policy Statement, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and City of Toronto Official Plan
- Utilize current planning and financial tools to promote intensification of employment areas
- New residential development will be not decrease the amount of land available for employment uses

Proposed Strategies

- Use design, buffering and separation from industries as necessary in order to mitigate adverse effects form noise, vibration, traffic, odour and contaminants, and to promote safety and security

- Conduct a study to determine how to overcome barriers to employment intensification and create expanded policies
- Marketing and infrastructure investment to enhance the competitive edge of the subject area in the regional economy
- Public-private partnerships to improve the foundation for growth
- Sharing driveways and parking area when possible to use land efficiently
- Promote multi-storey employment uses where possible
- Capitalize on financial incentives offered by the City of Toronto for employment intensification
- Use the Development Permit System to achieve better form and design of employment uses

3.2 MIXED USE

Context

While employment uses must be preserved and intensified in order to meet the City of Toronto Long Term Employment Land Strategy, community residents also expressed great interest in a variety of other uses for the subject area to improve overall quality of life.

Goal

In response to the strong interest in greater mix within the subject area, a variety of other uses will be permitted in addition to employment activities. The current residential stock will be improved and opportunities for residential intensification will be explored. Commercial and retail uses will be permitted in order to provide the community with a variety of services, and park space will be developed to serve the community's recreational needs. Therefore, while the subject area will remain predominantly employment use, a variety of compatible mixed uses will also be introduced where space permits.

Objectives

- Propose an amendment to the official plan policies and the zoning by-law to permit a variety to compatible mixed-use development within the subject area

Proposed Strategies

- Residential intensification in laneway structures
- Capitalize on Section 37 of the Planning Act for residential units over 10 storeys
- Capitalize on financial incentive programs for brownfield and greyfield redevelopment
- Strict intensification requirements for new development
- Proper buffering to create greater compatibility between different land uses
- Use the Development Permit System to facilitate good community design, efficient use of land, and sustainable redevelopment

Existing Conditions: Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Existing uses provide support for neighbourhood</p> <p>Mix of uses is aesthetically interesting and serves a diverse population</p> <p>Well used employment lands are important to the city</p> <p>Social mix of residential neighbourhoods</p>	<p>Light industrial uses create truck traffic</p> <p>Land contamination on west side of Gladstone</p> <p>Awkward uses (i.e., lone house between furniture bank and 3 storey mixed use bldg)</p> <p>Uncertainty associated with development of vacant lands, possible unwanted activities taking place in vacant land</p>

4.0 PUBLIC REALM

Purpose

The public realm includes streets, parks and public open space, pedestrian and bike circulation, transit, municipal services and community facilities. These public spaces provide community residents and visitors with recreational opportunities and the ability to move safely through the community. They also help to establish social networks and achieve health and psychological benefits.



Context

The NorthWest Triangle requires improvements in all aspects of public realm. There are only a few opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy public spaces and have safe, positive experiences walking and cycling through the area.

Goal

Create public spaces that foster social interaction, place-making and community building but also encourage the organic formation of space.

Objectives

- Design flexible spaces dedicated to public interaction that facilitate the strengthening of social networks while promoting cultural and economic activity such as plazas, squares, markets, and parks
- Enhance pedestrian access to housing, employment, services, retail, public transit and other amenities by ensuring pedestrian linkages throughout community
- Consciously create appealing pathways that lead to dynamic and lively public spaces and that preserve enjoyable views to other parts of the neighbourhood
- Capitalize on the City of Toronto's bike route strategy by integrating new cycling routes and bike lanes into newly developed areas
- Encourage a pedestrian-oriented environment with use of innovative street furniture for local businesses to bring more people out into the streets and stimulate conversation
- Create parks and open space to provide low-impact recreation uses for the community
- Increase opportunities for public enjoyment of natural heritage
- Preserve fruit-wholesale land use to extent possible, use as focal point for community marketplace (i.e., functioning employment space that serves public as well, such as Granville Island)



Proposed Strategies

- Promote public art installations in laneways and on appropriate structures throughout the community
- Utilize the City of Toronto's Graffiti Abatement Program, which employs youth to eradicate graffiti tags and vandalism and replace it with City-sponsored murals
- Take advantage of the Development Permit System to create design standards for the community, which will translate into more positive pedestrian experience
- Explore potential for government funded infrastructure improvements
- Integrate wide sidewalks and narrower streets to encourage greater pedestrian/cycling activity and safety
- Build a trail system along the rail corridor
- Work with fruit-wholesaler to see how to integrate its function into a community marketplace

Existing Conditions: Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
Some public art in laneways etc.	Limited open and/or greenspace
Phase two of the West Toronto Rail Path	Competition for space; cluttered sidewalks: advertising
	Limited opportunity for public realm

5.0 BUILT FORM

Purpose

Built form consists of height, massing, accessibility, connectivity, aesthetics and the relationship of buildings to public spaces. The built form largely contributes to how people relate to their environment and how they feel in particular places. Appropriate and well-planned built form can significantly improve resident and visitor experience of a place.

Context

The subject area consists of predominantly low-rise employment and residential developments. The community residents have varying ideas on what is 'good built form' in the area. For example, while some members of the community proposed to preserve the studios on Dufferin Street, others proposed to replace them, or otherwise make vast improvements to the exterior of the buildings. The built form of the area must therefore be flexible to appeal to a wide variety of residents and visitors.

Goal

Maintain the current character of the built form but increase points of connectivity and accessibility throughout the NorthWest Triangle. Encourage a dynamic built form that celebrates the traditional Victorian architecture of the area and contributes to a unique sense of place by forging a relationship between streets, blocks, and buildings that is reflective of the neighbourhood's culture and heritage. An appropriate and desirable level of intensification for new residential construction will be decided upon.

Objectives

- Divide the coarse grid fabric of the neighbourhood into a finer scale of small blocks to augment circulation, and establish more connections and access routes between streets
- Creatively design street frontages to link interesting paths to public gathering spaces
- Make efficient use of vertical space by varying the height and density of buildings, and take into account the potential formation of wind tunnels, shadow effects, and evolving character of the streets
- Assure that housing and retail building widths are relatively small to support a diversity of different uses. Allow employment buildings to have larger widths that are consistent with their functions
- In mixed use developments, keep retail at the ground level to provide street frontage, offices or studios above retail, and residential units atop employment
- Increase the setbacks of buildings from streets to allow for the development of wider sidewalks and dedication of space to the urban forest
- Dedicate streets primarily for active and public transportation, with interconnecting bicycle routes, wider landscaped sidewalks that have street furniture and art installations, and narrower streets to ensure pedestrian safety and to reduce the speed of traffic
- New developments respect vernacular architecture

Proposed Strategies

- Establish a Design Review Panel through the Development Permit System to provide advice on design issues
- Use the Development Permit System to protect and enhance the community's built heritage
- Maximum height for residential developments is 10 storeys, higher structures allowed with use of density bonusing (Section 37, Planning Act)
- Explore the potential for government financial assistance for structural improvements and brownfield redevelopment, implement a Brownfields Community Improvement Plan
- Utilize municipal planning and financial tools to protect heritage properties and establish their importance through the use of historical plaques

Existing Conditions: Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
Some heritage buildings – Victorian row houses and industrial buildings	Hard contrasts in building uses and types such as Industrial - residential and big box retail – residential
Lower rise building structures prevent overshadowing	Design of new buildings are creating unfriendly streetscape (short but wide and blank walls, long blocks)
	Poor condition of some buildings

6.0 CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Purpose

Cultural heritage may consist of particular buildings, structures, facilities, streetscapes and activities that are prominent in a community. They serve to foster a strong sense of place, history and connection to the land.

Context

The NorthWest Triangle is recognized as a productive artistic neighbourhood with a variety of work studios located predominately on Dufferin street north of Peel Street. The Victorian row house architecture, the renovated heritage Gladstone Hotel, and the CN Rail line are other prominent historical features of the area.

Goal

Retain the neighbourhood's distinct heritage through the preservation of unique and enduring places such as the Gladstone Hotel and the CN Railway. Respect the neighbourhood's history by maintaining artist work spaces that foster organic development of local culture and identity.

Objectives

- Ensure regional history is emphasized and visible in community built form
- Preserve functional uses that contribute to the identity and cultural texture of the neighbourhood

Proposed Strategies

- Protect artist work spaces
- Make certain that affordable housing is in effect to minimize gentrification of the neighbourhood
- Reuse and renovate heritage buildings such as victorian row houses and industrial establishments that reflect the history of the area
- Highlight the CN Railway by creating a bordering natural heritage and park system
- Reinforce sense of place through the opportunities provided by flexible public spaces that will allow residents and those working in the area to use urban rooms in a creative, unrestricted manner

Existing Conditions: Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Established neighbourhood with local identity, history and cultural resources (local artists, cultural institutions, festivals)</p> <p>Large stock of Victorian housing</p> <p>Victorian era industrial buildings</p> <p>Views of city</p> <p>Ample space for street art</p>	<p>Dilapidated and uncared for industrial heritage buildings</p> <p>Untapped potential for incorporating alleyways, parking lots and industrial sites into creative spaces</p> <p>Cultural friction between established neighbourhoods</p> <p>Graffiti mostly tagging rather than public art</p> <p>Victorian era industrial infrastructure is only one storey tall and not oriented towards a straightened Dufferin St.</p>

7.0 HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENT

Purpose

Housing can take a wide variety of forms, including single detached dwellings, row housing, stacked housing, and low-, mid- and high-rise apartment and condominium buildings. It is important that a wide variety of housing types and tenures are available in the area to provide opportunities for people of various ages, genders, cultures, income levels, family structures, and life cycles to live in any given area. A diversity in housing also facilitates greater social mix within the community.

The housing and residential environment is vital in improving the area to allow for sustainable growth measures that will attract new residents. Growth will also allow for innovative and creative investment opportunities with the creation of new businesses, services and the redevelopment of existing infrastructure. The possibility exists to renovate existing buildings for energy conservation and safety purposes.



Context

Currently in the NorthWest Triangle, there is a variety of housing stock, including detached, semi-detached, row housing, live-work spaces and low to mid-rise dwellings. Victorian housing is in close proximity to services and public transportation and reflects the unique character and history of the neighbourhood. In the area there is an issue of affordability due to high rents and property values, and a lack of social housing. Some dwellings have come into disrepair which has impacted the visual appearance of the area. In addition, the age of the area's housing stock suggests there are energy efficiency issues.

Goal

To have a neighbourhood that contains a wide array of high quality housing options that serve a range of different incomes, family types, and lifestyles.

Objectives

- Encourage improvements to existing housing infrastructure
- Promote residential intensification
- Ensure a variety of residential types and tenures exist within the community

- Surpass city standards for affordable housing by requiring 40 percent of new housing to be ‘affordable’, defined as not exceeding 30% of the total household income (CMHC, 2009)

Proposed Strategies

- Create housing for seniors that is accessible and in close proximity to amenities and services
- Amend zoning by-law to approve laneway housing and secondary suites for residential intensification
- Increase affordable housing using the Canadian Affordable Housing Program and the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association
- Capitalize on Homeowner Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) offered by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Existing Conditions: Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Variety of housing types - detached, semi-detached, row housing, live-work space, low- and mid-rise</p> <p>Housing is in close proximity to grocery / convenience stores / TTC</p> <p>Housing reflects unique character and history of the neighbourhood</p>	<p>High rents, High property values, High property taxes (issue of affordability for seniors, working class, large families)</p> <p>Lack of affordable / social housing</p> <p>Energy efficiency issues in older houses</p> <p>“Industrial” zoning + prioritization of employment lands requires zoning change to allow for infill / mixed use</p>

8.0 COMMUNITY SERVICES

Purpose

Community services may include educational services, libraries, community centres, convenience retail, urban agriculture, religious facilities and other services that benefit community residents. These services can provide a social safety net for high-needs individual and families and significantly improve quality of life.

Context

There is currently a community centre, public school, day care centre, and before and after school program in close proximity to the study area. Residents did not express significant concern for community services in their neighbourhood, however there was some interest in expanding on current services to take into account the needs of seniors and religious groups. Residents also expressed interest in incorporating an additional grocery store into the area to provide an alternative to Price Chopper. Lastly, there was interest in the development of a multi-use facility which could function as a market, community hub, and service centre for the community.

Goal

Improve upon existing community services by creating alternative choices to accommodate the diverse needs of the neighbourhood's inhabitants. In addition, community services will be visible throughout the community and accessible to all of the residents in the area.

Objectives

- Ensure community services are maintained to serve the growing population
- Explore opportunity for alternative community service provision through multi-use spaces within the community (ie: use of portion of a business building during evening hours)

Proposed Strategies

- Conduct a community needs assessment to determine what services are needed and desired
- Encourage local organizations to seek funding from foundations and philanthropic organizations to provide additional services for the community

Existing Conditions: Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
Services integrated into community Walkable and family-oriented	Services integrated into community Walkable and family-oriented Community services dispersed throughout west end Unable to locate comprehensive Inventory or map of community services

9.0 NATURAL HERITAGE

Purpose

Natural heritage is a system comprising of features that promote biological diversity. The system consists of substantial core areas connected by multiple linkages that enhance long-term ecological integrity of the area for current and future generation. Natural features include woodlots, wetlands, meadowlands, thickets, known locations of significant species, and water courses and water bodies. (North-South Environmental, 2009).

Benefits of augmenting natural heritage in the neighbourhood are expansive, encompassing improved air and soil quality; hydrological regulation; reduction in the urban heat island effect; filtration of pollutants; abatement of sound; increased well-being and health of residents; reduction in energy costs; and creation of habitat spaces. It also brings nature into the city in a unified way that will provide residents with quality experiences of the natural environment.

Context

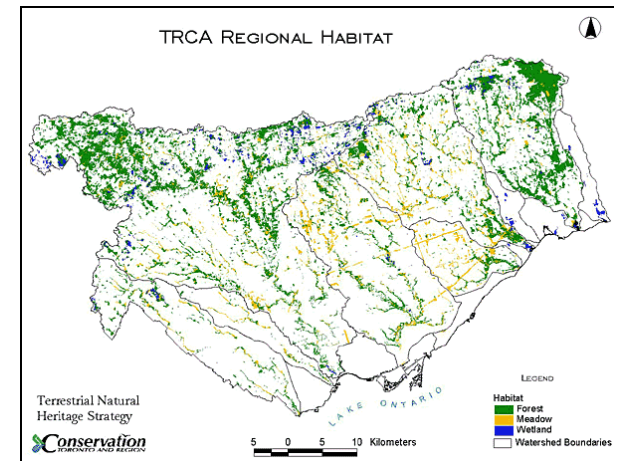
The area shows that there are no substantive natural areas (such as woodlots, wetlands, ponds, naturalized gardens, prairie pockets or meadows). The extent of natural features in the neighbourhood are limited to vary small patches located at the edges of buildings or sidewalks and some residential frontages that have naturalized garden spaces. Street trees are sparse in the area and are considered to be “nature stickers” rather than of a ecologically function system that seeks to provide a complex habitat.

Goal

Create a natural heritage system that promotes biological diversity by developing substantial core areas connected by linkages that enhance the long term ecological integrity and resilience of the area.

Objectives

- Preserve natural heritage features
- Restore core areas and linkages
- Identify areas for enhancement and potential buffer areas
- Expand the urban forest of public and private lands
- Integrate recreational uses to optimize educational opportunities for ecological awareness and heighten experience of nature in the city



Proposed Strategies

- Preserve naturalized corridors flanking the railway line as they may serve as a wildlife corridor and an area of enhanced biodiversity
- Create a continuous, interconnected core woodlot of substantial depth along the naturalized corridor as a productive and functional ecological buffer between the railway and any anthropogenic uses of land.
- A recreational trail can be incorporated alongside the woodlot to permit enjoyment of the natural areas by the community.
- Recruit and engage volunteers from the community and local schools in the restoration of the urban forest to cultivate a sense of stewardship while enriching local knowledge of historic ecosystems
- Strategically establish native habitat spaces on green and brown roofs that connect to the restored heritage network and pervasive urban forest
- Safeguard storm and waste water management techniques that incorporate habitat opportunities for biodiversity
- Encourage residents to plant gardens in their front lawns or backyards by securing a seed bank in the neighbourhood
- Promote planting of trees on front lawns and backyards by marketing LEAF (a local, non-profit organization) and the City of Toronto's free tree programs (http://www.toronto.ca/trees/tree_planting.htm)
- Intensively plant along streets and in/around parks

Existing Conditions: Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Small patches of natural areas - "wild" and unmanaged</p> <p>Alternative landscaping (lawns that are not manicured)</p>	<p>No substantive natural areas</p> <p>No visible natural processes or biodiversity</p> <p>No knowledge of biodiversity in the neighbourhood (land use perspective)</p> <p>No low impact recreational trails</p> <p>Limited areas for potential enhancement and buffer areas</p> <p>Lack of park/open space</p>

10.0 PARKS AND OPEN SPACE



Purpose

Parks and open spaces are important as they have the potential to act as an informal public meeting space that generates a vibrant social sense of community, and is inclusive and welcoming for all members. These types of land uses are pauses in the city where individuals can cease movement, enjoy their surroundings, and engage in reflection or relationship-building. This plan recognizes the importance of creating park and open space as an area of opportunity for the enjoyment of nature and recreation within an urban setting.

Context

Currently in the NorthWest Triangle there is a lack of park and open space for recreational purposes. A wide range of opportunities exist to maximize land and user potential.

Goal

Design park and open spaces for passive and active recreation that are safe and accessible, helping to foster a vibrant social sense of community.

Objectives

- Integrate parks and open space with the community so that they are used frequently
- Create beautiful, thought-provoking, and physically engaging spaces
- Encourage private and public partnerships so that sufficient funding is available for the development of high quality parks and open space

Proposed Strategies

- Create and implement beautification projects to foster a positive sense of community and pleasant, congenial landmark spaces that act as fortifying elements in the fabric of the neighbourhood
- Secure a cohesive joining of trail networks that enhance connectivity and fuse park and open space with the natural heritage system
- Implement security and safety measures such as adequate lighting, benches, trash bins, clearly marked pathways.
- Allow and designate space for public art such as innovative installations, furniture, murals, and tasteful graffiti
- Build Gazebos, Piazzas, artistic playgrounds, and rest areas in parks

Existing Conditions: Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
Land available to create park and open space that would encourage active and passive recreation	Lack of park and open space

11.0 TRANSPORTATION

Purpose

Transportation includes the networks provided for vehicular traffic, public transit, and active transportation such as walking and cycling. Efficient and strategically planned transportation is critical as it moves people, goods and services from point of origin to their destination.

Context

Currently in the NorthWest Triangle transportation is dedicated primarily for vehicular use. Creating active and sustainable transportation is therefore an important goal. The triangle has the opportunity to fabricate new connections by incorporating bicycle lanes to improve connectivity, movement, and circulation. Wider sidewalks could be devised to enhance and maximize pedestrian on-street traffic. The study area does have access to public transportation which is in close proximity to services and amenities. Additionally, once the Dufferin Street Jog Elimination is complete it will improve the flow of traffic by linking to Queen Street West. Although efforts will be made to reduce the dependency on the car, considerations will be made to provide for on-street parking and ensuring the road network is both safe for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians.



Goal

In the NorthWest Triangle the focus will be on improving the functionality and fluidity of movement within the community while developing more sustainable and socially stimulating forms of transportation. Promote diverse modes of transportation to allow residents equal opportunity to access goods and services within the community. Limit dependency on the car as a primary mode of transportation to ensure environmental sustainability. Improve upon current infrastructure and maintenance to ensure the safety of the community.

Objectives

- Objectives
- Encourage use of public transit, active transportation and bike/car share
- Improve pedestrian experience and connectivity

Proposed Strategies

- Locate a mix of amenities in transit oriented densities that meets the needs of individuals
- Create safer and attractive conditions such as dedicated cycling lanes, narrower roads and wider sidewalks
- Provide bike and car share facilities through Section 37 (Height and Density)
- Allow for connections through buildings and make alleyways more safe and inviting

- Sidewalk widths will be expanded in order to promote pedestrian traffic and allow sufficient space for streetscape elements such as street benches, garbage cans, recycling/composting bins, and street lamps
- Bicycle lanes shall be stitched with the road systems along Dufferin Street
- Connect Dufferin to Queen St once the Dufferin Street Jog Elimination project has been completed
- Connect Dufferin north of Queen St to the “Suggested on street route” connecting East - West to Harbord St as identified in the City of Toronto’s cycling map
- Additional bicycle lanes created on Queen Street West, Gladstone, Florence
- Improve upon existing infrastructure by undertaking a Parking Strategy Study to address the concern of a limited amount of on-street parking
- Construct infrastructure for bike and car share facilities that visually and physically blend with public spaces where they would most likely be accessed



Existing Conditions: Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
Dufferin Jog Elimination project	No bicycle lanes
Access to public transportation TTC	Limited connectivity with trails, pathways, bicycle lanes etc.
Strategic location in proximity to transit	Limited on-street parking
Supported by current infrastructure	Threat of relocation of employment to the 905 area, potential for lands to stay vacant

12.0 SYNERGISTIC USES

Purpose

The green and grey elements should be integrated and complementary, allowing for a reduction in the import and export of water, energy, waste, food, and materials.

Goal

Take advantage of the opportunities that exist between the green (parks & open spaces, natural heritage, urban forest, wetlands, green patches) and grey (built form, streets, pedestrian and bike routes, infrastructure) fabric of the neighbourhood to establish a beneficial and strong relationship between these overarching elements.

Objectives

- Promote energy efficiency to conserve energy and limit environmental damage
- Conserve water and use it responsibly
- Reduce the amount of waste in landfills
- Allow for neighbourhood level production of food
- Take advantage of underutilized space
- Address a range of environmental concerns such as pollution/air quality, stormwater management, urban heat island effect, loss of biodiversity, and noise

Proposed Strategies

12.1 Edible Landscapes

- Production of food provides for food security, autonomy, and sustenance within the community while enhancing the local economy. Food is produced and consumed in the same locale, eliminating transportation costs and enabling individuals residing in the neighbourhood to expand their knowledge of food generation and the natural processes that support it. Community engagement and social cohesion are additional benefits of exchanging agricultural products in the urban realm. Ensuring that soils are below toxicity standards is essential and should be incorporated in determining which areas are suitable for use.
 - o Create edible landscapes in the form of front or backyard gardens, community gardens and farmer's markets
 - o Incorporate a seed bank into the community
 - o Support and promote community plot initiatives

12.2 Green Roofs

Green roofs are unique spaces where natural environment/processes and architecture intersect, affording opportunities for biodiversity,



agriculture, and recreational purposes. The City of Toronto's Green Roof bylaw was passed on May 26th, 2009 requiring green roof construction on all new development for permit applications submitted after January 31st, 2010 for residential and commercial buildings and after January 31st, 2011 for industrial uses. Requirements for any new construction are posted on the City of Toronto website.

Green roofs can also be constructed on existing buildings depending on the permissible roof loads and availability of funding. Green roofs provide a number of benefits and/or opportunities including reduction in energy costs by insulating buildings during the winter months and cooling them in the summer; regulation of stormwater that reduces the amount of pollutants entering Lake Ontario downstream; reduction in the urban heat island effect; habitat spaces for mobile species such as birds, wind-dispersed seeds, and invertebrates; and recreational gardens. Intensive green roofs require greater soil depth and maintenance whereas extensive green roofs have less soil depth and require less maintenance.

Traditionally, extensive green roofs are used for biodiversity purposes. Brown roofs can be constructed from the rubble and construction wastes of demolished buildings. The complexity of brown roofs are ideal for a number of species, especially those adapted to rock or cliff habitats. A combination of different types of green roofs can be implemented to allow for additional recreation spaces, urban agriculture, and habitat patches to connect larger green networks. Green roofs should incorporate native, non-invasive species to reflect regional identity and sustain local biodiversity.

- o Construct green roofs and brown roofs on new and existing infrastructure for recreation, biodiversity, and urban agriculture

12.3 Storm and Wastewater Management

Storm and wastewater management can be viewed as the digestive organ of the neighbourhood and bordering areas. An ECO Machine can be integrated into a constructed wetland or built inside a greenhouse, naturally treating sewage and industrial wastes to re-use quality which could serve not only the NorthWest Triangle but also adjacent communities. This strategy minimizes the community's load on municipal treatment plants and creates a closed hydrological loop.

- o Develop storm & wastewater management through the construction of artificial wetlands (which also serve as potential habitat spaces)



- o Use topographical and hydrological measurements to decide on the location of the wetland
- o Funding for this can be procured from developers through Section 37 (Height and Density Bonusing) money

12.4 Energy

Conserve energy by preserving the embodied energy of existing functional buildings and retrofitting where feasible, and plan transportation routes to better accommodate active transportation. A DES (district energy system) increases energy efficiency by capturing and using the heat lost in conventional systems. This autonomous, reliable, and efficient energy system could also service abutting communities in the area. Solar roofs and building-scaled rooftop wind turbines can also be used in conjunction with the DES.

- o To implement a district energy system that makes use of sustainable energy production from solar roofs and building-scaled rooftop wind turbines
- o Locate the DES close to light industrial to mitigate potential sound disturbance from residential areas
- o Funding for this can be procured from developers through Section 37 (Height and Density Bonusing) money

12.5 Green Buildings

Green buildings provide a wide range of environmental and health benefits and are widely regulated through Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED).

- o Push developers to use LEED Silver as a minimum standard
- o Seek government funding to retrofit existing buildings to LEED EB standards
- o Understand LEED for Neighbourhood Design and incorporate strategies therein to create better integration of architecture and planning

13.0 IMPLEMENTATION

13.1 Development Permit System

The Development Permit System (DPS) is a new land use tool available to all local municipalities in Ontario. DPS contains a range of planning features that can help achieve a community's vision for future land use.

DPS can assist in achieving planning goals related to urban design, energy conservation and green infrastructure, efficient use of land, brownfield redevelopment, streetscape amenities, and transit and pedestrian-oriented development.

DPS combines the zoning, minor variance and site plan control processes into one application and approval process. It is implemented with a policy basis in the official plan, a development permit by-law, and a development permit that can be issued as a planning approval. A development permit is issued if the proposed development meets the conditions specified in the official plan and development permit by-law.

In the NorthWest Queen Triangle, DPS conditions could be used to achieve:

Community Design Goals

- Encourage exterior design that respects the neighbourhood character
- Streetscaping improvements in the form of landscaping, street furniture, and bicycle parking facilities
- Design, buffering and separation from industries where necessary
- Appropriately located murals
- 'Stepping back' of additional height to buildings to reduce shadowing
- External sustainable design features such as green roofs and solar panels

Efficient Use of Land

- Set intensification requirements for new developments
- Maximum 6 storeys for new residential developments
- Sharing of driveways and parking areas
- Encourage multi-storey employment uses
- Encourage multi-level or underground parking
- Heritage buildings to be preserved and reused
- Encourage brownfield redevelopment
- Encourage re-use and intensification of laneway structures

Environmental Protection

- Ongoing monitoring requirement to ensure natural heritage along CN Rail Corridor is not impacted negatively by new developments
- Permeable paving

13.2 Design Proposal

Legend

Orange - pathways

Yellow – existing residential

Light yellow/beige – new residential

Pink/red – retail

Solid blue – existing commercial/ LI

Light blue/turquoise – new commercial/LI

Black – solar panels

Dark Green – parkland

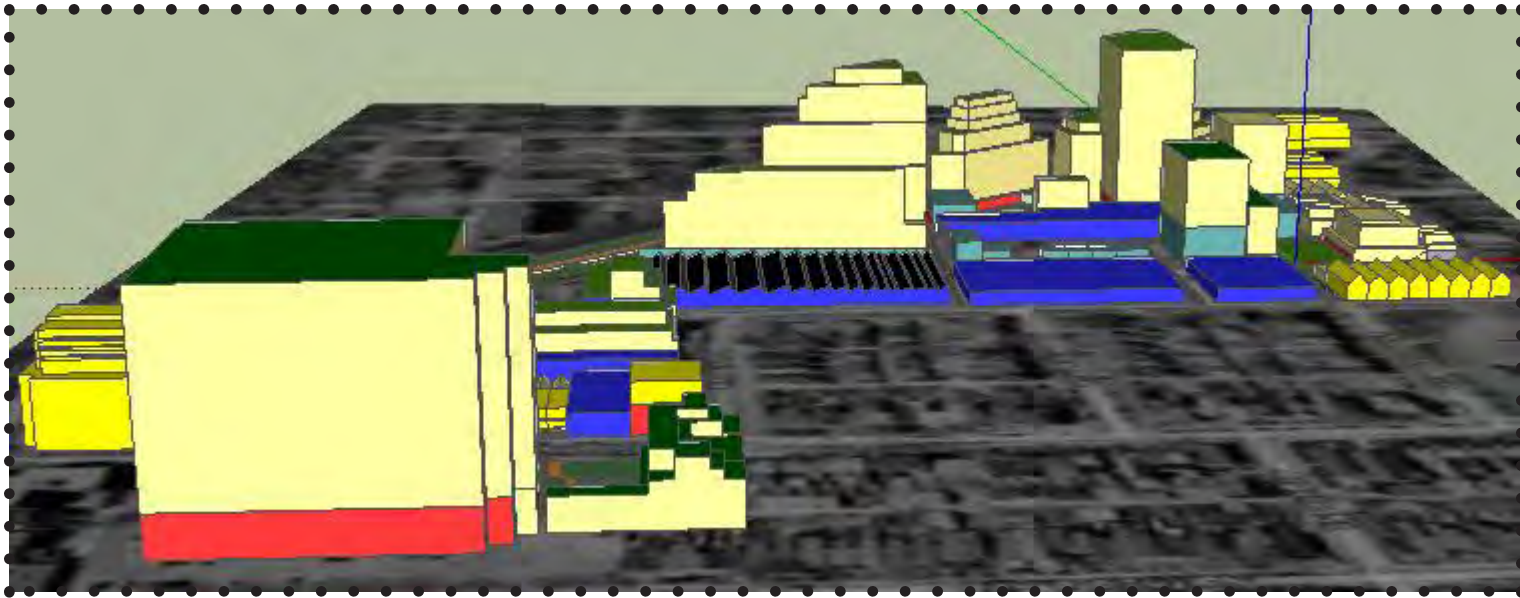
Light green – green roofs



Top Down View



South to North View



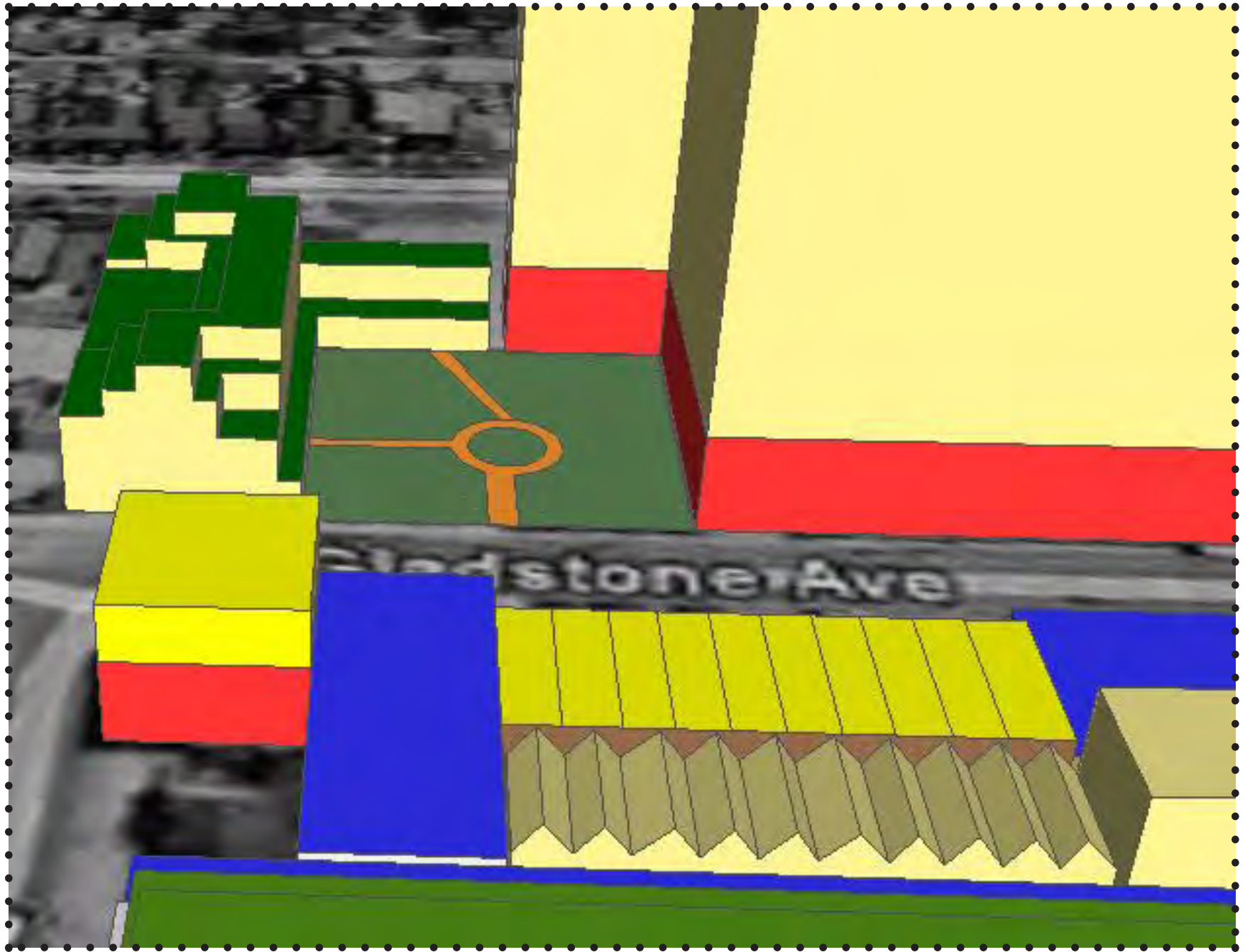
East to West View



North to South View



West to East View



Retirement residence



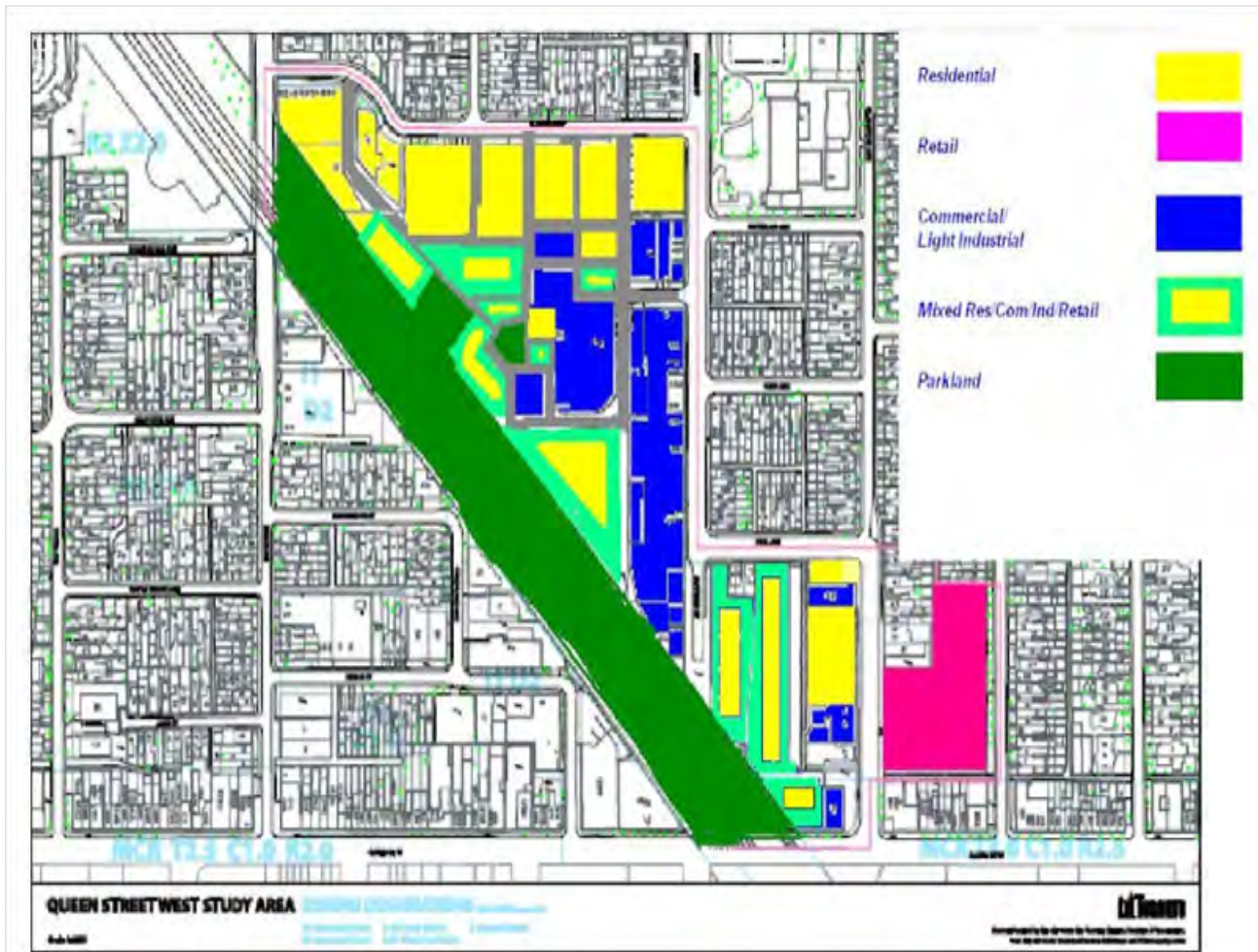
Existing light industrial (blue) and future light industrial (turquoise)

13.3 Zoning By-law Amendment

Apply for zoning by-law amendments to re-designate the land from employment light industrial to include the following uses:

- Residential
- Retail
- Commercial/Light Industrial
- Mixed use resident/commercial/Retail
- Parkland (includes open space and NHS)

13.3.1 Potential Zoning By-law Map



13.4 Brownfield Community Improvement Plan

Given that several parts of the Queen North West Triangle are brownfield sites («undeveloped or previously developed property that may be contaminated»²), the city should adopt a Community Improvement Plan [CIP] under s.28 of the Planning Act, and should designate the Queen North West Triangle as a Community Improvement Area. The incentives offered as part of a CIP include grants, tax incentives, and rebates to developers willing to develop in the designated area, which can be used to offset the costs of developing on a potentially contaminated site.

Offering a Brownfield CIP provides economic benefits through job creation and increased investment, social benefits through improved quality of life and housing options, as well as the environmental benefits associated with eliminating health and safety risks and environmental restoration, in addition to the compact form of communities created through infill development which reduces pressures for sprawl.

In addition, a Brownfields Financial Tax Incentive Program, under s.365.1 of the Municipal Act and s.333 of the City of Toronto Act is recommended, which is a financial tool that lets a municipality provide property tax breaks to owners looking to make productive use of brownfield sites.³

14.0 References

- 1 Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Provincial Policy Statement. (Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario), 2005.
- 2 City of North Bay, Brownfield Community Improvement Plan (North Bay: Planning Services, 2008), 2008.
- 3 Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Community Improvement Planning Handbook (Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario), 2008