



# The Northwest Triangle *Redefined*

BIOREGIONAL PLANNING WORKSHOP, York University

Prepared By: Rick Conroy, Steve Gitao, Michael Halder, Matt Kenel and Heidy Schopf

For: Quentin Hanchard, Steven Heuchert and Active 18

Date: December 14, 2009

# CONTENTS

---

Vision .....	1
Goals and Objectives .....	3
Rationale .....	4
Legislative and Policy Context .....	5
Key Ideas .....	8
Employment Areas .....	11
Zoning .....	13
Current Conditions .....	14
The Plan .....	17
Plan Components and Implementation .....	19
Conclusion .....	32

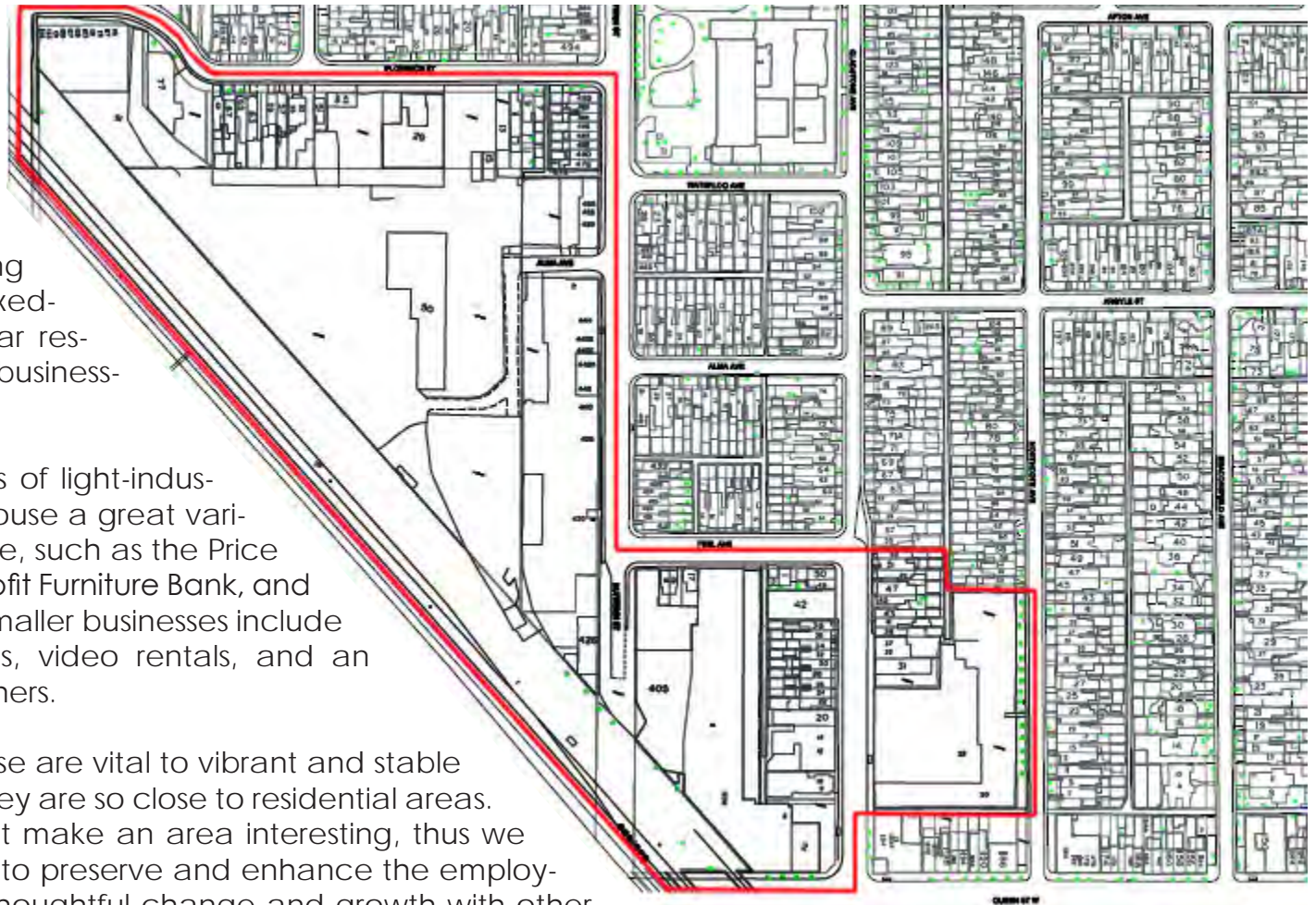


# VISION

The Northwest Triangle (NWT) is an area in transition. Located along historic Queen Street West near its junction with Dufferin Avenue, the area is surrounded by residential properties, a railway corridor, and a vigorous arts community. Along Queen Street are a number of mixed-use buildings, containing popular restaurants, art galleries and small businesses.

The NWT contains pockets of light-industrial employment lands, which house a great variety of businesses. Some are large, such as the Price Choppers food store, the non-profit Furniture Bank, and a produce distribution centre. Smaller businesses include woodworking shops, electricians, video rentals, and an auto mechanic shop, among others.

Employment lands like these are vital to vibrant and stable communities, especially when they are so close to residential areas. It is the mix of the land uses that make an area interesting, thus we have a tremendous opportunity to preserve and enhance the employment lands, while still enabling thoughtful change and growth with other uses.



We envision the NWT as a complete community, where there is an appropriate mix of land-uses and service opportunities available to residents, businesses and visitors.

We see an area that is compact, where the built form reflects a 'human-scale' of development. The car is not the dominant form of transportation, rather alternative forms of transportation are prioritized.

The NWT should be connected to the surrounding communities, so that it ties into the existing flows of energy, people, goods and experiences, and it should be flexible enough to enable new flows with its neighbours. In all ways, the habitat of the area should fit within the greater regional ecosystem.

Lastly, the NWT should feature complementary uses, making the neighbourhood a harmonious whole. The elements of form and function should combine to create an experience that is equitable, economical, and environmentally sustainable.

Our vision is ambitious and aims to push the boundaries of conventional planning. If implemented, there is little doubt that many elements of this plan will have to be adapted to the realities of planning in the City of Toronto. Our intent was to create a plan that would help the residents, users and stakeholders reimagine the possibilities for the future of the Northwest Triangle.



# GOALS and OBJECTIVES

---

Out of this vision, three broad and integrative goals emerge that together address all the elements needed for vibrant, stable communities.

**GOAL ONE:** Maintain and strengthen the employment base in the Northwest Triangle (NWT) to provide for a variety of work opportunities. Focusing on the “Work” environment, this goal has the following objectives:

- 1) To retain and enhance the existing employment base in the NWT
- 2) To foster the development of local independent artisans and businesses

**GOAL TWO:** Provide a living environment within the NWT that nurtures a strong sense of place and which embodies sustainable development practices. With respect to the “Lived” environment, this goal strives:

- 1) To implement a mixed use community within the NWT, but with an emphasis on the employment use of the area
- 2) To encourage the adaptive reuse and retrofitting of existing built structures
- 3) To employ green building standards for all new development in the NWT
- 4) To provide an equitable mix of housing types and tenure
- 5) To create a public realm on a human scale

**GOAL THREE:** Establish natural and built spaces that foster social interaction, quiet reflection and community building. To create and enhance elements of “Play,” this goal has the following objectives:

- 1) To create spaces that provide for a variety of recreational opportunities for people from all walks of life
- 2) To establish a natural system that creates form, function and connectivity with the larger bioregion
- 3) Ensure public spaces are open and inviting.



# RATIONALE

---



This Precinct Plan has been prepared for a number of reasons. On a city-wide scale, the Greater Toronto Area is forecast to grow by 2.7 million people and 1.8 million jobs by the year 2031 (City of Toronto, 2007). For its part, the City of Toronto is expected to absorb 20 percent of this increase in population or 537,000 additional residents and 30 percent of the increase in employment or 544,000 new jobs. This additional growth will be "... steered to areas which are well served by transit, the existing road network and which have a number of properties with redevelopment potential" (Toronto Official Plan, 2007, p. 2-3). In this context, the Northwest Triangle is a great candidate site for redevelopment with the potential to accommodate part of the new expected growth in both residents and jobs.

On a more local scale, the Northwest Triangle is undergoing its own set of changes. Firstly, Dufferin Street, the central spine of the Triangle, is being extended south under the railway tracks to become one continuous street. This continuation will eliminate the need for all modes of transport to detour through Peel Avenue and Gladstone Avenue. Secondly, with the development of the West Queen West area situated to the south of the Northwest Triangle, the area as a whole is under growing development pressure. With the area proving to be a popular place to live and work due to its close proximity to Downtown Toronto, a number of high rise condominium developers have expressed interest in the lands within the Northwest Triangle. Thus, in anticipation of potential upcoming developments to the neighbourhood, this precinct plan intends to outline development principles and guidelines that are informed by the ideas of bioregionalism and yet detailed beyond what is provided by the City of Toronto's Official Plan.

# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

---

## PROVINCIAL POLICIES

The goals, objectives and implementation measures of the Northwest Triangle precinct plan must be framed within the larger planning regime that governs both the province of Ontario and its municipalities including the City of Toronto. In particular, the Planning Act, 1990 is the key planning legislation that guides the process and outcome of land use planning. The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), 2005 as issued under section 3 of the Planning Act, 1990, provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. According to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (2008):

“The Provincial Policy Statement recognizes the complex inter-relationships among economic, environmental and social factors in planning and embodies good planning principles. It includes enhanced policies on key issues that affect our communities, such as: the efficient use and management of land and infrastructure; protection of the environment and resources; and ensuring appropriate opportunities for employment and residential development, including support for a mix of uses.”

While a number of sections of the PPS are relevant and applicable to the redevelopment of the Northwest Triangle such as housing, public spaces, parks and open spaces, the employment areas section merits particular discussion due to its current official plan designation as an Employment Area. According to the PPS, municipalities should promote economic development and competitiveness through protecting and preserving their designated employment lands. On these lands, there should be a mix and range of employment to meet long-term needs as well as create opportunities for a wide range of economic activities and ancillary uses with consideration shown for existing and future businesses (MMAH, 2008). The PPS is also quite clear in setting out strict conditions that must be met if municipalities wish to convert their stock of employment lands to other non-employment uses. In this regard, a municipal comprehensive review is undertaken by a municipality prior to any re-zoning of the employment lands (MMAH, 2008).

In terms of provincial plans, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GPGGH) of 2006 that arises out of the Places to Grow Act, 2005 is a key provincial plan with implications for the Northwest Triangle area. The GPGGH provides a framework for managing growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe including: directions for where and how to grow; the provi-

sion of infrastructure to support growth; and protecting natural systems and cultivating a culture of conservation. City Council's planning decisions are required by the Planning Act, 1990 section 3(5b) to conform with the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

The GPGGH is significant to the Northwest Triangle in a number of ways. With regards to Employment Lands, the GP-GGH repeats much of the language as written in the PPS but outlines the six key tests that a municipal comprehensive review, as mentioned above, must fulfill before an employment area is converted for other uses including:



- A need for the conversion;
- The municipality will meet the employment forecast allocated for the municipality;
- The conversion will not affect the overall viability of the employment area;
- There is existing or planned infrastructure to accommodate the proposed conversion;
- The lands are not required over the long-term for employment purposes; and,
- Cross-jurisdictional issues have been considered (Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, 2006)

With the above six tests stated, this precinct plan does not propose a complete conversion of the lands, but rather a conversion of only designated areas of the Northwest Triangle to permit mixed use while still maintaining the employment base of the area. However, aside from the issue of employment, the Northwest Triangle meets the requirements of the Growth Plan, particularly in the areas of directing new growth in already built up areas of the city that offer municipal infrastructure services and which reduce the dependence of the automobile through the development of a mixed use, transit supportive and pedestrian friendly community. However, it must be duly noted that where there is a conflict between the PPS, the Toronto Official Plan or a zoning by-law and the GPGGH, it is the policies of the GPGGH that prevail. These provincial policies and plans are usually implemented in municipalities through their official plans.



## MUNICIPAL POLICIES

The vision of the City of Toronto's Official Plan is clear: Make Toronto an attractive and safe city that evokes pride, passion and a sense of belonging – a city where people of all ages and abilities can enjoy a good quality of life (City of Toronto, 2007). It goes on to specify that the vision can only be achieved through the following goals:



- Vibrant neighbourhoods;
- Affordable housing choices;
- Attractive streets made for walking;
- Affordable transit system that moves people quickly;
- A strong and competitive economy that creates and sustains well-paid, stable, safe and fulfilling employment opportunities for all Torontonians;
- Clean air, water and land;
- Green spaces of all sizes;
- Recreational opportunities;
- Cultural facilities; and,
- Beautiful architectural and excellent urban design

# KEY IDEAS

---



The above vision is carried out through policies within the components that constitute a city including its built form, community services, cultural heritage, housing, natural heritage, parks and open space, public realm and transportation. What follows is a brief summary of key ideas on each of these components as articulated in the City of Toronto's 2007 Official Plan. These key ideas form the basis of this proposed precinct plan for the Northwest Triangle.

## BUILT FORM

The development of the built form is more than the individual building and its functional use within the fabric of the City. As such, it must also be conceived in terms of how it fits within the context of the neighbourhood and the larger city. When designing each new building, therefore, it must be remembered that each building is making a contribution to the overall design of the City.

## COMMUNITY SERVICES

The social infrastructure, which consists of recreation centres, arenas, community health clinics, schools, libraries, community gardens, among others, is just as important as the physical infrastructure to the well-being of a community. These services form the essential support for people living and working in the neighbourhood and, as such, should be readily accessible to them.

## CULTURAL HERITAGE

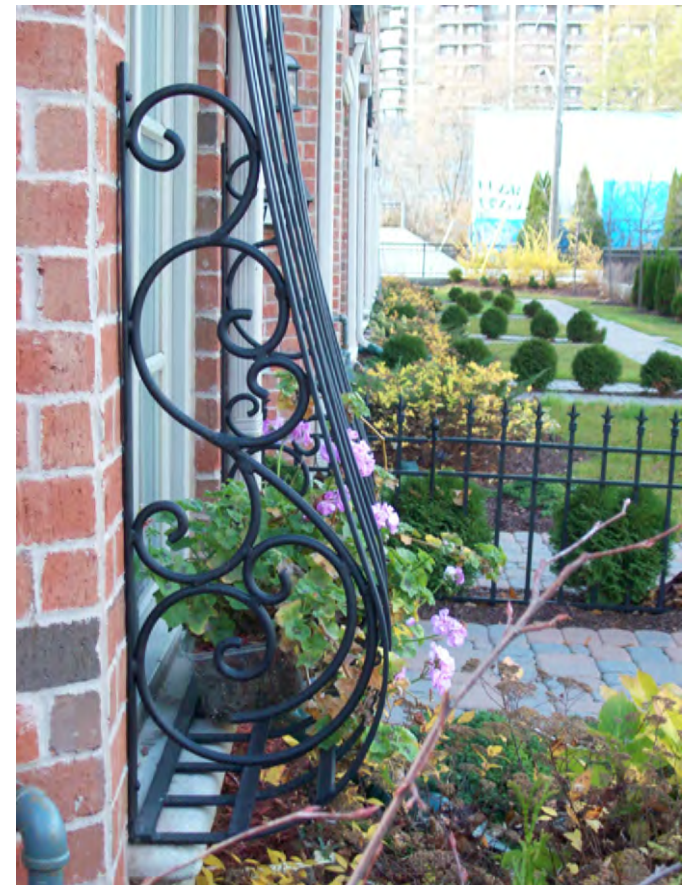
Cultural industries are an important sector of local economies. As such, there is a need to retain and create new performance venues, studios, rehearsals and administrative spaces, galleries and museums. Moreover, community arts endeavours in libraries and community centres should also be supported in order to provide opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to experience arts and cultural activities.

## HOUSING

A city's quality of life, economic competitiveness, social cohesion as well as its balance depend on the provision of adequate and affordable housing. As such, there is a need for a diversity of type and tenure in the housing stock of a community, but especially so for purpose-built rental housing, affordable rental housing and affordable low-rise ownership housing for large households with children and multi-family households.

## NATURAL HERITAGE

Toronto's natural heritage features (e.g., woodlots, meadows, wetlands, ravines etc.) and functions are an evolving mosaic of natural habitats that support a variety of living organism in the City. As such, city-building decisions should place a high priority for the protection, restoration and enhancement of these natural heritage features and functions.







## PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Parks and open spaces provide for people the opportunity to relax and experience nature in relative peace and quiet. Such spaces are to be created with both passive and active forms of recreation and designed in a variety of forms including urban plazas, parkettes, community gardens and trails.

## PUBLIC REALM

The streets, sidewalks, parks, open spaces and public buildings are features aimed at drawing people together to create the strong social bonds at the neighbourhood, city and regional level. These public spaces collectively set the stage for festivals, parades and civic life as well as daily casual contact. In essence, the elements of the public realm are what create communities.

## TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is more than the use of private automobile. It includes a wide range of sustainable transportation options such as a bicycle network, a system of sidewalks, lane ways, pathways and trails. These options should be seamlessly linked, safe, convenient, affordable and economically competitive.

# EMPLOYMENT AREAS

---

The Northwest Triangle is designated as an Employment Area which, according to section 4.6 of the Official Plan, are the “hot-houses where we grow our enterprises and jobs” (City of Toronto, 2007, p. 4-11). Therefore, while the Official Plan is clear in acknowledging the importance of employment areas, it also recognizes that: “Uses that support the prime economic function of Employment Areas such as parks, small scale retail stores and services to meet the daily needs of business and employees, workplace day care and restaurants, must also be readily accessible within Employment Areas” (City of Toronto, 2007, p. 4-12). In other words, ancillary uses that support the area businesses and its workers are permitted. Thus, it appears the official plan has taken a broad and inclusive approach to employment uses within its Employment Areas such that, in the case of the Northwest Triangle, light industrial is the main use, but it is certainly not an exclusive use. The policies of the Official Plan also permit stand alone retail stores and “power centres” in



such Employment Centers provided they front onto major streets that also form the boundary of Employment Areas. Dufferin Street is, according to Map 3 of the Official Plan, a major street. The additional conditions imposed on the establishment of the stand alone retail stores on employment lands include a transportation capacity study showing an acceptable level of





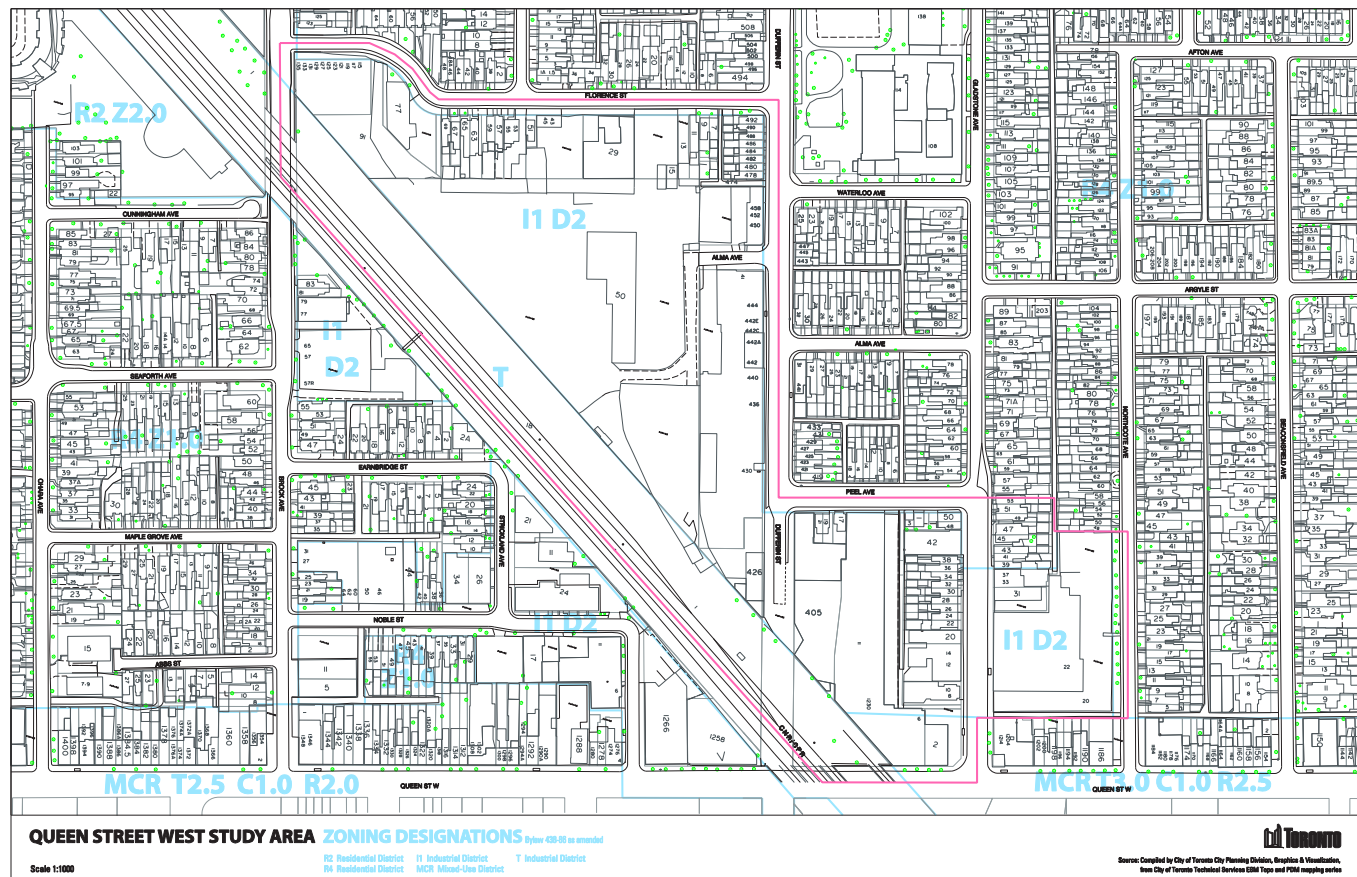
traffic on adjacent and nearby streets. The other condition that must be satisfied is that the functioning of other economic activities will not be adversely affected (City of Toronto, 2007).

In terms of development criteria within Employment Areas, the Official Plan sets out a number of them to ensure that these areas “work well and look good” (City of Toronto, 2007). More specifically, the Plan states that development in these areas should support the economic function and the amenity of adjacent areas, encourage the establishment of key clusters of value-added employment, avoid excessive car and truck traffic, provide adequate parking, provide landscaping on any flanking yard adjacent to any public parks and open spaces to create an attractive streetscape, and minimize nuisance impacts to bordering residential areas through fencing, landscaping and other measures, among others (City of Toronto, 2007).



# ZONING

According to Land Use Map 18 of the City of Toronto's Official Plan, the Northwest Triangle is designated as an Employment Area. Specifically, the area is currently zoned I1 D2 meaning that it is to be used for Light Industrial purposes and has a density ratio of 2.0 and a height limit of 14 metres. Permitted uses include artist live/work studio, custom workshops, general wholesaling establishments, certain classes of storage warehouses, packaging plants, among a host of other similar uses as specified in the City of Toronto's Zoning By-law No. 438-86 for the subject area. The zoning by-law also specifies setbacks from front lot lines as well as the separation of buildings and structures from districts zoned residential.



# CURRENT CONDITIONS

---



The propositions within this precinct plan are based on an elucidation of the current existing conditions, challenges and opportunities of the Northwest Triangle as gathered from background research on the community, a site visit and a community charrette. The key findings are described below in Table 1.



TABLE 1. Conditions and Opportunities in the Northwest Triangle

COMPONENT	EXISTING CONDITIONS and CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
LAND USE	Vacant employment lands, small commercial spaces, active light industrial, big box retail and low rise residential	Mixed Use Area: Development of live/work spaces; built structures with ground floor retail and upper floor residential units
	Queen West Triangle regeneration area that will, upon build out, include nearly 3,000 residential units and 40,000 square metres of non-residential space including live-work artist studios	Buffer areas are created to separate the light industrial from the mixed use areas
	A transportation corridor (i.e., railway line)	
PUBLIC REALM	Streets, for the most part, are not pedestrian-oriented as the sidewalks are narrow and cluttered	Increase the boulevard space for pedestrians and reduce the width of the roadway for cars
	Open space and greenspace is quite limited	"Re-awaken" Dufferin Street through streetscape enhancements and pedestrian-scale built form
BUILT FORM	Historical buildings within the Northwest Triangle particularly behind the Price Choppers grocery store along the laneway as well as along Dufferin Street which is lined with former industrial buildings that are being utilized as wood-working studios	Woodworking studios should be maintained and their blank facades could be enhanced and the space behind them could be opened up to other uses
	Heights of existing structures are not imposing, but different types of structures and uses offer a hard contrast	Built structures should have an upper limit of six storeys as this would maintain the architectural character of the area and promote human-scale development
	Upcoming high rise residential condominiums in West Queen West	
CULTURAL HERITGE	Unique artist-oriented culture with its cultural institutions and festivals which is especially noticeable along Queen Street West	Alleyways could provide spaces for street art and could facilitate cultural programming for residents and visitors
	Large stock of Victorian homes	Unique cultural character and feel that should be maintained and even expanded (or drawn) into or along Dufferin Street
	Established Portuguese-speaking community. According to the 2006 neighbourhood census data, Portuguese (24.04%), Chinese (10.75%) and Vietnamese (2.80%) are among the top five languages spoken in this neighbourhood after English (55.65%) (City of Toronto, 2008)	Industrial buildings may also be primed for various forms of adaptive reuse



TABLE 1. Conditions and Opportunities in the Northwest Triangle (continued)

COMPONENT	EXISTING CONDITIONS and CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
HOUSING	A variety of housing types including detached, semi-detached, row housing in the Victorian architectural style as well as live/work spaces and low and mid-rise buildings	Affordable housing options in the area, particularly for seniors and the working class, may be made available through mixed-use developments
	High property values in the area translates into high property taxes which raises the issue of affordability, especially for Portuguese seniors	Construct additional housing units through infill housing in underused spaces (i.e., on empty lots, laneway housing, garage retrofits etc.)
	Lack of affordable rental housing especially for families	
	Absence of social housing and seniors housing for the residents of the larger area	
COMMUNITY SERVICES	Community services of the Northwest Triangle are situated outside the area except for the Price Chopper grocery store	Local community centre to provide services such as community policing, a community stewardship office for local area volunteers, a community meeting space, among other uses
	TDSB elementary school, places of worship, public library, ambulance station, community centre and child care centres are situated in the vicinity	Serve the needs of the Portuguese community, but especially its aging population
NATURAL HERITAGE	Negligible amounts of natural areas and, as such, the landscape offers little in the way of ecological value	Railway corridor may be enhanced to function as a wildlife corridor
	Lands along the railway corridor	Greening the streetscape, particularly along Gladstone Avenue, but also implementing greenroofs, permeable paving solutions and other green technologies to manage stormwater runoff on site
	Front lawns of houses and street trees	'Naturalizing' the current wooden fence berm to absorb the noise of passing trains
TRANSPORTATION	Well serviced by public transit, specifically by a bus route along Dufferin Street and a streetcar route along Queen Street West	A green trail system along the railway corridor for non-motorized uses such as for pedestrians and cyclists
	Realignment of Dufferin Street and the reconstruction of Peel Avenue and Gladstone Avenue is the major development in this area	Realization of the proposed Argyle bike route which travels along Argyle Avenue and through to Brock Avenue via Florence Avenue
	No formal bike paths going through this area according to City of Toronto's 2009 Cycling Map	Connect the Northwest Triangle to the surrounding neighbourhoods (e.g. Liberty Village) beyond the railway corridor through a pedestrian bridge
		Underground parking should be the preferred options as a means of reducing surface parking lots

# THE PLAN

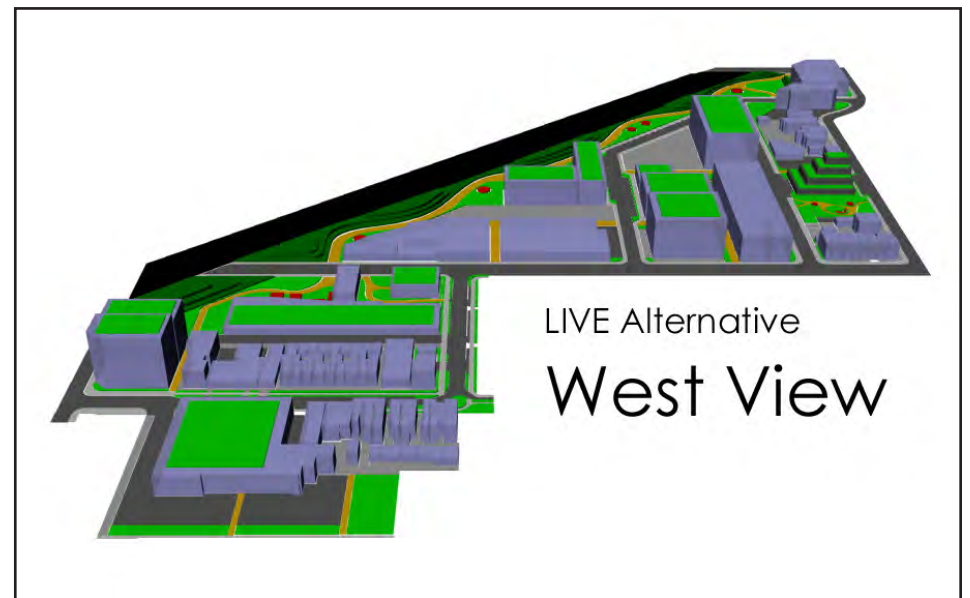
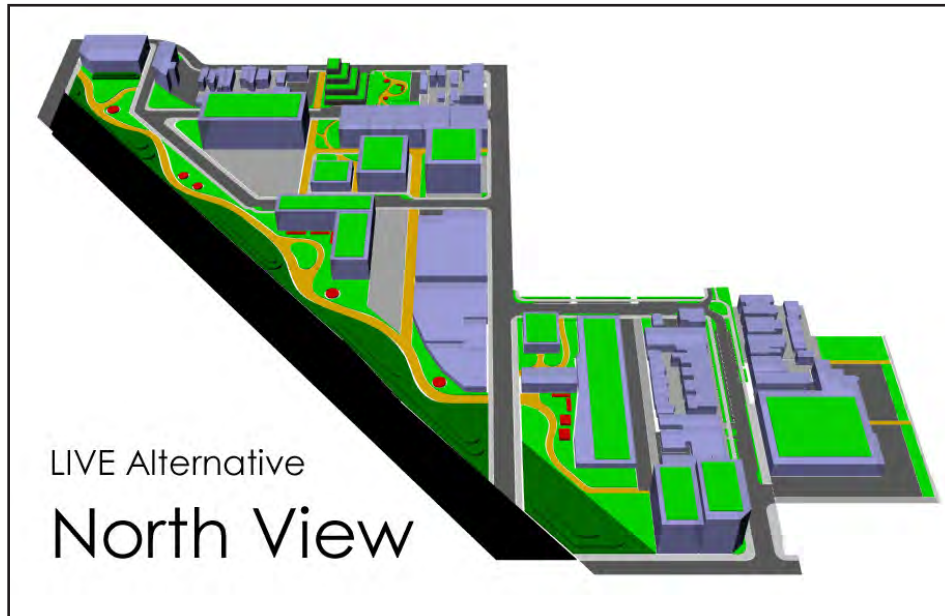
The three core goals of this plan, as stated above, reflect an intentional integration of the elements of land use, public realm, built form, culture and heritage, housing, community services, natural heritage and transportation. In doing so, this plan attempts to highlight the natural synergies that exist between each element and also challenge the assumption that any element could realistically be isolated from another. Moreover, the concept of sustainability runs through the core of this plan, and implicitly links each element to the next. For clarity's sake, each of the aforementioned eight elements will now be reviewed individually to explicitly highlight how they are reflected in the plan.



## LEGEND

AWS	Artist Work Space
E	Employment
MCR	Mixed Use
MS	Municipal Service Centre
P	Parking
PS	Public Square
R	Residential
TH	Transit Hub







# PLAN COMPONENTS & IMPLEMENTATION

---

## LAND USE

The land use recommendations made in this plan consider not only zoning designations, but other projects and initiatives that concern the NWT as a whole. To begin, this plan suggests amending the current Employment Area designation to expand beyond light industrial to include commercial and institutional uses as well as re-zoning designated portions of the NWT to allow a mixed-use community and permit development that reflects the character and scale of the surrounding residential neighbourhoods. These measures will enable the NWT to diversify the employment opportunities available to current and future businesses and residents while providing housing opportunities that are complementary to the surrounding area.

## LAND USE IMPLEMENTATION

The designation of the Northwest Triangle as an employment area certainly complicates any proposed land use changes for this area. However, in order to implement the changes envisioned by this precinct plan for the Northwest Triangle the following considerations or suggestions <sup>1</sup> with regards to complying with provincial and municipal plan policies are offered:

- The City of Toronto's Official Plan contemplates commercial establishments in an employment area. Indeed, on this matter, the Official Plan clearly identifies uses that support the business and economic activity of an employment area including offices, parks and ancillary uses that support the employment use of the area and that these complimentary uses should be "readily accessible within Employment Areas" (City of Toronto, 2007, p. 4-12). In other words, there is room for associated retail within the Employment Area that support the current employment uses and, as such, a wholesale re-designation of this Employment Area is not necessary. It is on this basis that the precinct plan proposes the creation of mixed use commercial areas. Although major retail areas are permitted under the Official Plan, as described above, this precinct plan does not propose the construction of such areas, as the GPGGH clearly states that major retail use does not constitute an employment use.

- With respect to residential uses, there may be previous cases in Ontario where adding residential uses to an existing list of permitted employment uses was not considered a conversion of the employment area designation. However, the one

<sup>1</sup> The items discussed in the first two bullet points were, in part, informed by personal communication with a Counsel to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Any inaccuracies or misinterpretations of the described content are the authors alone.

practical problem that may arise from the establishment of residential uses within an employment area is setback guidelines between light industrial uses and residential neighbourhood. Again, because the Northwest Triangle is zoned light industrial and not heavy industrial, residential units would not sterilize future employment lands. Also, if the residential use in question is on the edge of the employment area, compatibility issues may not be so much of a concern. Moreover, the residential uses being proposed in this precinct plan are in the form of a Mixed Commercial-Residential designation therefore compromising between competing land uses.

- Section 26(1)(b) of the Planning Act makes it clear that when municipalities undertake their five year review of their Official Plan, they may choose to re-visit policies dealing with areas of employment. At such time, the City might be encouraged to expand its definition of employment areas to permit other types of employment and residential use with strict restrictions to maintain the integrity of Employment Areas. The view of this plan is that employment areas and residential mixed use development need not be mutually exclusive.

Encourage the City of Toronto to pass a by-law to designate the NWT as a Community Improvement Project Area to enshrine the priority status of the area, as well as ensure the local business community and residents are actively engaged. The City of Toronto can lobby the Government of Ontario to expand the Tax Increment Financing program to include the Northwest Triangle whereby the revenue from future property tax increases (which results from the revitalization of the area) can be utilized now to finance revitalization efforts

In terms of allocating public monies towards infrastructure development, this plan strongly advocates for the construction of a geothermal heating facility to provide district heating to new buildings within the NWT. This project can also be part of a larger NWT strategy to implement a localized version of LEED Neighbourhood Design standards. This can help ensure there is a comprehensive plan for the entire NWT that strives for area wide sustainability, without incurring the potentially prohibitive costs of LEED certification.

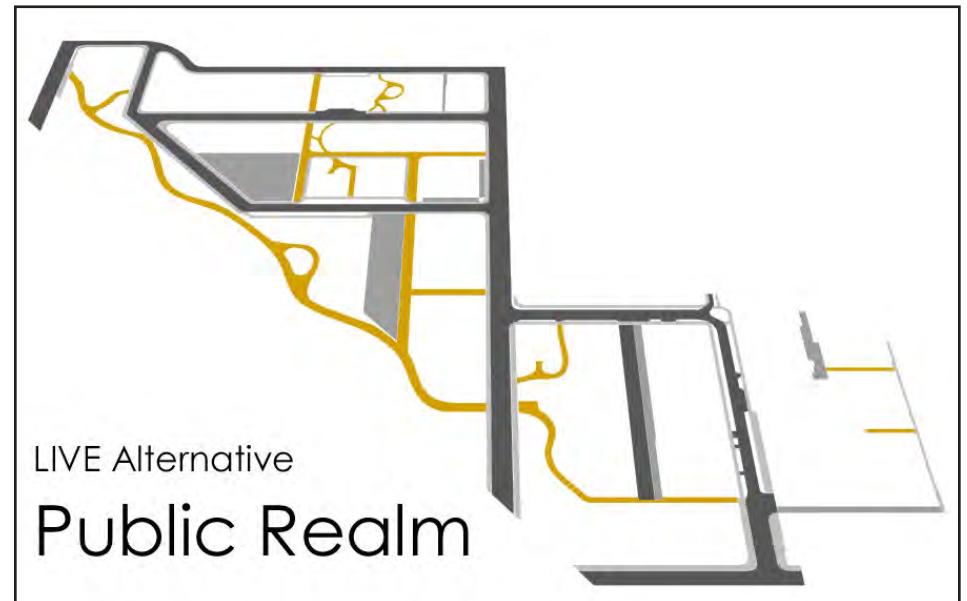
## PUBLIC REALM

As stated, there is tremendous potential to achieve concurrent enhancements to both the public realm, and natural heritage of the area. In many cases these elements occupy the same physical space and are necessarily connected. In addition to the biological enhancements to the public realm, all public spaces and linkages through accessible private lands should be well lit, maintain sight-lines, display public art and contain exploration paths that link different areas of the NWT together.

## PUBLIC REALM IMPLEMENTATION

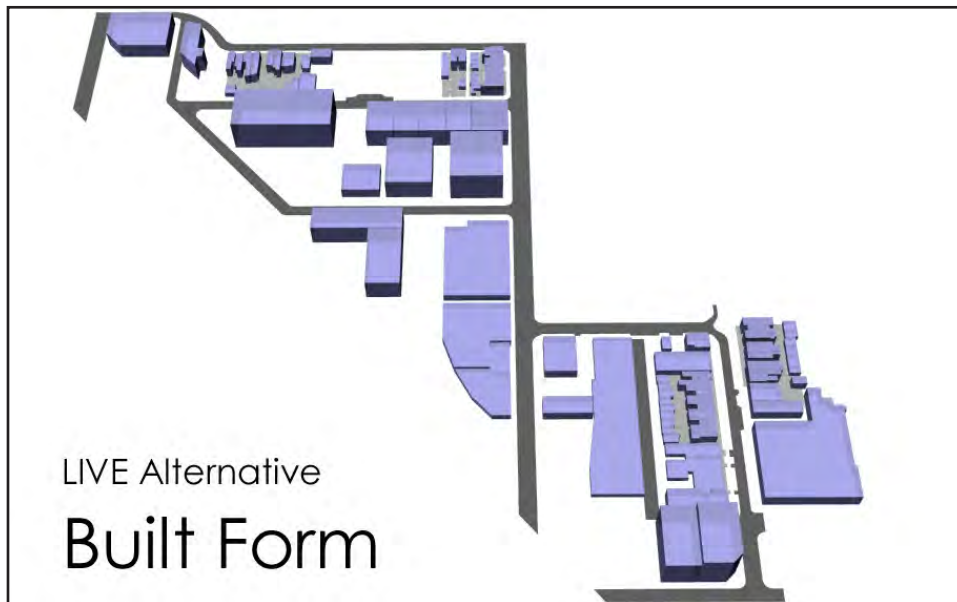
This plan recognizes the importance of the connection between quality of life, good urban design and the public realm. With this understanding, generous set backs and widened sidewalks are strongly encouraged to enhance and promote a built environment on a human scale. Increased set-backs allows one to better interact with public spaces and the surrounding buildings. Conversely, narrow sidewalks and small set backs do not allow for visual and other types of interaction with the built form. This plan is supportive of a recently passed motion by the City of Toronto that seeks to regulate and tax advertising billboards. The bylaw is effective April 2010 is expected to raise \$10 million and although as yet decided, Council is strongly considering apply the funds towards public art (City of Toronto, 2009).

A unique character of the NWT is the vast network of alleyways that provide rear access to business premises and pri-





vate garages. This extensive network is a significant part of the neighbourhood's public realm that is currently under utilized by the public apart from those with alleyway garages. A major reason for this under-utilization is the fact that the alleys are disjointed, not pedestrian friendly and generally uninviting. This plan calls for the alleys to be connected, open to the public, encourage public art (as opposed to graffiti tagging) and make use of permeable materials to minimize negative stormwater impacts. Guidelines from the City of Toronto Walking Strategy will be used to guide the connectivity of these alleys and the public realm in general.



## BUILT FORM

Building density, height, mass, orientation, and scale all have a profound impact on the character and feel of an area. The NWT envisioned in this plan addresses each of these elements to encourage development of a more 'human-scale'. Development should be kept at an appropriate height that can still lead to moderately dense development without aesthetically overpowering surrounding land uses. New developments should also be given more generous setbacks from sidewalks and transportation routes to create a more pedestrian-friendly atmosphere.

## BUILT FORM IMPLEMENTATION

In terms of creating sustainable built form, all building and site plans should abide by the City of Toronto's Green Standard which aims to improve air and water quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance the natural environment. Several recent studies by the City of Toronto have paid particular attention to design and built form in terms of ensuring a pedestrian-friendly, human scale environment. Some of these studies include the Vibrant Streets Manual, Main Streets Initiative, Toronto's Green Standards and the Avenues and Mid-Rise Buildings Study. The latter is particularly relevant to the NWT because of concerns raised by local residents and planners alike about the height and massing of recently approved developments in the area. The Mid-Rise study could

be adapted for the NWT in advising what scale of building is most appropriate for the area and, if need be, a bylaw could be passed to ensure the agreed upon character is maintained. The study also meets larger provincial planning goals, particularly with regards to Places to Grow and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. These policies are heavily informed by sustainable planning principles which call for land and population intensification, use of existing infrastructure, transit oriented development and healthy living environments. These principles are in line with the vision and rationale of this plan, and implementing aspects of the Mid-Rise Buildings Study would also directly address goals one and two of this plan.





## CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Through this plan, the thriving arts community of Queen Street West can find space to grow within the NWT. Key components of this plan are to maintain the current employment base, which includes various arts studios and woodworking facilities, as well as to support interactive public art and local, community based arts projects throughout the NWT.

There are also a number of existing employment facilities that provide space for local businesses and artists. These buildings should be retained, and possibly retrofitted and enhanced.

## CULTURE and HERITAGE IMPLEMENTATION

The culture and heritage goals can be achieved by providing matching grants to external sources whether public or private to finance the adaptive re-use of buildings. The NWT is renowned for its rich stock of red brick pre-war buildings. While these buildings provide aesthetic value for this area, not all of them fulfill the criteria for heritage designation. Nonetheless, this plan calls for their preservation by requiring heritage studies be conducted before demolition permits are approved by the City.

This plan calls for the extension of the artistic characteristic of Queen West throughout the NWT. One of the major ways this can be achieved is by ensuring the existing City of Toronto Percent for Public Art Program is instituted throughout the NWT. This program calls for private developments of significance (greater than 10,000 square metres, significant density or height increases) to contribute a minimum of 1% of the capital project costs towards public art. As a result of the expected private construction investment in the area, this program would be a good fit for the area.





## HOUSING

There is already a small but established residential base along Florence Street, as well as a planned multi-storey, condominium tenure structure at 2 Gladstone Avenue. The NWT is also nestled within a stable residential neighbourhood to the west, north and east, and a dense area of condominium tenure towers being built on the south side of Queen Street. That said, this plan still recognizes the potential for further, but restrained, residential development in select areas of the NWT. The majority of this new housing stock should be in the form of mixed-use commercial/residential development, where one or more stories of residential development sits atop



one or more stories of

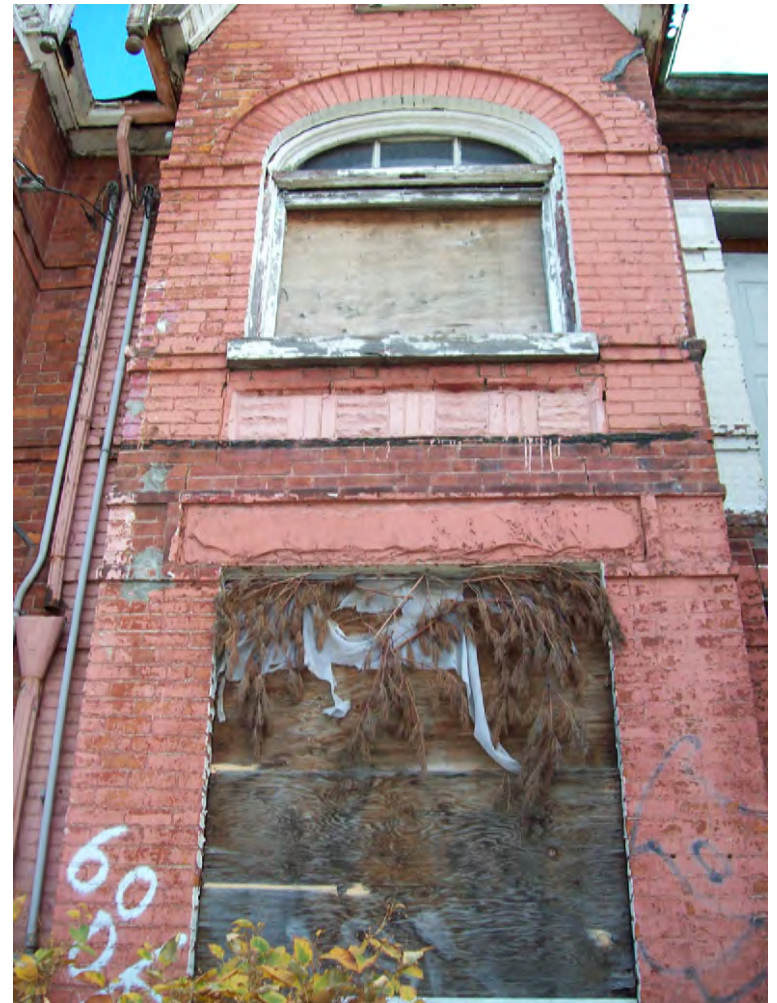
retail or commercial space that starts at grade. There are also opportunities for residential intensification and in-fill housing through the construction of lane way housing. This plan calls for the provision of an equitable mix of housing types and tenure.



## HOUSING IMPLEMENTATION

This plan recognizes that while this area is zoned LI: light industrial, several new condominiums have been approved through official plan amendments. These condominiums are generally one to two bedrooms, and presumably catering to very young families or singles. Over the years this neighbourhood has become a desirable place to live, which has resulted in an increase in the cost of housing. This plan calls for regulation whereby a minimum of 25 percent

of all new housing stock is set aside as a combination of affordable rental housing and affordable market housing. This percentage allocation of affordable housing residences follows in the footsteps of Waterfront Toronto which has mandated 25 percent of all new housing to consist of a combination of affordable rental housing and affordable ownership (Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation, 2005). Such regulations have been put in place for specialized projects in British Columbia and Ontario. The BC Provincial government mandated that 20% of the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics athletes Village be set aside for affordable housing (City of Vancouver, 2008). This plan is aware of a growing aging population in Ontario, commonly referred to by planners as the "demographic tsunami", whereby in 2025 there will be 7.5 million Canadians over the age of 65 (Miller et al. 2008). With this in mind, housing stock in the area must cater to senior populations by having related services nearby and that foster the concept of aging in place. Further, the housing stock in the NWT should be built to VISIBLE or Adaptive housing standards, which would allow persons with disabilities to be accommodated as buyers, renters or visitors. Recently passed legislation at the Provincial level - Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) - outlines manners in which persons with disabilities ought to be accommodated through detailed standards and guidelines. The NWT ought to ensure that these standards and guidelines are followed, to provide accessible and equitable housing.



## COMMUNITY SERVICES



As a result of the public consultation process, this plan reflects the understanding that the NWT, and surrounding area, is well served by most form of community services. However, as an important area of employment lands which will be protected and enhanced through this plan, it is desirable to provide various forms of employment services catering to the employers and employees of the NWT. This could involve the creation of a community employment resource centre and/or municipal services centre to allow businesses, workers and job seekers to interact and access other municipal services.

## COMMUNITY SERVICES IMPLEMENTATION

This plan recommends the establishment of a cooperative Business and Employment Improvement Area Association (BEIAA) for the NWT to create solidarity within the local business community and also encourages all levels of government to create a pilot program to implement a business rent geared to revenue policy. This can help ensure that businesses of all sizes can afford to remain in or move to, the NWT. The City of Toronto is keen to ensure that its employment lands are maintained and not lost to other uses such as residential. With this in mind it is proposed that a NWT BEIAA encourage investment through existing programs at the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government, and create an Innovation Park that would make use of the rent geared

to revenue policy. Such innovation parks exist in the City of Kingston and the City of Hamilton, who have partnered with all levels of government, universities and the private sector to create centres for research, employment and in the process, reju-



venated contaminated or under used lands. In addition, The Ontario Centres for Excellence administers a number of funding programs for industrially relevant research and development. One of particular interest is The Centre of Excellence for Energy. Since this precinct plan calls for the installation of geothermal heating, the NWT could partner with a local university to create an innovation park whereby research and development on district and geothermal heating could be conducted. This would satisfy the City's policy of ensuring no employment lands are lost and also meet all three goals of this plan.

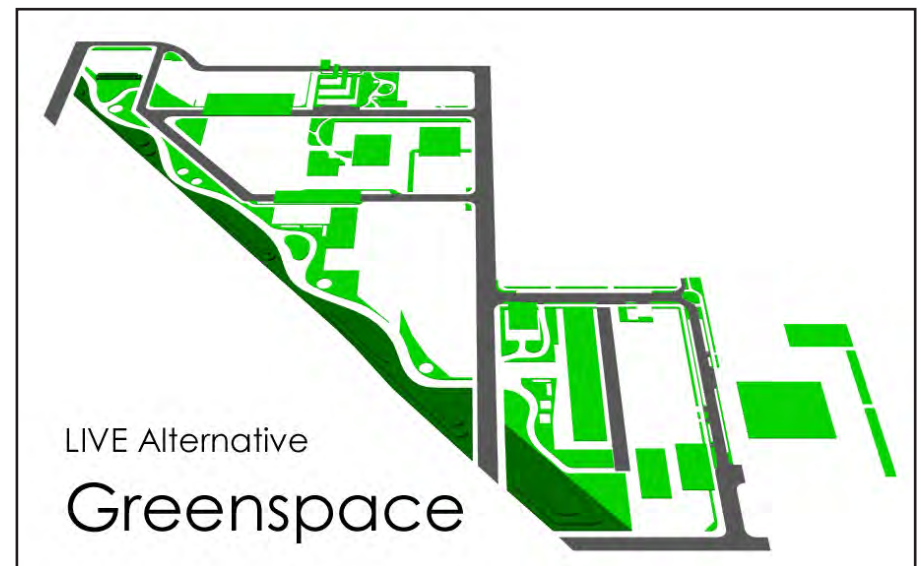
## NATURAL HERITAGE

In lieu of any substantial existing natural heritage features, the railway corridor will become the 'green backbone' of the area: complete with a naturalized sound-barrier berm, multi-use exercise pathway and areas for



exercise pathway and areas for

quiet reflection. This space should also allow for the potential Phase II of the Toronto West Rail Path, which can be integrated into the multi-use path system. Where the potential exists, this large greenspace corridor should also be connected to smaller parks and parkettes to create an integrated greenspace network. This can be accomplished by seizing synergistic opportunities between public realm and natural heritage features. For example, by developing a localized natural heritage system strategy for the NWT that integrates street trees, public parks, the rail corridor and greenroof plantings, one can enhance the public realm and help add biological diversity.





## NATURAL HERITAGE IMPLEMENTATION

In order to expand the natural heritage system, all available planning tools must be used to secure the largest possible natural system within the NWT. This plan calls for the extension of the Toronto West Rail Path. Phase I of this natural recreational and transportation corridor opened in October 2009, running from Cariboo Avenue in the Junction Neighbourhood in a south-easterly direction to its termination at Landsdowne Avenue. Phase II is yet to be approved but it is planned to run from Landsdowne Avenue in a south-easterly direction past Queen Street West and terminate at Strachan & Wellington Avenues. Once completed this trail system is to be naturalized and replanted with native species including; American Bittersweet, Braken Fern, Choke Cherry, Panic Grass among others (Friends of the Toronto West Railpath). This trail system will not only provide for an alternative mode of transportation but provides for regenerated open natural areas in the NWT, hence fulfilling goals two and three of this plan.

This plan acknowledges the fact that majority of the lands in the NWT are privately held, therefore it is expected that landowners will strive to maximize returns by maximizing building footprints on their parcels. This creates difficulty when attempting to safeguard or create natural heritage in the NWT and therefore requires innovative solutions to maximize such features. One such solution would be to mandate the creation of green roofs on all new significant developments in the NWT. In May 2006 the City of Toronto passed a revolutionary bylaw (effective January 2010) that requires all new developments exceeding 2,000 sq metres to construct green roofs (City of

Toronto Green Roof By-Law, 2009). This plan seeks to ensure this by-law is enforced to maximize natural heritage opportunities within the NWT, and also explore the possibility of reducing the square metre requirement in the NWT to facilitate the creation of more green roofs.

## TRANSPORTATION

The core transportation goals of this plan are to enhance road connections, pedestrian access and bike paths within the NWT to encourage and facilitate the flow of people and goods. This will involve the extension of existing public roads and the creation of new connections within the area west of Dufferin Street and will also be influenced by the Dufferin Street Re-alignment project, currently underway. A network of fully accessible pedestrian and bicycle paths will also complement the extension of the public road network. Finally, the creation of a transit hub, ideally located near the intersection of Queen Street and Dufferin Street, would help serve the needs of train, auto, transit and cycling users, all in one location.



## TRANSPORTATION IMPLEMENTATION

Increasing connectivity in the NWT through pathways and road networks would be acceptable to most progressive planning thinkers. However, this process will likely require an environmental assessment to satisfy engineering, environmental and property right concerns. To support this assessment, current City of Toronto studies and policies should be highlighted; including the Toronto Bike Plan, and the Toronto Walking Strategy.





The Walking Strategy aims to create “a city where high-quality walking environments are seamlessly integrated with public transit, cycling and other sustainable modes of travel” (Toronto Walking Strategy). This strategy not only highlights the importance of a walkable urban form but recognizes walking as a mode of transportation that must be integrated with others.

This plan also calls for the creation of a Municipal Service Centre. It was envisioned that this centre be built on the same lands and be attached to, the proposed transit hub to allow cost sharing between the different levels of government that would fund the transit hub. The Municipal Service Centre would allow residents to access City of Toronto services at a decentralized location, such as vehicle registration, licensing, property taxes, and planning information. During the public engagement process, residents of the NWT reminisced of by-gone era whereby the City maintained satellite offices, tailored to each particular neighbourhood, that would negate the need to make a trip to City Hall. In this case, any new

design or property development guidelines developed for the NWT could be attained from this proposed service centre.

# CONCLUSION

---

The vision of this plan is to create a community that is complete, compact, connected and complimentary. By being complete we ensure that all the elements that make up great spaces and communities are provided. By being compact we create a sense of place and a destination that can be gritty and welcoming while maintaining its identity. Being connected means enabling the movement of people and goods of all modes and mobilities. By being complementary we create something that is greater than its individual parts. These types of terms too often become diluted and lose their meaning when the physical form they take does not truly reflect the spirit in which they are used.



The authors of this plan believe that it is more than a static document. The North-West Triangle envisioned in this plan is as realistic as it is innovative. This plan aims to push the boundaries of contemporary planning while at the same time being pragmatic and practicable within the larger planning and policy context.

The tools to create this plan already exist, so the question becomes not how, but why?

The authors of this plan believe that planning is a social process that fundamentally impacts peoples lives. When you engage the community in the issues that affect them, you necessarily do more that create better planning outcomes; you create relationships. Whether as a politician, architect, member of the public, planner, or any step in between, planning connects people and challenges them to create something that works. This plan is as much a product of that social process as it is a stage in its continuing evolution.

The NWT has great potential. In its lost spaces is an opportunity to reconnect with the larger bioregion. In its back alleys, a chance to reconnect people with their community and in the air, the sense that anything is possible in the NWT.

# References Cited

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

City of Toronto. (2007). Official Plan. Available at: [http://www.toronto.ca/planning/official\\_plan/pdf\\_chapter1-5/chapters1\\_5\\_aug2007.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/planning/official_plan/pdf_chapter1-5/chapters1_5_aug2007.pdf). Retrieved on: November 10, 2009.

City of Toronto. (2008). Little Portugal (84): Social Profile 2 – Neighbourhoods Language & Ethnicity. Available at: [http://www.toronto.ca/demographics/cns\\_profiles/2006/pdf2/cpa84.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/demographics/cns_profiles/2006/pdf2/cpa84.pdf). Retrieved on: November 12, 2009.

Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006

Miller, G., Harris, G., & Ferguson, I. (2008). Bracing for the Demographic Tsunami- Can Canada's Seniors Escape Un-Pleasantville? The Ontario Planning Journal, Vol.21 No.6, 1-3.

Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. (2008). Provincial Policy Statement, 2005. Available at: <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page1485.aspx#1.3>. Retrieved on: November 15, 2009.

Ontario Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Renewal. (2006). Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Available at: <https://www.placestogrow.ca/images/pdfs/FPLAN-ENG-WEB-ALL.pdf>. Retrieved on: November 15, 2009.

Places to Grow Act, S.O. 2005, c.13

Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.P.13

Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation. (2005). Sustainability Framework. Available at: <http://www.waterfrontoronto.ca/dbdocs//4a1fe4722fcae.pdf>. Retrieved on: November 14, 2009.