

Section 1: Introduction

1.1

The Avenues

What are the “Avenues”?

The Avenues are important corridors along major streets where reurbanization is anticipated and encouraged to create new housing and job opportunities while improving the pedestrian environment, the look of the street, shopping opportunities and transit service for community residents.

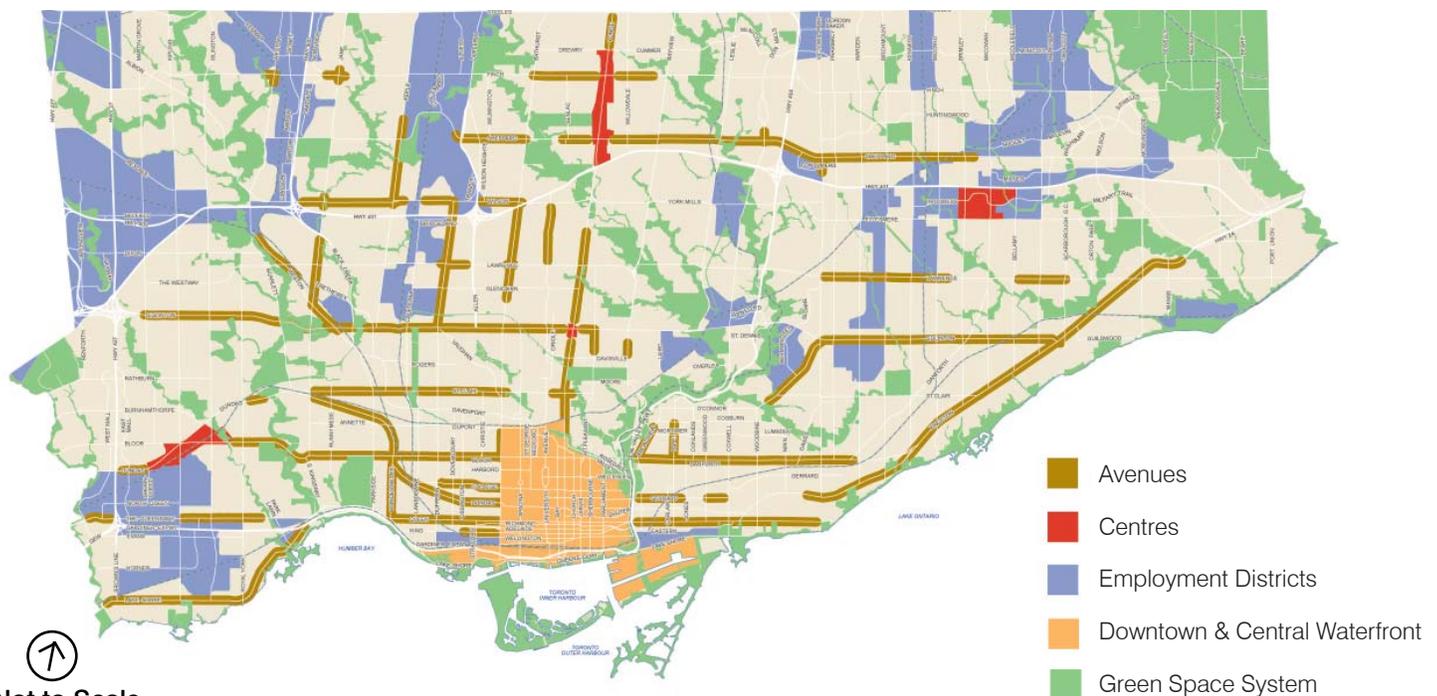
(source: Official Plan)

The City of Toronto is forecast to have approximately 3.08 million residents by 2031. Strategies for how and where to accommodate this growth are important.

The objective of this study is to develop the policies and processes that will encourage the appropriate development and “reurbanization” of the Avenues through the construction of more, and better-designed mid-rise buildings, accommodating the future population growth along Toronto’s Avenues. This ‘Avenues and Mid-Rise Buildings Study’ builds on the directions of the City’s Official Plan.

The purpose of the City’s Official Plan is to direct physical growth by:

- Identifying areas where the City wishes to see growth occur (Downtown and Central Waterfront, Centres, Employment Districts and Avenues);
- Focusing civic resources to ignite this change; and,
- Creating a new regulatory framework (i.e. Zoning By-laws and urban design guidelines) that creates certainty for development, with a degree of design flexibility, while continuing to provide the broader community with a level of comfort about the character and form of future development.



Not to Scale

Official Plan Map 2 - Urban Structure (map should be referred to in colour).

The City has undertaken, and is currently undertaking, a number of studies and activities that have shaped the recommendations in this report. Below is a list of some of these initiatives:

- Main Street Initiative (1987)
- Mid-Rise Symposium (2005)
- Avenue Studies (2000 - present)
- Transit City (2007 - present)
- Tall Buildings - Inviting Change in Downtown Toronto (2008 - present)
- Toronto Green Standard (2008 - present)

See Appendix D: Related City Initiatives, for a summary of these initiatives.

Toronto's Official Plan encourages intensification in identified "growth areas," which comprise approximately 25% of the City's land area, including Mixed Use Areas, Employment Areas, Institutional and Regeneration Areas.

The Official Plan directs that most future growth in the City will occur in designated growth areas identified as the Downtown and Central Waterfront, Centres, Employment Areas, and Avenues. These areas are identified on Map 2 of the Official Plan - Urban Structure. The Avenues policies in the Official Plan are intended to help the City direct growth to areas with existing infrastructure, including transit, retail, services, etc., while creating vibrant, livable communities and protecting existing neighbourhoods.

What is Reurbanization?

Reurbanization is a co-ordinated approach to the redevelopment of land within the existing urban fabric to accommodate regional growth.

Reurbanization improves and makes better use of existing urban infrastructure and services before introducing new ones on the urban fringe. This helps reduce impacts on the natural environment and improves the livability of the urban region by:

- reducing the pace at which the countryside is urbanized;
- preserving high quality agricultural lands to protect Toronto's food security;
- reducing our reliance on the private automobile;
- reducing greenhouse gas emissions; and,
- reducing our consumption of non-renewable resources.

(Source: Official Plan)

1.2

Mid-Rise Urbanism

Toronto's neighbourhoods are one of its greatest assets. They provide a setting that has long supported a high quality of life for the City's residents. The protection of these neighbourhoods is a priority embedded in the policies that control the City's growth. This growth will be directed to areas of the City that can accommodate and support new development without disrupting the integrity of the neighbourhoods and enjoy a high level of transit and transportation service. The Official Plan has identified the Avenues as one of these areas.

The Avenues are intimately linked to the identity and vitality of the neighbourhoods that surround them. As "main streets," they have both a functional relationship, providing a range of services that are used by area residents on a daily basis, as well as a symbolic role – as the social nerve centre of communities. The character of growth on the Avenues must recognize the unique connection to these neighbourhoods through a development form that is moderate in scale and reflects high quality design and materials. This energizing growth for the City is termed as "Mid-Rise Urbanism".

The Avenues vision calls for beautiful tree-lined streets and sun-lit sidewalks, framed by carefully articulated mid-rise buildings providing a multiplicity of retail and community uses at the sidewalk level, with residential and commercial units above. As better transit service is incrementally introduced, and the population increases, the Avenues will be re-energized, supporting improved levels of commercial, retail and community services. Combined with investments in the streetscape and public realm, the setting for a vibrant community life will emerge.

This illustration at right demonstrates the potential evolution of an Avenue with a 20 metre wide R.O.W. through mid-rise built form.



A 20 metre wide R.O.W. with several sites that may accommodate potential redevelopment.



The Avenue can gradually intensify through the introduction of mid-rise buildings



Eventually the Avenues will transform as vibrant streets providing a high level of services and amenities while protecting the character of adjacent neighbourhoods

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