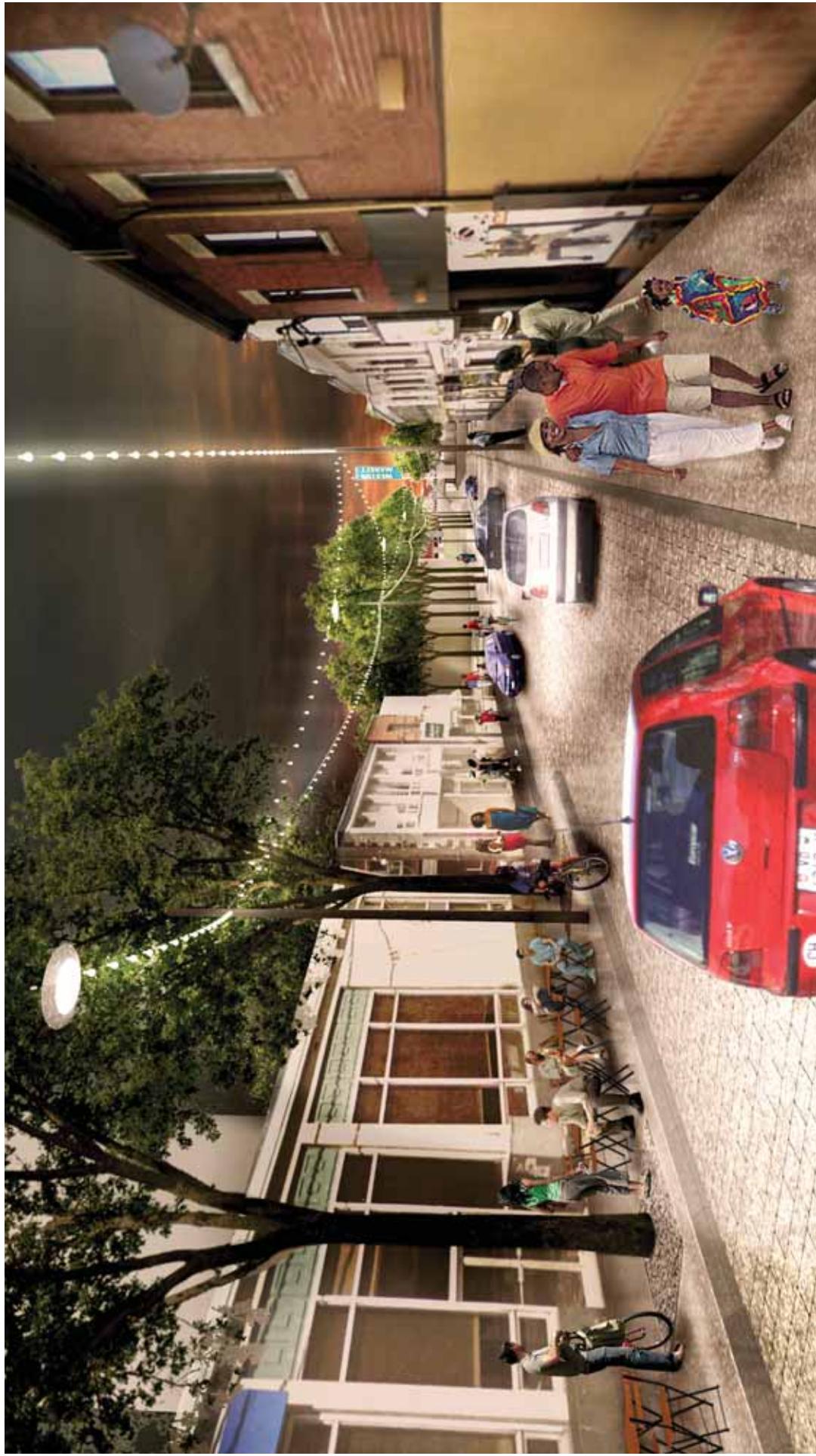
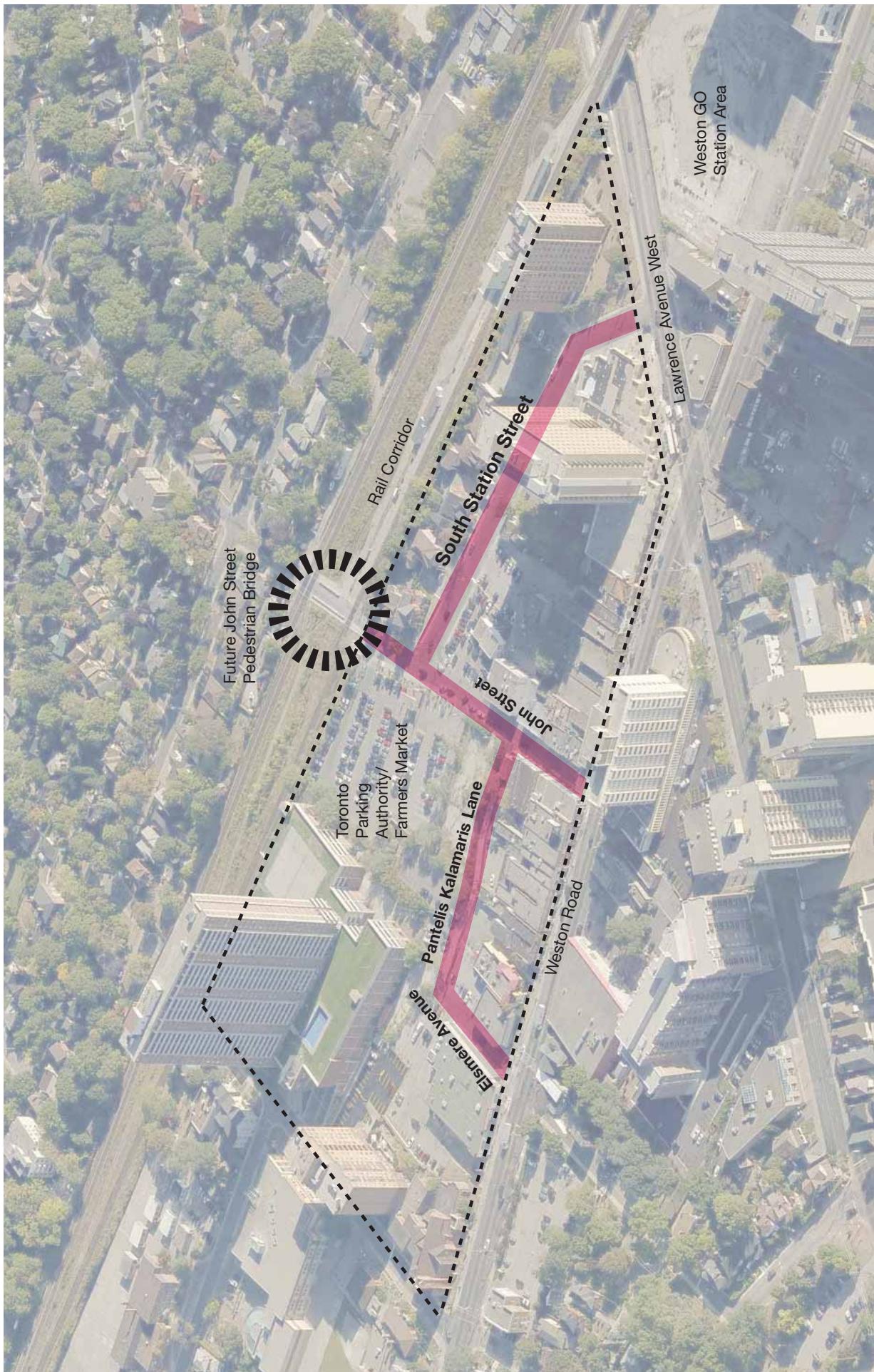


John Street Revitalization Public Realm Improvement Plan



Contents

Introduction	1
Process.....	2
Existing Conditions	4
Analysis > Synthesis.....	6
Design Principles.....	8
Public Realm Plan Recommendations	10
Demonstration Plan	19
Next Steps.....	36
Appendices	



John Street Precinct Study Area / oblique aerial looking northeast

source: composite of Bing Maps screen captures

Introduction

Weston is an area in Toronto with a rich history. The community has grown and evolved since it was first settled in the 1800's. John Street—one of the original village streets—was once the connector to the market space associated with the railway station and is an important part of Weston's heritage.

John Street currently connects the residential neighbourhood east of the existing rail corridor to the traditional commercial core located along Weston Road, and is home to the seasonally operating Farmers' Market located at the Toronto Parking Authority parking lot. The closure of John Street to vehicular traffic as part of the Metrolinx 2015 Union Pearson Express project and the relocation of the GO Rail Station has galvanized the community, who are actively seeking ways to take advantage of existing strengths and identify future opportunities to improve Weston.

In December, 2011, ULI Toronto District Council, in partnership with Metrolinx and the City of Toronto, successfully submitted a grant application called the “John Street Revitalization/Streetscape Plan” as part of an international competition for ULI's 75th Anniversary Urban Innovation Fund. The Plan will contribute to the transformation of the precinct surrounding John Street into a vibrant market district. DTAH—a Toronto-based architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design firm—were selected by ULI to assist with the Plan.

This project is one of the first ‘quick-start’ initiatives to emerge from the City of Toronto Weston 2021 Design Initiative and the ULI Technical Assistance Panel (TAP), conducted together with two public-sector partners – the City of Toronto and Metrolinx. The ULI TAP program brought together local industry expertise to determine how to best leverage ongoing initiatives to start the revitalization of the neighbourhood.

This Plan does not include built form recommendations, but does suggest a potential public realm direction for Weston to support redevelopment. The Plan will hopefully serve as a guide for future City public realm projects and community led initiatives.

It is too much to ask of this Plan to solve all of the issues that Weston must address – for many are beyond the reach of public realm design. However, the Plan does suggest and demonstrate that a thoughtful and well-designed public realm can support social interaction, be safe and inviting, be cost effective, and add value to the community.

This Plan involved the cooperation of Councillor Nunziata's office, the Weston Village BIA, City of Toronto staff (Planning, Urban Design, BIA Office, Public Realm, Transportation), Metrolinx, and numerous individuals who served on the Stakeholder Advisory Committee.

Process

There are a number of positive initiatives in the area that Weston needs to capitalize on such as the GO Station relocation and Station Area Master Plan, Farmers' Market, pending Cultural Hub, and the John Street Bridge. This Public Realm Improvement Plan intends to build upon those efforts.

The Plan was guided by a Project Management Committee with representatives from ULI, Councillor Nunziata's office, City of Toronto Planning - Urban Design, BIA Office, Capital Projects, Public Realm, and Metrolinx. The process included two community stakeholder meetings, a design workshop, and a public realm demonstration project.

The first stakeholder meeting was held in late February 2012 to introduce the project, define the scope of work, and listen to participants initial ideas for improving the public realm. The presentation included examples of streetscape improvements from other places to stimulate the discussion and suggest possible directions for Weston.

A design workshop with invited stakeholder participants was held in April 2012. The workshop began with a walking site tour to better understand the existing site conditions, gain a shared streetscape design vocabulary, and identify challenges and opportunities. Participants worked in groups to explore streetscape design options, suggest materials and details, and other elements they thought would contribute to a positive public realm design. Each group reported back to the larger workshop, with the results informing the overall plan.

One of the early suggestions that came from the two initial meetings was the idea of a demonstration or "pilot project". A pilot is a good way over a short period of time—and with far less capital cost—to test if the proposed improvements would benefit the community. The Pilot was installed mid-June to align with the grand opening of the Weston Farmers' Market and remained until late August 2012. The purpose of the pilot was to see how drivers would behave to a modified roadway, and how residents and visitors would make use of additional public space.

A final stakeholder presentation in late September 2012 summarized the findings from the Pilot project, presented the proposed design principles and public realm improvements, demonstrated what the public realm could look like if following the design direction, and suggested next steps for the City and community to keep the project moving forward.

The main interest expressed by participants during the meetings and design workshop was to make the public realm more inviting, attractive and celebratory. It should build on the Weston Village identity, and complement the historic built form character. The public realm should provide opportunities to tell more of the Weston story—both the past but also the Weston of today and into the future. Overall it should become more accessible and balanced, accommodating people as well as vehicles. Weston needs to get ready for redevelopment that will inevitably happen in time, with public realm improvements being part of the solution.

John Street Pilot Project / June to August 2012



Analysis > Synthesis

Existing Conditions

The existing public realm is best described as utilitarian, with basic materials and arranged to support vehicle movement, not enrich the pedestrian experience. Sidewalks are narrow, with many not meeting current City of Toronto guidelines for creating vibrant streets. Street trees or other plantings are notably absent. Overhead power lines and wooden poles are dominant streetscape features. The curb to curb dimensions are too large for the current and proposed operational requirements. There are no special design features present at all. Overall, the streetscape is uninviting as a place, but offers a great deal of room for improvement.

Challenges + Opportunities

The John Street pedestrian realm is tighter than a typical City of Toronto street. Sidewalks can be widened to better accommodate pedestrian movement by narrowing the lane widths and moving the curbs. This will provide options for trees and other plantings but only in certain locations. South Station Street has a far wider travel way than required, but it will be difficult to plant trees consistently with a high number

of existing driveways intersecting with the sidewalks on both sides. Elsmere Avenue presents as a driveway or access lane, not a public street. The travel way is also larger than required so it is possible to gain some space to widen sidewalks. Overhead power lines can be placed below grade, but not without significant cost. However, doing so would reduce visual clutter and provide the best opportunity for trees to grow to a mature size.

The future John Street Pedestrian Bridge will soon provide a landmark structure that terminates the view along John Street from Weston Road. The future potential redevelopment of the Toronto Parking Authority property and the possible expansion of the Farmers' Market operation and Cultural Hub are welcome opportunities. Other possible redevelopment sites are found along John Street, South Station Street, Elsmere Avenue and Pantelis Kalamaris Lane. All of these projects should provide a positive frontage to the public realm, and contribute to the overall revitalization of the Precinct.

Existing Conditions / John Street Precinct



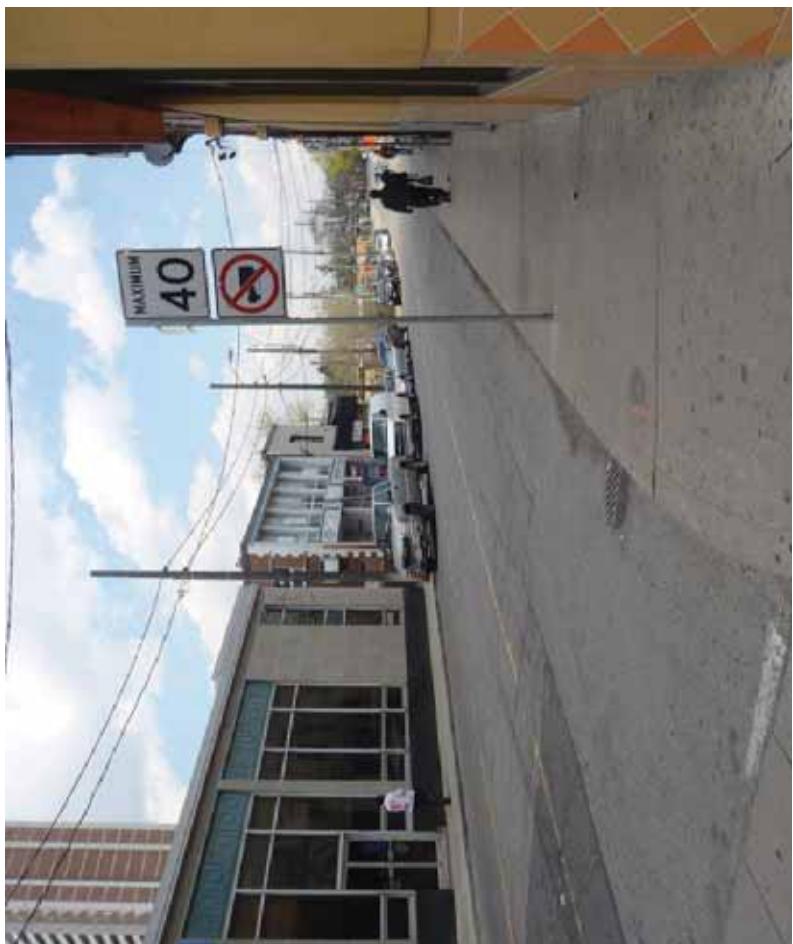
Pantelis Kalamaris Lane



Lawrence Avenue West



John Street towards rail corridor



John Street at Weston Road

John Street



Elsmere Avenue



South Station Road

Design Principles

The streets, lanes and supporting open spaces should become critical components of the public realm network. They should better accommodate pedestrians, and provide a higher quality of design and materials.

This design approach builds upon the direction established through the Weston 2021 Design Initiative (2011). The following design principles should guide future improvements to the public realm.



Create Identifiable Landmarks

Stimulate Cultural Expression

Build a Green Weston Village

Make Streets as Places

Encourage a More Walkable Weston Village

A new Farmers' Market + Cultural Facility and the John Street Pedestrian Bridge will provide different types of landmarks announcing arrival into Weston Village.

Toronto is a city of many neighbourhoods and villages. The community of Weston—like the City it is within—enjoys a storied past and bright future along with an ever increasing level of cultural diversity.

These elements will be evident in the design of the Village public spaces. Layers of story telling will take place on the sidewalks and street furnishings, and become part of the everyday visual identity of Weston.

Make efforts to provide optimum conditions for healthy plant growth to achieve maximum benefit.

Introduce green design features in the public realm and on private development sites, such as low impact development strategies and stormwater water management features (bioretention cells, rain gardens, bioswales, etc.).

Public Realm Plan > Recommendations

The public realm plan for the John Street Precinct builds on the recommendations from the 2021 Design Initiative and additional insight gained through this process.

The prescription for Weston is to learn from the best and most appropriate streets in

Toronto: Keep it simple, use what works and what we know can be done.

Overall, the public realm should be elegant yet simple, uncluttered, easy to maintain, and provide opportunities to tell Weston's story.

Sidewalks and Curbs

Roadway

Sidewalks should be widened to accommodate a minimum 2.1 m clear pedestrian zone on all streets. Provide rolled or chamfered curbs in either granite or concrete to improve accessibility and suggest a different character that supports the Village identity. Sidewalk paving materials should be concrete which is simple to construct, maintain and replace. The sidewalks should be detailed and constructed to a high quality. Control joints should be saw cut rather than tool jointed for a smoother surface and more precise detail. Minimize isolation/ expansion joints across the footpath to improve accessibility and visual appearance.

Each existing street has one lane of through travel in each direction, with one lane of parking. The lane is basic concrete in a narrow right of way. The improved streets and lanes should maintain the current lane assignments but narrow lane widths to gain space for sidewalks and calm traffic. Materials within the roadway should be of a higher quality. We suggest granite cobbles or concrete interlocking unit pavers with an appropriate village character. The roadway is the largest surface in the public realm, so this will result in the most visible change to the character of the streets. The City is currently using a variety of unit pavers on many streets that are well suited for Weston.



Concrete sidewalk and chamfered curb



Improved paving materials in roadway



Improved paving materials in roadway

Street Lighting

New street lights will contribute to a unique Precinct identity. They should be elegant, of pedestrian scale and provide a sense of intimacy and security. One of the elements suggested through the stakeholder process was to include holiday lighting across John Street to create a distinct environment from the other streets.

There are two possible street lighting options:

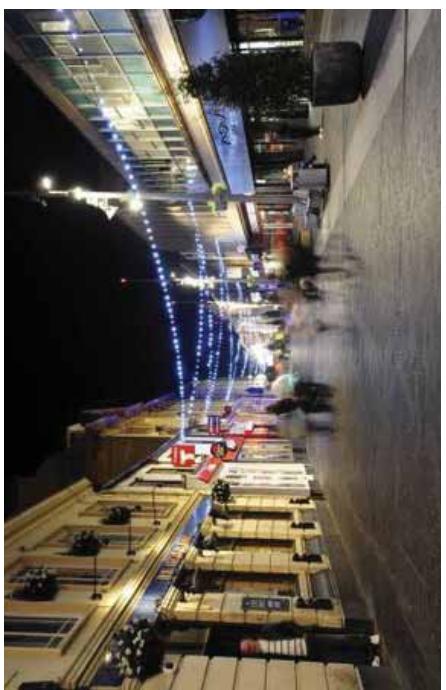
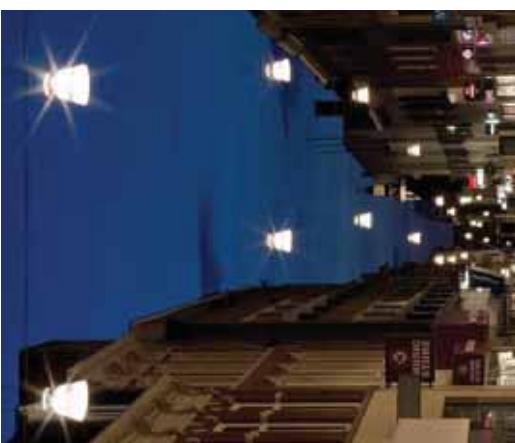
- The first option suggests a more conventional approach: underground all of the overhead power lines, introduce decorative pedestrian scale poles with concrete footings on both sides of the street, with either post top mounted luminaries or on a mast arm, and add catenary lights on cables strung across the John Street roadway and attached to buildings across Pantelis Kalamaris Lane. This option provides a clean appearance and reduces conflicts with street trees. This option would require cable duct work between poles.

- The second option suggests a unique to Weston design: introduce simple direct burial concrete-or steel poles on

both sides of the street, string holiday lights between the poles and across the street, and place a single luminaire over the centre of the roadway. This option would not require the under-grounding of the existing power lines, with building supply from either side of the street (not across from one side as existing). The holiday lights would provide the cable connection for the street lights. This option does not require footings or cable duct work between poles, and is more cost effective (approximately 1/3 the cost of the conventional option).

In both options we suggest LED luminaires and holiday lights. This technology—although not currently used in Toronto's public realm—is likely the inevitable future.

LEDs are compact, cost effective and more environmental responsible than conventional lighting technologies. LEDs are successfully used on well-known private developments throughout the City, for example Evergreen at the Brickworks and the Distillery District. Weston could become the first community in Toronto to embrace LEDs and catenary lights as part of their public realm design.



LED catenary street lighting for John Street and Pantelis Kalamaris Lane

Holiday lights across John Street

Special street lighting options

Street Trees

Trees should be planted on all streets where the sidewalk width is a minimum of 3.5 metres. On John Street, the sidewalks are not wide enough to introduce trees on both sides of the street, and will need to make use of curb extensions within the parking lane to provide sufficient soil volume. Trees should not be planted in conditions that inhibit their growth to a healthy, mature size for large trees have far greater benefit than small trees.

For John Street, a large north side curb extension is possible at the intersection with Weston Road. This additional space can be used for many different purposes, such as outdoor seating, street trees, or additional planting. Other curb extensions are possible at the intersection with Pantelis Kalamaris Lane, in front of the TPA lot, and the spaces associated with the John Street Bridge landing.

On South Station Street, the sidewalks are large enough to plant trees without adding curb extensions, but they must avoid the multiple driveways that intersect sidewalks on both sides of the street. If driveways are consolidated during redevelopment, the City should explore opportunities to plant additional trees.

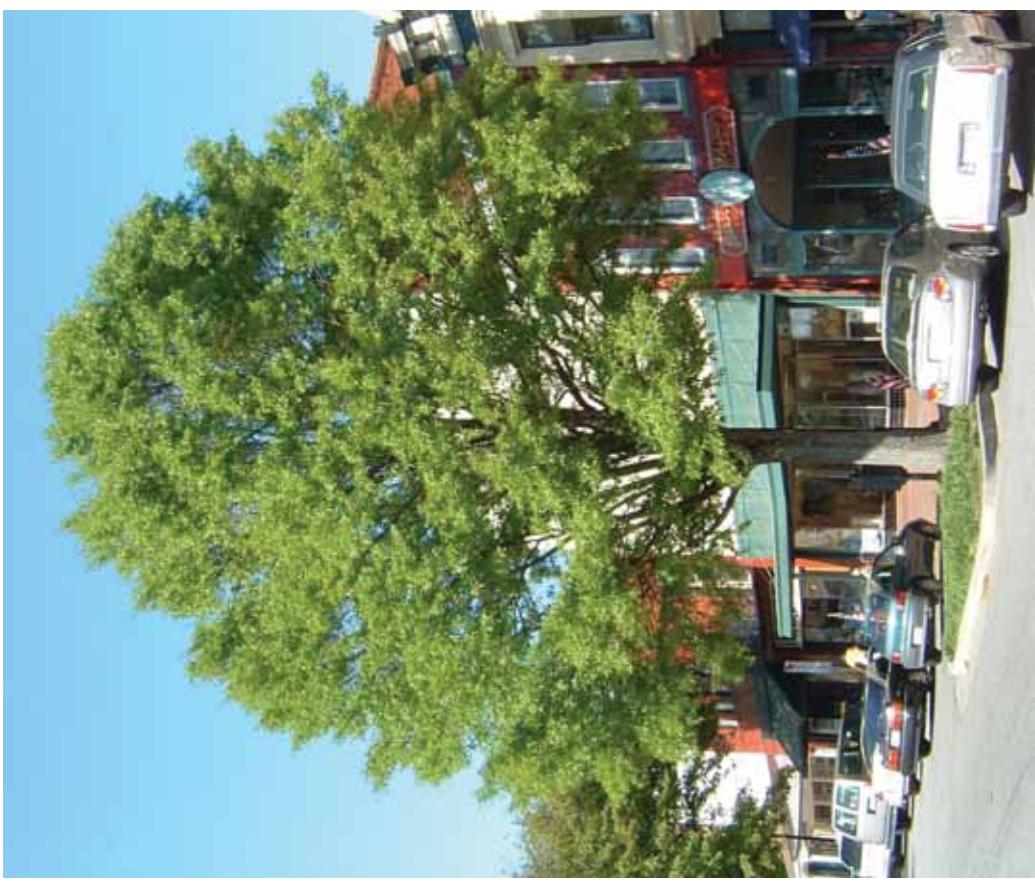
On Elsmere Avenue, trees are possible on the north side along the sidewalk of Shoppers Drug Mart. This planting would require parking restrictions along this segment of the street.

Although not in the Precinct study area, we considered how to introduce trees to the Lawrence Avenue West and Weston Road intersection. Street tree plantings are possible in large open planters along the York Active Living Centre frontage.

This would have the additional benefit of consolidating the sidewalk width into a more generous promenade adjacent to the building face, rather than divided into two footpaths.

All street tree plantings should follow the guidelines found in the recent City of Toronto “Tree Planting Solutions in Hard-Surface Boulevards” (2012). Where open planters are possible they offer the added benefit of potential underplanting with groundcovers, annuals, and perennials.

Big trees and opportunities for additional planting



Special Features

Outdoor Seating
Widened sidewalks and curb extensions provide opportunities to activate the public realm. Cafes, pubs, restaurants and other commercial uses can make use of the additional space for tables and chairs, displays, and special events. One of the lessons learned from the pilot project is that although seating will be used if present, it is important that someone manage the facilities responsibly. Other seating is possible by adding benches within the street furnishing zone or integrating benches into the design of planters on John Street and at the Weston Road and Lawrence Avenue West intersection.

Public Art

Public art will highlight the importance of the precinct to Weston. Introducing public art in the Precinct offers an opportunity to increase civic engagement. Public art could be either commissioned works by professional artists or the subject of subsequent community art projects.

The simple concrete sidewalks provide a suitable canvas for public art. One of the suggestions from the stakeholder meetings was to develop a “Weston Walk of Fame”. Several examples exist in Toronto and other places of embedded bronze plaques or carved granite in concrete sidewalks. More ephemeral art installations are also possible on the concrete surface.

Large scale public art is appropriate in highly visible and important public realm locations. We suggest that the intersection of Lawrence Avenue West and Weston Road could accommodate a large sculptural installation. Such public art should be of a sufficient scale and boldness to provide meaningful impact. The proposed pylon sign associated with the John Street Pedestrian Bridge will also serve as a landmark feature to help orient residents and visitors and announce arrival in the Precinct.

Public Open Spaces

Public gathering spaces—such as a square or plaza—should be introduced by the Farmers’ Market/Cultural Hub and the landing of the John Street Pedestrian Bridge. A new parkette at the intersection John Street and South Station Street on existing City-owned land would further add a much needed public space. All of the public spaces should include seating and planting to further promote the green identity of Weston. Plantings should provide visual interest throughout the seasons and below maintenance.

Wayfinding

A system to direct residents and visitors to key destination and services would provide another level of identity, orientation and a sense of security. Any system for Weston should coordinate with the City of Toronto’s wayfinding strategy.



Elements of surprise



Embedded stories in sidewalk



Wayfinding + orientation



Places to watch others



Large scale public art



Ephemeral use of sidewalk for public art



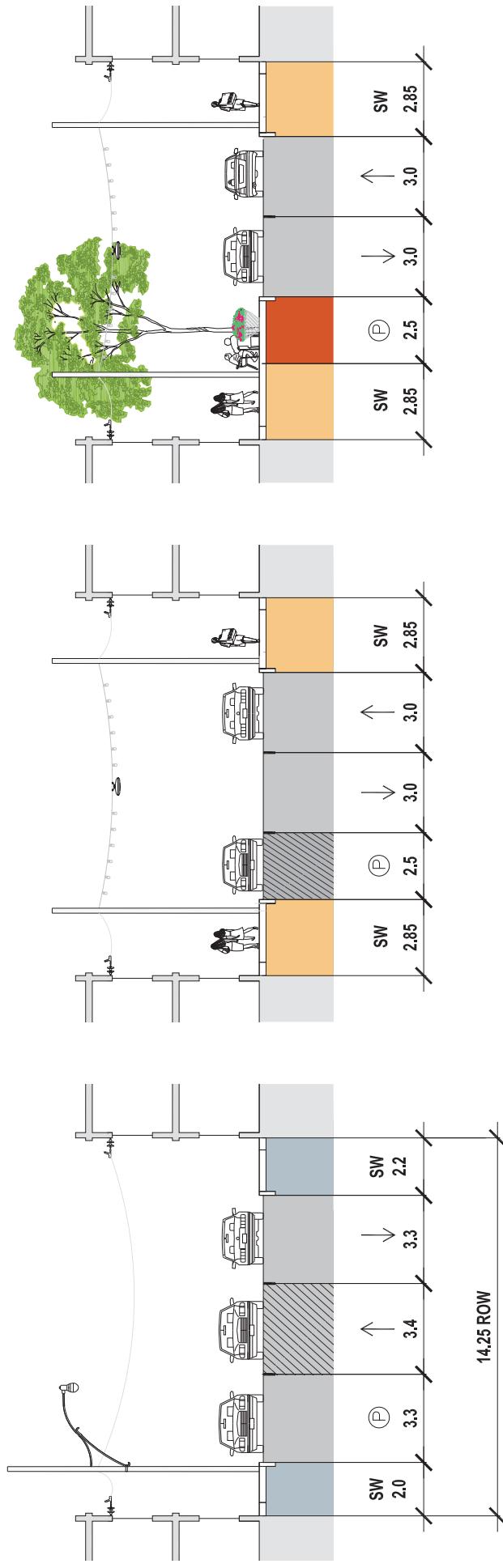
Fostering a green identity



Places to sit

Special features to enrich the public realm experience

Street Design > John Street



Existing

- 2 through lanes, 1 parking lane
- Wider roadway than required
- Narrow, sub-standard sidewalks
- overhead wires
- no trees

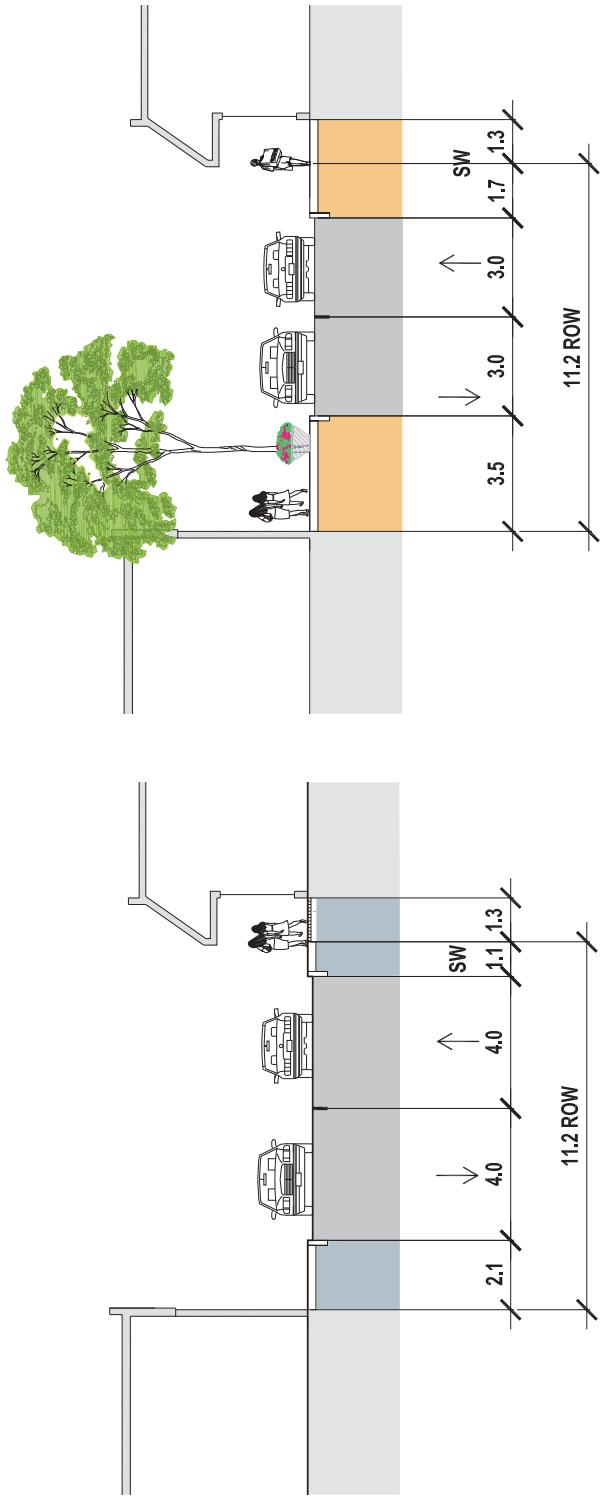
Potential - Midblock

- 2 through lanes, 1 parking lane
- Narrow roadway
- widen sidewalks to meet minimum City guidelines for vibrant streets
- overhead wires with unique street lighting
- no trees

Potential with Curb Extension

- 2 through lanes
- Narrow roadway
- widen sidewalks to meet minimum City guidelines for vibrant streets
- overhead wires
- street trees and seating opportunity in place of parking lane

Street Design > Elsmere Avenue



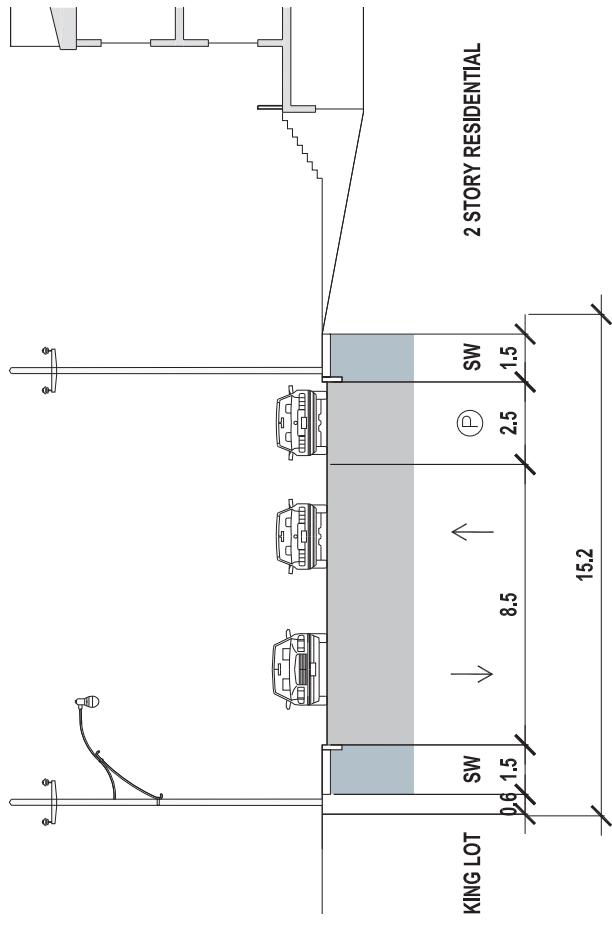
Existing

- 2 through lanes
- Wider roadway than required
- Narrow, sub-standard sidewalks
- overhead wires
- no trees

Potential

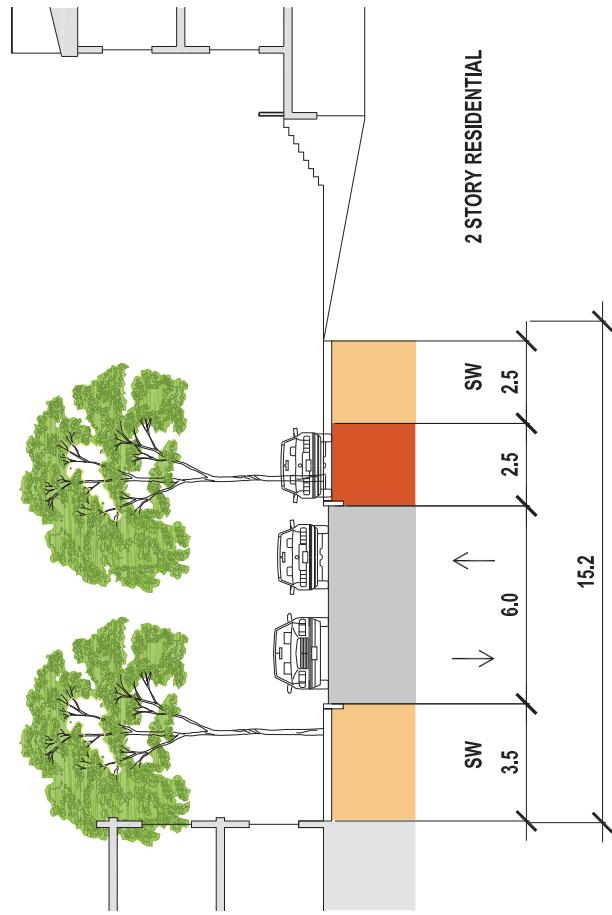
- 2 through lanes
- widen north sidewalk to provide minimum space for planting trees
- widen south sidewalk to improve pedestrian environment
- narrow roadway
- Parking lane still possible but will limit number of street trees and will reduce sidewalks

Street Design > South Station Street



Existing

- 2 through lanes with parking lane
- Wider roadway than required
- Narrow, sub-standard sidewalks
- overhead wires
- no trees



Potential

- 2 through lanes with parking laybys where possible
- widen west sidewalk with redevelopment to provide minimum space for planting trees
- widen east sidewalk to improve pedestrian environment and plant trees where possible
- narrow roadway
- More space for parking and trees still possible with redevelopment and driveway consolidation

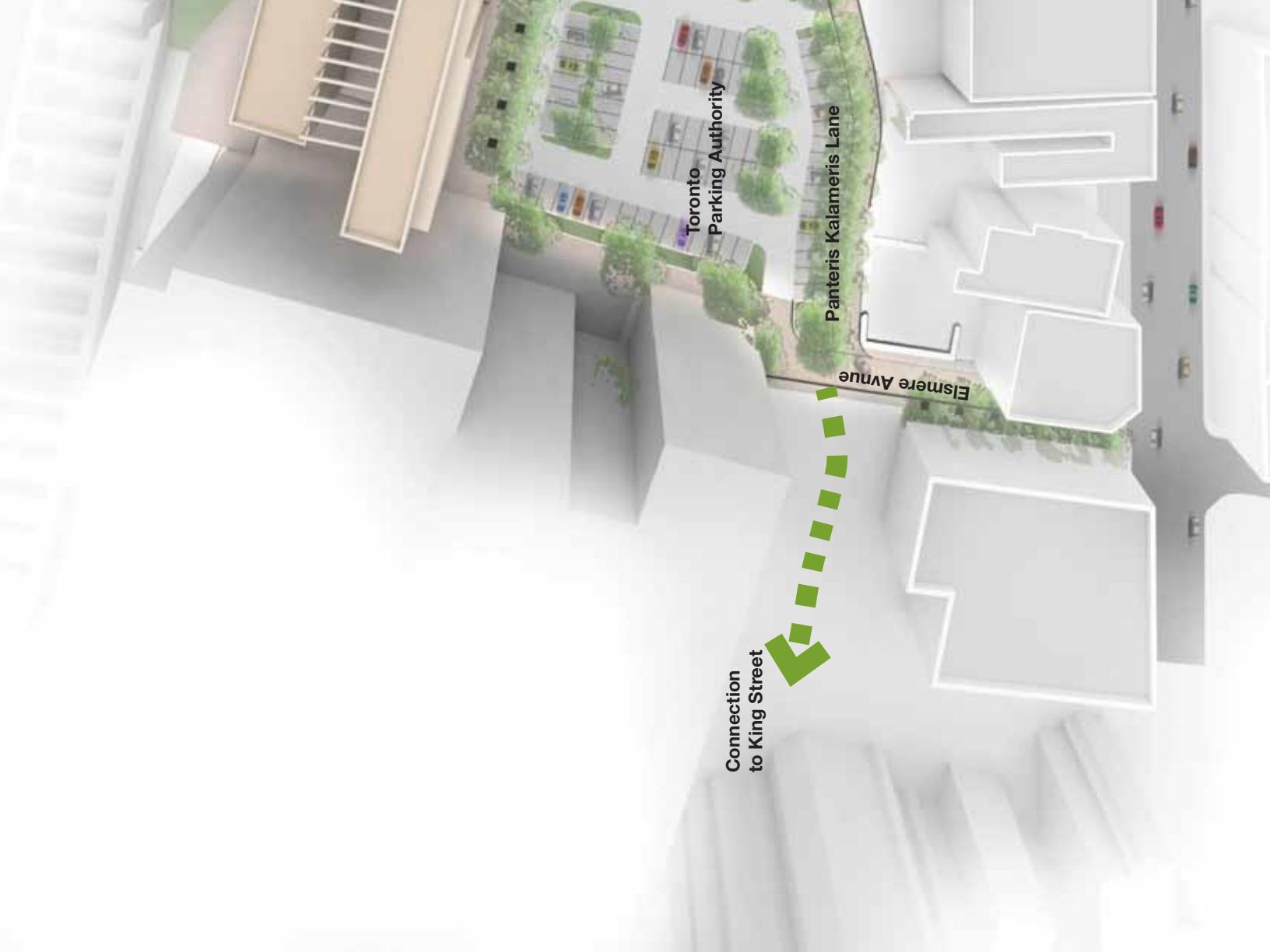
Demonstration Plan

A demonstration plan illustrates one way how the public space plan could be implemented over time if following the design principles and recommendations. The purpose of the demonstration plan is to provide guidance for the coordinated development of the public realm, in advance or at the same time as redevelopment in the Precinct.

On the following pages are several renderings that suggest the spatial arrangement, visual character, and quality of the public realm that is both appropriate and possible for the John Street Precinct.

John Street Precinct

The John Street Precinct will become the heart of a revitalized Weston Village. It should support a higher level of pedestrian activity, create better connections between existing and new destinations, and present an inviting Village scale and character.

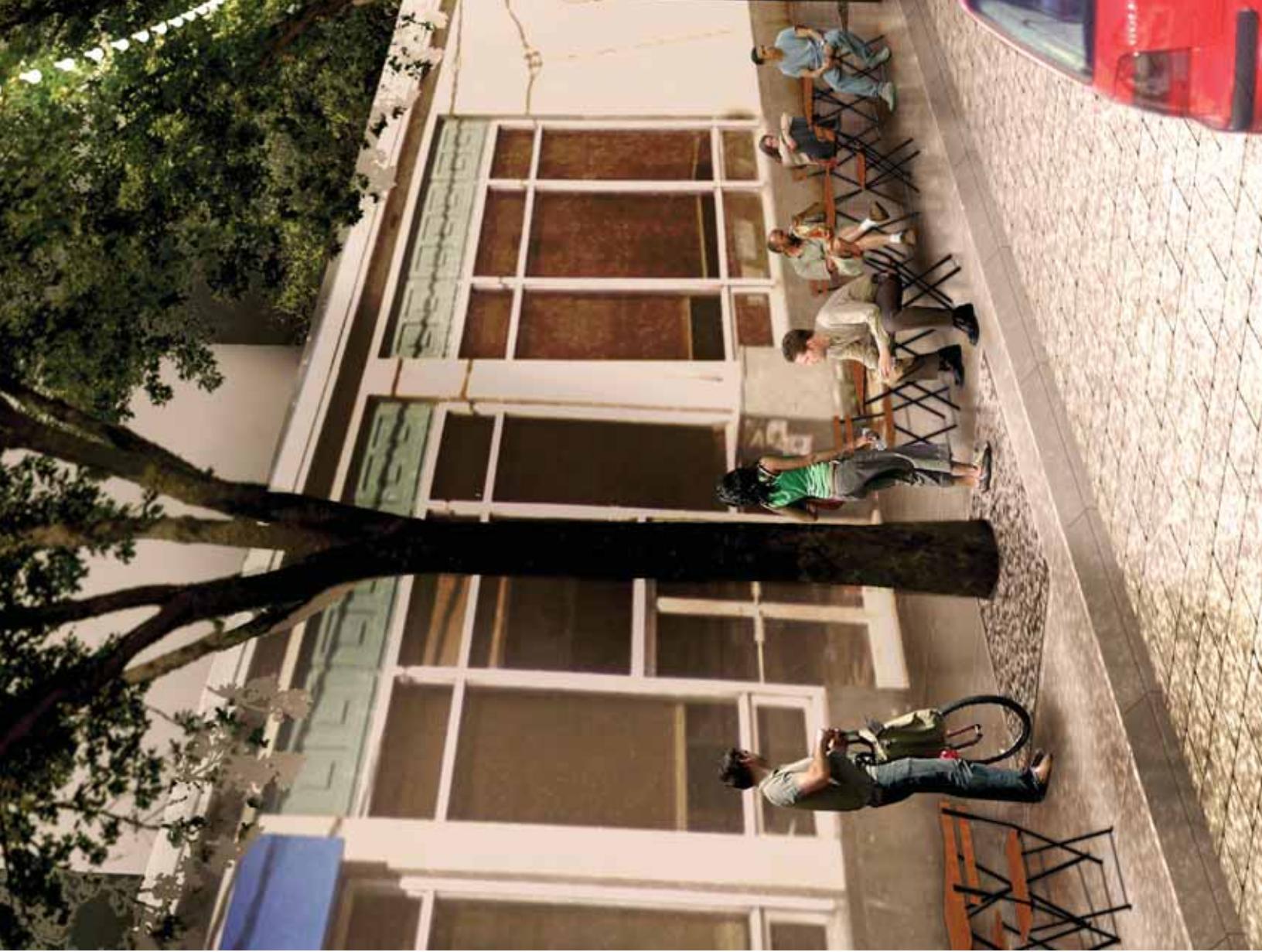




John Street at Weston Road

The curb extension at Weston Road will become a welcoming public space with plantings, space for outdoor seating, and a pleasant entrance feature to the Precinct.

The overhead catenary street lighting and holiday lights—together with new materials and a rebalanced roadway—will create a special urban place unique to Weston.

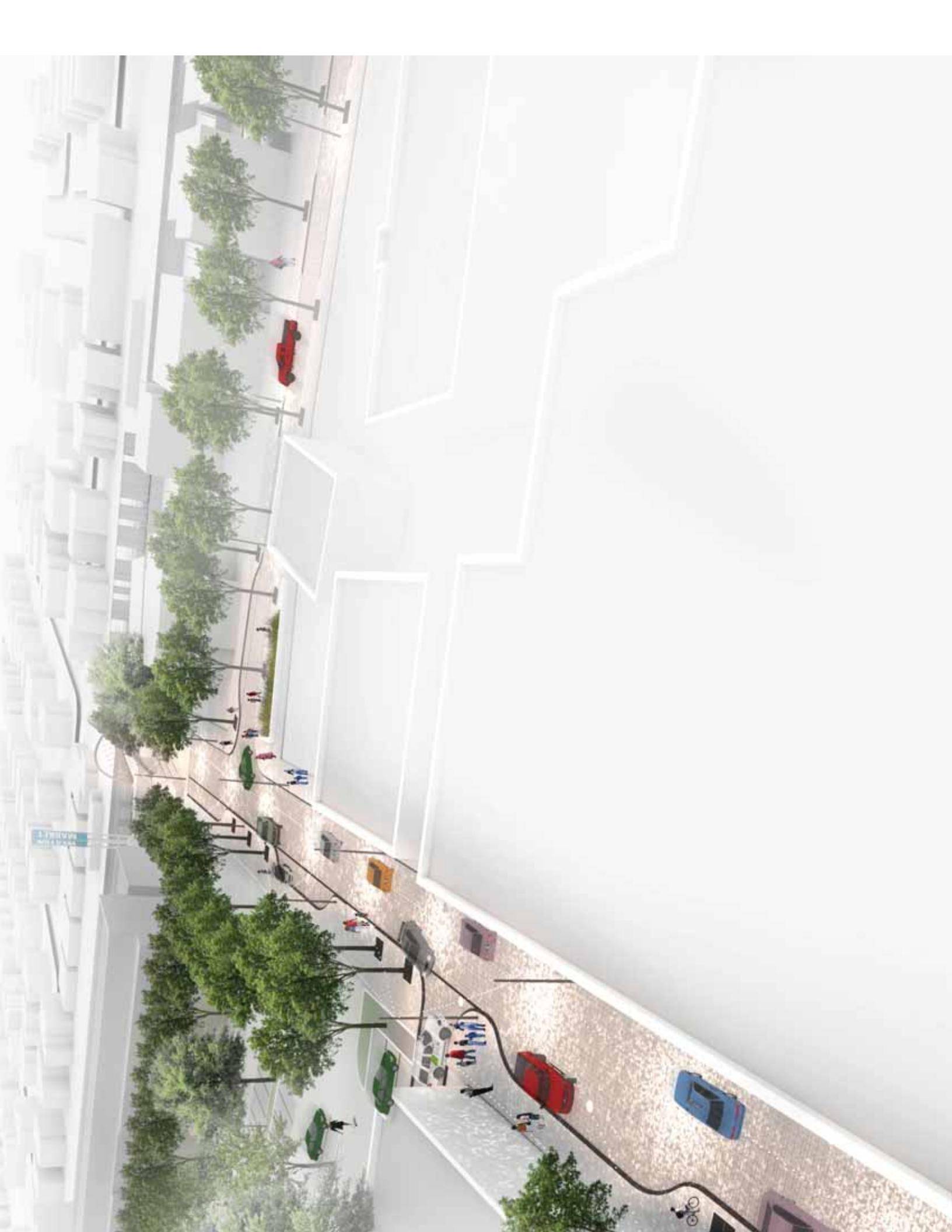




John Street > Overview

John Street is the central corridor in the Precinct. It provides a critical link between the Weston Road commercial district and the John Street Pedestrian Bridge. The recommended improvements will increase pedestrian activity, invite social interaction, support grade-related retail, and put forward a more green identity for Weston.





John Street + South Station Parkette

Redevelopment of the City-owned property at the intersection of John Street and South Station Street provides an opportunity to introduce a small parkette. The parkette should include seating and planting to support the greening of Weston.

The Farmers' Market, Cultural Hub and the John Street Pedestrian Bridge will work with each other and the public realm improvements to re-energize the Precinct and become community landmarks.





John Street Market Area

FARMERS MARKET

The improvements to John Street will further support the redevelopment of the Toronto Parking Authority property and the existing Farmers' Market operation. The Market has the potential to expand and become a year-round amenity for the community and regional destination.





South Station Street

South Station Street will become a critical green connection between the Farmers' Market area and the GO Station. This important street will have generous sidewalks and more narrow roadway to calm traffic. Potential future redevelopment along the street will relate to and reinforce the Village character.





Elsmere Avenue

Elsmere Avenue will become more of a proper Village street, with wider sidewalks, higher quality paving and street trees. The street will accommodate all users in a more balanced arrangement. Elsmere Avenue with Panteris Kalameris Lane will provide a smaller scale pedestrian route connected to the Farmers' Market area and future redevelopment.





Weston Road and Lawrence Avenue West

The intersection of Weston Road and Lawrence Avenue West will become a major community gateway. Large trees in open planters will provide a green entrance to the Village and John Street Precinct. The reconfigured sidewalks will complement the grade-related businesses and support social activities. Large scale public art will hold this important corner and further promote the role of arts and culture in Weston's revitalization.





Next Steps

This public realm improvement plan is an outreach effort by ULI and partners for the community of Weston. It currently has no official status. The recommendations within are being offered as a tool for the community, the local Weston Village BIA, and the City of Toronto for moving forward through the redevelopment and revitalization of Weston, and to coordinate with the many other initiatives currently underway in the community.

The improvements may not occur exactly as presented, but the spirit of the document is based on examples that have happened in Toronto and other places, or will in the near future. In addition to private redevelopment, the City and BIA should continue dialogue and work towards a formal coordinated public realm improvement plan for Weston.

Hopefully, this plan will help Weston take the next steps towards realizing a vibrant John Street Precinct.

dtah

50 Park Road
Toronto, Ontario
M4W 2N5

T 416 968 9479
F 416 968 0687
www.dtah.com