



The Main Street Mosaic

A Framework Plan for Main and Danforth

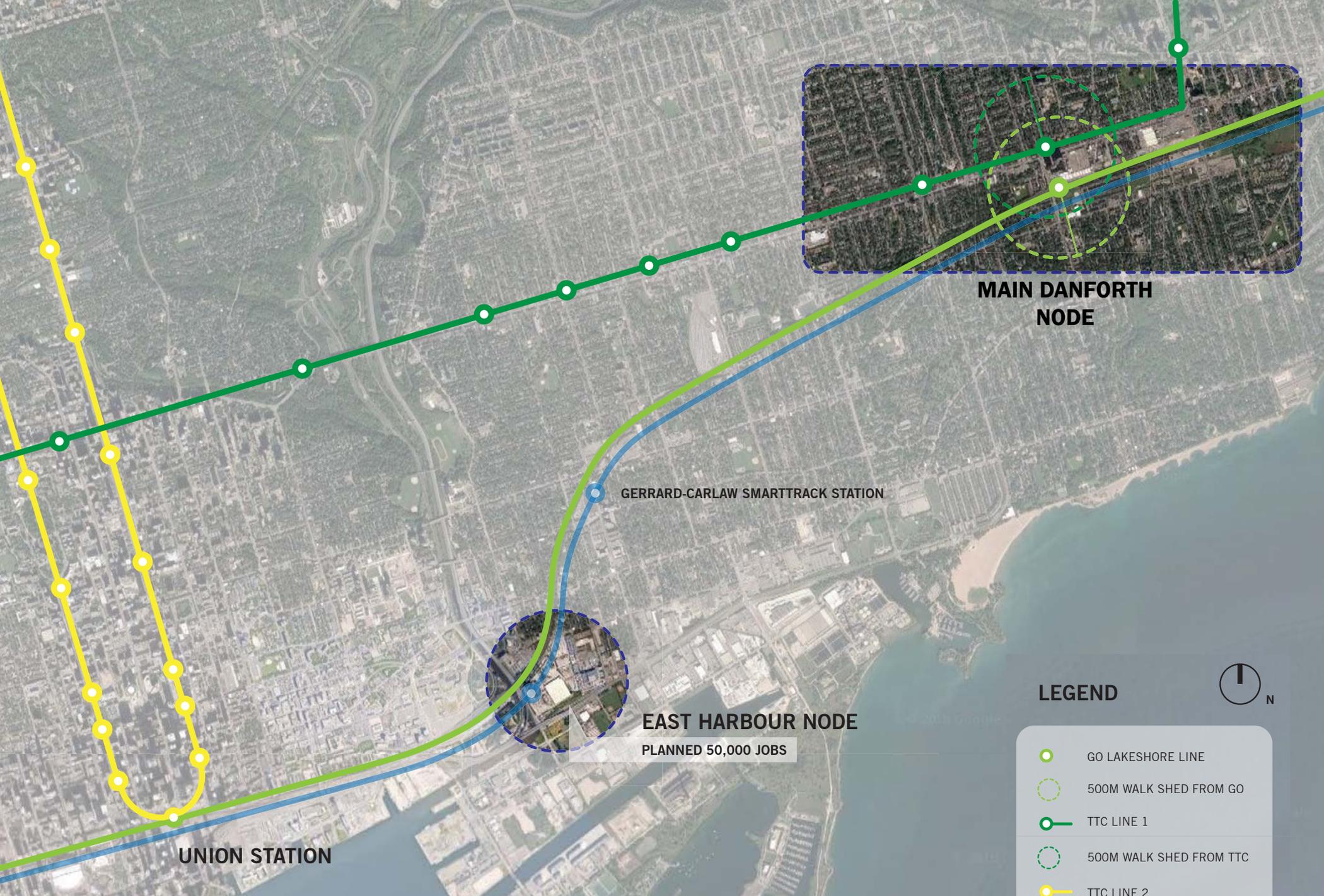
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**MAIN DANFORTH
NODE**

GERRARD-CARLAW SMARTTRACK STATION

EAST HARBOUR NODE
PLANNED 50,000 JOBS

UNION STATION

LEGEND

- GO LAKESHORE LINE
- 500M WALK SHED FROM GO
- TTC LINE 1
- 500M WALK SHED FROM TTC
- TTC LINE 2
- PROPOSED SMART TRACK



1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Objective

This report is the outcome of the ULI Leadership program 2017-2018. Over the course of a nine month process, interdisciplinary groups of planners, architects, civil engineers, real estate market experts, developers, lawyers and other city-building professionals were tasked with understanding the Main-Danforth node, including the nature of this space in the local community and its broader role in the City of Toronto. Part of the challenge involved creating new approaches to address various challenges associated with the future development of this site.

The vision and framework plan presented in this report has been informed by interactive sessions with community members, City staff, and various experts in land-based professions. **Overall, this Framework Plan seeks to push the boundaries of the possible, proposing a bold vision for the future of this area that is still rooted in practical recommendations for quick wins, partnership development, as well as long-term, community- focused change.**

Site and Area Context

The Main and Danforth area falls within the City of Toronto's East-End Danforth Neighbourhood, which is bounded by Woodbine Avenue to the west, Victoria Park to the north, Kingston Road to the south and lands immediately north of Danforth Avenue.

Between 2011 and 2016, the area showed a population increase of 2.6%. The area is predominantly composed of working age adults, but has a good balance between children, youth, per-retirement adults and seniors. The age population demographics do not differ much from the remainder of the City of Toronto. The larger neighbourhood is composed of a mix of ground level dwellings (51%) and apartment living (47%). Household incomes also show variation across the spectrum.

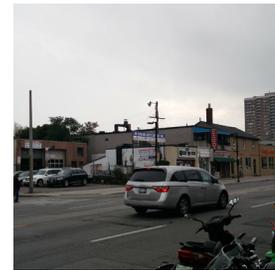
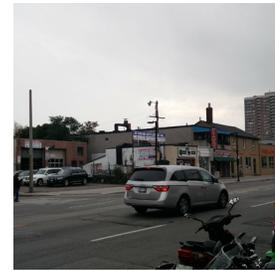
What can be apparent from visual observation of the project study area is that the immediate area around the intersection of Main and Danforth, differs significantly from the larger neighbourhood. It is characterized by commercial uses on the street with existing (or proposed) apartment buildings set back from the street.

High rise apartments are proposed in the immediate area, while the existing buildings look tired and aged. The number of proposed development applications indicate the area is on the verge of change. Change would be anticipated away from the stable residential neighbourhoods that are located to the south and west, with a focus being on the intersection as well as the Bloor-Danforth Subway Line or Lakeshore Road East GO Transit rail line.

The availability of multiple transportation options, provides this area with an opportunity for intensification that need not rely on the automobile. Not needing vehicular access means less money needs to be spent on transportation that could otherwise make it a more affordable to live in the area. Missing from the immediate neighbourhood are some vital elements that make up complete communities, which will be discussed in more detail in subsequent sections.

What We Heard

The vision and the framework plan have emerged out of our understanding of a variety of stakeholder needs. The key issues identified through interaction with the community included: disconnect between the TTC Main subway station and the Danforth GO station; Desire for improvement to and enhancement of community gathering space; need for reinvestment in community infrastructure such as the community centre; desire for jobs and local employment; expectations to fulfill role as Mobility Hub in the regional transportation plan, and a desire to make a place that reflects and is inclusive of the cultural make up of the area including the Bangladeshi community.



2.0 THE VISION

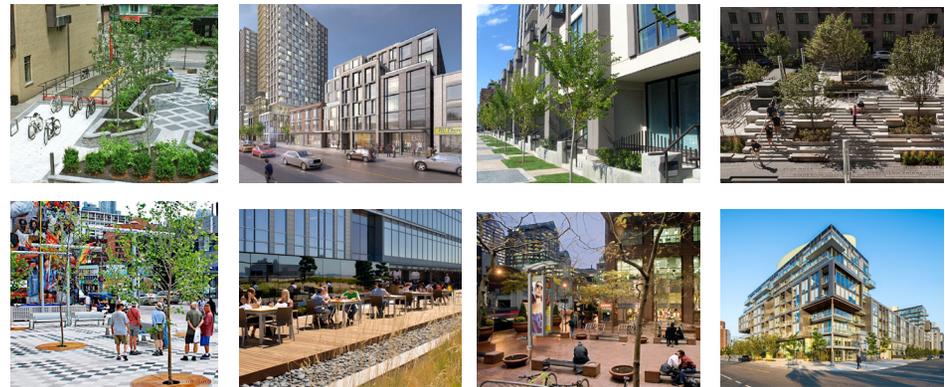
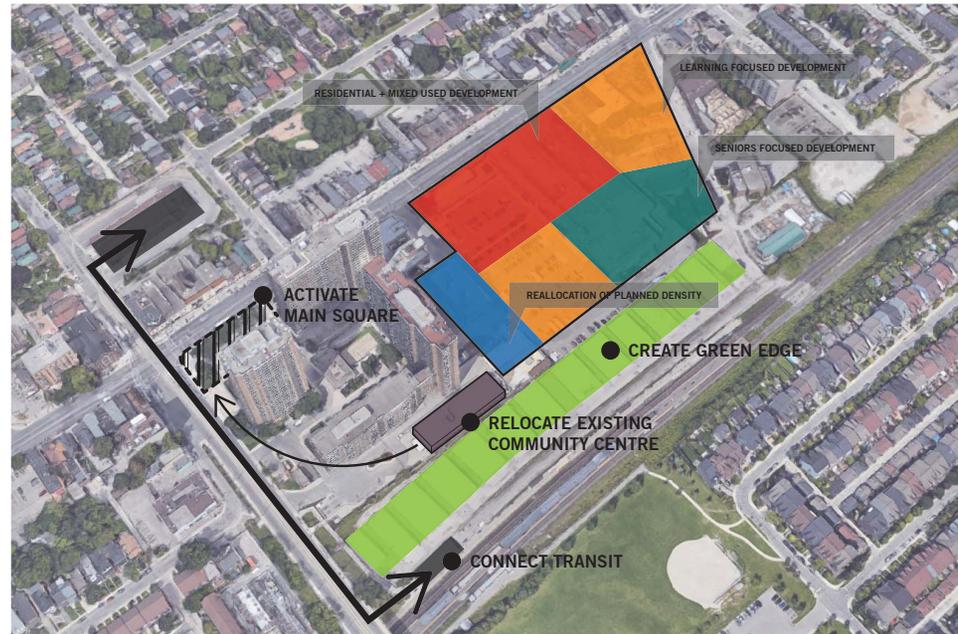
The Vision

The Main Mosaic is reflective of the diverse character of Main Danforth today and seeks to enhance that quality through re-imagining how community infrastructure is articulated and experienced in the area, how connectivity can be improved and how livable intensification can define the built form.

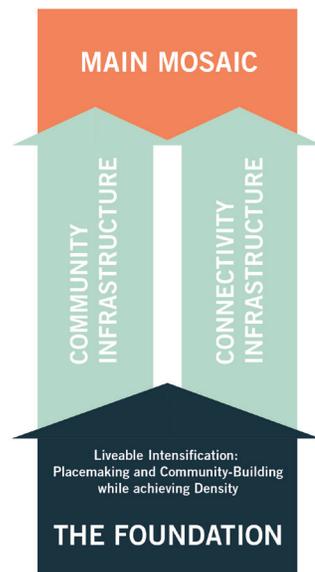
Why a mosaic?

Throughout the process, we heard from the community about what a great multicultural area this is. Its diversity is expressed in many ways – ethno cultural, socio economic, historic. Each block, restaurant, street corner has a story and a role and history in the neighbourhood – and we see that diversity, that patchwork of individual pieces that is greater than the sum of its parts. Individually, each recommendation or strategy put forward in our plan are an important element to the site's future; but together, they form a mosaic of opportunity, an image of what this community can become and the basis for the vision of this area as a truly complete community.

The language of a mosaic is already seen in writing about this area, including a local BIA, the DANNY, which refers to itself as the Danforth Mosaic Business Improvement Area. The recognition of this theme in the report reflects a desire to create a multi cultural place that celebrates the diversity that makes the character of Main and Danforth what it is today and creates a framework for an evolution of a diverse set of land uses and building program over time.



2.1 REALIZING THE VISION – CORE PRINCIPLES



LIVABLE INTENSIFICATION – The Foundation

Accommodating growth in the built-up areas of our cities is a key part of Provincial and local planning policy. Intensification close to transit, existing infrastructure, services, employment opportunities and schools is a desirable way to grow. Urban intensification can be less land intensive than greenfield development and it has a smaller environmental footprint; it can create communities that are walkable, support transit investment and located close to jobs. Many aspects of urban intensification are attractive, however, in practice, higher density living hasn't always lived up to its potential.

The intensification that the vision for Main and Danforth seeks to realize is not just one of providing the appropriate number of people and jobs to intensify the area, but it is one of a specific quality: a liveable intensification.

Liveable intensification is an approach to intensification that takes a tactical approach to new density, finding the right locations, building forms, public spaces and community amenities needed to make additional density a welcome change. Achieving liveable intensification is a critical component to making a place that people want to live, a place that has a strong community identity and a place that can achieve growth

Toronto's Official Plan is consistent with Provincial direction of realizing complete communities, and contains a range of policies to create the kinds of dynamic, transit supportive, intensified communities that fit within the existing built form context.

The intent in the Main Mosaic vision is to elevate the principle of liveable Intensification as a core tenet; to put an emphasis on the holistic delivery of a kind place that exemplifies the existing policy direction that guides land use and development from the very beginning.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Community infrastructure is both the soft and hard infrastructure that makes a neighbourhood unique. It's the housing and type of buildings people call home, it's the community services and supports that local families might access to find housing, see a doctor, or look for work. It's the places and spaces that people locally and from outside the neighbourhood come to experience like parks and recreational programming, and it's the employment and learning hubs that act as anchor institutions and are a cornerstone to vibrant redevelopment.

Near the corner of Main and Danforth are four buildings owned and operated by Talisker. Postwar, concrete towers nearing the end of their lifecycle. This area of the neighbourhood has long provided some of the community's rental housing market

and is home to many mid-low income residents with average incomes ranging from \$30,000 - \$50,000 per year. Like much of Crescent Town and the tower communities to the north of the Danforth, Main Square has served its residents well but could benefit from revitalization, retrofit and renewal.

Main Square has evolved over decades and has facilitated the growth of a strong sense of community amongst its residents. Its position and role in the wider neighbourhood could be better leveraged to strengthen existing community assets. The redevelopment of Main Square will achieve mixed income, mixed use and residential goals of the community.

The buildings at Main Square have a poor relationship to the public realm, the open spaces on the site are poorly designed and limit the potential for spontaneous and curated community activity. The redevelopment will produce new connections through publicly owned and pedestrian friendly streets, parks and open spaces and better incorporate Main Square into the surrounding neighbourhood.

The need for community spaces can be addressed by providing flexible and multi-purposes spaces. These spaces can accommodate a variety of services – from child care to housing supports – available for the residential and working populations at Main Danforth and can be adaptable as the

needs and demographics of the neighbourhood shift. These needs could be met through either City owned, standalone properties or as part of the mixed-use redevelopment, occupying tenancy spaces in private buildings. New public through streets will reintegrate Main Square and expand the immediate neighbourhood's population and navigation. New internal streets will make use of ground-related units and will keep in mind pedestrian movement and safety.

There are several core priorities that should be considered in the community infrastructure elements of the redevelopment opportunity:

- **Housing Diversity:** a full range of housing tenures and building forms will attract a broad range of incomes and diversity of households
- **Mix of Uses:** residential, commercial, community spaces, parkland, and employment including institutional, office, live-work
- **Sustainability:** redevelopment will address sustainability through design, infrastructure technology
- **Economic Health:** redevelopment will incorporate enough flexibility in design to address adaptability and resilience as the neighbourhood experiences shifts in demographics, lifestyle, transit, technology

- **Well-being:** encouraging of a healthy community and the live-work-play theory of Placemaking including meaningful public spaces that connect people to each other and a sense of place

This concept is not a new one, complete communities are a central part of Provincial policy, where in the Growth Plan they are defined as: “communities that are well designed to meet people’s needs for daily living throughout an entire lifetime by providing convenient access to an appropriate mix of jobs, local services, public service facilities, and a full range of housing to accommodate a range of incomes and household sizes.”

CONNECTIVITY

The Main and Danforth site represents one of four areas in the City of Toronto where GO Transit lines have an opportunity to connect with the TTC. This site is also designated as a Gateway mobility hub in Metrolinx’s Transportation Plan. Connectivity between the GO line and TTC is required to relieve the congested Yonge and Bloor TTC station in advance of the TTC’s Downtown Relief Line. However, 50 years since the Province launched GO service at the Danforth station, this connection still remains a “near miss.”

In order for this site to thrive and attract new businesses, employment opportunities and residents, it must be able to provide “fast, frequent

and well-connected means of movement.” It is important to assess opportunities to provide high-quality, safe and inviting connections between regional rapid and local transit networks (including streetcar and bus routes) in order to leverage the availability of existing and planned transportation infrastructure.

Despite its potential for growth, there are still numerous challenges facing the Main and Danforth site today from a connectivity perspective, as illustrated in the constraints mapping to the right.

With a new development, there will be additional challenges to connectivity such as:

1. How do we connect the site with the adjacent Canadian Tire block?
2. How do we establish a potential mid-block connection north of Danforth?
3. How do we increase the permeability of the large site? (Locations of the “Pit”, Community Centre, and Danforth GO station currently have poor visibility and accessibility)

Despite the current constraints and future challenges, there are numerous opportunities

that arise from the Main and Danforth site. Part of these opportunities arises from the physical nature of the site, while others are based on recent announcements and commitments from various public authorities and agencies, including the City of Toronto and Metrolinx.

The physical nature of the site presents a number of opportunities, including:

Close proximity between the TTC subway, streetcar and Danforth GO station. The stations are less than a leisurely 5 minute walk away.

Faster, more reliable connection to the downtown. The site is less than 10 km from Union Station.

Danforth Avenue is ideally suited for “main street” uses. The wide right of way at Danforth and adequate parking rate means that there is more flexibility to improve the public realm along Danforth.

From a policy perspective, the site offers additional support for improved connections in the near future:

The Growth Plan directs growth to Main and Danforth. As a major transit station area, it must meet 200 persons and jobs per hectare.

Metrolinx’s Big Move and 2041 Regional Transportation Plan supports increased investment. There is clear intention from Metrolinx to revitalize this site, enhancing stations access, local transit connections and streetscape design. With Regional Express Rail, the site will be serviced with two 15-minute all-day, two way service.

Danforth Avenue Planning Study supports as-of-right intensification. This City-initiated planning study supports increased heights and densities along Danforth and identifies this site for future development as part of a separate secondary plan.

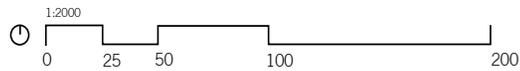
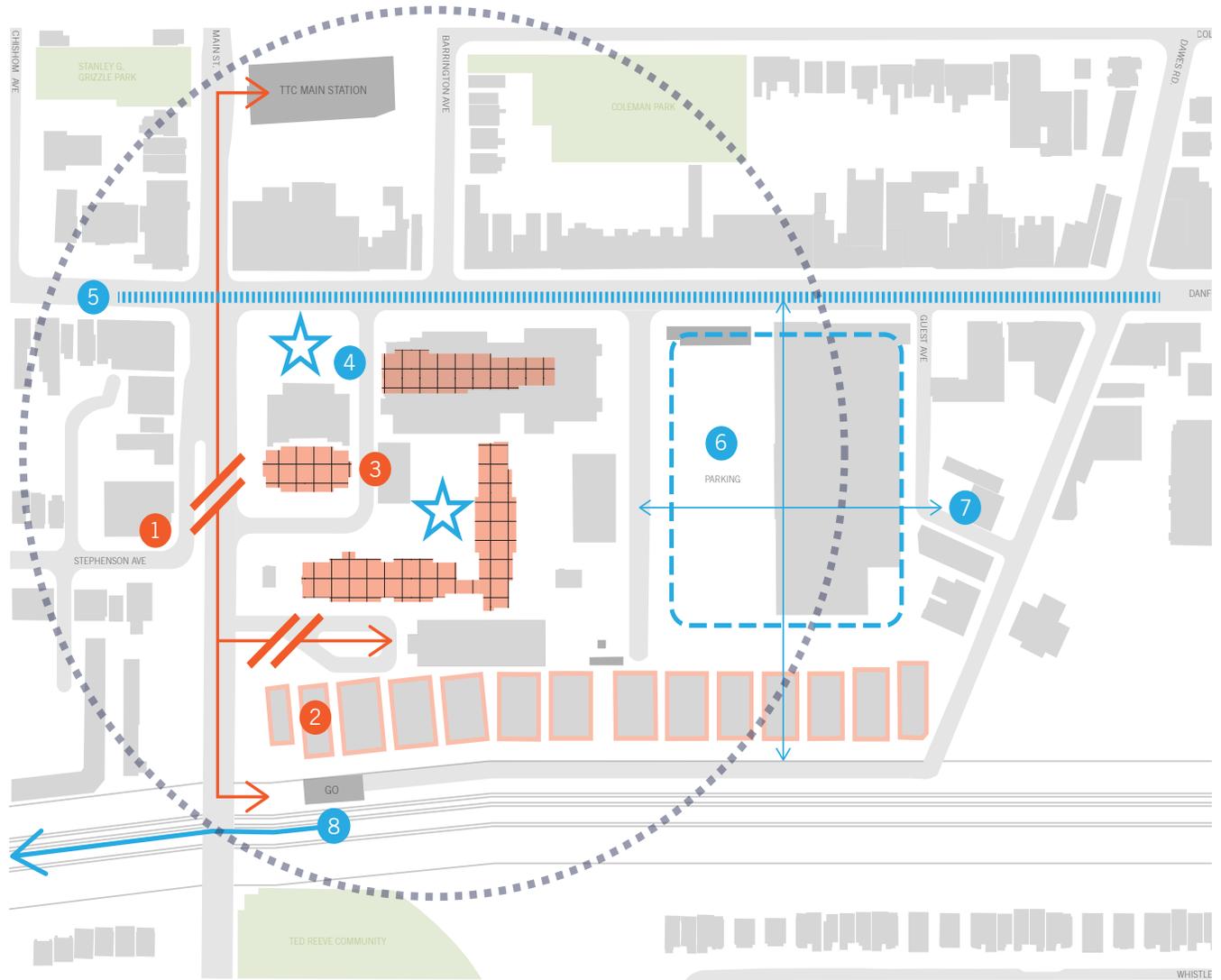
City’s Ten Year Cycling Network Plan supports multi-modal connectivity. The City has identified this stretch of Danforth Avenue as part of the beneficiaries of its \$16 million per year network plan.

CONSTRAINTS

1. LACK OF CONNECTION AND ACCESSIBILITY
-BETWEEN TTC AND GO STATIONS
-BETWEEN COMMUNITY CENTRE AND STREET
2. PHYSICAL BOUNDARY OF STORAGE FACILITY LIMITED DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY
3. AGING TOWER FORMS DISCONNECTED FROM PUBLIC REALM

OPPORTUNITIES

4. OPEN SPACE IMPROVEMENT
5. ACTIVATE FRONTAGE ON DANFORTH AVE.
6. LARGE SITE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY
7. POTENTIAL FOR FINER STREET NETWORK
8. ACCESS TO INCREASED JOBS AT EAST HARBOUR



3.0 THE CONCEPT PLAN

Inspired by the vision for the area and responding to constraints and opportunities the following concept plan was developed. The concept includes approximately 2,300 units (existing and new combined) with a target of 50% affordable units, new retail, office and educational uses and reinforces the three vision pillars, described in detail below:

Liveable intensification

- A mix of uses in land use and in planned building program; to create a place where the mosaic comes to life
- A diversity in open spaces: Active and passive open spaces in different areas frame development and provide important community spaces
- Mix of building heights, deployed to appropriately relate to the context, sensitive to transition in scale and intensity
- Strong, logical streets and blocks, public and private spaces

Community Infrastructure

- Create new open spaces to frame civic life including: An urban open space at the south east corner of Main and Danforth, a linear park along the rail corridor. Utilizing

undevelopable land for public benefit, and a woonerf street internal to the site, reclaiming streets for more seamless public movement.

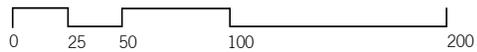
- Create a community-serving focus. Provide new prominence to the Community Centre by relocating it and integrating it with a building. A relocated community centre will have a more active frontage and visibility.
- Build affordable housing. The concept targets at least 50% affordable at different rates of affordability. Provide new housing that is affordable to the low-income and middle-income earners. Establish mixed-income and mixed-use buildings that will meet the current and growing need for households of all sizes. Ensure that as the community grows it is inclusive and maintains its diverse socio-economic and cultural character.
- Establish higher educational anchor institution. Establishing a college as an employment creator and commercial catalyst will create opportunities to bring new people into the neighbourhood both as residents and as commuters.
- Expand community services and supports. Expansion of community spaces for local and emerging social services, community programs and supports.

Connectivity

- Enhance visual connectivity from TTC to GO by introducing place-making design elements for the Danforth and Main crosswalk, strengthening the pedestrian crossing and link the lands north of Danforth with those to the south
- Create new connection from Main Station to Barrington Avenue and adding signage at Barrington and Danforth.
- Acquire or expropriate a portion of the building at the northeast corner of Main and Danforth to open up the pedestrian realm to dovetail with the area south of the site.
- Connect Ted Reeve park and athletic field with mid-block connection at the new site using a pedestrian and bike tunnel or overhead crossing.
- Connect the west side of Main Street to the Danforth GO Station platform with a pedestrian pathway under Main Street.
- Complete streetscape improvements for Main Street, Danforth Avenue, Dawes Road and Ted Reeve Drive with the long-term goal of improving the connection between Danforth Avenue to Gerrard Street.



- 1 NEW AND ENHANCED OPEN SPACES**
- 2 A NEW CLUSTER OF EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT USES**
- 3 ENHANCED CONNECTIVITY TO TRANSIT THROUGH LANDSCAPE**
- 4 DENSITY SUPPORTED BY COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE**



4.0 THE ACTION PLAN

The vision and recommendations for development provided in this plan are the product of only a few short months of work and basic reflections on the needs of the community and the development capacity at this location.

Many of the actions suggested in this plan require the alignment of many actors who are invested in the Main Danforth area including the public, current tenants, local BIAs and cultural associations, landowners and building operators, the City, Metrolinx and others.

The redevelopment of Main Danforth could bring significant change and the conversations between the local community, stakeholders, landowners and developers should be proactive, not reactive. As a first step to comprehensive redevelopment, a working group should be created to broaden the conversation about what could be achieved at this location, establish the goals for development from the public and private sector perspectives and seek to find alignment on key principles for the future.

A number of the recommendations identified in this plan will come along with comprehensive redevelopment. The following is a list of short, medium and long term actions that will be required to realize the vision put forward in this plan.

Short Term (1-2 yrs) Lower-cost high-impact public space and infrastructure enhancements can be a short term focus

- Continue to enhance and activate public space at Main Square through arts, culture, music and food-related events and programming
- Upgrade the Main Danforth intersection cross walk with vibrant paint treatments to enhance sense of place and community identity
- Implement improved/enhanced signage or light installations between TTC & GO, increasing visual connections
- Provide safe direct access to Barrington Ave from TTC station to facilitate another connection point to Danforth away from the Main intersection
- Connect GO platform to bridge

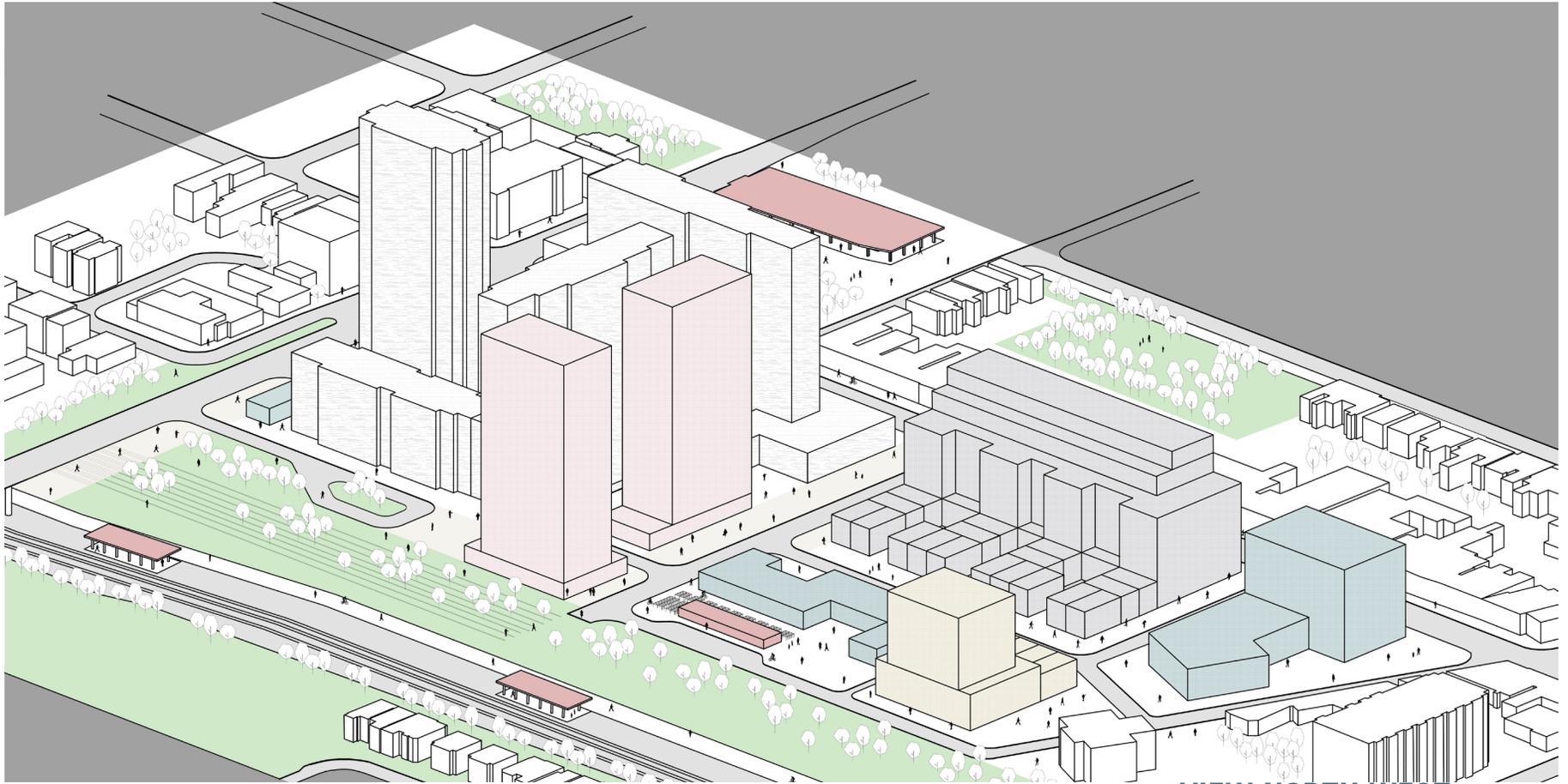
Medium Term (2-5 years) When redevelopment is ready to occur, lead with community infrastructure and connectivity enhancements such as:

- Relocate community centre to frame the Main Danforth Square, increase visibility and access.
- Extend GO Train platform west to connect station to existing residential on west side of Main Street.

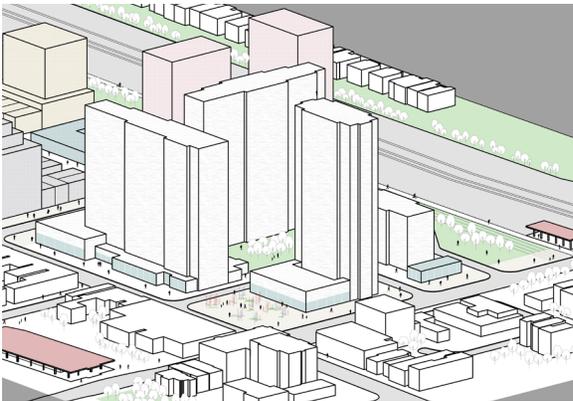
- Extend protected bike path on Dawes south of Danforth
- Create a elevated pedestrian/bike connection connecting north and south side of the tracks (mid block)

Long Term (5+ years)

- Secure an anchor institution to create a non-residential draw to the area and attract GO ridership
- Secure anchor office users that connect to the educational and training programming; include lower cost spaces for local social enterprise
- Undertake coordinated redevelopment



VIEW NORTH WEST



CONCEPTUAL REDEVELOPMENT- FULL BUILD OUT

VIEW SOUTH EAST

