

Pedestrians the missing ingredient

MAKING DUFFERIN VIBRANT

By Edward LaRusic

Staff has high hopes for the Dufferin Street Secondary Plan, envisioning it turning an inhospitable car-oriented corridor into a vibrant, pedestrian-orientated mainstreet with added parks and open spaces.

“Dufferin is just not a very hospitable, livable, walkable, desirable stretch right now because of the way it’s been built out,” Ward 15 Eglinton-Lawrence councillor **Josh Colle** told *NRU*.

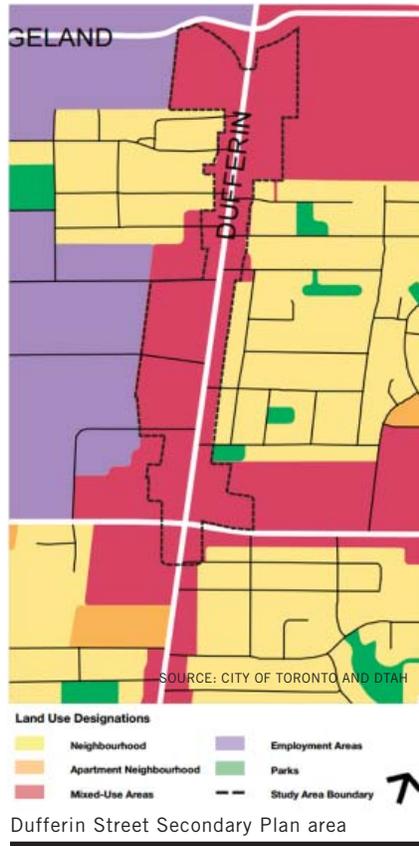
This stretch of Dufferin Street between Lawrence Avenue West and Highway 401 is largely characterized by one and two-storey commercial and retail businesses with large setbacks from the street and parking in front. It’s also home to the Yorkdale Shopping Centre, a major destination on the Spadina subway line that presents a large parking lot on its Dufferin Street frontage.

Colle said development in the 1950s and 1960s brought fast food joints and motor vehicle dealerships to Dufferin that worked for cars, but crowded out pedestrians. But its large lots and proximity to transportation infrastructure has renewed development interest in the corridor.

“We want to set the stage for what reasonable and responsible development looks like. But also, to try and reintroduce some missing ingredients to the street. That would be more green space, a more hospitable pedestrian environment and not as car focused on the street.”

The Dufferin Street Secondary Plan, which is an outcome of the city-initiated avenue study of Dufferin Street, is focused on improving the streetscape and pedestrian environment, creating new parks and open space, and enhancing transit service. Also in progress are urban design guidelines, which will provide direction for private development along the Dufferin corridor.

North York District west side planning manager **Al Rezoski**



said the secondary plan would turn Dufferin into a mainstreet comprising primarily mid-rise buildings with generous setbacks to both Dufferin and local streets. It will be an attractive street that encourages pedestrians and cyclists.

“We’d be looking at animated streetscapes with retail at grade along Dufferin, continuous weather protection, a double row of trees, and a cycle track at sidewalk level to encourage cycling.”

This section of Dufferin is a priority area for parkland in the official plan. The secondary plan will help address this by identifying up to 2 ha. of new public parks, and other initiatives will encourage private contributions.

“Some of [the new parks] will come through municipally owned land,” said Rezoski. “There’s the loop on the west side [near Cartwright Avenue], it’s a road loop that goes into Yorkdale Mall. That would be reclaimed as a municipal park. Some of it will occur through parkland

contributions on site on the larger blocks of land. And then there’s also POPS, the privately owned, publically accessible spaces which will add [open space].”

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PROGRESS REPORT

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the cost from the yet to be launched Public Transit Fund.

Investment in transit has been a priority for this council and throughout the budget process it voted to reverse operating cuts made in 2011 and 2012.

On the congestion file, which has been a major focus of the mayor's team, Tory has been working with transportation services staff to find ways to reduce congestion. A towing blitz near the start of the year gained a lot of media attention as the city adopted a zero tolerance policy for land blocking and illegal parking on arterial routes.

Staff is working on new ways to address congestion and in the fall will be hosting TrafficJam, a 48-hour hackathon, with **Evergreen CityWorks**.

The city has also been increasing its efforts to expedite construction. Staff has been trying to better coordinate road closures related to significant road and infrastructure repairs. This includes better coordination of road resurfacing, sewer and watermain work and TTC track replacement projects. Staff is also analyzing the cost/benefit of speeding up construction work. By investing an additional \$2-million into work on the Gardiner Expressway between Exhibition Place and Grand Magazine Street construction was completed two months ahead of schedule.

Another priority for Tory is reducing Toronto's level of poverty, and in particular the city's child poverty rates. In



Mayor John Tory and Prime Minister Stephen Harper at federal government's SmartTrack announcement
SOURCE: OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

August a report from a coalition of community activists and social agencies showed that 29 per cent of children in Toronto live in poverty.

"A Toronto with these levels of poverty is not the Toronto we remember and it cannot be the Toronto we leave to our children," Tory said in his first council meeting address.

Last term council voted to develop a poverty reduction strategy—a move that Tory had supported when he was elected. In December He appointed Ward 27 Toronto Centre councillor **Pam McConnell** as one of his deputy

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Among the proposed POPS is an urban plaza at the Yorkdale Shopping Centre. Rezoski said that the mall owner's plans are to eventually expand into the parking lot to the west, which will give the city an opportunity to integrate the shopping centre into the larger Dufferin Street context.

"The intent is to provide a finer grained development pattern, in conjunction with [Yorkdale's] build out to the west. The intent is to get their frontages broken up with smaller blocks of land. There would be either private or public streets created, as well as open space through a [POPS]."

The city retained urban design firm **DTAH** to complete the Dufferin Street Avenue Study in collaboration with planning firm **R.E. Millward Associates**, real estate consulting firm **N. Barry Lyon Consultants** and transportation firm **ARUP**. City staff are preparing the secondary plan and the design guidelines.

Public consultation on the draft secondary plan will occur this summer and the final plan is anticipated to be before North York Community Council before the end of the year.

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