

URBAN RETAIL

shops. It has been proven that small and medium size retail establishments have a better chance of being sustained when a larger retail anchor is located nearby—this is indeed the principle that drives the many successful retail developments throughout the greater Markham area⁶. The ‘junior anchor’, about 10-13,000 square feet in size, would draw in customers from a larger area and improve Unionville’s competitive edge within the region. The challenge of location as well as the appropriate built form of such an anchor is addressed in this report; the authors believe a Vision Plan that does not include a proposed retail anchor solution runs the risk of moving Main Street Unionville forward to a future where existing business will continue to struggle, and the needs of the community for more retail options will continue to be unmet.

Retail thrives in a mixed-use environment

Adding layers and depth to village fabric in the areas behind Main Street Unionville is the best opportunity to realize investment and economic sustainability within the core area. Retail—particularly on the scale found within the district—thrives best in a mixed-use environment. However, residential uses are better for infill

opportunities behind the existing buildings, as retail in locations without principal street frontage is difficult to sustain. Residents within the village core would provide a base clientele within easy walking distance of nearby shops, and create 24-hour vitality and activity within the core. Not only would these new residents be additional customers for goods and services on Main Street Unionville, they would restore an authentic balance between commercial and residential uses characteristic of historic Ontario

villages—and particularly the historic legacy of Unionville itself. The addition of mixed-use and residential buildings would also help to balance the variety of retail types that can be sustained, especially businesses offering goods and services associated with every day needs.

Parking Access

Naturally, simplified access to parking—as well as parking supply—are relevant questions that this Vision Plan

comprehensively addresses. The main proposal involves making use of the steep grade change to provide a second level of consolidated parking atop the lots which currently exist along the Concession Road to the east of Main Street Unionville. The design works with the topography of the area to create a solution that creates no visual impact from the perspective of one walking along Main Street Unionville. Parking dedicated for infill residential uses is located primarily underneath those buildings. For those arriving by car to shop in Unionville, a ‘park-once’ strategy is employed to ensure consistent patterns of parking turnover.

Demographics Support Expansion

During the initial phase of retail study, custom demographic profiles of the Main Street Unionville area were created to examine the composition of the existing local marketplace. These were based on the defining of a trade area of residents located within a 5-minute walk (roughly 500 metres linear distance) from the Main Street Unionville core area. This trade area took into account the local street pattern, correcting for paths that would be disruptive or unpleasant to traverse on foot. The resulting area encompasses roughly 2 square kilometres, and fits within the trapezoid formed by Main Street Unionville, Highway 7, Village Parkway and 16th Avenue. Key demographics are presented in the table.

Enhance Unionville as a Shopping District

Update Heritage Standards Business Recruitment Secure Anchor

Assist Retailer Practices Seek Leading Retailers Improve Parking Convenience

Robert Gibbs retail study included a host of recommendations to revitalize main street retail

Nearly 8,000 people reside within an unencumbered 5-minute walk of Main Street Unionville. As an area of protected heritage development, and built-out suburban development, there is little room for growth in residential units in the area, aside from what is being proposed in this Vision Plan. Due to the rapid growth regionally, the area’s population is projected to remain stable over the next 4-5 years. The area is well-off financially, with average household income projected to increase by 15% by 2017. As with regional trends, the area will continue to see a change in ethnic composition, with a major proportion of new residents of predominantly Chinese origin. It is useful to note, however, that the growth in non-native English or French speakers is roughly indexed to

the population of direct immigrants; this suggests that as these people have families, their children are learning English as a native language. This close-in catchment area has over 2,000 families within a 5-minute walk to MSU. Established research by the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) has shown that certain types of convenience-oriented retail require at least this many families to be viable⁷. This does not take into account the additional 5,000 families residing in the total area bounded by Kennedy Road, Highway 7, Warden and 16th Avenues. Retail needs currently unmet on MSU due to the conditions that have previously existed, which fall into the category of ‘convenience retail’ include: bakeries, delicatessens and food markets;

dry cleaners, cobblers, tailors; and an LCBO store.

Programming, Management and Finance

This Vision Plan, key as it is to bringing sustainable retail back to Main Street Unionville, cannot aim to solve every problem with a physical design solution. Main Street Unionville business and property owners, working closely with City staff, must agree on policy-oriented solutions as well in the areas of programming, management and finance including, but not limited to, the following:

The Main Street Unionville Business Improvement Association (BIA) should investigate hiring an individual with the marketing and business retention expertise to attract a mix of sophisticated retailers to Main Street Unionville, calibrated to be appropriate for a mixed-use, active heritage village district.

Adoption of a Form-Based Code (FBC) should be considered in place of the existing zoning by-law; if drafted, the FBC should contain rigorous standards for retail establishments, including signage design guidelines, window transparency guidelines, and general design guidelines that are sensitive of the differences between boutique retail, convenience retail, and professional services.

The City and BIA should work jointly to investigate potential financing structures

to aid in the development of new retail space without disincentivizing existing business owners, without the support of whom no improvements can occur.

Footnotes and Endnotes

- ¹ A significant amount of urban-scaled retail uses are planned to be added to the Markham Centre area in the next five years.
- ² The centre’s website contains a good overview of its development and a timeline: <http://www.shopsatdonmills.ca/en/centreinfo/Pages/Default.aspx>
- ³ That is, many business owners and shoppers alike recognize that, in its current configuration, one generally walks both sides of Main Street Unionville once before boredom sets in.
- ⁴ A full description and history of the by-law may be found in the Staff Report of March, 2013 prepared by Markham’s Heritage Planning section: Hutcheson, Regan. Staff Report to Development Services Committee on Request to Remove Restrictions on the Approval of Additional Restaurant Floor Space within the Commercial Core Area of Historic Unionville. Corporation of the City of Markham, ON, Heritage Planning Section, March 5, 2013.
- ⁵ See, The Corporation of the City of Markham, Ontario. Planning Markham’s Future: City of Markham Official Plan Part I DRAFT. September, 2012. Sec. 8.3.7
- ⁶ This is not to say that Main Street Unionville should by any means try to replicate the function or style of a regional shopping centre. See, Gibbs, Robert A. “Principles of Urban Retail”. John Wiley & Sons, 2012. for a thorough treatise on developing successful and supportable retail in a traditional built environment.
- ⁷ See Gibbs, Robert A. “Principles of Urban Retail”. John Wiley & Sons, 2012. pp. 1-10 for a thorough outline of supportable retail types.

	2007	2012	2017
TOTAL POPULATION	7,838	7,962	7,942
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	2,486	2,574	2,594
AVG. HH SIZE	3.09	3.03	3.00
TOTAL FAMILIES	2,166	2,215	2,203
AVG. FAMILY SIZE	3.28	3.27	3.33
AVG. HH INCOME	\$145,575	\$153,623	\$179,978
MEDIAN AGE	42.6	43.1	42.7
HH W/ INCOME >\$100,000	1,253	1,465	1,795
NATIVE LANG. ENGLISH	5,233	5,104	4,858
NATIVE LANGUAGE NON-ENGLISH/FRENCH	2,263	2,513	2,716
IMMIGRANT POPULATION	2,555	2,587	2,636
VISIBLE MINORITY CHINESE	1,587	1,720	1,884

Custom demographic profile of the local marketplace/trade area within a 5-minute walking radius (500 metres from Main Street)



A CLOSER LOOK

In such a visually striking community as Unionville, its challenges may not be readily apparent, yet they put the village at risk in a number of interconnected and very real ways.

Most pressing are the threats to the commercial district's economy. Changing consumer tastes and habits have altered the retail landscape; where the village used to be a haven for antiques shoppers, for example, now it is not seen as a destination for any particular specialty. Seasonal fluxes in visitor traffic put a strain on retailers to remain solvent from fall until activity picks up again in the late spring, yet rents and BIA levies remain high all year, and competition from surrounding retail centres has grown steadily. More "For Lease" signs have appeared in the past five years than at any time in Unionville's recent past.

Functionally, the village needs to manage its vehicular traffic flow and parking more efficiently if it is to create a healthier retail setting. It requires clearer focal points that draw visitors and create appealing social hubs. There are

opportunities for added cultural programming, for enhancing the walkability of the entire area, and for showing leadership and innovation in sustaining itself environmentally.

Finally, for this vision to be realized, Unionville needs community champions who have the determination to work with residents, business owners and the City to help turn recommendations into actions.



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

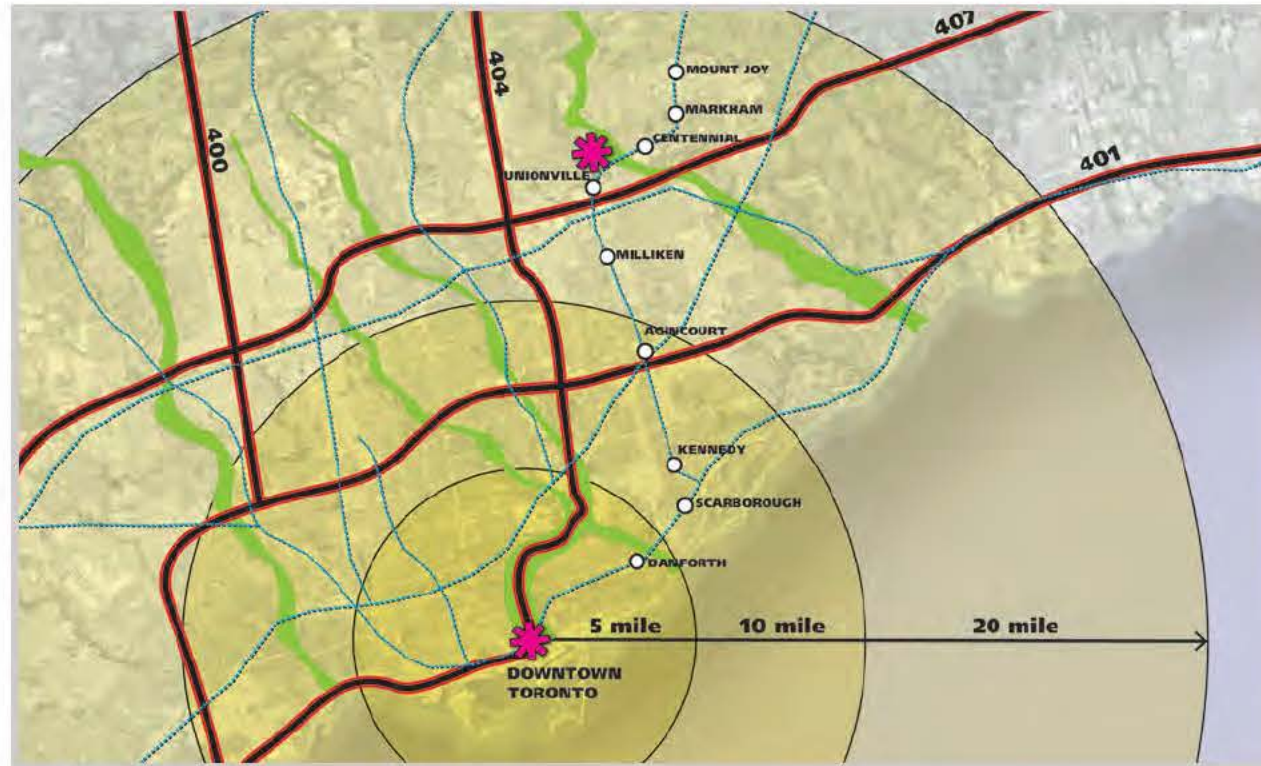
Challenges

As discussed previously, the greatest challenge to Main Street Unionville is the current unsustainable trajectory of retail viability. There are, nevertheless, many other challenges to be addressed as well. These include the following:

- Small parcels and multiple landowners
- Presence of Rouge River flood plain limits buildable land area
- Presence of physical barriers to expanding existing shops, growing new businesses, and adding new housing
- Limited access behind the Main Street for service vehicles and loading
- Parking is limited to individual, inefficient lots
- Preservation of the heritage character of Main Street Unionville

Each of these challenges identifies a constraint for planning the future sustainability of the Village. Also implied in each is an opportunity to take corrective action: for example, fragmentation in parcel size and ownership suggests an opportunity for joint agreements between landowners to achieve common goals and derive mutual benefit. This approach can, in turn, address the problems of limited parking and growth potential through recommendations for shared parking facilities on consolidated parcels, and joint-development infill projects by landowners of adjacent parcels.

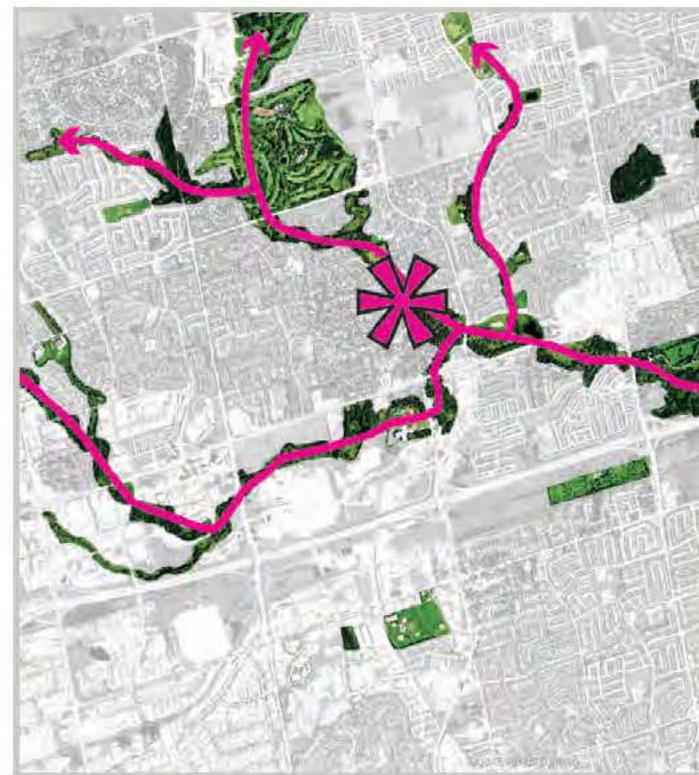
In another example, individual landowners and businesses must provide parking on an individual basis, typically on their own sites. This limits the overall capacity and efficiency of parking within



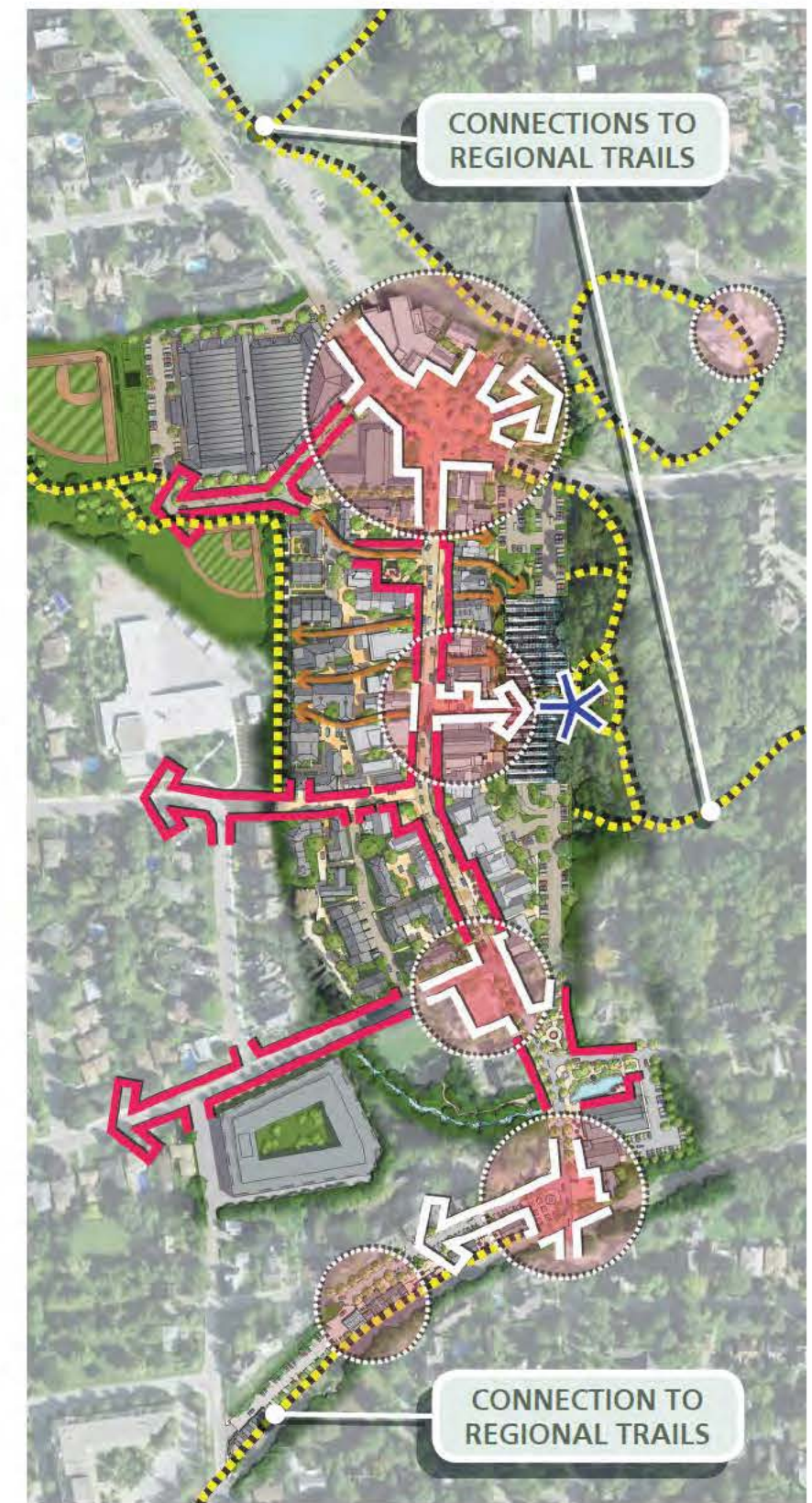
Regional Map



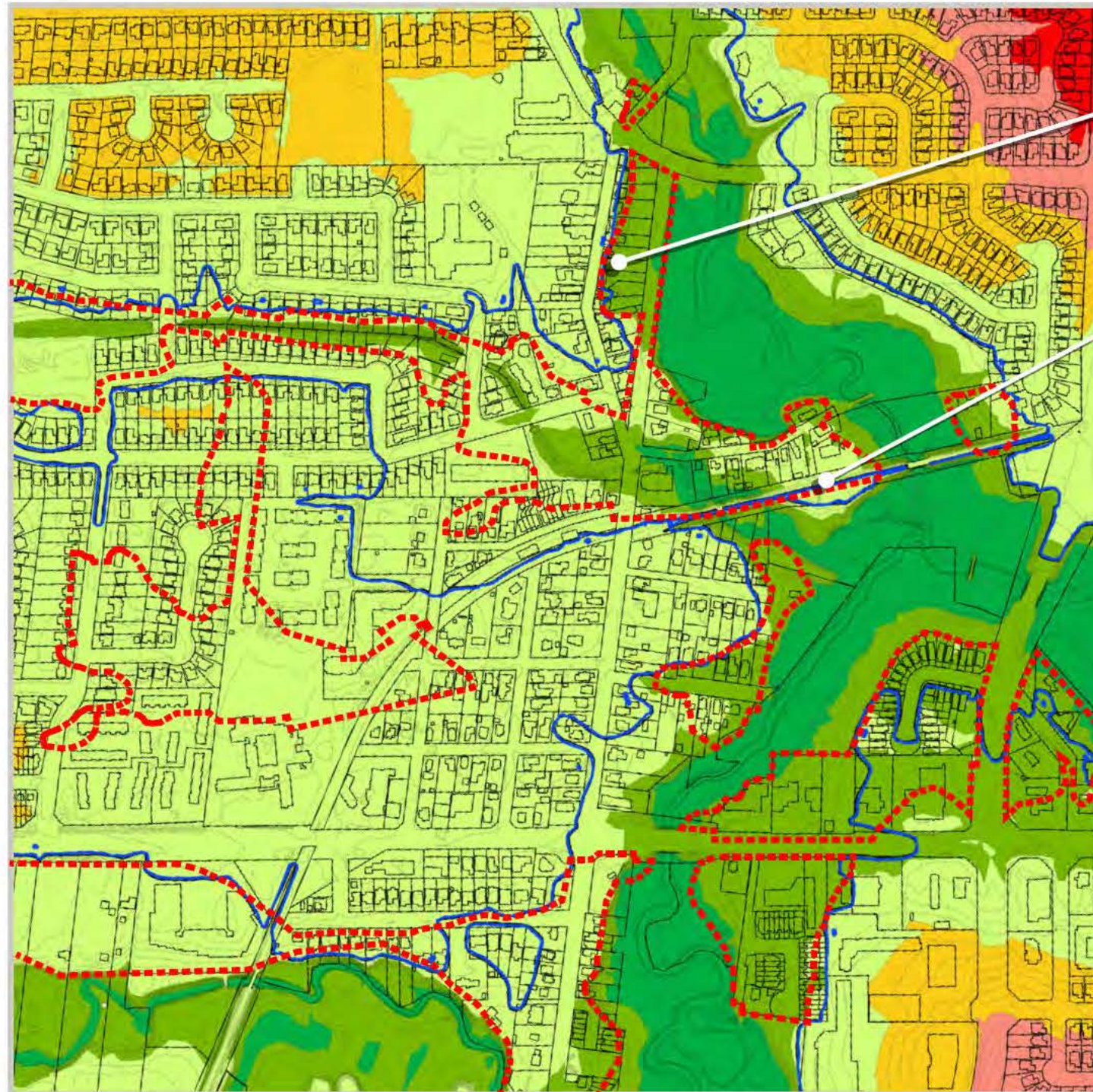
Small Lots in the Core



Regional Trail Map



Connections to Regional Trail Map



Existing Topography, TRCA Flood Plain and Related Constraints

5M DROP IN TOPOGRAPHY BETWEEN THE FRONT AND BACK OF BUILDINGS ALONG THE EASTERN EDGE OF MAIN STREET

RAILROAD EMBANKMENTS LIMIT WATER CONVEYANCE DOWNSTREAM & ARTIFICIALLY RAISE THE FLOODPLAIN IN UNIONVILLE

PARKING IN A FLOODPLAIN: Addressing TRCA Concerns

Portions of the study area are within the floodplain and under the jurisdiction of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) as a Special Policy Area. This places limits on development potential. Development proposals in the Vision Plan are conceptual opportunities which would require further examination, study and consultation with the TRCA, the City of Markham and provincial authorities. This is particularly the case with the concept to provide a much needed increase in parking supply within the Village core by introducing a single level parking platform over the floodplain east of Main Street. The TRCA has completed several innovative projects in similarly flood-prone locations including the Evergreen Brickworks, Toronto and Bill Crothers Secondary School, Markham. The parking platform concept will require a fulsome examination and liaison with the TRCA.

the Village, given the access and size constraints of the individual parcels. By consolidating parking across individual parcels and investing in a centralized parking structure, parking capacity can expand efficiently to meet both current and future needs. This additional parking capacity will, in turn, allow for strategic retail expansion, particularly the community retail anchor described in the previous section.

Locating a parking facility on the East Side backlots was originally proposed in the Community Charrette. This site provides sufficient land area to accommodate a facility, and has good accessibility for servicing the village core. As described below, this solution comes with its own set of challenges and constraints.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Individual Focus Areas have their own challenges:

Highway 7 – This regional arterial is a busy thoroughfare that carries a high volume of traffic. The intersection of Highway 7 and Main Street Unionville is the ‘front door’ of the Village, but in its current state does little to project the character of Unionville or serve as an attractive gateway. The current retail configuration at this intersection, although unattractive, remains viable and thus is not necessarily incentivized for immediate redevelopment. When eventually redeveloped, a preferred design solution would provide a continuous street wall while locating the parking behind and below the buildings, a challenge given the shallowness of the land parcels. In addition, these parcels vary in size, and ownership is spread among several landowners. There has been uncertainty regarding roadway improvements, proposed configurations, and York Region’s desire for a grade separation between the adjacent railroad track and roadway. The Rouge River floodplain exists immediately to the east of the Main Street Unionville intersection, which constrains development on the adjacent parcels or requires coordination with the TRCA.

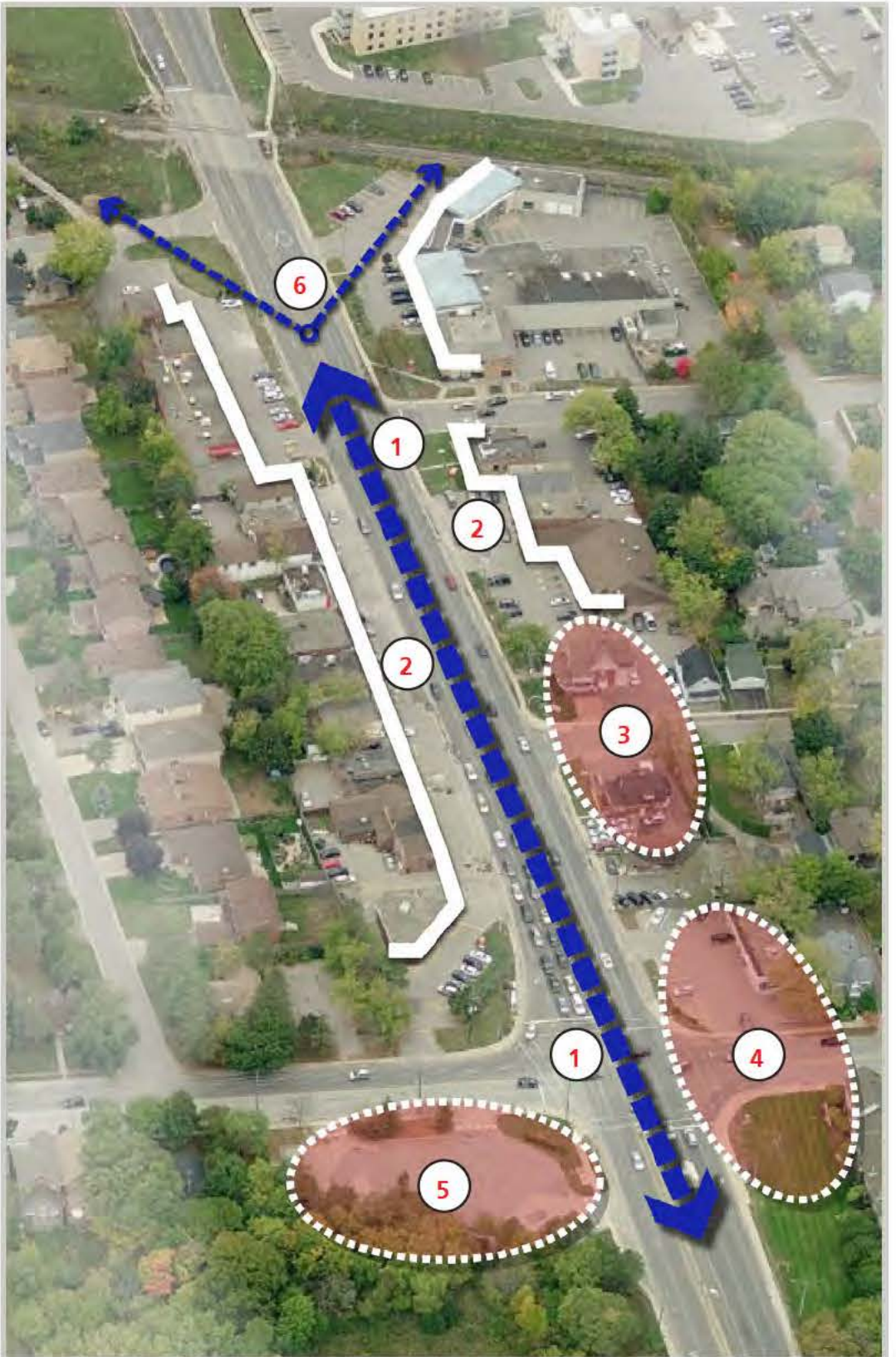
Stiver Mill – While rich in amenities, the Stiver Mill area has its own challenges, including a lack of suitable locations for parking and the traffic generated by the unsightly recycle depot. Additionally, the Planing Mill is not within the perceived walkshed of Main Street Unionville. Those walking Main Street Unionville venture as far south as the bandstand at Fred Varley Drive, at which point the continuity of the street wall and retail experience fragments. This stretch of Main Street Unionville needs to be enhanced to entice



Existing Condition at Highway 7 and Main Street



Typical Condition along Highway 7



Existing Highway 7 Looking West

Highway 7

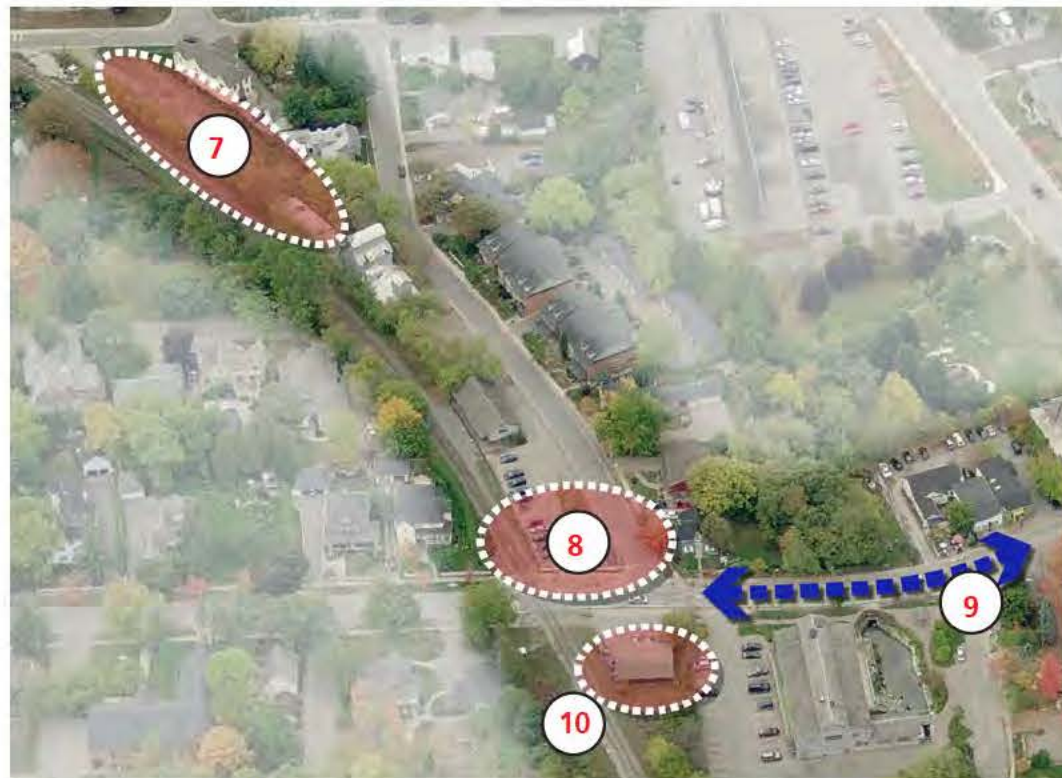
1. Roadway unaccommodating of pedestrians and bicyclists, devoid of trees and their beneficial shade, unsustainable socially, economically, and environmentally.
2. Unattractive streetscape of surface parking lots and strip retail is not befitting the heritage precinct and harms property values in the area.
3. Heritage buildings are orphaned in the mix of buildings.
4. Unattractive Gateway/Node to Heritage Precinct.
5. Former Gas Station site remains undeveloped with impermeable asphalt surface.
6. Sight Triangle restricts buildable frontage adjacent to tracks.

Stiver Mill Area

7. Overgrown and underutilized open area currently location of farmers market.
8. Important Node and gateway to commercial Main Street unrecognized.
9. Retail "walking loop" of Main Street does not extend to include station and Stiver Mill Area, leaving important village assets underutilized.
10. Recycle Depot adds activity to Main Street in this Area, but has parking and circulation issues.



Recycling Depot



Existing Stiver Mill Looking West



Renovated Stiver Mill

people to walk further south to the Planing Mill, farmers market and Stiver Mill.

West Side North, West Side South – There are three general constraints on the West Side of Main Street Unionville: relatively small parcels of land, individual parcels each having separate ownership, and conditions that make access difficult for parking and service. While previous attempts have been made amongst the property owners to work together to resolve these issues, no progress was achieved. In addition, the adjacent Parkview Elementary School is a sensitive issue: "former" road connections to the West Side of Main Street Unionville were severed to provide additional parking for the school. Furthermore, portions of the West Side South are within the 100-year floodplain, which is artificially high in this area due to the railroad tracks acting as a dam that constricts the floodways of Bruce Creek and the Planing Mill stream into the Rouge River to the south. Floodplain remediation should be considered if improvements are to be made in the future to the railroad tracks.

East Side – While relatively small parcels with individual ownership are also a constraint on the East Side of Main Street Unionville, access for parking and service is made easier by way of the Concession Road to the east. The topography on the East Side is, however, particularly challenging: Main Street Unionville sits along a ridge, out of a historical necessity to build the village on higher ground. Buildings along the East Side therefore open onto Main Street Unionville in the front, though the rapidly sloping topography from front to back creates 'walk-out' basements in the rear. Most East Side buildings straddle the floodplain line, and their rear parking lots fall entirely within

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

the floodplain. Pedestrian access between Main Street Unionville is accomplished via a public stair located mid-block, as well as through occasional private stairs, all without handicap accessibility.

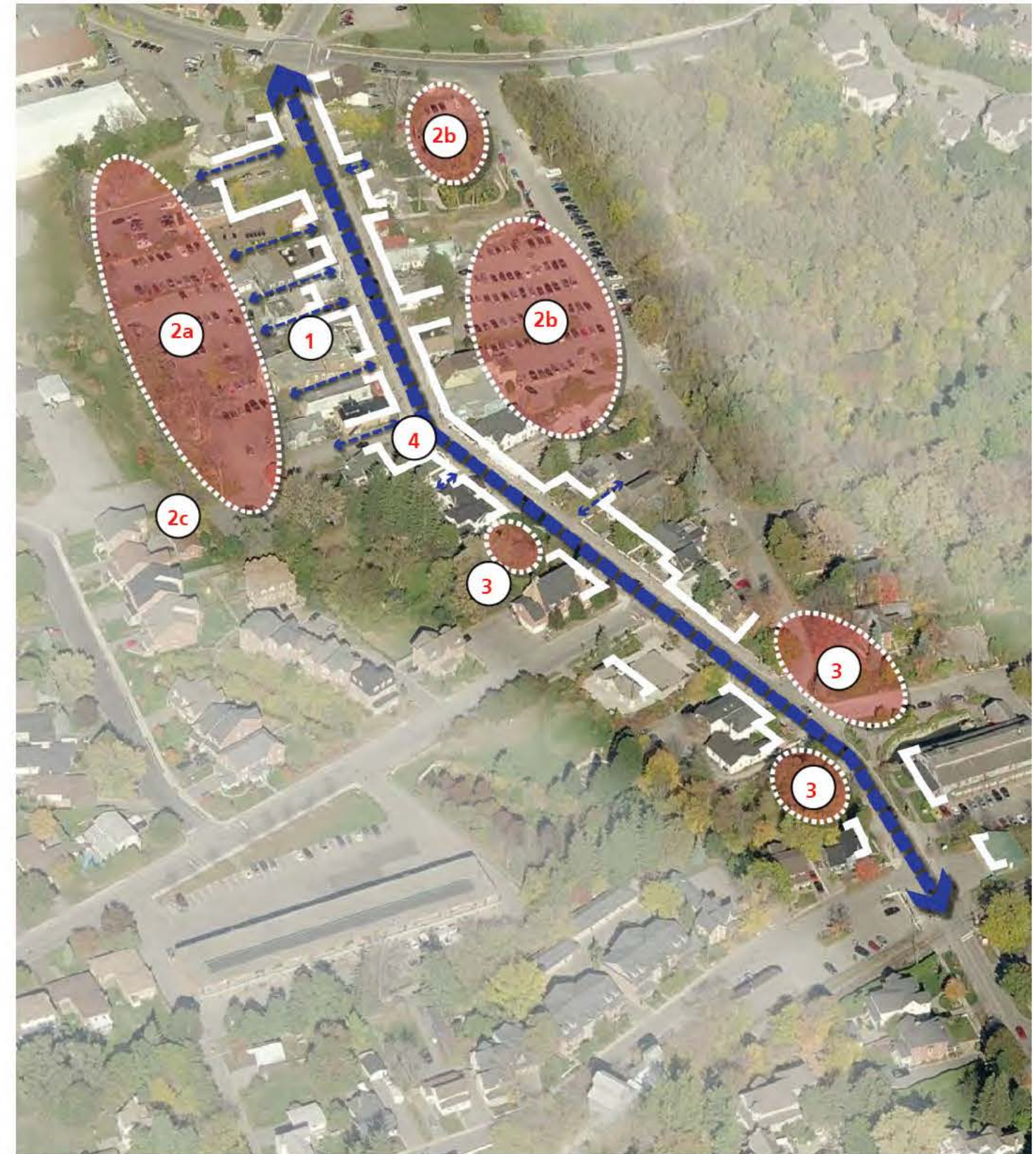
Crosby Community Centre Area – The relationship of the Crosby Community Centre building to Main Street Unionville represents a missed opportunity to provide the street with a community anchor and a focus of pedestrian activity. While the building’s program of activities provides a valuable service to the community, it does little in the way of activating the important corner of Carlton Road and Main Street Unionville at which it sits. The building itself detracts from the heritage character of the Village, and fails to engage the public realm of the street or the cenotaph space immediately in front, and is dominated by a driveway friendlier to cars than pedestrians. What results is an anticlimactic end to a walk along Main Street Unionville. Further problems include the obstructed visibility of and access to Crosby Park and the playfields situated behind Crosby Community Centre, and the lack of adequate parking. Potentially a new building could replace the Crosby Community Centre which could involve two skating rinks, necessitating relocation of the Curling Club. It should be noted however that this is not contemplated in Recreation policy documents at this time and would require a funding model/ source and review of the City-wide ice pad needs. Finding an appropriate location and implementation funding for the Curling Club would present an additional challenge. Meanwhile, an unsightly parking lot occupies the northeast corner of Main Street Unionville and Carlton Road, providing a poor gateway to the Unionville



East Side Parking Lot



Existing Cenotaph Park



Main Street Looking North

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Main Street Looking North

1. Lots accessed from Main street means gaps between buildings are automobile access drives - Not retail pedestrian passages
2. Unattractive surface parking lots
 - a. West Side accessed only from Main Street
 - b. East Side accessed from Concession Road
 - c. Parking lot areas isolate Main Street from neighborhood behind.
3. Retail street wall gaps interrupt the continuity of the Walking Loop
4. Main Street streetscape does not accommodate street trees or cafe seating well and needs to be refreshed to be made more vital and attractive.

Main Street Looking West

5. Fonthill Blvd and neighborhood disconnected from Main Street. Pedestrian access uncomfortable
6. Unattractive edge to Parkview School yard.
7. Individual lot parking access driveways. Compromises streetscape continuity.
8. No accessible route to Main Street from lower level parking area.
9. Unattractive asphalt parking lots create a great deal of storm water run off and are inefficient in terms of parking spaces and circulation.



Typical Alley off of Main Street

Branch Library, Toogood Pond Park, and the Rouge River Trail system.

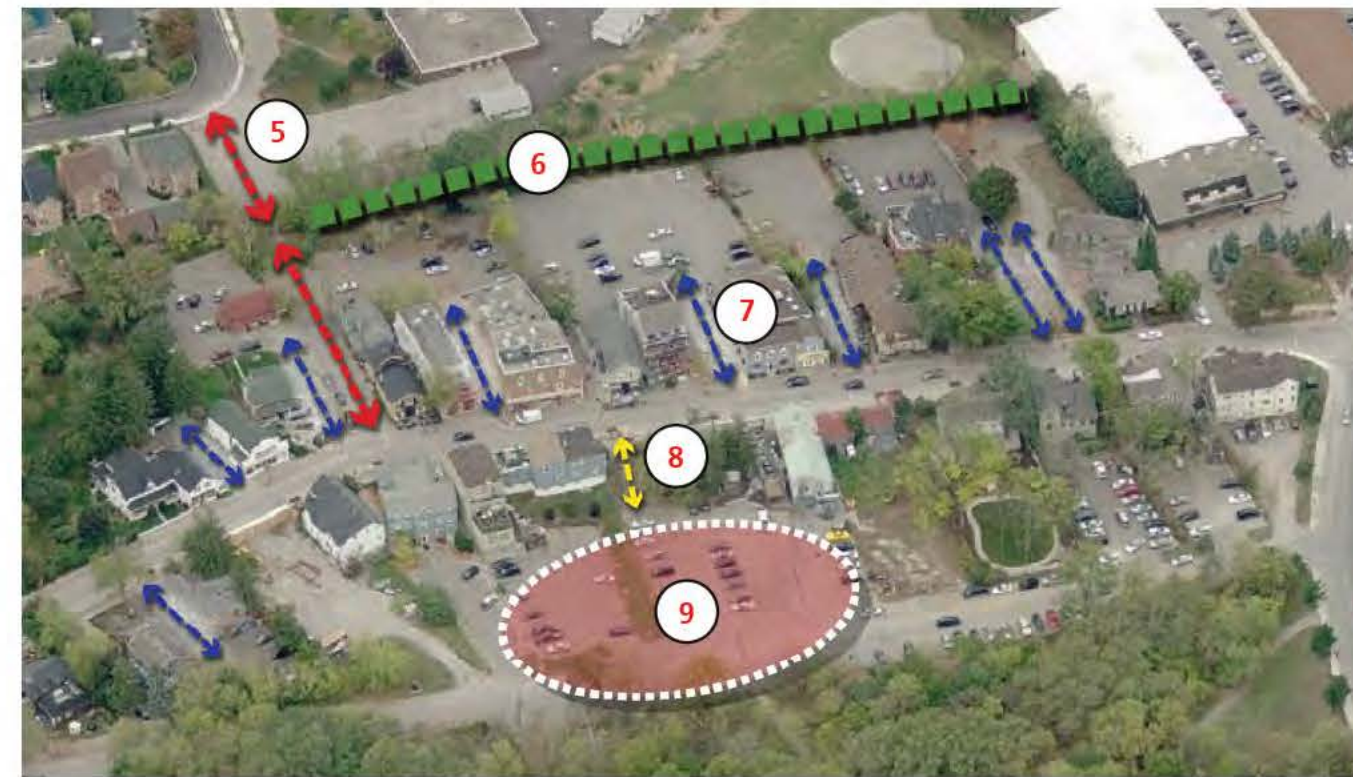
Toogood Pond Park – Toogood Pond Park is a wonderful asset to the community, and must be successfully linked to the Main Street Unionville Core Area. Creating a seamless physical and psychological connection between these two assets is the primary challenge.

Opportunities

The opportunities for implementation of this Community Vision Plan are many, particularly with respect to the timing of this report. The public process used in developing this Vision has built momentum for action; the renovation of Stiver Mill has been completed, giving community members a clear precedent of positive change; the City has lifted the 50/50 Policy relating to retail vs restaurants after ten years of debate and controversy; and a willing group of property owners appear committed to accomplishing necessary improvements, having seen previous efforts bear no fruit. Massive development is being undertaken in Markham and in the region at large, currently one of the fastest growing areas in all of North America. This growth and associated world-class development has sharpened the focus of City leaders and Unionville stakeholders on the future of the Main Street village that serves as their historic core. Thus, an engaged citizenry, committed stakeholders, willing ownership, as well as City Planning staff and Council are motivated to support a future vision. That this unique and dedicated group of individuals has come together at such a crucial time to propel Main Street Unionville forward, it is hoped, is viewed by future generations as more than mere coincidence.



Parking along Main Street



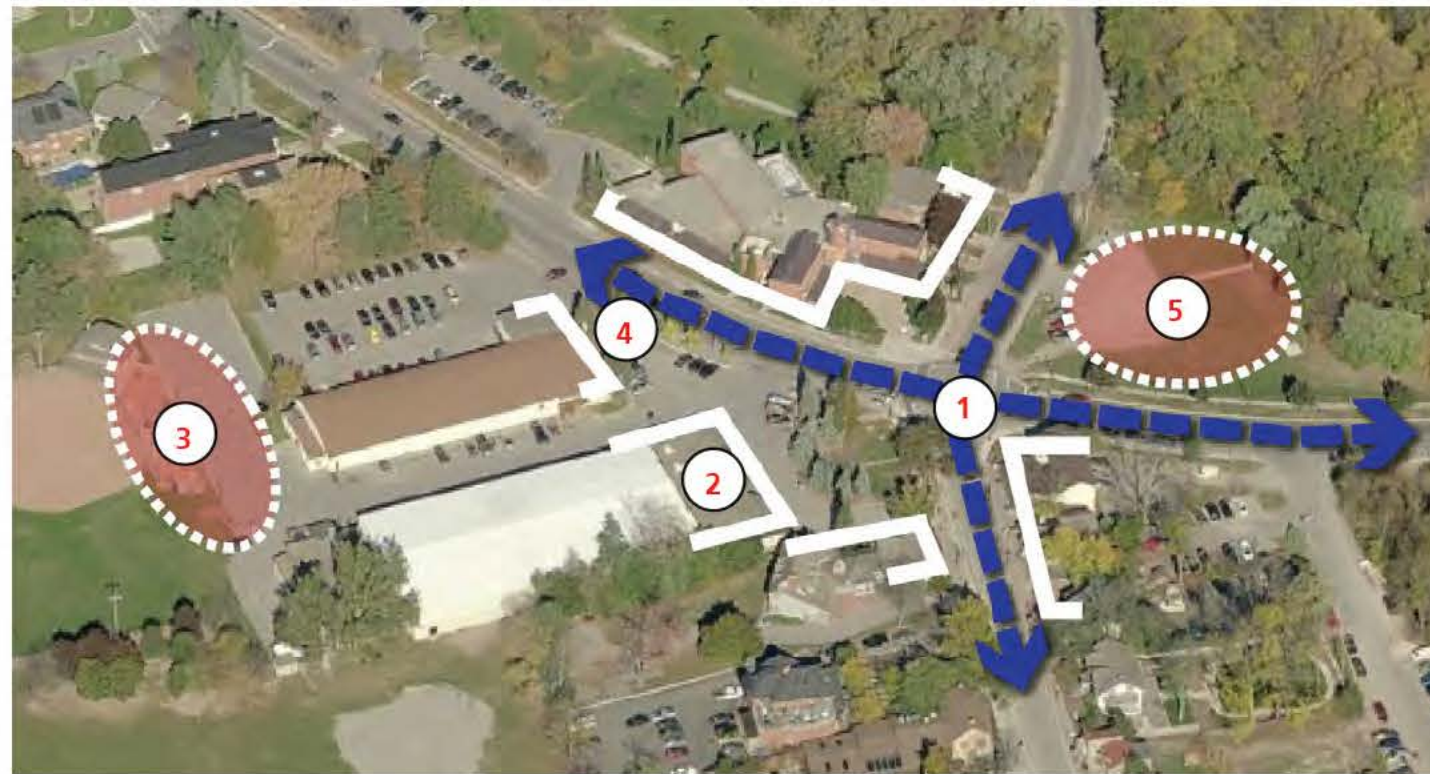
Main Street Looking West

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

If parking is the greatest physical constraint to sustainable growth in the Village, then the ability to find practical solutions for this issue affords the greatest opportunity for success. Chief among these is the possibility of consolidating parking on the East Side and locating a two-level central parking facility on land currently occupied by a patchwork of individual surface lots, backyards, and the Concession Road. This location would have a number of benefits: The upper level would provide direct pedestrian access to Main Street Unionville; parking spaces could be laid out in an efficient configuration; the upper deck would double parking capacity on available land; and parking would be more convenient and accessible for the disabled. When added to the available on-street parking and other regional parking locations, parking capacity could grow with the Village, and even flex to meet the needs of festivals and events.

Infill opportunities are found throughout the Village. Much of what is proposed is situated on undeveloped land, principally surface parking lots, at the rear of buildings on Main Street as well as numerous gaps in the streetwall. By relocating much of the surface parking below grade and in the East Side parking facility, the depth and character of the Village's heritage can be preserved and enhanced. New opportunities to add and expand retail shops can be provided, and residential units can be added directly into the Village core.

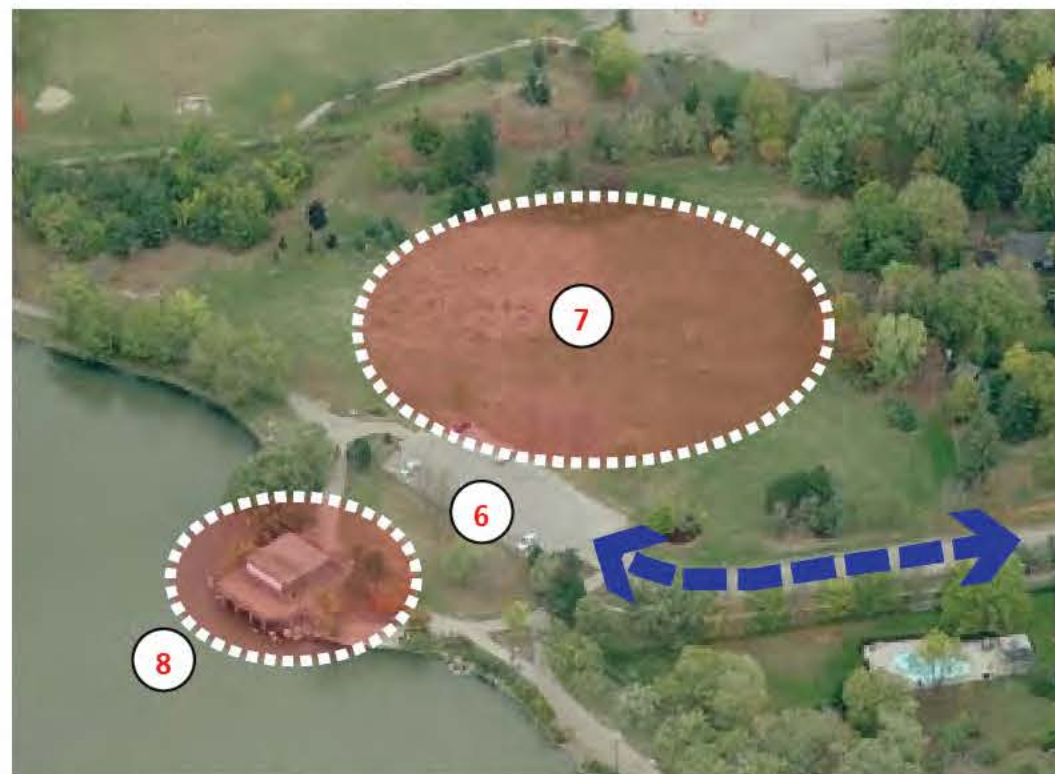
Adding layers and depth to the Village fabric atop the asphalt parking lots currently located behind Main Street Unionville is the best opportunity to realize investment and economic sustainability within Unionville's core. Retail, particularly on



Northern Village Gateway



Playing Fields behind Crosby Arena



Existing Condition at Toogood Pond Park

Village Square Area

1. The four corners of the Main and Carlton intersection have little relationship with each other, leaving the space ill defined.
2. An unattractive building facade, the drop-off drive, and a poorly designed Cenotaph Park combine as spatial elements that are isolated and disengaged from one another, as well as the street.
3. Crosby playfields are not easily accessed and remain a hidden asset in the Village.
4. Unattractive surface parking lots and streetscape along Carlton Rd.
5. Unattractive surface parking lot that compromises connection to river valley trails and public library.

Toogood Pond Park

6. Generally, Toogood Pond Park is underutilized, poorly programed, and is not well integrated into the Village.
7. Under-utilized park open space area.
8. Concession stand is not successful being too far removed from street access; this is not a sustainable retail location

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



West of Main Street



West Side of Main Street



Aerial of Village Core

the scale found within Unionville, thrives best in a mixed-use environment. Residential use is better for infill behind the existing Main Street buildings, as retail in locations without Main Street frontage is difficult to sustain. Residents within the Village core would provide a base clientele within easy walking distance of Main Street shops, and create 24-hour vitality and activity within the core. Not only would these new residents be additional customers for Main Street goods and services, they would restore an authentic balance between commercial and residential uses characteristic of other atypical main street district, as well as historic Ontario villages, and particularly the historic legacy of Unionville itself. The addition of mixed-use and residential buildings would also help to balance the variety of retail types that can be sustained, especially businesses offering goods and services associated with every day needs.

Another great feature of Unionville's location is its adjacency to the Rouge River Valley Trail System and the Toronto Area Park System. This affords an opportunity to link Main Street Unionville directly to the park trails, which can be easily and directly accessed both east and north of the Village Core.





LEARNING FROM OTHERS

First principles of far-thinking urban planning call for all those involved to seek out the successes of other communities and study them in detail for possible application to the current project.

The team reviewed several related communities, not only locally through site visits but also nationally and internationally. The precedent villages highlighted in this section resemble Unionville in certain specific ways, if not in exact size or scope. The goal was to identify successful expressions of new urbanism, the sympathetic restoration of heritage districts, and concepts for creating healthy commercial main streets of a similar scale.

As well, visits by various stakeholders to projects such as Toronto's Evergreen Brickworks and Wychwood Barns offered insights into how to deal innovatively with floodplain conditions and integrate environmentally sustainable options.



PRECEDENT VILLAGES - POUNDBURY - OVERVIEW



Poundbury as Precedent

When looking at what the Community Vision Plan for Main Street Unionville aspires to accomplish, the team naturally sought out precedents to which they could turn. Precedent is defined as, “any act, decision, or case that serves as a guide or justification for subsequent situations”. More than any other example, the team found that Poundbury, a new extension to the city of Dorchester, Dorset, fit this description.

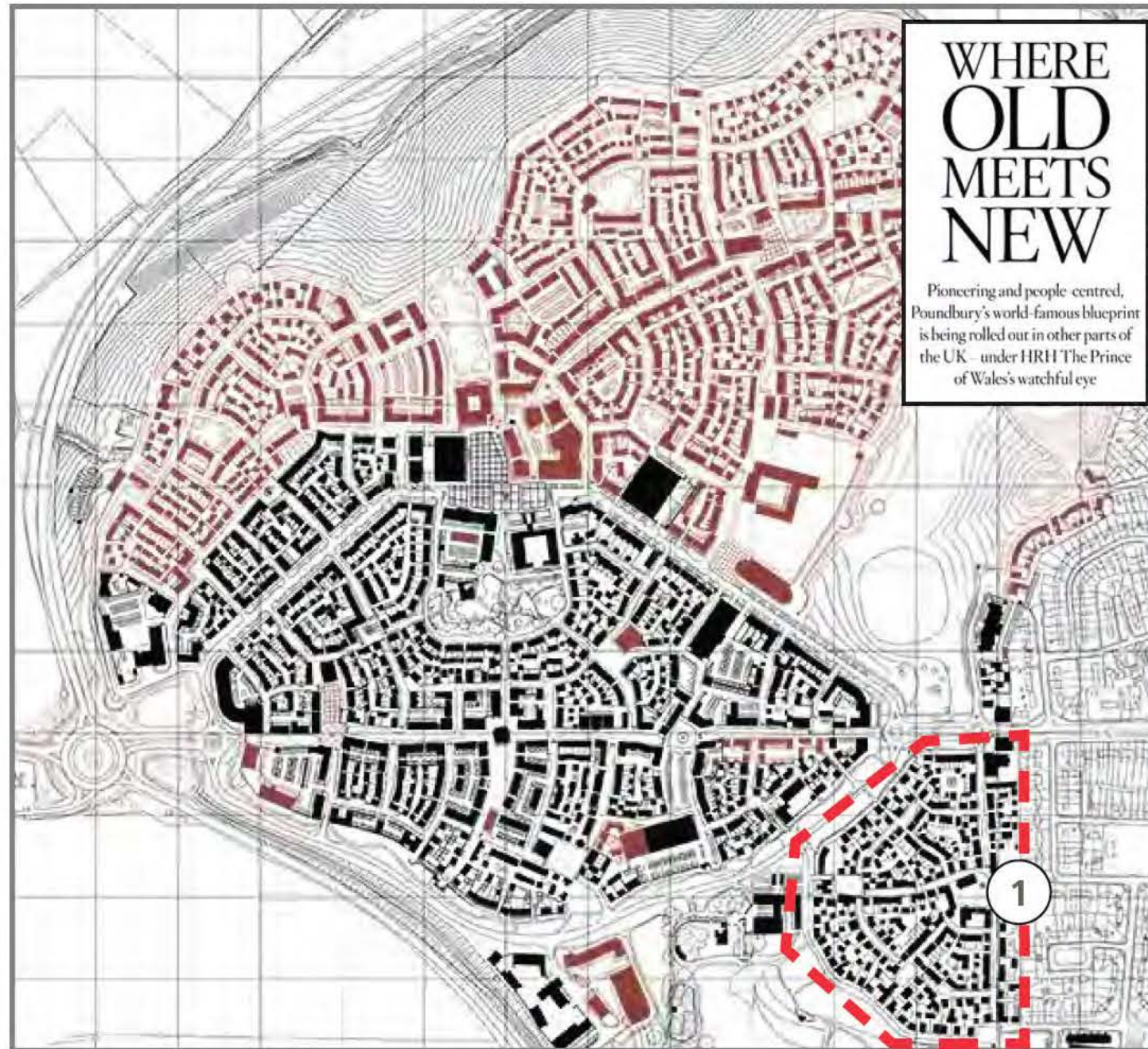
Poundbury is a traditional village built from scratch. The idea was conceived in the late 1980s, an era when the tenets of neotraditional town planning were still in their nascency. Such an idea would have been thrown out as

too radical for the times if not for the fact that the growing city of Dorchester would need to expand on neighbouring lands owned by the Duchy of Cornwall—in other words, land under the direct control of the Duke of Cornwall, HRH Prince Charles.

It is a fact of history that radical planning decisions—some good, some bad—have sometimes needed to be made by royalty: in the case of Poundbury, Charles had in fact been spending much time developing a personal view of architecture and

urbanism¹. He indeed saw the drawbacks of the Modernist planning and architecture overwhelming Britain, and felt that a return to traditional urban form could work in a modern context. With the authority of a Prince, and backed by a genuine passion and interest in creating a neotraditional model for urban development, famed architect Léon Krier developed a preliminary site plan for the 400 acres immediately to the west of Dorchester in 1988, and public planning workshops were held in 1989.

As can be seen in the Masterplan (left), Krier conceived a village that could be developed in four separate quarters. The first of these (lower right), construction of which began in 1993, was mainly complete by the



Masterplan of Poundbury (area outlined in red is phase I completed in 2000)



Aerial View

end of the twentieth century; Phase Two (lower centre) was completed by 2010, and construction of Phase Three (upper centre) is well underway. All buildings shown in red are the future Phase Four, to be completed by 2025.

When looking at the site plan, one can immediately see a village that may as well have existed for centuries—one that, perhaps, grew organically. That was indeed Charles’ vision. But how does it relate to Main Street Unionville?

Poundbury is a very relevant precedent to Main Street Unionville

The Main Street Unionville Community Vision Plan certainly is not one of building from scratch; rather, it preserves a village that is already several hundred years’ old while allowing it to grow organically and once again function as a true village. In fact, the preservation of Main Street Unionville’s heritage assets is the one key priority in this Vision Plan, as nothing meaningful can be accomplished if this is not held in the highest esteem. We must turn back to our initial definition of precedent: Main Street Unionville is not Poundbury—but Poundbury is a guide for how to achieve a successful future vision on Main Street Unionville. While far from identical twins, Poundbury is nevertheless is a close cousin

to Main Street Unionville in that it shares philosophical and tangible precepts.

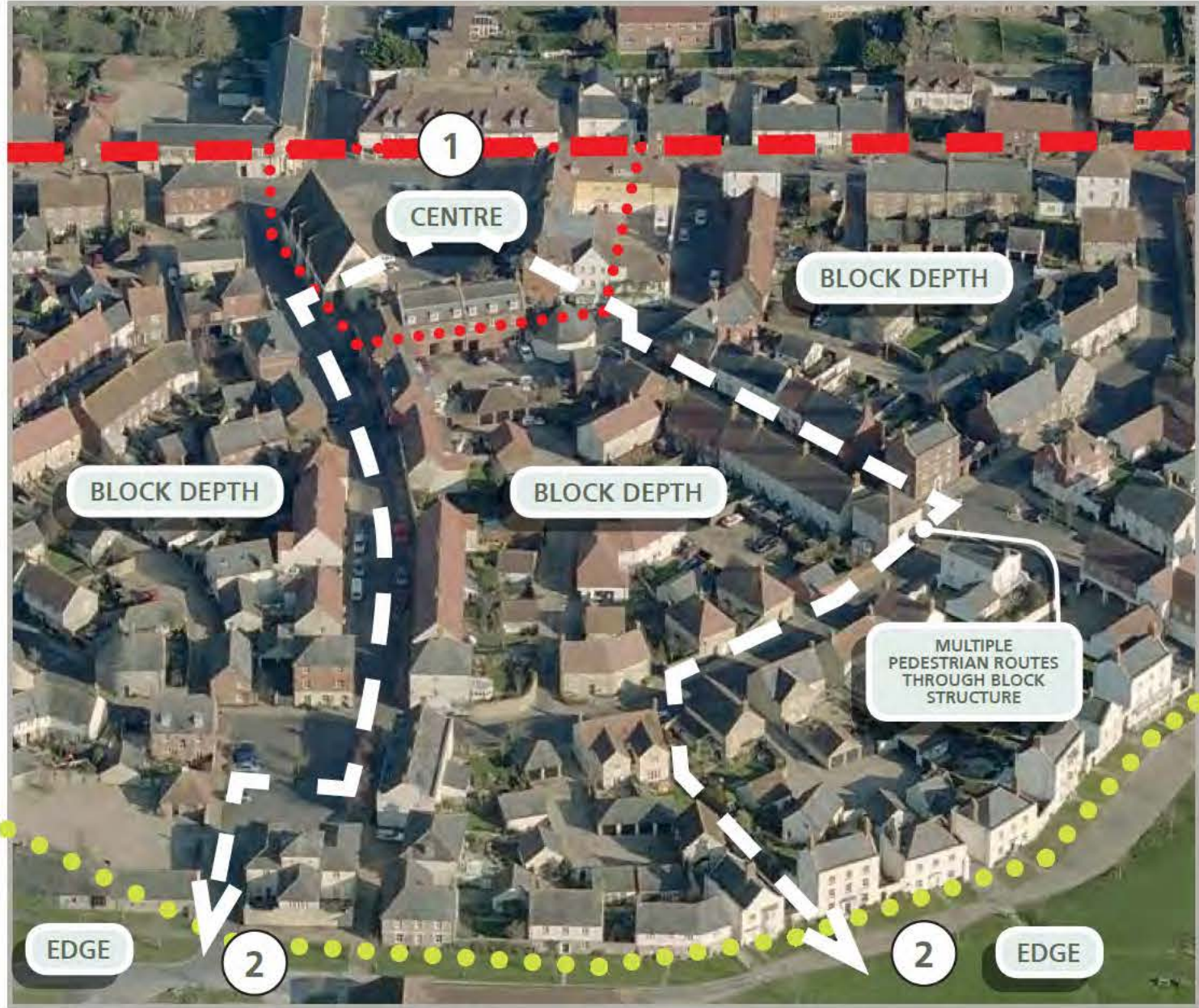
Thus, Poundbury is relevant because it has thoughtfully combined urbanism and architecture to craft a one-of-a-kind

place while embracing historical continuity. In the small spaces between and behind existing buildings on Main Street Unionville, urbanism and architecture need to be designed simultaneously to use every inch of

the limited space to maximum effect, both sensory and economic. Like the watchmaker deftly inserting new parts among the old to ensure an antique timepiece continues to function, we can look to Poundbury for the technical basis upon which to base our vision for the future.

However, this relationship transcends the technical and philosophical similarities between Poundbury and the Community Vision Plan (though these will be discussed below); indeed Charles himself has previously recognized Markham as being a notable steward of its built environment. Markham has the honour of being the initial recipient of the Prince of Wales Prize for Stewardship of the Built Heritage in 2000. Selected over eight other Canadian municipalities by a jury of experts from Heritage Canada, Charles addressed via video those gathered at the Markham Theatre for presentation of the award:

You have gathered this evening to honour and celebrate achievements in the preservation of historic places. As many of you will know, this is a cause very dear to my heart. Historic buildings help to give us a sense of our roots, and of belonging, which are vital to our existence as human beings...



Aerial Photo of Poundbury Phase I c.1993-2000. The Poundbury Main Street is focused by an urban square (red dots) and the village is organized from centre to edge, from commercial main street to residential edge and perimeter park system.

PRECEDENT VILLAGES - POUNDBURY - OVERVIEW



Typical block with interstitial pedestrian spaces, and residential intensification within the block



Poundbury mid-block pedestrian passage
Human-scaled, thoughtful and modest urbansism

In particular, the Awards Jury cited the determination of Markham in using a variety of legal means and incentives to protect heritage buildings and entire districts. In concert with these measures, a host of voluntary organisations dedicated to heritage preservation has worked to achieve, with considerable success, public awareness for heritage in Markham...

In the towns and cities of Britain, I have felt deeply about the wanton destruction of old buildings and entire districts in the name of progress and their replacement with a featureless and soulless urban jungle. Before it is too late, I pray that people will realize the potential of sensitive conversion to new uses for our built heritage. And so, Ladies and Gentlemen, I do hope that Markham's success, which I applaud, will be an inspiration for other towns and cities across Canada.

Style vs. Form

When we examine the aerial view of Poundbury Phase I (previous page) and of a typical block (left), we immediately notice that the buildings are of a style foreign to Ontario. Poundbury's buildings are of a rural English Country Vernacular style, the local traditional architectural style of Dorchester. It is a style fitting of Dorchester's history and heritage. Similarly in Main Street Unionville,

buildings shown in this Community Vision Plan will need to be interpreted in a style that is derived from the existing heritage context, described in the District Plan² as "Unionville Vernacular" (1790-1920) that includes a collection of styles like Ontario Gothic Revival, Italianate, Second Empire, Queen Anne and Edwardian Classicism to name a few. What is important is that the style of the buildings in each case is sympathetic to the local heritage—the Community Vision Plan does not intend to recreate Poundbury's buildings on Main Street Unionville!

Looking again to the aerial photo(p.51), and ignoring the styling of individual buildings, we notice something else: the way those buildings relate to one another, and to the spaces between them. In contrast to style, this is the village's overall form. When looking at Poundbury's built form, we see more direct similarities to both what exists today on Main Street Unionville, and to what the Vision Plan foresees. Running along the top of the picture(red dash) is main street, an axis of movement around which some of Poundbury's important buildings are organized (as in Main Street Unionville, Poundbury's firehall is situated along this street). Below this main street appear to be a confusing tangle of buildings, mainly residential. But while it is helpful to study the built environment from the air,

villages (and indeed cities) are meant to be experienced from the ground level. Looking at the view from ground-level, we see how what appears chaotic from the air translates into a human-scaled, thoughtfully designed neighbourhood (see pair of images, left).

Further notice in the aerial photo(p.51) that there is a defined centre to the village, as well as a defined edge. It is clear where the village exists and, where it does exist, it is clear where the most intense activity takes place. This progression of intensity already exists along Main Street Unionville as one walks from the Stiver Mill district on the south to the Old Firehall and the Queens Hotel. Future development envisioned along Main Street Unionville must respect this progression from centre to edge and back, as well as respecting the defined edges of the village on the east (the Rouge) and west side (Parkside fields and Crosby Park).

Style and form are not married to one another: We can respect the historic architectural styles that make Main Street Unionville unique while replicating a traditional, walkable village form with the careful planning and insertion of new buildings. It is the tactful placement of these buildings that make the small spaces in between meaningful for those on foot that has been accomplished at Poundbury.

Scale

While the study area in this Vision Plan is nowhere near as large as that of Poundbury, the scale of the development that is proposed in this Vision Plan is in fact similar to that of Poundbury. Buildings are between two and four stories; design

is at a very fine scale; adjacencies matter. The sides and backs of the buildings are just as relevant as their fronts. For example, in the elevated view of Pummery Square, Poundbury (left), we can see the area leading to the Market Hall (Brownsword Hall). Note that buildings are not at right



Village Centre - Elevated View of Pummery Square, Poundbury

angles but are carefully placed, or stage-setted, to create a pleasing street picture and passage at pedestrian level. The faceted side of the Octagon Café helps to create a sense of enclosure for those sitting in the courtyard while funneling people toward the important civic space beyond.

As we approach the Market Hall, we see the subtle change between pedestrian-only space and space that is open to automobiles, marked by a single bollard. While not immediately apparent, the Market Hall itself is built at a slight slant to all of this: it allows one approaching to see slightly more of the building's façade, and therefore builds a greater sense of anticipation for arrival.

Outdoor tables are set against the sides of the taller buildings, which have been designed to be interesting—windows are not uniformly sized or positioned; the side door of the white building has a thoughtful overhang; the brick building has a single lamp and hanging basket affixed in seemingly random places. In fact, it appears as if there is a window missing from the second storey of the brick building—why isn't it there? Was it once there and has since been bricked over? Of course, being in Poundbury it was designed in a "picturesque" way consistent with the informality of a rural village—but it begs one to question. In Main Street Unionville we are blessed with existing heritage buildings that have developed



Street Picture - Eye Level View of Poundbury pedestrian passage looking toward the Village Centre. Uniquely designed small scale spaces behind the block create intimate places within the village.

PRECEDENT VILLAGES - POUNDBURY - REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

these quirks as they have grown and changed and aged. While these will be preserved, we must pay attention to this level of detail when designing new buildings to allow the village to gently grow sensitive to these idiosyncracies. This is not planning by zoning. To achieve this effect in Poundbury, a strict regulatory framework was devised and carried out. To ensure that future development in the Main Street Unionville study area stays true to the Community Vision Plan, similar tools will have to be enacted.

Regulatory Framework

Poundbury has codified exceptional urban design into a regulatory framework that allows for predictable development that is at the same time part of a unified vision for an urban village. This predictability of form, scale, and architecture is at the core of what the city, stakeholders, and potential developers will need to create a place that is consistent with the Community Vision Plan. It cannot be stressed enough that the Fred Varley Drive development saga is a textbook case of what can happen when the regulatory framework to ensure predictable development in tune with the community's wishes is not in place. We will now present

a brief overview of these tools and their applicability to Main Street Unionville.

Form-Based Codes³

Many communities in North America are adopting an alternative to the conventional, use-based zoning by-law that has been the standard for nearly 100 years. The Form-Based Code still governs use, but does so as a secondary element. Instead, built form

(discussed above) is the primary organizing element of the by-law. Such elements as building massing, height, placement and the design of intermediate spaces are codified to create a firm, predictable template on which the community can expect developers to design buildings. The Massing and Scale illustration below is an example of a page from Poundbury's Form-Based Code.

Form-Based Codes are also much more graphically-oriented than the traditional

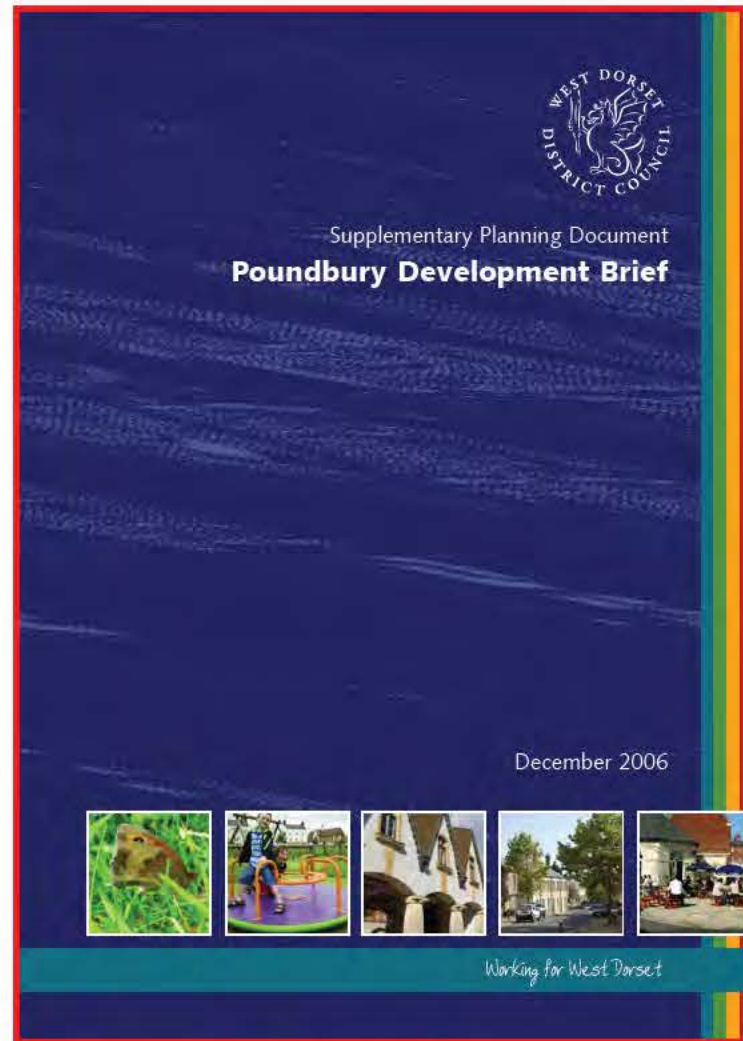
text-based zoning by-law, making them much easier to comprehend by residents, elected officials and developers alike. With a clear understanding of what is and is not legal, the community can quickly work out questions and disagreements on proposed projects.

Pattern Book⁴

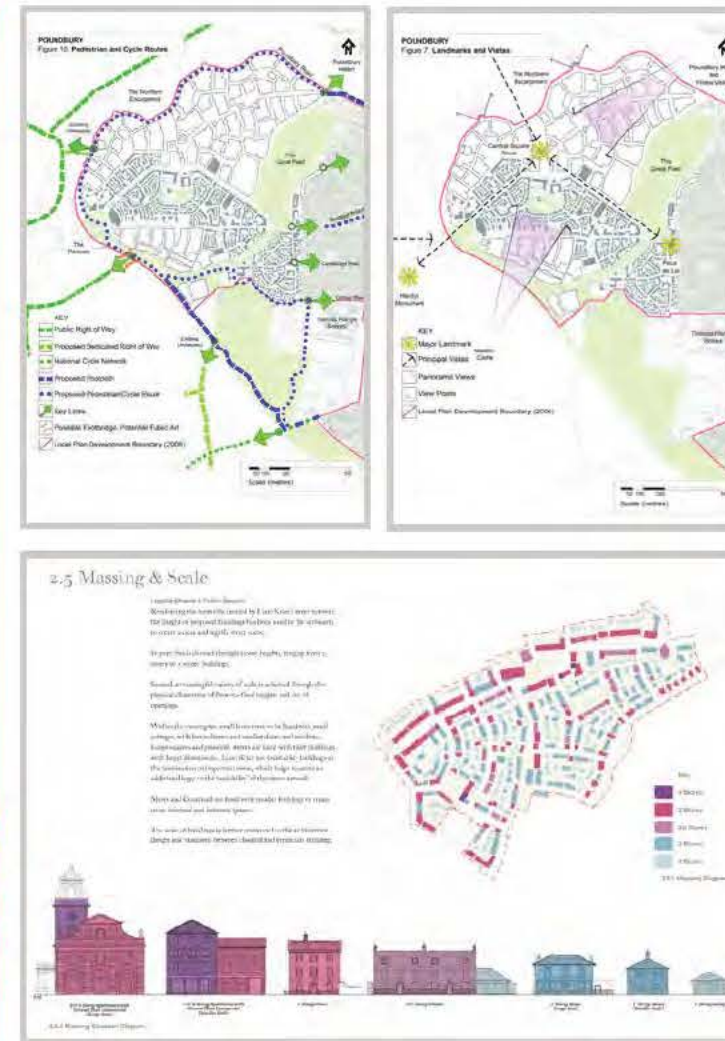
In use since Roman times, a Pattern Book is a document that codifies examples of specific architectural designs and features desired in a community. Pattern Books were once commonly used in North America prior to the twentieth century. More intricately detailed than the Form-Based Code, the Pattern Book focuses on style. Depending on a community's wishes, this document can be quite rigorous or can provide some flexibility to a developer or designer. For example, a pattern book for Main Street Unionville might require specific types of columns, roof shingles, doors or railings on any new buildings that would be compatible with the existing local heritage character⁵.

Secondary Plan

A Secondary Plan is a more focused version of a Master Plan, applicable to a specific area. In fact, Section 9.19.6.2 of Markham's Official Plan states that, "A new secondary plan shall be approved for the



Secondary Plan - Development Brief



Form Based Codes

PRECEDENT VILLAGES - POUNDBURY

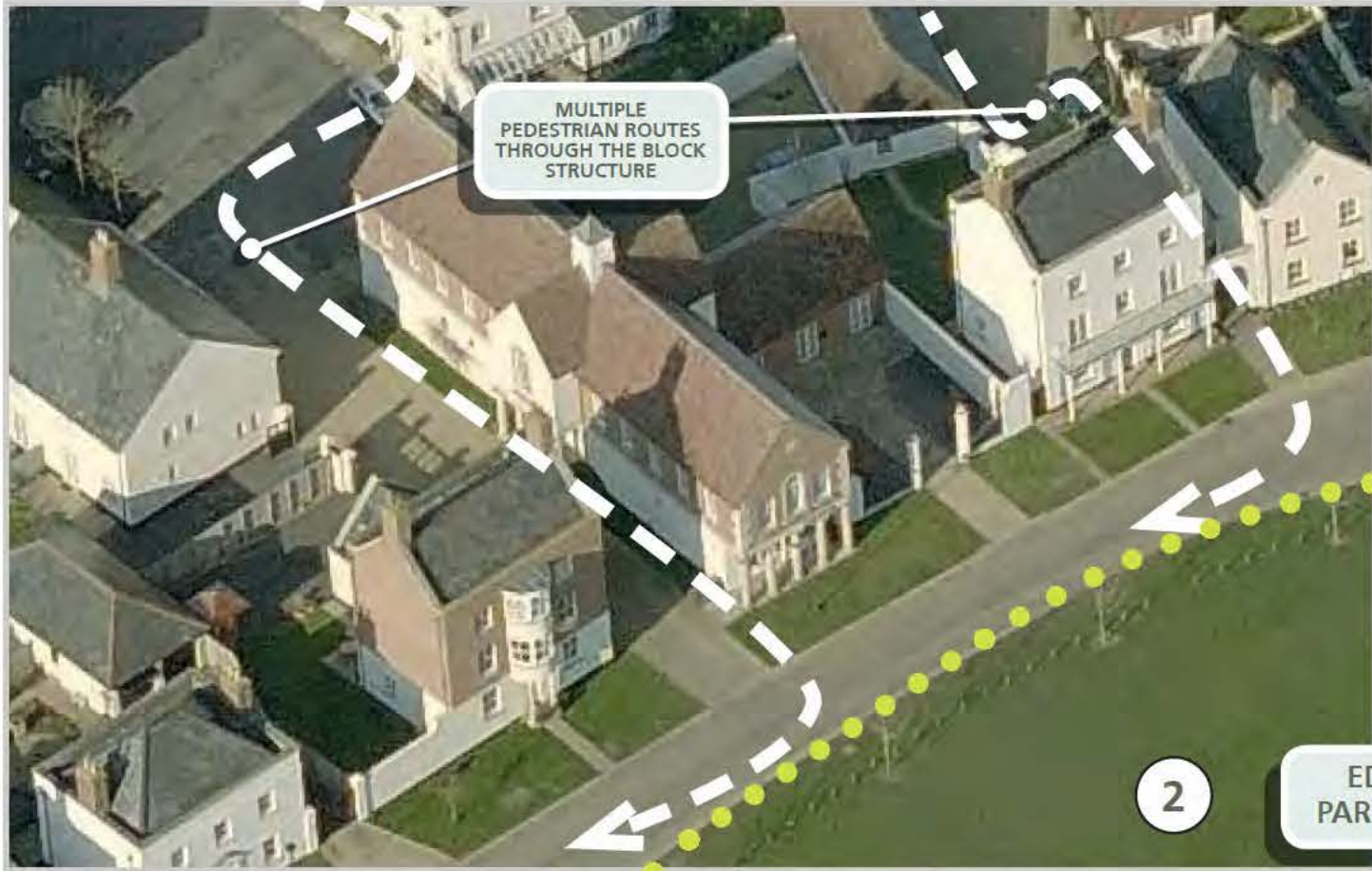
Unionville Heritage Centre”. To ensure that any secondary plan has maximum effect, it should be drafted simultaneously with a Form-Based Code, to ensure consistency between the two documents. Poundbury was able to achieve this effect by consistently employing the same teams of experts over a period of years as plan and code were drafted. Ideally, the explicit policy aims developed in the secondary plan should be embodied in the form-based code, as the latter document serves as the “technical manual” of sorts for what can and cannot be built.

Poundbury’s version of a secondary plan is termed a “Development Brief”⁶, as all development is new-build (p.52). The development brief is easy to read, and clearly lays out point-by-point Poundbury’s purpose, the tenets of its built form, its scale and intensity, its architectural styles, its mix of uses, as well as social policies, civic uses, and sustainability. While the ideas and policies for a secondary plan for Main Street Unionville that would implement this Vision Plan would necessarily be different from those of Poundbury, this document in its depth and breadth should serve as a model

for what Markham should aspire to in terms of secondary plan development.

Ultimately, Main Street Unionville must have residential intensification to support development of successful retail, as well as a year-round relevancy and sense of village culture. Those who fear that growth will destroy Main Street Unionville’s special qualities can look to the fundamental principles of urban design successfully deployed at Poundbury to create the appropriate scale and style for a modern urban village. Furthermore, they may

have confidence that regulatory tools—which as noted by HRH Prince Charles, Markham has successfully deployed in the past to preserve its heritage while growing—can be put in place to ensure that this vision and quality of design is affirmatively implemented.



Edge of the Village - Poundbury residential fabric comes to the perimeter of the Village fronting onto sport fields and an open space park system.

Details matter