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# Revitalizing Toronto's Inner Suburban Neighbourhoods: A Study Of The Markham And Lawrence Area Of Scarborough

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REVITALIZING TORONTO'S INNER SUBURBAN NEIGHBOURHOODS: A STUDY OF  
THE MARKHAM AND LAWRENCE AREA OF SCARBOROUGH

by

Niklaus Ashton, BA, Ryerson University, 2009

A major research paper  
presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Planning  
in the Program of  
Urban Development

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2012

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REVITALIZING TORONTO'S INNER SUBURBAN NEIGHBOURHOODS: A STUDY OF  
THE MARKHAM AND LAWRENCE AREA OF SCARBOROUGH

Niklaus Ashton  
Master of Planning, 2012  
Urban Development  
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ABSTRACT

This study investigates issues and challenges facing the inner suburban neighbourhood of Markham and Lawrence in Scarborough – Toronto's east end. Like many other mature suburbs throughout North America, Markham-Lawrence has begun to see decline and deterioration that has resulted in lower quality of life and the flight of the middle class. Recognizing the importance of healthy, well-balanced communities for Toronto's future, this case study aims to better understand challenges in the Markham-Lawrence area and proposes a series of recommendations for community improvement that are capable of expanding the life chances of impoverished residents, re-establishing a strong middle class, and spurring greater economic development.

**Key words:** inner suburbs, revitalization, decline, Toronto, planning

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## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

The inner suburbs of North American metropolitan areas are nestled between the central city and recently developed outer suburbs, and are composed of a collection of subdivisions that were constructed primarily between the end of the Second World War and the 1970s (Lee & Leigh, 2005; Hanlon, 2010; Peiser, 2007a). Unlike the previous wave of suburbanization that took place before World War Two (Schwarz, as cited in Peiser, 2007a), post-war suburbanization occurred on a massive scale, with numerous baby boom families fleeing the urban core in search of the ‘American dream’ (Chiras & Wann, 2003; Lee & Leigh, 2005). The self-contained subdivisions that characterize inner suburban neighbourhoods feature a low-density and auto-centric built form inspired by 1950s planning principles (Chiras & Wann, 2003; Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). This built form was initially popular amongst the original predominantly White, middle class residents who relied on the automobile to get around and saw the low-density layout of the communities as ideal for raising families (Hall, 2002).

Today, however, inner suburban neighbourhoods are no longer considered to be ideal places to live for the middle class (Lucy & Phillips, 2000). Aging infrastructure, inadequate housing choice, a lack of services and amenities, and the auto-centric built form characteristic of contemporary inner suburbs have meant that the middle class is increasingly looking to the gentrified central city and the newer outer suburbs for accommodation (Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009; Hanlon, 2010). In place of the middle class, lower-income individuals and families are moving into inner suburban neighbourhoods, which are now relatively more affordable than other parts of metropolitan areas due to their decline in status and quality of life (Hulchanski, 2010). This trend is especially problematic since inner suburbs lack the social infrastructure and facilities and easy access to alternative forms of transportation required by the

more socially disadvantaged populations inhabiting these communities. Without appropriate social services and other infrastructure, many contemporary inner suburban residents face barriers to social inclusion and reduced quality of life.

Fortunately, there are a multitude of initiatives that can be undertaken to meet the needs of socially disadvantaged residents, attract new middle class residents, and encourage private investment, all of which are key to reversing decline and improving quality of life in inner suburban areas. Effective strategies for the revitalization of inner suburban communities include the introduction of higher density, mixed-use development; a greater variety of housing types; well developed social and community services; and better access to transit. The revitalization of existing commercial strips and nodes, as well as connectivity and accessibility improvements are also essential for the successful rejuvenation of inner suburban neighbourhoods.

#### Purpose, Goals, and Objectives

This study aims to gain a better understanding of the social, economic, and physical issues and challenges within the Markham-Lawrence area of Scarborough, an inner suburban community in the east end of Toronto. Similar to other mature suburbs across the continent, Markham-Lawrence has begun to see decline and deterioration that has resulted in lower quality of life and the flight of the middle class. As the middle class leaves the neighbourhood, socially disadvantaged groups such as racialized peoples, recent immigrants, seniors, and single-parent families have arrived due to the area's relatively affordable accommodation (Hulchanski, 2010). These socially disadvantaged groups face employment barriers and other challenges that prevent them from improving their lives, resulting in their segregation into deep pockets of poverty (City of Toronto & United Way, 2005; United Way, 2004). Their struggles are made worse by living in a neighbourhood initially designed for highly mobile middle-class families that lacks easy

access to transit, social services, and facilities needed to reduce social exclusion and improve quality of life. The ultimate goal of this paper is to develop a series of recommendations for community improvement in the Markham-Lawrence area that will expand the life chances (e.g. access to high quality social, economic, and leisure opportunities) of impoverished residents, re-establish a strong middle class, and spur greater economic development.

To begin with, the study assesses the challenges facing inner suburban Toronto neighbourhoods, including weaknesses in built form, social service provision, and infrastructure that exacerbate social problems and contribute to the marginalization of inner suburban residents. It then identifies solutions to these problems through an investigation of social and land-use planning strategies/policies that have the potential to revitalize neighbourhoods and improve quality of life through enhancements in built form, social service provision, and infrastructure. Following the identification of social and land-use planning policies/strategies, an analysis of the demographic and physical composition of the Markham-Lawrence area is undertaken to understand the specific needs of the community. An appropriate and relevant selection of identified strategies/policies is then proposed for the neighbourhood, and suggestions are made regarding how such policies/strategies can be adapted and implemented to meet the particular needs of the area. Figure 1.1 below lists the five major research questions that form the basis of this study.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the challenges facing inner suburban communities in Toronto?
2. What strategies and policies have the potential to address inner suburban problems, resulting in neighbourhood revitalization and improved quality of life?
3. What specific issues and challenges exist in the Markham and Lawrence area of Scarborough?
4. What neighbourhood revitalization strategies and policies are best suited to meet the needs of the Markham and Lawrence community?
5. How might some of these strategies/policies be implemented in the Markham and Lawrence area?

Figure 1.1

### **Relevance and Benefits**

Conducting research on the issues facing inner suburban communities and possible solutions to these problems is essential for the future success of Markham-Lawrence and Toronto as a whole. Growing social polarization is resulting in a city of haves and have-nots, with the have-nots comprising the largest proportion of the population and growing at an unprecedented rate (Hulchanski, 2007). Area specific policies and strategies must be developed for deteriorating inner suburban communities that make up a large proportion of the City of Toronto. Without appropriate access to much needed services, infrastructure, and quality built form, the socially disadvantaged residents of these communities will be unable to fully participate in society and contribute to Toronto's future.

In addition to improving quality of life for current and future residents of inner suburban neighbourhoods such as Markham-Lawrence, revitalization action plans and policies have the potential to help the both the City of Toronto and the Province of Ontario meet smart growth goals contained within the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Toronto's inner suburban neighbourhoods are prime locations for intensification given their proximity to both the

central city and outer suburbs, and the existence of necessary transit and other infrastructure. By investing in and encouraging growth in mature suburban communities, governments can reduce the outward expansion of the Greater Toronto Area, resulting in numerous economic, social, and environmental benefits.

### Study Area

The Markham and Lawrence neighbourhood of Scarborough (Figure 1.2) is selected as a study area because it shares many of the characteristics identified in several studies on socially disadvantaged and deteriorating inner suburban communities. Hulchanski (2007), the City of Toronto (2005), and the United Way (2004) have identified the Markham and Lawrence area as being home to significant numbers of economically and socially disadvantaged peoples, and lacking sufficient services and infrastructure to meet the growing needs of these marginalized residents. In addition, the built form and physical layout of the community represents prototypical post-war suburban development as Markham-Lawrence is based on the Don Mills (Canada's first and most famous post-war suburban subdivision) model. Therefore, it is likely that some of the recommendations proposed for the community can be applied to other mature suburban areas throughout Toronto and the rest of North America.



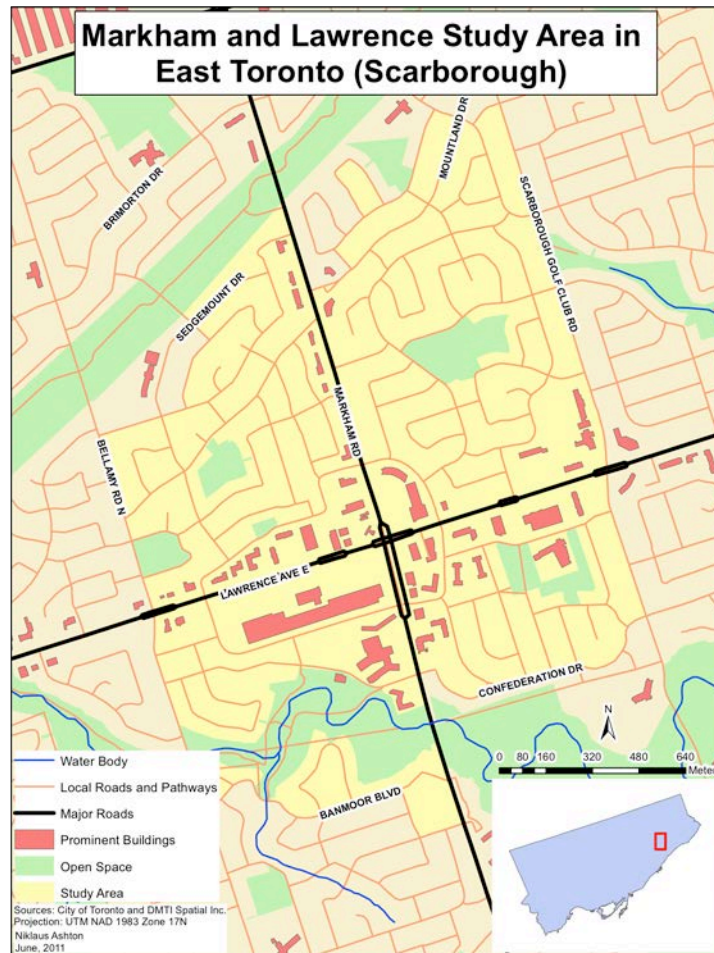


Figure 1.2

It is also selected because the area has not been extensively studied by the City (like the 13 priority areas have been), and the area contains a diverse array of land uses and buildings, meaning that there are many revitalization issues that can be addressed by a variety of strategies and policies. In fact, Lawrence Avenue East between Bellamy Road and Scarborough Golf Club Road (including the intersection of Markham and Lawrence) is identified as an Avenue in Toronto's Official Plan. As an Avenue Study has yet to be conducted by the City, this study could help inform any future investigations of the area. Boundaries for the area were defined by selecting Statistics Canada Dissemination Areas fully contained (with one exception) within the

following boundaries: the hydro corridor to the north, Scarborough Golf Club Road to the east, Highland Creek to the south, and Bellamy Road to the west.

### Overview of Data and Methods

The data required in determining the major issues and challenges facing the Markham and Lawrence study area and the most effective and appropriate ways in which to respond were obtained from a variety of sources. In addition to information and ideas garnered through an extensive literature review, insight from key informants, as well as data on the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the neighbourhood population, built form and land-use characteristics, and the location and provision of vital community services, facilities, and amenities were acquired and analyzed. Several different methods were employed in order to collect and analyze the data. Open-ended key informant interviews were conducted to gain professional insight on neighbourhood issues and potential opportunities, while a spatial and statistical analysis of socio-economic and demographic characteristics, built form and land-use characteristics, and the location of vital community services, facilities, and amenities was undertaken to fully understand the social and physical attributes of the neighbourhood. This analysis in conjunction with a site reconnaissance (field observations) of the study area allowed for a greater appreciation and knowledge of community residents, their environment, and daily challenges and issues they encounter within such space, which is essential in identifying appropriate and effective social and land-use planning solutions.

### Limitations and Scope of Study

Although the analysis of inner suburban issues and of the Markham-Lawrence study area is intended to be advanced and thorough, various time, resource, and ethical constraints have introduced limitations resulting in a reduced scope of study. The limited time and resources

available to dedicate to an extraordinarily complex topic such as the decline of inner suburban communities has meant that not all of the important and relevant issues facing inner suburbs could be addressed. Similarly, some of the more detailed aspects of bringing about neighbourhood change such as necessary policy and funding mechanisms are not thoroughly explored in the study. Nevertheless, the case study of the Markham-Lawrence area examines a wide range of the most pressing issues within the community in significant depth, and numerous ideas and solutions capable of addressing said issues are outlined. Though many of the final recommendations could be applied in other inner suburban jurisdictions, some are more specific to the Markham-Lawrence area and therefore may not be applicable elsewhere.

Another limitation of the study is the inclusion of only two stakeholder perspectives on issues facing the Markham-Lawrence neighbourhood. Both time and ethical constraints prevented the inclusion of other community stakeholder perspectives such as those of residents, business owners, and other professionals within the area. A much longer time frame in conjunction with a more in-depth and lengthier ethics approvals process would be required in order to conduct additional key informant interviews with other community members.

Data integrity and validity issues due to time and resource constraints also introduced limitations. The socio-economic and demographic characteristics data were obtained from the 2006 Census of Canada, making the data five years old and potentially invalid. Although this could not be avoided even with the appropriate time and resources, data integrity issues such as the potential incompleteness of the built form, land-use, and facility and service location data could have been reduced if more time and resources were available to dedicate towards data collection. Nonetheless, a great deal of effort was put into ensuring that all collected data was as accurate and up-to-date as possible.

## CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

Before commencing an investigation into the issues and challenges facing the Markham and Lawrence community of Scarborough, it is important to gain an understanding of what exactly constitutes an inner suburb, how they came to be, the typical issues that exist, as well as what land-use and social planning strategies have the potential to address problems facing these areas. This chapter summarizes the ideas and findings of various academic publications, government documents, and non-governmental organization reports from throughout North America, with a special focus on literature concerning Toronto's inner suburbs. The first section of the literature review defines what an inner suburb is, identifies Toronto's inner suburbs, and provides an overview and description of the development and initial characteristics of inner suburban communities across North America and Toronto. After defining the inner suburbs, the literature review discusses inner suburban decline and deterioration, including the various issues and challenges currently facing these communities and their contributing factors. Finally, the chapter ends with an overview of several land-use and social planning interventions that have the potential to reverse inner suburban decline.

### What are the Inner Suburbs?

#### *Defining the Inner Suburbs*

There is a multitude of terms used to refer to what this paper calls the inner suburbs. These include post-World War II suburbs (Lucy & Phillips, 2000; Design Center for American Landscape, 1999 and Seaver, Morrish, & Rapson, 1998, as cited in Lee & Leigh, 2005), sitcom suburbs (Hayden, 2000, as cited in Lee & Leigh, 2005), first tier suburbs (Hudnut, 2003), inner ring suburbs, older suburbs, first-ring suburbs (Hanlon, 2010), mature suburbs, first suburbs, and working class suburbs (Puentes & Orfield, 2002). All of these terms typically refer to specific

neighbourhoods throughout North American metropolitan areas that can be identified by both their geographic location and the era in which they developed (Hanlon, 2010; Puentes & Orfield, 2002). Most of the literature on inner suburbs define these communities as being a collection of subdivisions located just outside of the central cities that were built between the end of the Second World War and the 1970s (Lee & Leigh, 2005; Hanlon, 2010; Peiser, 2007a). This is in contrast to what Schwarz (as cited in Peiser, 2007a) refers to as pre-war inner suburbs, which developed between the mid 1800s and World War Two, and are now either part of or directly adjacent to the central city. In the Toronto context, inner suburban communities are located primarily in the former municipalities of Scarborough, North York, and Etobicoke, which now form the outer reaches of the City of Toronto proper. All three areas experienced rapid growth during the 1950s and 1960s (United Way & Canadian Council on Social Development, 2002), and bridge the central city with the outer suburbs located in the surrounding regions of York, Durham, Peel, and Halton.

#### *Development of the Inner Suburbs*

There are many factors that contributed to the occurrence of rapid growth outside of traditional central city neighbourhoods following World War Two. One factor relates to the perceived decline of the inner city by academics and members of the general public alike. Modern thinkers in the post-War era saw elements of decline throughout the central city and began to develop alternative ways of living based on anti-urban notions (Hall, 1989). Anti-urban thinking has its foundations in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when many urban dwellers experienced disease, crime, and stress brought on by poor living conditions, overcrowding, and an unsanitary environment (Hall, 1989). These conditions led people to question urban living, which resulted in the formation of several key ideas behind Modern thinking – that cities are bad,

unhealthy places that encourage immoral behaviour and prevent the development of a wholesome family life (Sewell, 1993). These ideas quickly began to permeate the minds of everyday citizens who longed for life in quieter communities that mitigated against the problems of the central city (Novick, 1979). The development of anti-urban thinking also influenced government and corporate actions that laid the groundwork for an alternative way of living.

The development of the 'American dream', influenced by the ideas of Modern thinkers, is another factor that led to the formation of settlements outside of the inner city. Wary of urban living, the expanding middle class of North America had the desire and means to purchase personal vehicles, new appliances, and other items that were previously considered luxuries (Chiras & Wann, 2003). Along with this, they also aspired to own new homes in low-density communities located outside of the inner city where they could escape those different and less fortunate than them, as well as the perceived chaos of urban life (Lee & Leigh, 2005). Post-War demographic trends also contributed to the demand for new family-oriented housing in lower-density settlements. The baby boom together with large-scale immigration resulted in a tremendous number of young families looking for accommodation (Filion & Bunting, 2006).

This demand for a new type of living was met by government and corporate actions that facilitated the middle class exodus into new suburban communities. Private developers began purchasing large tracts of land in the urban periphery based on urban growth plans developed by municipalities at the time (Novick, 1979). These developers worked in tandem with urban planners and municipal officials to design new suburban subdivisions, which would be bought and lived in by middle class homeowners receiving financial and other forms of assistance by senior levels of government and corporate lenders (Sewell, 1993). Federal housing policy and mortgage assistance programs in both the United States and Canada (e.g. the passing of the

National Housing Act of 1944 and the formation of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation in 1946 in Canada) were instrumental in promoting home ownership in new suburbs and providing families with the financing required to do so by subsidizing and guaranteeing mortgages (Lucy & Phillips, 2000; Smith, 2006; Novick, 1979, Sewell, 1993). In the United States, private lenders also offered secondary mortgages and federal tax laws allowed homeowners to deduct their property taxes from income taxes (Lucy & Phillips, 2000). The middle-class exodus to newer suburbs in the post-War era was also facilitated by government policies that led to the mass development of highways and other roadways meant to allow for the movement of automobile driving suburbanites to and from the central city and throughout their low-density neighbourhoods (Chiras & Wann, 2003; Lee & Leigh, 2005).

#### *Development of Toronto's Inner Suburbs*

The population of the former Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto (now the City of Toronto) doubled between in the fast-growth post-War era (between 1951 and 1971) to almost 2.1 million people, with the majority of the growth taking place in the present-day inner suburbs of Scarborough, North York, and Etobicoke (Novick, 1979). This rapid growth was not only facilitated by federal government policies, but by provincial and municipal growth policy and regulations. The passing of the Planning Act of 1946 by the Ontario government provided a framework for both municipalities and private developers to commence the mass development of new subdivisions outside of Toronto's core (Sewell, 1993). Of great importance as well was the formation of the Metropolitan Toronto government in 1953, bringing together the 'old' City of Toronto with its emerging suburbs. The introduction of a two-tiered government structure allowed for growth in the emerging suburbs to be overseen and financed with the help of resources from the developed core (Novick, 1979). The Metropolitan Toronto government

financed and developed physical infrastructure such as sewers, schools, and roads, including over 60 miles of new highway, which provided the groundwork for private developers to build subdivisions throughout the region (Novick, 1979).

### *Initial Characteristics of the Inner Suburbs*

The urban form of the inner suburbs is based on the planning principles of the 1950s that emphasized larger lots, lower-density form, and a separation of land-uses. These principles were implemented by private developers who both influenced and were influenced by strict zoning codes (Chiras & Wann, 2003; Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). Typical components of the inner suburban form include housing subdivisions with houses separated by type and size, single-storey shopping centres and strip plazas surrounded by parking lots, office buildings surrounded by parking lots, scarcely placed community institutions and facilities, and large roadways connecting each of these separate elements (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2000). This dispersed urban form made automobile ownership a necessity for one to meet their needs on a daily basis. Streets within residential subdivisions tended to be of a curvilinear form with the intention of preventing non-residents from entering and finding their way around the community (Sewell, 1993; Smith, 2006). Residents of varying socio-economic backgrounds were also kept separate through the segregation of different types of housing by developers, whose actions were supported by municipalities (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2000).

Although unpopular to many according to today's standards, the 'self-contained' subdivisions of the inner suburbs were very popular amongst the original mostly White, middle class residents (Hall, 2002). Many of these inner suburban subdivisions are based on principles championed by Clarence Perry of the Russell Sage Foundation, a social welfare organization in the United States (Hall, 1989). These principles resulted in "neighbourhood units" that



contained an elementary school, public library, and commercial functions at the centre; places of business at the edge; a range of recreation areas placed to avoid concentration; setbacks between buildings and the street; private family backyards; large arterial roads as outer boundaries; internal curvilinear streets to discourage traffic; and apartment buildings located at the periphery of residential areas (Novick, 1979). This neighbourhood concept was replicated throughout post-War suburbs in North America and intended to support and provide for the needs of young families (Filion & Bunting, 2006). Since most families were middle class and had access to an automobile, many of their expressed needs were met in these communities.

#### *Initial Characteristics of Toronto's Inner Suburbs*

Many of the neighbourhoods developed in the post-War years throughout the inner suburbs of Toronto share and reflect characteristics similar to other North American inner suburban communities. The prototypical inner suburban neighbourhood in Toronto is the Don Mills community in North York, whose developers followed many of the principles advocated by Clarence Perry. Clearly influenced also by Garden City principles, Don Mills was conceived in the 1950s by Macklin Hancock and built by a private developer named E.P. Taylor (Sewell, 1993). It is characterized by a separation of land-uses; low density development; a rigid hierarchy of streets with many loops, cul-de-sacs, and crescents; a central shopping mall and retail strips; and a concentration of apartment buildings and a tremendous amount of green space to shield single family homes from noisier, 'incompatible' land uses (Smith, 2006). Like other North American inner suburbs, Don Mills and other inner suburban communities in post-War Toronto were inhabited by young, middle class families that were predominantly White (Smith, 2006).

More specifically, Don Mills was composed of four separate neighbourhood quadrants, each with an elementary school and local store. These four quadrants were joined in the centre by a major intersection surrounded by a ring road. The ring road contained services and facilities to be used by residents of all four quadrants, including a community centre, shopping centre, and a library (Sewell, 1993). The Don Mills model was replicated throughout the post-War suburbs of Toronto and Canada, with the inner suburban community of Scarborough in Toronto's inner suburbs using it frequently throughout the 1950s and 1960s (Sewell, 1993).

Although Toronto's inner suburban communities look quite similar to those located in other jurisdictions throughout North America, Toronto's inner suburbs differ in terms of the degree to which "tower-in-the-park" slab apartment buildings were incorporated into the urban fabric. Beginning in the 1960s and continuing into the 1970s, hundreds of these towers were constructed throughout North York, Scarborough, and Etobicoke due to concerns over increasingly limited supplies of land (E.R.A. Architects et al., 2010). These buildings, usually set relatively far back from the street, are located on large lots where often over 80 percent of the land is dedicated to open space (E.R.A. Architects et al., 2010). Units in these buildings were originally targeted at young single professionals and seniors, but quickly became home to lower income families who could not afford typical single-detached suburban dwellings (Novick, 1979).

### Inner Suburban Decline and Deterioration

#### *Aging Infrastructure and Housing*

Although the infrastructure and housing of inner suburban communities was at one time brand new and in some cases state-of-the-art, years of use and poor maintenance has led to degradation and decreasing quality (Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). Housing has become

run-down, schools and parks are worn out, and public spaces appear dull, obsolete, and are poorly used (Lucy & Phillips, 2000; Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). This is all made worse by the fact that post-War suburban neighbourhoods were built quite rapidly and according to relatively basic standards, increasing their susceptibility to deterioration (Lucy & Phillips, 2000). These factors together with the small size, poor quality, and absence of various types of housing has meant that much of today's middle class has no desire to live in inner suburban communities (Lucy & Phillips, 2000). As a result, many middle class families have chosen to locate in the outer suburbs where they can purchase newer and bigger houses with modern amenities and features at price points that tend to be only marginally higher than those for smaller inner suburban homes (Hanlon, 2010). Many members of other demographic groups, such as young professionals, are choosing to live in the central city where a variety of housing types located in convenient, well-maintained, and compact communities are available (Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). In place of middle class families, inner suburban homes are increasingly being bought by either investors or working class families who either are not interested in investing in their properties (as in the former case) or cannot afford to invest large sums of money in their properties (as in the case of the latter) (Peiser, 2007a; Lucy & Phillips, 2000). Reinvestment in inner suburban residential properties is further discouraged by the deteriorating state of the surrounding community as property owners are less likely to spend money maintaining their structures if the rest of the neighbourhood is plagued by poor maintenance (Lucy & Phillips, 2000).

Like similar areas across North America, the infrastructure, housing, and public realm throughout Toronto's inner suburbs is deteriorating quite rapidly, resulting in the departure of the middle class (City of Toronto & United Way, 2005). The housing stock in many of these

communities is predominantly characterized by small, single-family homes and numerous slab apartment towers, with very few options in between these two housing type extremes (Novick, 1979; Affordable Housing Office, 2009). Although poor maintenance and deterioration is not a widespread problem amongst single-family homes, a large proportion of inner-suburban apartment towers are in need of significant re-investment. These buildings tend to be energy inefficient due to poor design and aging construction materials, and residents face numerous issues involving plumbing, appliances, and pest infestations (United Way, 2011). In addition to poor housing quality, the arterial roads that traverse the inner suburbs are typically lined with out-dated, poorly constructed, and underutilized structures surrounded by a considerable amount of parking (Young & Wright Architects Inc. et al., 2008).

A deteriorating and poorly designed public realm together with small, outmoded houses, and a general sense of decline has meant that many of Toronto's inner suburban communities have become unpopular with today's middle class, who either spend their money in the outer suburbs for a larger house or in the inner city for the available amenities (Hulchanski, 2010; City of Toronto & United Way, 2005). Although not decreasing, property values in inner suburban communities have not kept up with those in many central city and outer suburban neighbourhoods due to the decline and growing stigmatization of the inner suburbs (Hulchanski, 2010; United Way & Canadian Council on Social Development, 2002). As a result, families with more modest incomes are inhabiting the smaller, older homes and lower income individuals and families are living in the deteriorating apartment towers. Inner suburban neighbourhoods are increasingly becoming home to the working class and impoverished since the older, lower quality housing is relatively affordable compared to housing options in other parts of the Greater Toronto Area (Hulchanski, 2010).

### *Changing Demographic and Social Trends*

As mentioned previously, North American inner suburbs have seen the flight of the middle class and influx of lower income households, largely due to the relative affordability of houses in the inner suburbs compared to increasingly expensive housing in the gentrifying inner city and newer outer suburbs (Lee & Leigh, 2005). Poverty rates in inner suburban communities across the continent have been steadily increasing, while those in the inner city and outer suburbs are on the decline (Puentes & Warren, 2006). Essentially, the inner suburbs have become the only place where the growing number of people earning modest and lower incomes can afford to live in large metropolitan areas. Social polarization has resulted in a society characterized by a shrinking middle class, with increasing number of people at either end of the income spectrum (United Way & Canadian Council on Social Development, 2004). Out of the entire spectrum, the lower income segment is expanding at the greatest rate due to the restructuring of the labour market, decreases in government funding and support systems, and cost of living increases (United Way & Canadian Council on Social Development, 2004; Hanlon, 2010). The problem of increasing poverty is exacerbated by the inadequacy of the existing inner suburban built form and social infrastructure in meeting the needs of an expanding socially disadvantaged population (United Way, 2011). Please see the sections below for more details on how various inner suburban characteristics are affecting the quality of life in these communities.

In addition to growing poverty, inner suburbs have also seen a transition in terms of the ethnic composition of their populations. Many inner suburban communities throughout North America are home to increasing numbers of racialized peoples and recent immigrants looking for affordable accommodation (Randolph, 2004). This trend is positive because it has meant increasing diversity in traditionally homogenous inner suburban communities. Having said that,

many of these racialized peoples and recent immigrants are disadvantaged and impoverished due to discrimination and the inability to secure well-paying jobs (Puentes & Warren, 2006; United Way & Canadian Council on Social Development, 2002). Trouble securing better-paying employment is especially a problem for recent immigrants whose credentials, language ability, and lack of experience working in the industrialized world act as barriers to such employment (United Way & Canadian Council on Social Development, 2002). As increasing proportions of North America's poor belong to racialized groups or are new to the continent, the relatively affordable inner suburbs have seen the formation of concentrations of racialized poverty (Hanlon, 2010; Hulchanski, 2010).

This trend is even more troubling because the built form and social service infrastructure of the inner suburbs is often incapable of meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups from diverse backgrounds. This is due to the fact that the built form and social infrastructure has not adapted according to demographic changes, and is still suited more towards middle class White families who were the original inhabitants of these neighbourhoods (Novick, 1979; Puentes & Warren, 2006). For example, inner suburban housing often lacks the space required by immigrant families that tend to be larger, resulting in crowded conditions (Affordable Housing Office, 2009; Puentes & Warren, 2006). As a result, the quality of life of many contemporary inner suburban residents is compromised. The sections that follow provide a more in-depth explanation of how the built-form and social infrastructure of inner suburban communities fail to meet the needs of a changing population.

Similar to a changing ethnic composition, the rise in the proportion of the population in the inner suburbs that are seniors is not a negative trend in and of itself. North American inner suburbs have and will continue to experience increases in their elderly populations, not only due

to overall aging trends, but also due to the desire of many senior citizens to “age in place” within the neighbourhoods (in many cases inner suburban neighbourhoods) that they have always lived in (Chiras & Wann, 2003; Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). The problem with this trend is that, like many racialized peoples and newcomers, inner suburban seniors tend to have lower incomes and their needs are not appropriately met by the existing built form and social infrastructure of these areas (Randolph, 2004; United Way & Canadian Council on Social Development, 2002). Increasing poverty amongst the elderly can be attributed to inadequate pensions and lower levels of government assistance combined with increases in the cost of living (United Way & Canadian Council on Social Development, 2002).

Toronto’s inner suburbs have experienced the same sort of demographic shifts taking place in other inner suburban communities across North America. The City of Toronto has seen increasing income polarization amongst its citizens along with the geographic segregation of different socio-economic groups (Hulchanski, 2007; 2010). Toronto’s lower income population is growing at a rate higher than any other socio-economic group due to several factors, including the disappearance of higher-paying manufacturing jobs and employment barriers faced by immigrants (United Way & Canadian Council on Social Development, 2004). Certain social groups are much more vulnerable to poverty in Toronto, with lone-parents, seniors, immigrants, racialized peoples, and children and youth most at risk (United Way & Canadian Council on Social Development, 2002). The vast majority of higher poverty neighbourhoods in the Toronto area are now located within the inner suburbs of Scarborough, North York, and Etobicoke, where middle income neighbourhoods continue to decline in number (Hulchanski, 2010).

Since certain social groups are disproportionately affected by poverty, Toronto’s inner suburbs are now home to increasing concentrations of low-income lone-parent families,

racialized peoples, seniors, children, youth, and newcomers. These groups now make up a large proportion of the population of inner suburban neighbourhoods because they often cannot afford to live in the gentrifying 'old' Toronto or in the outer regions of York, Peel, Durham, and Halton (Hulchanski, 2010). Like inner suburbs throughout North America, Toronto's inner suburban communities tend to lack the amenities, resources, and built-form conducive to supporting marginalized peoples (City of Toronto & United Way, 2005). Consequently, there is tremendous amount of unmet need throughout these areas.

#### *Disinvestment and Inadequate Government Policy*

In addition to the exodus of middle class residents from the inner suburbs, many retailers and other employers have also left inner suburban communities (Peiser, 2007a). This has resulted in a lack of higher quality retail outlets, fewer employment opportunities, and a substantial decrease in the attraction of investment (Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). Retailers and corporations have focused their efforts on locating in either the central core of cities where incomes are increasing and amenities are plentiful, or in the outer suburbs where buildings are newer and land is cheaper/more abundant (Lee & Leigh, 2005). Developers also contribute to disinvestment in the inner suburbs by exercising their preference for developing new structures and communities on greenfield sites in the outer suburbs. The reason for this is that it is less risky to develop in better-off communities because it is less expensive and profits are guaranteed, whereas they deem redevelopment in the inner suburbs to be expensive, unpredictable, and not worth the risk (Lucy & Phillips, 2000).

Inner suburban communities are no longer attractive to developers, lenders, and corporations due to declining household incomes, aging and deterioration housing and infrastructure, and the lack of community assets such as cultural amenities, mixed-use shopping



centres, and public institutions (Lucy & Phillips, 2000). Government funding cutbacks and inadequate policies have also facilitated decline and disinvestment in inner suburban neighbourhoods. Funding for inner suburban revitalization projects has been few and far between in the United States due to government focus on inner city revitalization (Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). In Canada, senior levels of government have introduced cutbacks over the last few decades, and much of the funding that is currently available is unreliable as it is provided on a short-term basis (Clark, as cited in Noble, 2009). This together with a lack of policy recognizing and addressing the unique issues of inner suburban areas has allowed inner suburban deterioration to continue unabated (Puentes & Orfield, 2002).

Lack of investment is also a problem for Toronto's inner suburbs, but in contrast to other North American metropolitan areas, many growth management policies that have the potential to spur revitalization in the inner suburbs do exist. The main issues in Toronto with respect to disinvestment are the actions of private developers and inadequate government funding. Developers in Toronto have focused mainly on the construction of condominiums in the downtown core and on lower density homes in the outer suburbs, most of which are aimed at middle to higher income families and individuals (United Way, 2011, Affordable Housing Office, 2009). Senior levels of government have facilitated decline in inner suburban neighbourhoods by reducing government transfer payments to municipalities and by downloading funding responsibilities for key services and programs to municipal governments without providing them with adequate sources of revenue (McKellar & Amborski, 2009). Consequently, the City of Toronto and other municipalities have had to implement service reductions, delay or permanently halt the construction of new services and facilities, and reduce

maintenance of infrastructure, which has had a negative impact on quality of life in inner suburban communities.

### *Lack of Appropriate Services and Amenities*

As mentioned previously, inner suburbs across North America often lack appropriate social infrastructure and amenities, in terms of both quantity and quality, required by contemporary residents. When these communities were originally constructed in the immediate post-War era, very little consideration was given to the social needs of neighbourhood residents as it was assumed that they would be able to meet these need themselves with help from voluntary and non-profit organizations (Randolph, 2004). Therefore, little else was provided beyond the basics of a school, a few parks, and possibly a library, recreation centre, and a centrally placed shopping venue (Novick, 1979). This degree of service and amenity provision may have met the essential needs of the original White, middle class inhabitants of the 1950s and 1960s, but the current state of inner suburban services and amenities is inadequate for not only today's middle class, but for the increasingly impoverished and diverse residents of 21<sup>st</sup> century North American suburbs (Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009; Novick, 1979). Increasingly, larger segments of today's middle class desire a multitude of opportunities for recreation, shopping, and socializing that is located close to home, pedestrian friendly, and easily accessible by transit, walking, or car (Beyard & Pawlukiewicz, 2001). Socially disadvantaged residents also desire and need these easily accessible opportunities, in addition to a variety of social services and programs that can aid them in furthering their education, preparing for and finding employment, connecting with fellow community members, and accessing resources required for day-to-day living (United Way & Canadian Council on Social Development, 2002; City of Toronto & United Way, 2005).

Although a basic form of amenities and social infrastructure are typically present in inner suburban communities, there are issues regarding accessibility and quality of provision. In terms of accessibility, existing retail activities, social and community services, and public spaces are often located far from one another in single-use plazas and buildings best accessed by automobiles (Lukez, 2007; Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). Thus, if someone needs to run a variety of errands or wants to partake in a variety of activities, they have to either use a car to get to and from various locations, or they can spend a great deal of time travelling between destinations by public transit, bicycle, or on foot. Accessing required or desired services and amenities may be made worse if the service or amenity in question is not available within the local community. Even if a service or amenity is located within the neighbourhood, it may not necessarily meet resident needs due to underdevelopment, poor quality, or having not been adapted to suit changing demographics (City of Toronto & United Way, 2005). The inadequate provision of social and community services, retail activities, and other amenities such as public space has negatively affected the ability of inner suburbs to develop a sense of community (Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). As a result, inner suburban social capital, or the development of cooperation, trust, and support amongst members of a community, is severely compromised (Dunham-Jones & Wiliamson, 2009).

The provision of services and amenities is also lacking in many of Toronto's inner suburban neighbourhoods. Compared to the central city, the inner suburbs always had underdeveloped social infrastructure, and this has been made worse by the introduction of user fees for the use of public buildings and funding cuts to social service organizations (City of Toronto & United Way, 2005; Task Force on Access to Space, 2002). The consequences of these measures for vital neighbourhood organizations have been the loss of access to public

buildings, scaled-back programs, and in some cases a complete cease of operations (City of Toronto & United Way, 2005; Task Force on Access to Space, 2002). Without the supplemental offerings of various social organizations, many inner suburban residents must rely on existing municipal facilities and programs, which are often not enough to meet their needs. Shopping opportunities and other amenities such as public space are also lacking and of poor quality, rarely situated together to allow for one-stop convenience or in locations easily accessible by foot or public transit (Novick, 1980). Services and amenities that are most likely not to be located within walking distance of Toronto's inner suburban residents include community health centres, youth services, newcomer settlement services, employment services, community gardens and markets, and food banks (City of Toronto, 2005).

### *Inaccessibility and Immobility*

As discussed before, immediate post-War planning ideals and codes resulted in communities developed around the automobile. Internal neighbourhood streets were often laid out in a curvilinear pattern to impede internal traffic and mobility, while the larger arterial roads were built to move high volumes of traffic quickly and efficiently (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2000). These expansive roads connected a low-density built form where different activities and land-uses were separated by a tremendous amount of asphalt and green space, making it very difficult to travel by any other mode of transportation (Beyard & Pawlukiewicz, 2001). These landscapes were not designed for pedestrians, cyclists, or public transit users. This auto-centric urban form poses accessibility and immobility problems for inner suburban communities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as many residents have chosen or have no other choice but to use alternative forms of transportation. As a result, youth, seniors, the impoverished, and other non-

drivers in the inner suburbs have to struggle to get around their neighbourhoods (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2000).

The low-density, dispersed, and auto-centric built form of Toronto's inner suburbs has made it difficult for many current non-driving residents to conduct daily errands, purchase needed goods, visit family and friends, and obtain and maintain employment (United Way & Canadian Council on Social Development, 2002; City of Toronto & United Way, 2005). A much larger proportion of inner suburban inhabitants in today's Toronto use alternative forms of transportation, and this is especially true for residents of apartment towers where car ownership is significantly below average and transit ridership is significantly above average (E.R.A. Architects et al., 2010). Although the arterial roads that traverse the inner suburbs usually have acceptable transit service, there is rarely transit provision within neighbourhoods (Novick, 1980). This can be problematic because inner suburban subdivisions tend to be quite large and feature curvilinear street patterns, meaning that many households are not within a reasonable walking distance to the nearest transit stop (Novick, 1979). In terms of the mobility of pedestrians, movement both within communities and along arterial roads is made difficult by the lack of sidewalks and crossings; the presence of expansive roads and parking lots and fast moving vehicles; and an abundance of driveways that break up sidewalks and put pedestrians in harms way (Young & Wright Architects Inc. et al., 2008).

Figure 2.1 below summarizes the various issues and challenges facing North American inner suburbs. The issues and challenges identified in this literature review act as guide for the analysis of current conditions in the Markham-Lawrence area of Scarborough featured in Chapter 4.

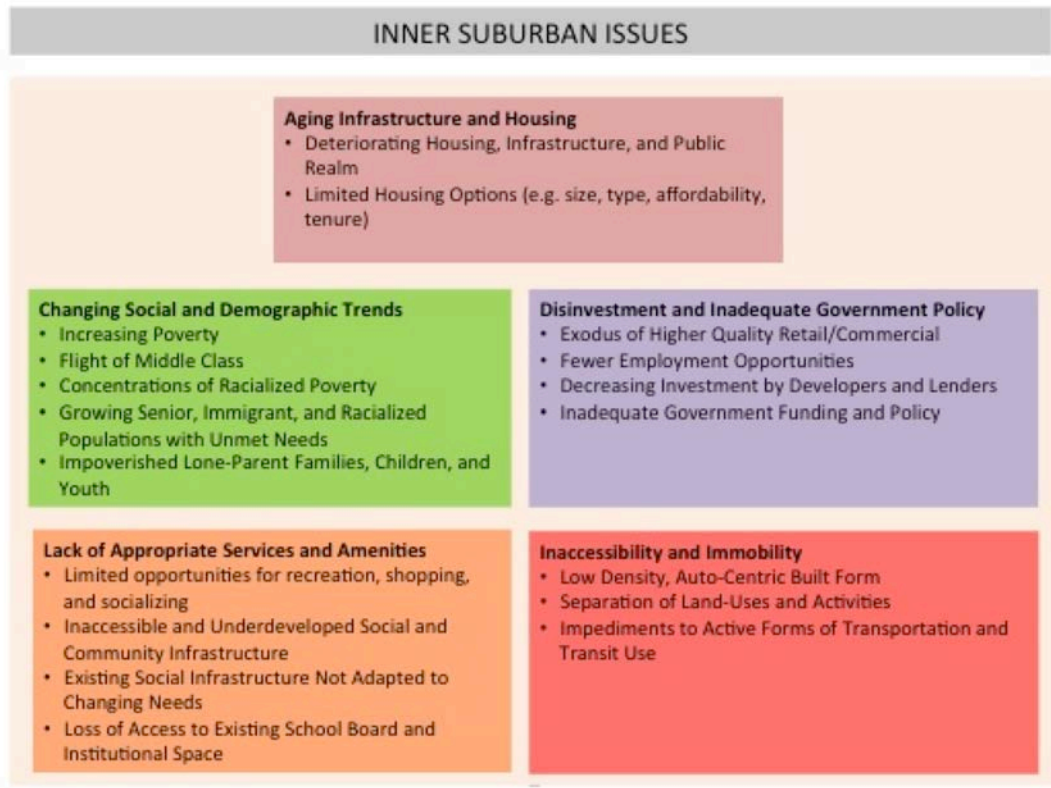


Figure 2.1

### Revitalizing Inner Suburbs

This section of the literature review outlines some of the major land-use and social planning strategies that have been proposed and/or implemented throughout North America in order to encourage the revitalization of inner suburban communities. Although a wide variety of planning strategies are discussed, the fine details of implementation such as accompanying policy, regulations, and financial tools are discussed briefly, if at all. Emphasis is placed on generating ideas and solutions to the issues discussed in the previous section, not on determining the feasibility of proposed interventions or the actions required for their successful implementation.

All of the following planning strategies are classified under various categories that reflect different aspects of the inner suburban form and therefore do not directly correspond to the

categories used to classify issues and challenges in the previous section. The use of a different classification scheme is necessary since many of the solutions outlined below are capable of addressing more than one set of issues. For example, the planning strategies outlined in the Economic Development and Commercial Revitalization section below could potentially address issues discussed in several of the sections discussed above, including Lack of Appropriate Services and Amenities, Disinvestment and Inadequate Government Policy, Changing Social and Demographic Trends, and Aging Infrastructure and Housing. As such, to avoid repetitive discussions of planning interventions, the interventions are grouped together under a different set of headings. Figure 2.2 attempts to clarify the relationships between issue categories (outlined in the previous section) and their corresponding solution categories (outlined below).

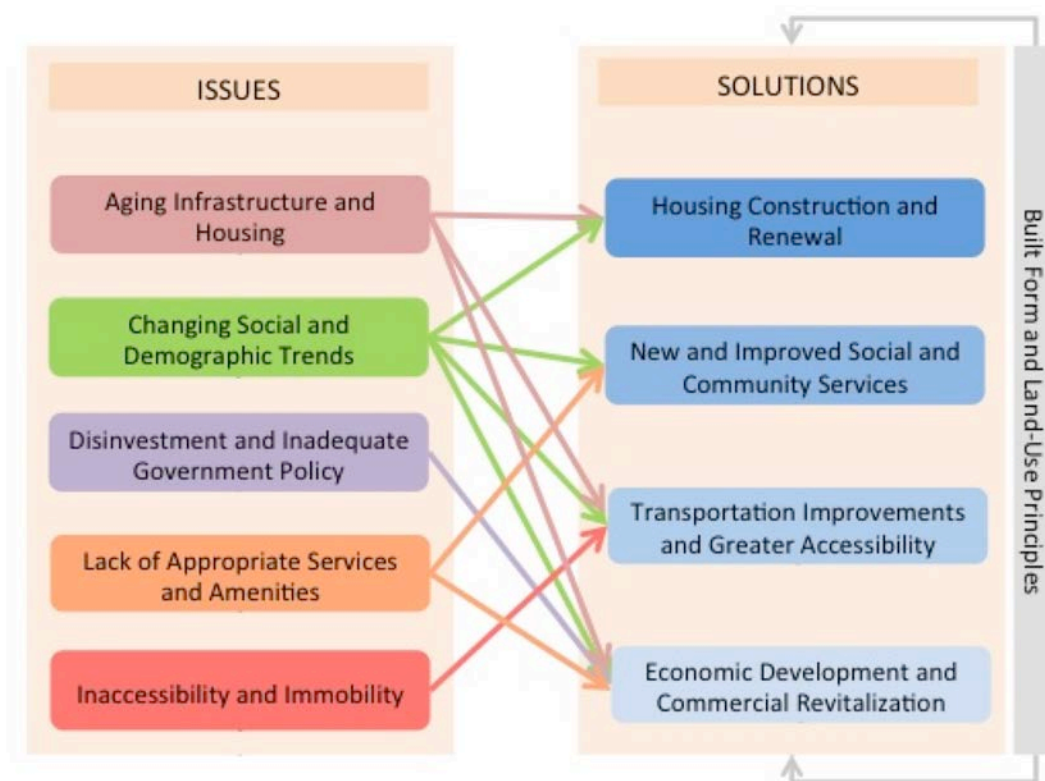


Figure 2.2: Relationships Between Inner Suburban Issues and Solutions

The development principles and strategies outlined in the first section on land-use and built form serve as an introduction to and organizing framework for the physical planning and urban design strategies that are referred to throughout the other four categories. Physical planning and urban design interventions are further classified using Lukez's (2007) "Methods of Redevelopment" typology. The most basic forms of redevelopment involving the adaptive re-use of existing structures are considered to be forms of "editing"; slightly more advanced undertakings of redevelopment involving additions to existing structures or sites are classified as forms of "writing"; and the most ambitious examples of redevelopment involving the complete or partial eradication of a building, stretch of infrastructure, or site are categorized as forms of "erasing" (Lukez, 2007).

#### *Land-Use and Built Form Principles*

Many of the land-use and built form interventions are based on both Smart Growth and New Urbanist principles. Smart Growth principles emphasize the importance of accommodating future population growth in higher density, mixed-use communities that promote alternative forms of transportation and make use of existing infrastructure, with the ultimate goal being to prevent further urban sprawl and its associated negative consequences (Lee & Leigh, 2005). New Urbanist principles have similar goals, but there is a stronger emphasis placed on the use of traditional neighbourhood design approaches to develop more compact, human-scale communities that encourage healthier lifestyles and a greater sense of community (Lehrer, 2006). Together, these two approaches to urban development call for the design of higher density, compact, mixed-use communities that have all the services and amenities that one could need or desire intermixed with or within walking distance of places of residence.



There are many ways of introducing compact, mixed-use elements into the already built-up inner suburban fabric. Regardless of the methods used to realize the goals mentioned above, there are several key principles that are essential for a successful outcome. The first key principle is the creation of an identifiable centre or core characterized by the highest densities and greatest mix and variety of uses (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2000). This central node should include a myriad of businesses, public institutions, restaurants, housing types, retail stores, and public gathering spaces where residents and people from the surrounding community visit frequently in order to meet their daily needs (Lukez, 2007). The second key principle is to continue mixed-use concentrations (albeit at slightly lower intensities) of housing, retail, office space, and public amenities along major corridors that line the edges of residential subdivisions (Lukez, 2007). Both the central node and mixed-use corridors should be well connected by various forms transportation to each other and to surrounding residential communities, while a special emphasis should be placed on encouraging and facilitating pedestrian activity within mixed-use developments (Lukez, 2007; Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). Another key principle concerns the way in which the mixed-use concept is implemented. In order to be truly effective in creating a complete community, both individual structures and entire blocks must be mixed-use (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2000). So, for example, in addition to each building having multiple uses (e.g. retail at grade with residences above), a series of buildings in a block should vary in terms of their combination of uses (e.g. office space, retail, residences, social organizations, public institutions). An entire block of buildings with retail at grade and residences above is a start, but a greater diversity of uses is more effective.

These land-use principles for creating complete communities are supplemented by numerous urban design guidelines that enhance the character of neighbourhoods, ensure

maximum accessibility, and contribute to increased liveliness through the encouragement of pedestrian activity. Of greatest importance is the design and placement of buildings.

Essentially, buildings should have no less than two storeys, and should be placed close to the right-of-way in order to form a continuous street wall. Setbacks should only be permitted to allow for the formation of public space (Lukez, 2007; Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2000).

Implementation of these land-use and built form principles on the ground can occur in three main ways. Inner suburban form can be “edited” through the adaptive re-use of unused and abandoned buildings (Lukez, 2007). For instance, large buildings such as former single-format, big-box structures can be converted into several-storey mixed-use developments with residences (Lukez, 2007), or could accommodate larger-scale uses and activities such as a theatre. A more diverse array of activities can also be introduced into the inner suburban fabric through the process of “writing”. Infill can take place on larger lots with ample amount of parking or underutilized open space as occurred in Minneapolis where a developer converted a parking lot into a four-storey mixed-use building with residences, offices, shops, restaurants, and a new arts centre (Chiras & Wann, 2003). Another form of “writing” is the vertical expansion of existing structures (Lukez, 2007). For instance, several storeys of residences and/or office space can be added onto existing single-storey retail strips, thereby increasing densities and activity levels (CMHC, n.d.). Finally, parts of the existing inner suburban fabric can be “erased” or demolished to make way for the construction of a brand new mixed-use development based on New Urbanist principles (Lukez, 2007).

Numerous studies have been conducted on land-use and built form in Toronto’s inner suburbs, resulting in the development of a series of recommended strategies intended to increase accessibility to services and amenities and encourage a greater variety of and intensity of

activities in low density communities. Basically, the introduction of mixed-use development is recommended at key intersections and nodes, as well as within commercial sections of main arterials throughout the inner suburbs (Brook McIlroy Planning & Urban Design et al., 2010). Some larger apartment sites situated along arterial roads are also identified as being appropriate locations where a greater variety of services and amenities can be introduced (E.R.A. Architects et al., 2010). In terms of built form and design guidelines, most mixed-use buildings are expected to be mid-rise (between 5 and 11 storeys), with building heights no less than three storeys and no greater than the width of the right-of-way on which they are situated (Brook McIlroy Planning & Urban Design et al., 2010). Buildings should be located right at the property line in most cases in order to form a street-wall that frames the pedestrian environment. Setbacks are encouraged, however, if the space is to be dedicated to patios, street furniture, public space, and other public realm improvements (Young & Wright Architects Inc. et al., 2008). Step-backs (or the setting back of the upper floors of a building from the property line) should be incorporated in taller mid-rise buildings to ensure that the street-wall (or portion of a building's frontage at the property line) is no greater than 80% of the right-of-way width (Brook McIlroy Planning & Urban Design et al., 2010). Finally, all mid-rise buildings located adjacent to or near low-rise residential neighbourhoods should be setback and gradually decrease in height and scale towards these communities (City of Toronto, 2009).

### *Housing Construction and Renewal*

The major emphasis of most land-use planning approaches to housing issues is to ensure a greater diversity of housing options within neighbourhoods, so that people from all backgrounds have access to suitable and affordable accommodation that meets their needs. Increasing housing options involves the introduction of a full range of housing types in terms of

size, configuration, and tenure into communities characterized by a homogenous housing stock (Walz & Wilson, 2007). Neighbourhoods with a greater variety of housing types and sizes can accommodate individuals and families at any stage of life and from all socio-economic and other backgrounds (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2000). Programs that facilitate access to and ensure the provision of affordable housing options should also accompany land-use planning solutions. Examples of such strategies include rent supplements and allowances for low income tenants; second mortgages/loans for prospective moderate income homebuyers; and development incentives to encourage the construction of affordable homes by developers (Affordable Housing Office, 2009).

There are numerous ways to incorporate a greater variety of housing types into mature, built-up inner suburban neighbourhoods. Approaches involving the “editing” or the conversion/re-use of existing structures are most suitable for established residential subdivisions as they result in very little change to the existing urban fabric (Chiras & Wann, 2003). Housing units can be added to existing homes through the conversion of garages, bedrooms, and basements (second suites) into self-contained units for singles, seniors, and other people looking for smaller sized affordable accommodation (Chiras & Wann, 2003). Entire houses can also undergo conversion into multi-unit dwellings with several apartment units (CMHC, n.d.). Approaches involving additions to existing structure or sites (“writing”) can also be suitable for residential subdivisions. Modest vertical and horizontal additions to neighbourhood homes and the construction of back-lot houses on unused portions of residential lots can increase housing choice within neighbourhoods without drastically affecting the surrounding community (CMHC, n.d.; Puentes & Warren, 2006; Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2000).

Other forms of “writing” that are more suitable for larger residential sites and sites along nodes and corridors include the addition of residences above existing commercial strip plazas and malls; the introduction of townhouses and low to mid-rise apartment buildings on the underutilized portions of large apartment sites; and the incorporation of residential units into mixed-use buildings constructed on underutilized portions of commercial and large apartment sites (CMHC, n.d.; Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). A more diverse array of housing types can also be introduced into mature inner suburban communities through the “erasing” of existing forms to make way for new mixed-used developments that incorporate various types of housing together with a multitude of other uses and activities (Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). This type of redevelopment allows for the construction of innovative housing types such as live/work row houses with retail or workspace on the bottom floor, although this type of live/work unit could also be incorporated as infill on larger sites (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2000). The utilization of the strategies above to increase housing choice in existing neighbourhoods can result in more attractive, integrated, and accessible communities where people of all ages, ethnicities, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds can find suitable and affordable housing.

In the Toronto context, various forms of housing redevelopment have been proposed for the City’s inner suburbs. Strategies to increase housing choice include the redevelopment of existing underutilized sites in nodes and along corridors into mixed-use buildings with residences and other activities and intensifying existing large apartment sites through the introduction of infill townhouses and apartments (City of Toronto, 2009; E.R.A. Architects et al., 2010). A recent proposal to waive development charges in priority neighbourhoods within the City of Toronto is currently being studied, and this could potentially stimulate the redevelopment of underutilized sites throughout inner suburban communities (Toronto City Council, 2011).

Another major focus of housing revitalization efforts in Toronto's inner suburbs is the renovation and upgrading of the many apartment towers that dot the landscape (City of Toronto, 2009; E.R.A. Architects et al., 2010).

#### *New and Improved Social and Community Services*

A major concern of planners when trying to improve quality of life in older suburbs is to ensure that land-use planning measures are combined with necessary social planning interventions. The presence of a well-developed and accessible social infrastructure is essential for the development of social capital and the delivery of necessary social services within inner suburban communities (Chiras & Wann, 2003; Noble, 2009). Neighbourhoods with a good amount of social capital are characterized by strong bonds between residents from a variety of backgrounds, which provides a support network for anyone struggling to integrate and become more involved in their community (City of Toronto, 2005). Social services and programs further facilitate social inclusion by providing much needed resources and opportunities to more vulnerable groups that may encounter greater barriers when trying to establish successful lives (Noble, 2009; City of Toronto, 2005). Particularly important services required in North American suburbs today include immigrant settlement services, services for seniors, the impoverished, and child and youth. Social services assist in the accessing of services; in the adjustment to a new way of living; and in the upgrading of skills needed for education and employment amongst many other things (Puentes & Warren, 2006). Sport, recreation, and leisure facilities are also extremely important as they provide residents with opportunities to build connections and engage in healthy activities (Chiras & Wann, 2003).

There are many strategies that can be employed to increase the presence and capacity of social services and facilities in mature suburban neighbourhoods. The most basic interventions

involve the re-use (“editing”) of existing community structures such as houses, strip mall units, and unused spaces in apartment buildings through the incorporation of social services and programs. Within residential subdivisions, a centrally located house can be converted from a residence into a neighbourhood “common house” with a community kitchen, space for workshops and meetings, a recreation and exercise room, and a study area (Chiras & Wann, 2003). Such a facility has the potential to create better connections amongst community members and provides much-needed community space within a short walking distance from residential homes (Chiras & Wann, 2003). Existing strip mall units located in nodes and along major roads can also be converted into a community agency providing services for the surrounding area, while underused recreations rooms in apartment buildings could also undergo conversion to provide services, amenities, and multi-use space for building residents and nearby neighbours (Noble, 2009).

The conversion of other community facilities such as libraries and schools into multi-use centres could also be considered a form of “editing”, although it is more a form of enhancing since existing functions remain. For instance, libraries could become home to community meetings, discussion groups, and English as a Second Language (ESL) help sessions (City of Toronto, 2005; Hudnut, 2004). Schools could undergo a similar re-invention to include other functions, although it is much more likely that an addition to existing school structures or the introduction of infill buildings on underutilized portions of school properties (“writing”) would be required. School sites could undergo redevelopment to include a range of activities and function such as a daycare, health centre, and newcomer settlement services (Walz & Wilson, 2007). Community facilities could also be incorporated through infill on large apartment sites, parking lots, developable sections of parks and open spaces; and through additions to existing

retail strips and shopping centres. Complete redevelopments of underutilized sites featuring mixed-use buildings could also incorporate social infrastructure along with other uses and activities. Regardless of the methods used to improve and expand social infrastructure in mature suburbs, it is essential that accessibility be a main factor in determining the location of services (Roman & Moore, as cited in City of Toronto, 2005). Typically, services should be within walking distance of most of their clients, which is considered to be no more than one kilometre (City of Toronto, 2005).

The strategies being implemented throughout Toronto's suburbs to address lacking social and community infrastructure mirror those mentioned above. Apartment building recreation rooms in addition to stores within strip malls and shopping centres are being transformed into local community hubs (Noble, 2009). As well, the services offered in existing community centres are being expanded to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population. For example, North York Community House operates several community hubs in both apartment recreation rooms along Lawrence Avenue West and in the Lawrence Square shopping centre (Noble, 2009). Provided services include settlement assistance, cooking classes, and ESL sessions. The Lawrence Heights Community Centre offers a tremendous amount of creative programming for area youth, including classes in music production, graphic design, and computer literacy (Noble, 2009). In terms of recreation and leisure opportunities, several inner suburban parks and open spaces have been slated to receive significant upgrades such as new soccer fields, splash pads, playgrounds, cricket pitches, and picnic areas (City of Toronto, 2009; City of Toronto, 2010). There has also been a greater push to open up school board facilities to wider community use. All of these initiatives are spearheaded by the City's Strong



Neighbourhoods strategy, which aims to improve community infrastructure throughout priority neighbourhoods in the inner suburbs (Noble, 2009; City of Toronto & United Way, 2005).

### *Transportation Improvements and Greater Accessibility*

There are two main goals behind most transportation and accessibility related strategies. The first goal is to improve connectivity between different elements of the inner suburban form, while the second goal is to make inner suburban communities more accessible and pedestrian friendly by facilitating and supporting walking. Connectivity and accessibility can be improved through the addition of new pedestrian pathways, bike paths, and public roads between different types of land uses in conjunction with the development of more mixed-use buildings (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2000). Of great importance is the introduction of additional links between residential areas and surrounding activities such as retail strips and shopping centres, recreation areas, parks, and other amenities and social services (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2000). Accessibility of transit stops to residents should be improved through the creation of conveniently placed pedestrian pathways that reduce potential barriers and walking time. Transit stops should also be well integrated with nearby shopping opportunities and other amenities, further increasing accessibility within neighbourhoods (Beyard & Pawlukiewicz, 2001). More ambitious redevelopment schemes have even greater potential to improve connectivity and accessibility in mature suburban communities. There are numerous examples throughout North America of inner suburban centres, characterized by a shopping mall surrounded by an abundance of parking, being completely transformed into mixed-use town centres with a traditional grid street pattern interwoven with surrounding arterials and subdivisions (Lukez, 2007).

Approaches aimed at increasing the walkability of the inner suburban form range from relatively simple streetscape upgrades such as widening sidewalks and adding trees to completely overhauling the physical organization of arterial roads (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2000). Strategies that are effective in transforming auto-dominated inner suburban streets into more pedestrian friendly zones include widening sidewalks, lining sidewalks with trees, ensuring buildings frame the street, and adding street furniture such as benches (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2000; Lucy & Phillips, 2000; Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). Walkability can be increased further through the introduction of pedestrian cut-throughs, which break up large blocks that tend to inhibit pedestrian activity (Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009).

Physical alterations can also be made to the organization of arterial roads in order to mitigate the anti-pedestrian effects of their immense scale (Lukez, 2007). Relatively basic interventions could include the addition of a planted median in the middle of an arterial road and the introduction of bicycle and transit lanes along the curb. Slightly more advanced undertakings include the institution of separated transit lanes in the middle of the road or the introduction of parallel parking in the curb lane (Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). Finally, inner suburban arterial roads can be completely overhauled into multiway boulevards that feature several medians that divide traffic lanes according to function (Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). Although many variations exist, a typical configuration involves the separation of large roads into four separate sections. There are usually two curb side sections on either side of the right-of-way intended for lower speed local traffic, which often feature curb side parking and well-designed pedestrian friendly sidewalks (Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). These lanes are separated from the two higher speed middle sections by landscaped medians that provide a buffer

for pedestrians and cyclists. The two middle sections intended for higher speed through traffic, are divided by another landscape median that splits the boulevard in half, thus providing safe ‘islands’ for pedestrians crossing the road (Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009).

Many of the aforementioned strategies have been recommended and/or implemented in Toronto’s inner suburbs. Studies analyzing connectivity and accessibility in inner suburban communities have emphasized the introduction of new public roads and pedestrian pathways to facilitate better access to local commercial nodes and green space (City of Toronto, 2009). In terms of improvements to public transit, the closer spacing of transit stops to limit walking distances as well as the addition of bus or high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes have been proposed (Young & Wright Architects Inc. et al., 2008). Pedestrian friendly right-of-ways are also a major focus of many of the revitalization studies. Potential solutions include the institution of additional signalized pedestrian crossings; introducing continuous planted medians, adding on-street parking and bike lanes; widening sidewalks; and reducing the number of traffic lanes (City of Toronto, 2009; Young & Wright Architects Inc. et al., 2008).

#### *Economic Development and Commercial Revitalization*

Supporting small community based businesses and revitalizing existing retail strips and shopping centres are two key ways of stimulating economic development in inner suburban neighbourhoods. Successful neighbourhood businesses are important, as they can be a catalyst for further economic development and increased investment in a community. They are also key sources of employment in areas lacking a strong economic base and tend to understand and meet the needs of locals better than chain stores and other types of businesses (Noble, 2009). Planning based solutions that have the potential to support the development of community-based businesses usually involve securing suitable and affordable space. This can be accomplished

through the re-use of existing spaces and/or through additions to existing structures or sites. Innovative strategies include the allowance of home-based businesses within residential neighbourhoods and the creation of neighbourhood small business hubs (Chiras & Wann, 2003; Noble, 2009; Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2000). Neighbourhood small business hubs provide affordable office space for local entrepreneurs within their own communities. These hubs reduce start-up and operating costs for small businesses as office equipment and supplies are shared amongst the various tenants (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2000). Small business hubs could be located in underutilized space such as apartment building recreation rooms, be constructed on underutilized portions of larger sites, or be incorporated into mixed-use redevelopments (Chiras & Wann, 2003; Noble, 2009).

Reinventing existing commercial areas within inner suburban neighbourhoods is also a vital component to community revitalization as shopping nodes often serve as the centre of community life. Out-dated and inaccessible retail strips and shopping nodes need to be retrofitted in order to attract more clientele, a greater mix of businesses, as well as meet the needs of a changing population (Beyard & Pawlukiewicz, 2001; Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). Several key principles exist for the successful rejuvenation of retail functions. The first key principle is to create an environment where people want to be by adding exciting activities and amenities, creating public gathering and open spaces, and making improvements to the streetscape and public realm (Peiser, 2007b; Walz & Wilson, 2007). Activities and amenities such as outdoor marketplaces, performing arts stages, and sporting events add vitality to an area and encourage people to stay and shop in their own neighbourhoods (Peiser, 2007b). Public open spaces are important in creating a sense of community and provide places for pedestrians to meet others and enjoy what their community has to offer (Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009).

Improvements to the streetscape and public realm such as pedestrian-scale lighting, abundant landscaping, and lining streets with vibrant and interesting uses such as outdoor patios also encourages greater pedestrian activity in an area (Beyard & Pawlukiewicz, 2001).

Another key principle of retail revitalization is ensuring the presence of a variety of other functions and uses. The inclusion of residences has mutual benefits for both residents and business owners alike – businesses have a nearby customer base, while residents have convenient access to shops and services (Walz & Wilson, 2007). The addition of other functions such as offices, social and recreational facilities and services, cultural and entertainment venues, and institutional uses allows residents to access a multitude of services and amenities in one location (Beyard & Pawlukiewicz, 2001). This diversity of activity increases the attractiveness of an area and ensures the use of space at all times of day (Beyard & Pawlukiewicz, 2001). Finally, as mentioned previously, it is essential that retail strips and nodes be well connected by all forms of transportation to the surrounding community.

The implementation of the above principles can be accomplished gradually through infill and vertical additions or it can be accomplished through substantial redevelopments. A wider range of uses and activities can be incorporated into existing retail sites by adding structures containing office, additional retail, and other services and amenities onto underutilized portions of such sites (Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). Since inner suburban retail strips and shopping malls tend to be set far back from the right of way, newer infill structures should be situated near the property line to properly frame the street and reduce the prominence of surface parking (Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). On smaller sites without a great deal of underutilized space, vertical additions containing offices, residences, and other uses could lead to increased activity levels and accessibility (Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009). As mentioned

in the previous section of transportation and accessibility, complete mall redevelopment can also be undertaken, involving the introduction of an abundance of public space, interconnected mixed-use buildings, and internal pedestrian walkways (Dunham-Jones & Williamson, 2009).

In the Toronto context, revitalization studies have proposed many of the above strategies on underutilized commercial sites. There is definitely a focus on the creation of public squares at key intersections, public realm improvements, and the inclusion of public art displays (City of Toronto, 2009; City of Toronto, 2010). The formation of Business Improvement Area (BIAs) organizations is also recommended as way to spearhead commercial revitalization in struggling retail districts. BIAs bring local retailers together to implement public realm improvements and promote member businesses to the wider community (Brook McIlroy Planning & Design et al., 2010).

### Conclusion

Figure 2.3 below provides a summary of the planning interventions that are capable of addressing issues and challenges facing inner suburban communities. The various revitalization strategies outlined in the previous section will inform the recommendations for community improvement in the Markham-Lawrence neighbourhood featured in Chapter 5.

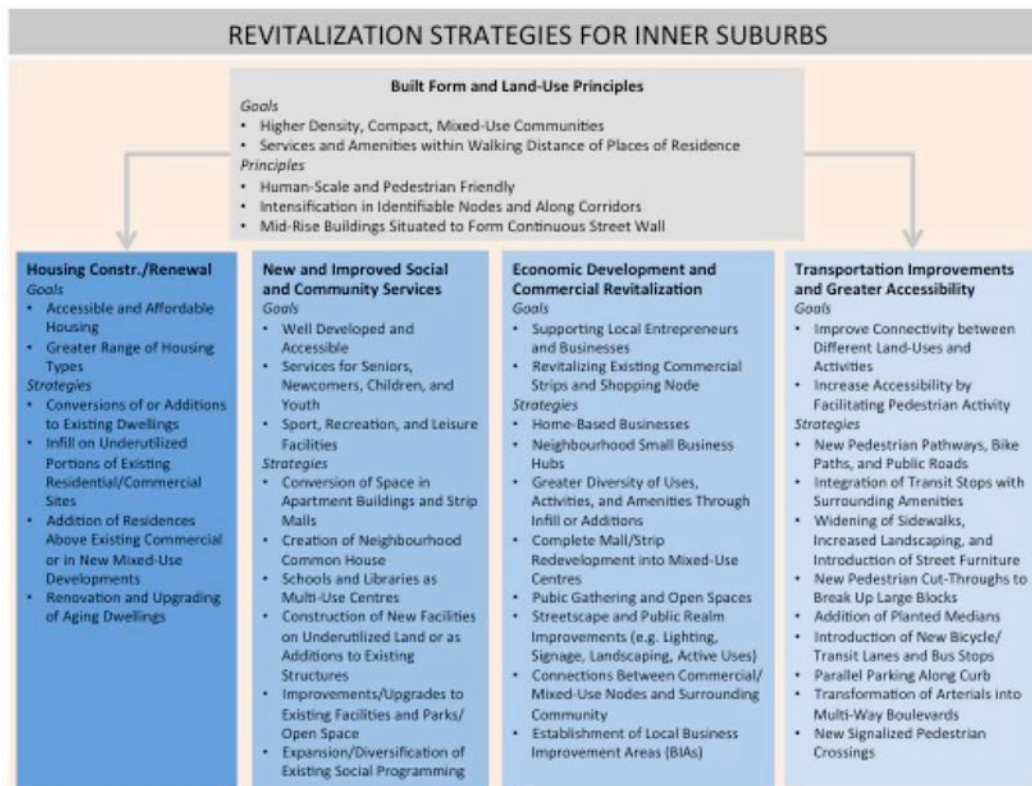


Figure 2.3

## CHAPTER 3 - DATA AND METHODS

The data required in determining the major issues and challenges facing the Markham and Lawrence study area and the most effective and appropriate ways in which to respond were obtained from a variety of sources. In addition to information and ideas garnered through an extensive literature review, insight from key informants, as well as data on the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the neighbourhood population, built form and land-use characteristics, and the location and provision of vital community services, facilities, and amenities were acquired and analyzed. Several different methods were employed in order to collect and analyze the data. Open-ended key informant interviews were conducted to gain professional insight on neighbourhood issues and potential opportunities, while a spatial and statistical analysis of socio-economic and demographic characteristics, built form and land-use characteristics, and the location of vital community services, facilities, and amenities was undertaken to fully understand the social and physical attributes of the neighbourhood. This analysis in conjunction with a site reconnaissance (field observations) of the study area allowed for a greater appreciation and knowledge of community residents, their environment, and daily challenges and issues they encounter within such space, which is essential in identifying appropriate and effective social and land-use planning solutions.

### Key Informant Interviews

In addition to information and ideas obtained through an extensive literature review, insight from professional land-use and social planners (key informants) familiar with the Markham-Lawrence neighbourhood were gained in order to identify significant problems in the neighbourhood and potential solutions. One social planner and two land-use planners who work or have worked in the Markham-Lawrence community participated in open-ended interviews on



challenges facing the neighbourhood. Care was taken to ensure that the professional planners interviewed reflected the diversity of Toronto's inner suburban communities, and the Markham-Lawrence neighbourhood in particular.

Local land-use planners were interviewed due to their professional knowledge of the inner workings of the community, and of the relationship between residents and the built environment. Professional land-use planners understand how neighbourhoods should be designed, what elements must be present, and how social, economic, environmental, and transportation infrastructure must come together to create highly accessible, thriving communities. Therefore, land-use planners familiar with the Markham-Lawrence area can provide professional insight on the ability or inability of the community's current built form, land-use characteristics, and social and economic infrastructure to meet the needs of residents. Further, these community land-use planners are at the forefront of addressing issues pertaining to poorly planned built form and land-use, and therefore are a great resource for identifying land-use planning strategies that have the potential to revitalize the Markham-Lawrence neighbourhood.

A social planner who is familiar with the community was interviewed since they have a tremendous amount of knowledge and experience dealing with social and economic issues within disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Social service and planning organizations are often first in identifying and bringing awareness to significant issues and challenges facing residents in underprivileged areas. As such, social planners are important key informants since they can provide valuable insight on the experiences of and challenges encountered by local residents, as well as the priority issues that need to be addressed and what improvements to social service infrastructure and delivery are critical for a successful outcome.

All key informant interviews were conducted at a location (e.g. their office) and time convenient to the interviewees. Interviews were conducted in accordance with an interview guide outlining major topic areas and questions to be asked (Appendix A). Each interview began with questions about the key informant's professional background and familiarity with the Markham-Lawrence area, followed by a series of main research questions regarding decline within the community (Table 3.1). The first major question concerned the issues and challenges that currently exist within the neighbourhood, which was followed by several sub-questions about priority issues and how challenges affect various groups of people differently. The second major question pertained to appropriate revitalization strategies that are capable of addressing the needs of area residents, which was followed by sub-questions relating to community assets and critical actions that need to occur in order to effectively solve problems. Finally, the last major question concerned the implementation of revitalization strategies within the Markham-Lawrence neighbourhood. This was followed by questions about funding commitments and community involvement.

<b>Table 3.1: Key Informant Interview Questions</b>
<u>Main Question 1</u> What specific issues and challenges exist in the Markham and Lawrence area of Scarborough? <i>Sub-Questions</i> What are the greatest weaknesses of community? What are the greatest challenges? What are the less formidable challenges? What are the priority issues that need to be addressed? Do challenges affect all people equally?
<u>Main Question 2</u> What neighbourhood revitalization strategies and policies are best suited to meet the needs of the Markham/Lawrence community? <i>Sub-Questions</i> What are some of the greatest opportunities/assets in community? What needs to be done in order to solve the identified priority issues? Can you think of examples from other jurisdictions/parts of the city?
<u>Main Question 3</u> How might some of these strategies/policies be implemented in the Markham and Lawrence area? <i>Sub-Questions</i> How do we finance commitments? Who needs to be involved? What role should community members play? Can you provide any specific ideas/proposals to improve the neighbourhood?

## Spatial and Statistical Analysis

A spatial and statistical analysis of the community's social and physical attributes was also performed in order to further understand the composition of the population, their surrounding built environment, and the services, facilities, and amenities present in their neighbourhood. The spatial and statistical analysis of the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the area's population allowed for the development of a profile of community residents, which is key to understanding the challenges they are encountering and to identifying strategies that will be most effective at addressing their needs. For instance, the analysis of socio-economic and demographic information allowed for the identification of groups who may be more vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion, such as racialized peoples, seniors, single-parent families, and recent immigrants. A spatial and statistical analysis is capable of identifying the size of these groups, as well as where any spatial concentrations may exist within the neighbourhood. This sort of analysis at the neighbourhood level is possible by mapping census variables at the Dissemination Area (DA) level. Socio-economic and demographic characteristics for the Markham-Lawrence area were obtained from the 2006 Census of Canada (Table 3.2). The spatial distributions of these characteristics across the neighbourhood are presented at the DA level using choropleth and bar chart maps. Descriptive statistics, graphs, charts, and tables are also used to summarize key characteristics of the community.

<b>Table 3.2: Socio-Economic and Demographic Data</b>	
<u>Dwellings</u>	<u>Immigration</u>
Tenure	Immigration Status
Type	Period of Immigration
Condition	<u>Income and Housing Affordability</u>
Value	Personal Income
Period of Construction	Housing Expenditures
<u>Education</u>	<u>Language</u>
Level of Attainment	Languages Spoken at Home
<u>Employment and Labour Force</u>	<u>Modal Split</u>
Employment Status	Method of Travel to Work
<u>Ethnicity and Race</u>	<u>Population</u>
Visible Minority Status	Total Population
<u>Household Composition</u>	Age Distribution
Family Structure and Type	
Size	
Source: All data from the 2006 Census of Canada (Statistics Canada)	

Spatial analysis is also undertaken on built form and land use characteristics, as well as the location of services, facilities, and amenities. Built form and land use characteristics such as parks and open spaces, transit stops, buildings, and streets, roads, and pathways were inventoried and mapped in order to determine their locations within the neighbourhood (Table 3.3). Similarly, the location of various services, facilities, and amenities such as community centres, libraries, and social service providers were also inventoried and mapped (Table 3.4). Spatial analysis techniques such as spatial and attribute queries were used to select features by their characteristics or location in order to assist with the creation of an inventory of built form/land use characteristics and the location of services, facilities, and amenities.

<b>Table 3.3: Built Form and Land-Use Characteristic Data</b>	
<b>Data Type</b>	<b>Data Source</b>
Building Footprints	DMTI Spatial Inc.
Land-Use and Zoning	City Planning Division, City of Toronto
Parks and Open Space	Parks, Forestry, and Recreation - City of Toronto DMTI Spatial Inc.
Property Data	Technical Services - City of Toronto
Property Evaluation	Corporate Finance - City of Toronto
Streets, Roads, and Pathways	Geospatial Competency Centre - City of Toronto DMTI Spatial Inc.
Transit Routes and Access	Toronto Transit Commission
Water Bodies	DMTI Spatial Inc.
Note: Additional data from site reconnaissance (field observations)	

<b>Table 3.4: Location and Provision of Services, Facilities, and Amenities Data</b>	
<b>Data Type</b>	<b>Data Source</b>
Care Homes, Community Health Centres, and Hospitals	City of Toronto; 211 Toronto Information Service; Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
Community Gardens, Markets, and Kitchens	Foodshare
Community Centres, Recreation Centres, and Swimming Pools	Culture and Tourism - City of Toronto; 211 Toronto Information Service; Toronto Association of Community Centres
Cycling Routes and Trails	Transportation Services - City of Toronto
Emergency Services	City of Toronto
Food and Rent Banks	Shelter, Support, and Housing - City of Toronto; 211 Toronto Information Service
Libraries	City of Toronto; Toronto Public Library
Places of Worship	Social Policy Analysis and Research - City of Toronto
School Sites/Child Care Centres	City of Toronto; DMTI Spatial Inc.
Social Housing	City of Toronto
Social Service Providers/Organizations	211 Toronto Information Service
Note: Additional data from site reconnaissance (field observations)	

### Site Reconnaissance (Field Observations)

A site reconnaissance was conducted in order to gain an understanding of the dynamics of the Markham-Lawrence community, including how residents interact with and make use of built form, various land typologies, and any facilities, services, and amenities. It is important to have first-hand knowledge of the environment in which residents go about their daily lives, and in which they encounter barriers and other issues that this study is aimed at addressing. Only with such knowledge can the researcher begin to understand the challenges faced by community members and what neighbourhood features need to be improved upon, completely transformed, or introduced in order to address issues and improve quality of life. The site reconnaissance also served as a supplementation or a way to “ground truth” the built form and land use characteristics and locations of services, facilities, and amenities revealed in the spatial and statistical analysis.

Data collected during the site reconnaissance include the location and accessibility of buildings, the relation of the built form to surrounding spaces, transit access and quality, available shops and services, the provision of community services and facilities, the quality of built form and open space, and how residents interact with these various features. Three separate site visits were made to the study area, which took the form of walkabouts throughout large portions of the neighbourhood. Notes, photographs, and diagrams of interesting and noteworthy observations were taken throughout each of the walkabouts. Care was taken to ensure that collected data represent the multifaceted nature of the Markham-Lawrence community, so that any portrayals or descriptions of the neighbourhood included in this study are as accurate as possible.

## Scope and Limitations

Although the analysis of inner suburban issues and of the Markham-Lawrence study area is intended to be advanced and thorough, various time, resource, and ethical constraints have introduced limitations resulting in a reduced scope of study. The limited time and resources available to dedicate to an extraordinarily complex topic such as the decline of inner suburban communities has meant that not all of the important and relevant issues facing inner suburbs could be addressed. Similarly, some of the more detailed aspects of bringing about neighbourhood change such as necessary policy and funding mechanisms are not thoroughly explored in the study. Nevertheless, the case study of the Markham-Lawrence area examines a wide range of the most pressing issues within the community in significant depth, and numerous ideas and solutions capable of addressing said issues are outlined. Though many of the final recommendations could be applied in other inner suburban jurisdictions, some are more specific to the Markham-Lawrence area and therefore may not be applicable elsewhere.

Another limitation of the study is the inclusion of only two stakeholder perspectives on issues facing the Markham-Lawrence neighbourhood. Both time and ethical constraints prevented the inclusion of other community stakeholder perspectives such as those of residents, business owners, and other professionals within the area. A much longer time frame in conjunction with a more in-depth and lengthier ethics approvals process would be required in order to conduct additional key informant interviews with other community members.

Data integrity and validity issues due to time and resource constraints also introduced limitations. The socio-economic and demographic characteristics data were obtained from the 2006 Census of Canada, making the data five years old and potentially invalid. Although this could not be avoided even with the appropriate time and resources, data integrity issues such as

the potential incompleteness of the built form, land-use, and facility and service location data could have been reduced if more time and resources were available to dedicate towards data collection. Nonetheless, a great deal of effort was put into ensuring that all collected data was as accurate and up-to-date as possible.



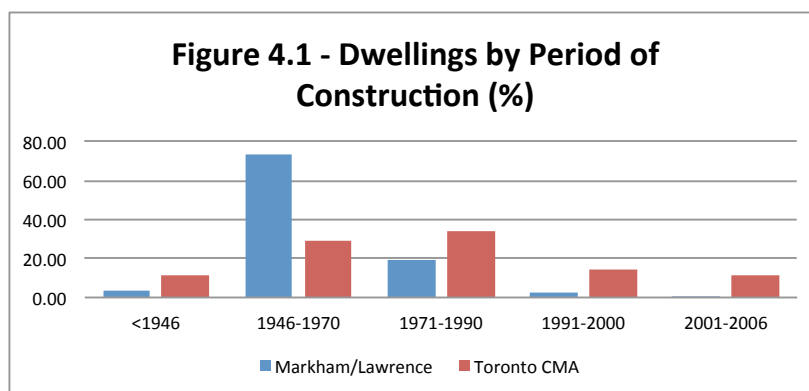
## CHAPTER 4 – ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

This chapter uses the information garnered through the literature review on typical issues and challenges facing inner suburban communities as a basis for conducting an analysis of the issues that exist in the Markham/Lawrence area of Scarborough – an inner suburban neighbourhood in Toronto. Although Markham/Lawrence is experiencing issues and social transformations similar to other North American inner suburbs, it is important to gain an understanding of the particular trends and challenges that are of greatest significance in this community. As mentioned in the Data and Methods chapter, insight from key informants, as well as data on the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the neighbourhood population, built form and land-use characteristics, and the location and provision of vital community services, facilities, and amenities were acquired and are analyzed in this chapter. The result is a profile of neighbourhood residents and an outline of the major issues and challenges facing the Markham/Lawrence area.

### Aging Infrastructure and Housing

Some of the main concerns regarding inner suburban infrastructure and housing as identified in the literature review are the deterioration of aging housing and the overall built form and public realm, as well as the lack of housing options in terms of size, type, and affordability. As indicated in Figure 4.1, the vast majority of the housing stock in the Markham/Lawrence area in 2006 was built in the immediate post-War years (1946-1970), with a substantial proportion also built between 1971 and 1990. Very few dwelling units were constructed before 1946 and after 1990. In contrast, when looking at the entire Toronto CMA, dwellings constructed in the post-War years account for a much lower percentage of the total, with dwellings built before

1946 and after 1971 making up higher proportions of total dwellings than in the Markham/Lawrence community.



Although the housing stock in the Markham/Lawrence neighbourhood is significantly older than in many other communities in the Toronto area, the percentage of dwellings requiring major repairs in 2006 is only slightly higher than for the whole CMA (6.69% vs. 6%). This statistic, however, tends to mask the issue of aging and deteriorating apartment towers that is of particular concern in Toronto's inner suburbs, including Markham/Lawrence. Figure 4.2 reveals that sections of the Markham/Lawrence neighbourhood that have higher numbers of apartment units (and thus buildings) tend to have a higher percentage of dwellings that require major repairs. Many of the area's apartment towers appear to be worn down and in need of renewal (Figure 4.3). Most single-detached homes within residential subdivisions are not in a state of disrepair like the apartment towers, with many appearing to be well kept and in good shape (Figure 4.4). Despite this fact, the average value of dwellings in 2006 within the Markham/Lawrence area was significantly lower than for the Toronto CMA as a whole (\$293,282.00 vs. \$403,112.00). This could be attributed to the limited housing options available in the area compared to other parts of the Toronto region or to the decline of the neighbourhood.

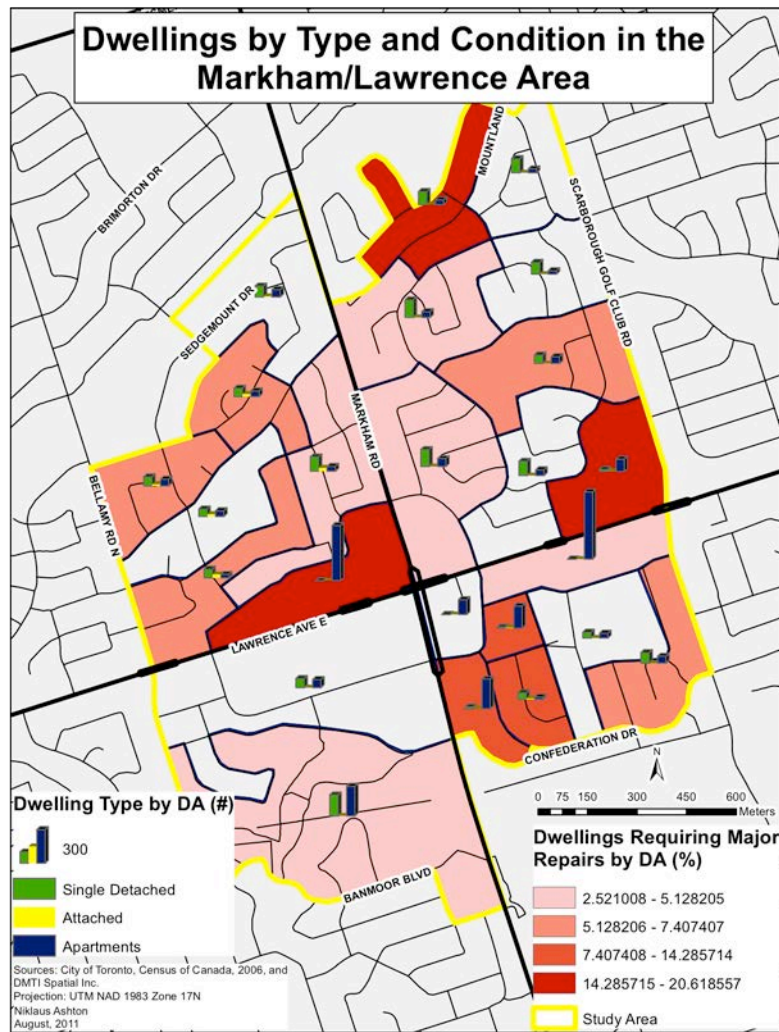


Figure 4.2

NOTE: The blue bar in the legend represents 300 dwellings – larger bars represent more than 300 dwellings, while smaller bars represent less than 300 dwellings (proportionally)

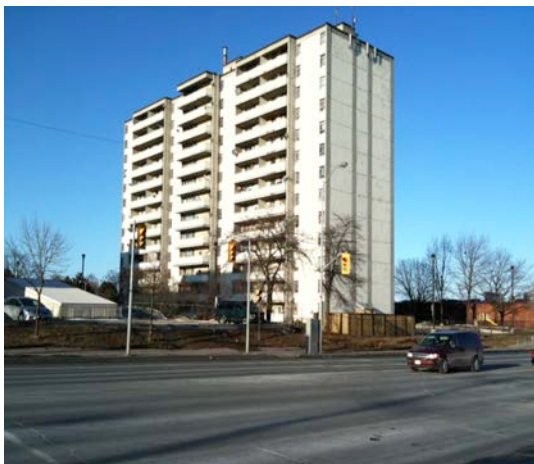


Figure 4.3: Building in need of renewal



Figure 4.4: Single-family homes in relatively good condition

In addition to aging and poorly maintained apartment towers, the neighbourhood is also characterized by deteriorating infrastructure and an uninviting public realm. Sidewalks have cracks (Figure 4.5); major corridors are lined with run-down strip malls (Figure 4.6); and there is little in the way of pedestrian friendly elements such as street furniture, tree planting, and active retail at property lines (Figures 4.7 and 4.8). As Figure 4.9 indicates, most of the buildings that line the major corridors are single-storey and are set far back from the right-of-way. The result is poorly defined corridors that are dominated by the automobile and that alienate pedestrians who must negotiate with traffic in order to arrive at distant destinations. In addition, most open spaces along the corridors are either parking lots or empty masses of concrete and asphalt, resulting in an abundance of underutilized space (Figure 4.10).



Figure 4.5: Cracked sidewalk



Figure 4.6: Run-down plaza



Figure 4.7: Run-down, poorly maintained streetscape



Figure 4.8: Non-active (blank wall) retail at property line



## Built Form - Building Heights and Setbacks in the Markham/Lawrence Area

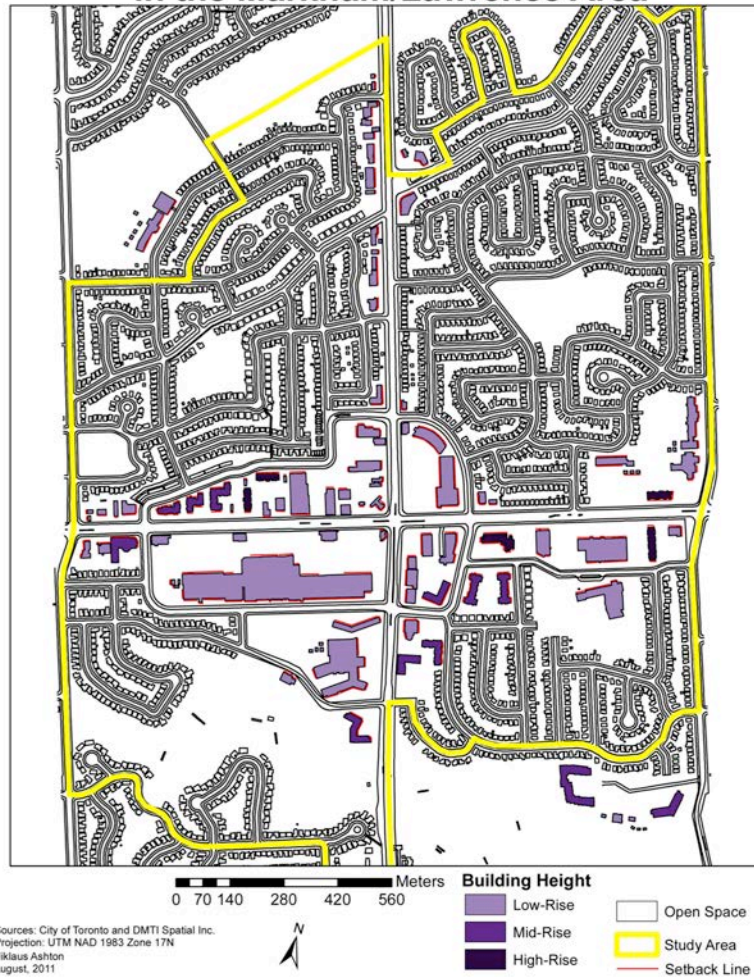


Figure 4.9: Major low-rise commercial buildings set far back from property lines resulting in poorly defined street-wall



Figure 4.10: Underutilized public space

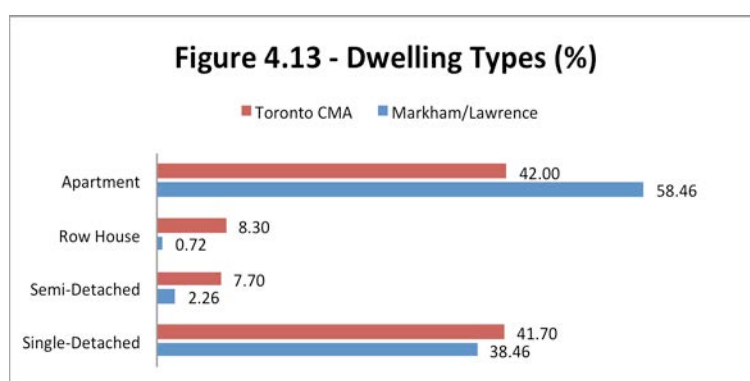
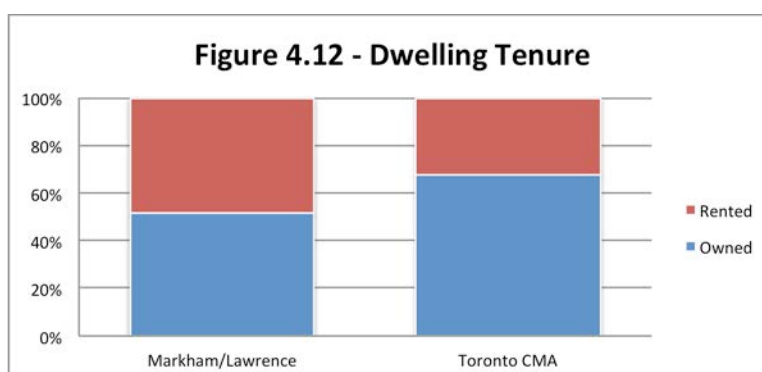
Key informants familiar with the neighbourhood indicate that the current state of the community's public realm and existing open space is a major concern – there is an abundance of private space, but it is poorly maintained and underutilized. An example mentioned by one interviewee is the vast parking lot surrounding Cedarbrae Mall, which is never used for anything other than parking even though much of the parking lot remains empty for extended periods of time (Figure 4.11). Since the neighbourhood's existing infrastructure and public realm lacks many of the characteristics and details that are conducive to a lively, well-used urban environment, public life (i.e. the collective use of neighbourhood open space by residents for a variety of purposes) in the community is almost non-existent. Overall, many sections of the neighbourhood are showing visible signs of decline, and this trend discourages investment and other initiatives aimed at reclaiming and taking pride in the area.



Figure 4.11: Vast, empty parking lot surrounding Cedarbrae Mall

Besides the deterioration of housing and other elements of the community's physical form, the Markham-Lawrence area also lacks a sufficient mix of housing types to meet the needs of existing and future residents. Although the neighbourhood's dwelling tenure split (Figure 4.12) ensures that both owners and renters have equal opportunities to live within the area,

housing type statistics and field observations indicate that two types of dwellings predominate in the area – smaller single detached dwellings and apartment dwellings (Figure 4.13). Only a small percentage of dwelling units are alternative housing forms such as row houses and semi-detached houses. The limited housing options available within the Markham-Lawrence area means that relatively wealthier households looking for other forms of accommodation go outside of the neighbourhood, while households with lower incomes have no choice but to adapt to existing available housing options, which are often unaffordable and unsuitable for their needs.



As Figure 4.14 reveals, sections of the community with higher proportions of rented dwellings tend to have much lower average personal incomes than sections with higher percentages of owned dwellings. Furthermore, looking back at Figure 4.2, it is apparent that

many of the rented dwellings are located within pockets of the neighbourhood containing concentrations of apartment towers. Most of the apartment towers in the area are privately owned, but there are also two buildings operated by the Toronto Community Housing Corporation and one operated by a non-profit (see Lack of Appropriate Services and Amenities section below). Essentially, it seems that what Hulchanski (2010) has observed across Toronto's inner suburbs is also true in the Markham-Lawrence community – that lower middle class households continue to inhabit the single-family homes that line the inner streets of the community, while lower income households live in the deteriorating apartment towers that line the major arterials.

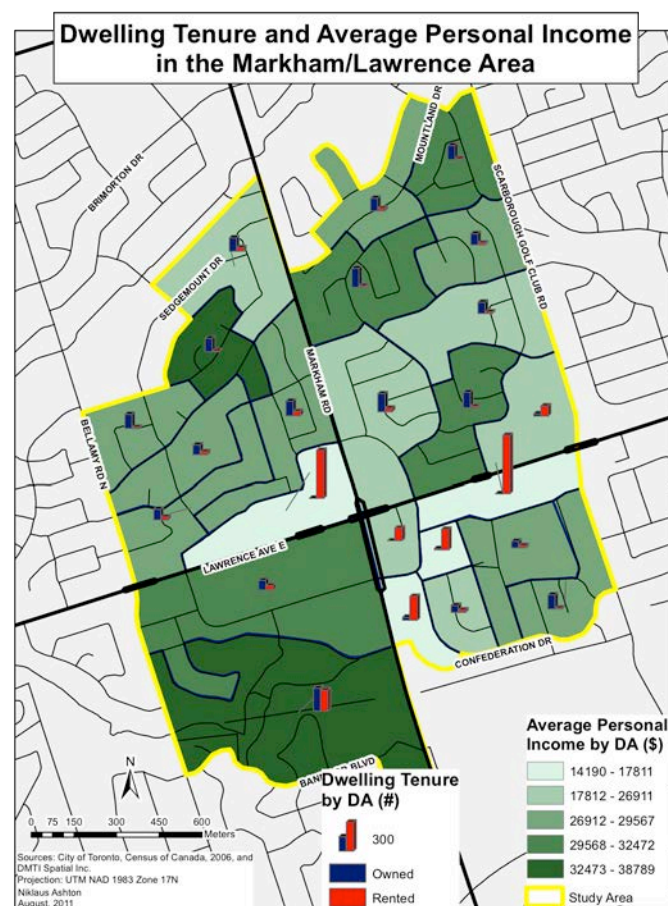


Figure 4.14

NOTE: The red bar in the legend represents 300 dwellings – larger bars represent more than 300 dwellings, while smaller bars represent less than 300 dwellings (proportionally)



Although the neighbourhood's bi-polar housing type distribution divides the community by socio-economic background and housing tenure, both owner and renter households face housing affordability problems. The analysis of census data indicates that over a quarter of owner households and almost half of all renter households spend more than 30% of their incomes on housing. In October of 2011, the average rent in the central/eastern part of Scarborough where the study area is located was \$935, which was lower than the Toronto CMA average rent of \$1,066 (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2011). As will be discussed in later sections, many of the neighbourhood's households include larger immigrant families, single-parent families, and seniors, all of whom may require alternative types of housing that are more affordable, which is currently lacking in the area.

#### Changing Social and Demographic Trends

Like many other inner suburban communities across North America, the Markham-Lawrence area is experiencing growing poverty and other major shifts in its demographic composition. The same contributing factors that affect other mature suburbs throughout Toronto and the rest of the continent are also relevant in explaining increases in poverty in the Markham-Lawrence neighbourhood. Recent trends such as the disappearance of well-paying industrial jobs and a rise in the number of people facing employment barriers have resulted in an increase in lower income individuals and families overall (United Way & Canadian Council on Social Development, 2004). These economic trends have disproportionately affected particular social groups such as single-parent families, racialized peoples, newcomers, and seniors (United Way & Canadian Council on Social Development, 2002). The Markham-Lawrence community has become home to greater numbers of lower income households than other parts of the Toronto CMA because the community has relatively affordable accommodations compared to the

gentrifying inner city and newer outer suburbs (see Aging Infrastructure and Housing section above). The neighbourhood's relative affordability has also resulted in the arrival of relatively large numbers of people belonging to the social groups mentioned above that are most vulnerable to poverty.

More specifically, both income and education levels are significantly lower in the Markham-Lawrence area compared to the rest of the CMA. The average personal income (total income for all individuals fifteen years of age and older divided by number of individuals with income in 2005) for the community in 2005 was approximately \$27,000, whereas the average personal income for the Toronto CMA was about \$42,000. In terms of education, Figure 4.15 reveals that individuals who did not complete high school comprised a much higher proportion of the neighbourhood's population than of the population of the entire CMA. Conversely, the chart also indicates that individuals with a university education constitute a significantly higher proportion of the Toronto CMA's total population than in Markham-Lawrence. Within the neighbourhood itself, lower incomes and higher unemployment rates are found in the south-east quadrant, the southern half of the north-east quadrant, and along Lawrence Avenue west of Markham Road (Figure 4.16). These sections of the community contain the lower rent apartment towers, including two social housing and one non-profit building (see Lack of Appropriate Services and Amenities section below).

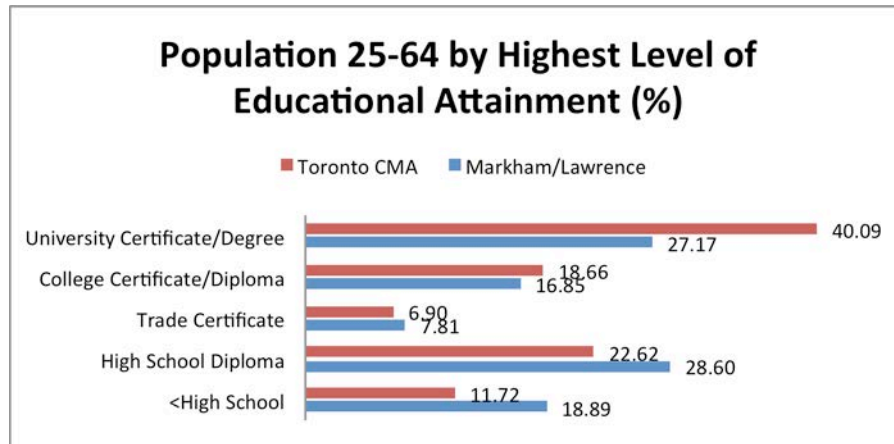


Figure 4.15



Figure 4.16

NOTE: The red bar in the legend represents an unemployment rate of 9.6% – larger bars indicate unemployment rates higher than 9.6%, while smaller bars indicate unemployment rates lower than 9.6% (proportionally)

Growing ethnic diversity is another demographic trend that is changing the face of the Markham-Lawrence community. The neighbourhood is home to an increasingly diverse population due to its relative affordability, which draws immigrants and racialized peoples who face employment barriers and are disproportionately affected by poverty. Compared to the Toronto CMA, immigrants compose a higher proportion of the population in Markham-Lawrence (Figure 4.17), with recent immigrants also having a greater presence in the community compared to the CMA (Figure 4.18). More significantly, racialized peoples comprise a much higher proportion of the Markham-Lawrence area's population than the Toronto CMA's population (Figure 4.19), being home to a large South Asian community (the neighbourhood's largest racialized ethnic group), as well as peoples of African and South-East Asian origins (Figure 4.20). Within Markham-Lawrence, a large number of immigrants and racialized peoples live in the most impoverished sections of the neighbourhood home to apartment buildings in the south-east quadrant and along Lawrence Avenue (Figure 4.21).

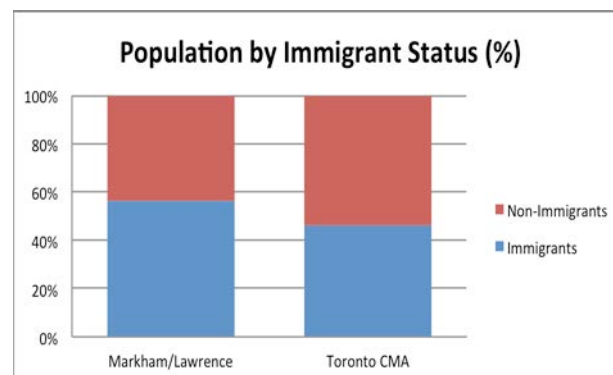


Figure 4.17

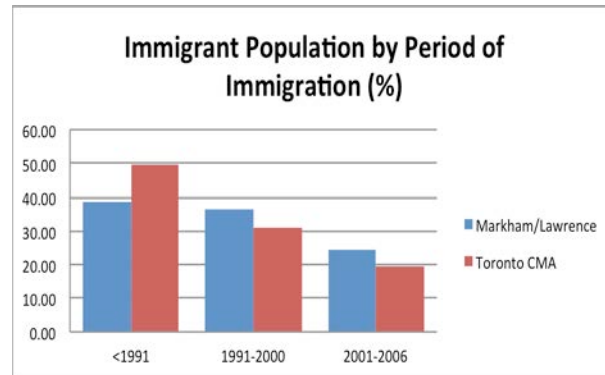


Figure 4.18

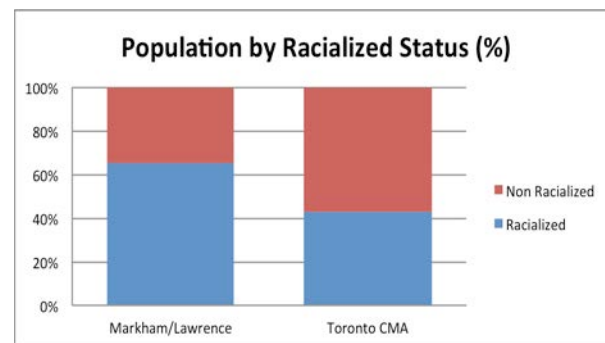


Figure 4.19

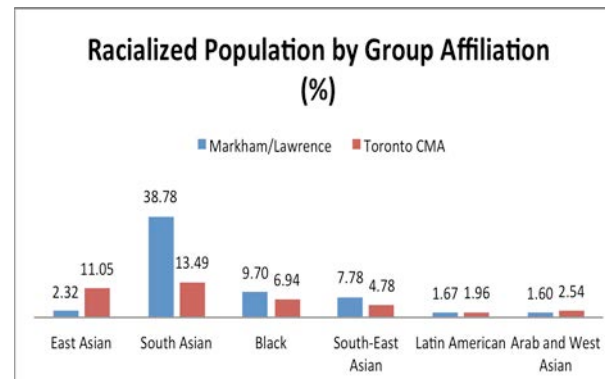


Figure 4.20

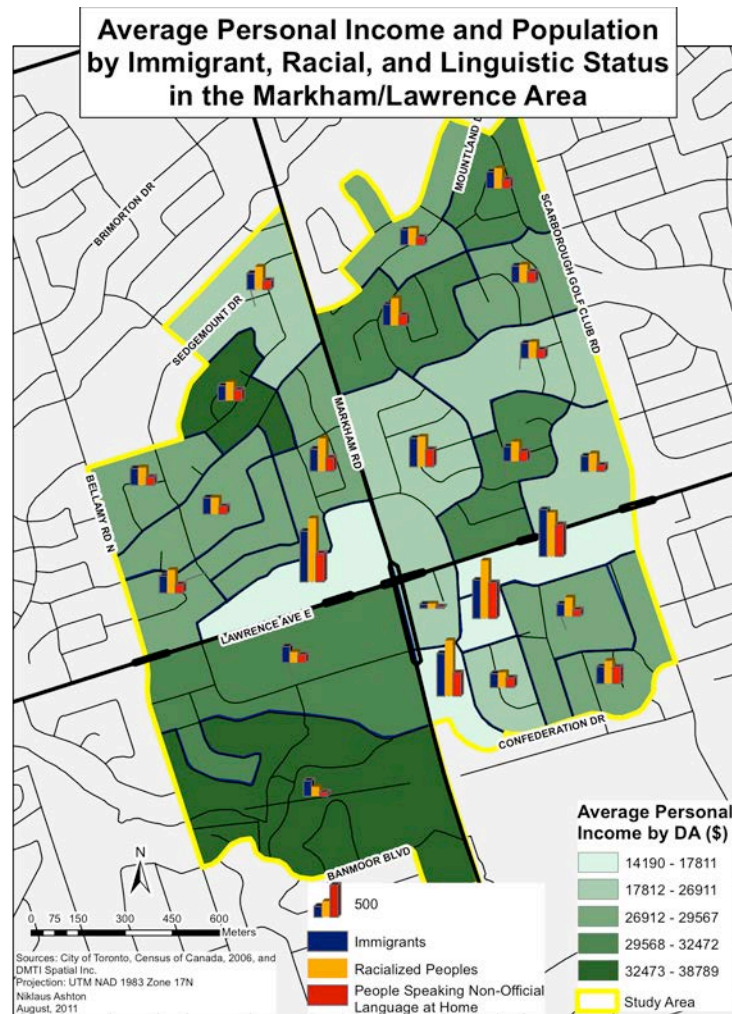


Figure 4.21

NOTE: The red bar in the legend represents 500 people – larger bars represent more than 500 people, while smaller bars represent less than 500 people (proportionally)

In addition to greater ethnic diversity, the Markham-Lawrence community is seeing shifts in the age distribution of its population and in the composition and size of its households. In terms of age, the Markham-Lawrence neighbourhood mirrors many other mature suburbs in that seniors constitute a higher proportion of the population compared to the metropolitan area as a whole (Figure 4.22). This factor is further reflected in household size statistics that indicate Markham-Lawrence has a higher proportion of single-person households than the CMA as a whole (Figure 4.23) and in the presence of a number of senior citizen residences operated by the

Toronto Community Housing Corporation within the neighbourhood (see Lack of Appropriate Services and Amenities section below).

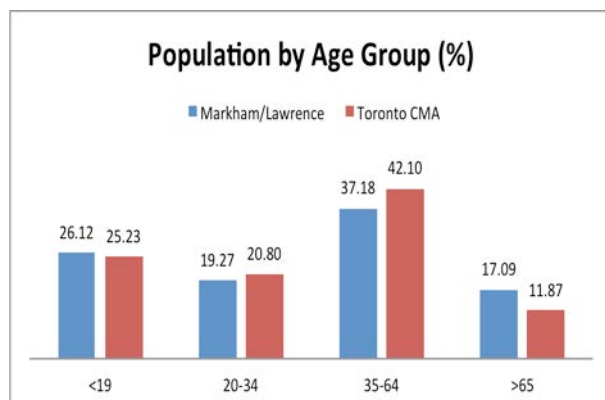


Figure 4.22

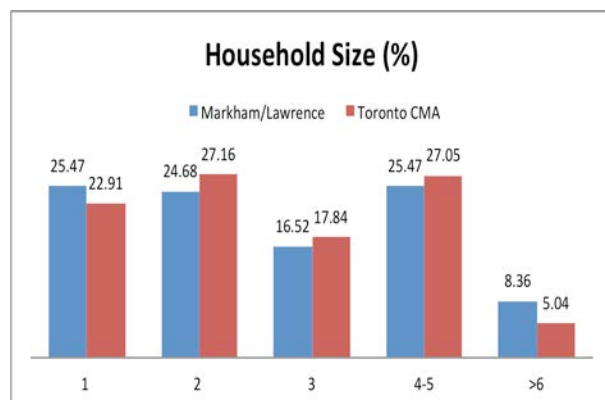


Figure 4.23

Household size characteristics also reveal that the area has a higher proportion of large households (six or more people) than the Toronto CMA (Figure 4.23), possibly reflecting the presence of many immigrant families within the community, which tend to be larger than non-immigrant families. Besides household size, an analysis of household composition variables indicates that over a quarter of all families with children in Markham-Lawrence are headed by a lone-parent, which is slightly higher than the percentage for the Toronto CMA as a whole (Figure 4.24). Similar to other inner suburban neighbourhoods in Toronto and across North America, poverty seems to disproportionately affect vulnerable groups such as seniors, children and youth, and lone-parent families. Figures 4.25 and 4.26 reveal that many seniors, children and youth, and lone-parent families tend to be concentrated in the most poverty-stricken parts of the neighbourhood.



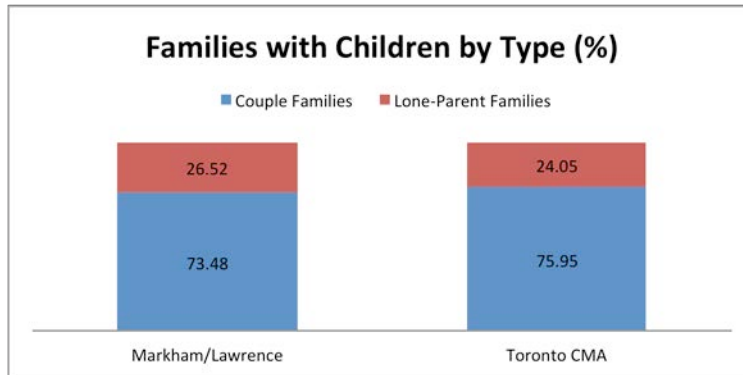


Figure 4.24

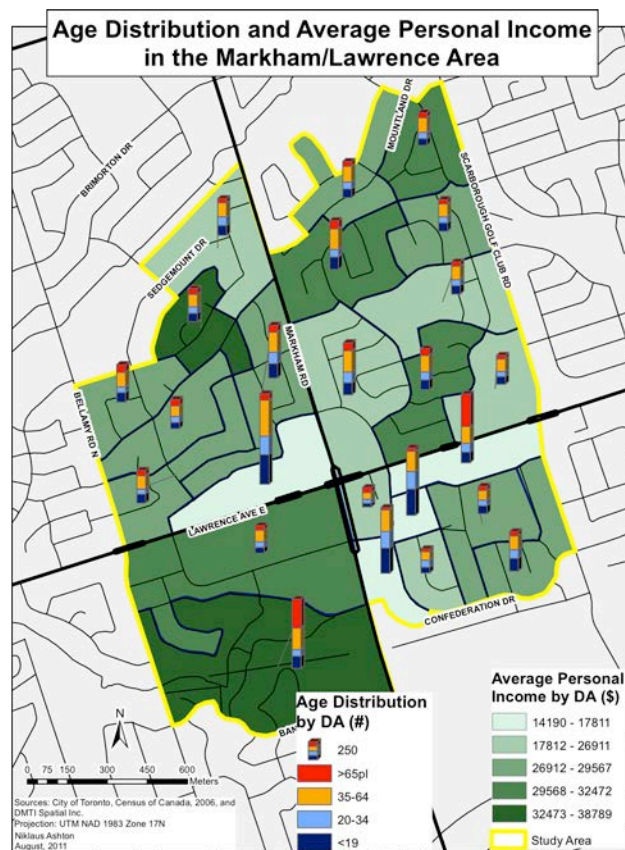


Figure 4.25

NOTE: The stacked bar in the legend represents 250 people equally divided into four age groups – larger bars represent more than 250 people, while smaller bars represent less than 250 people (proportionally).



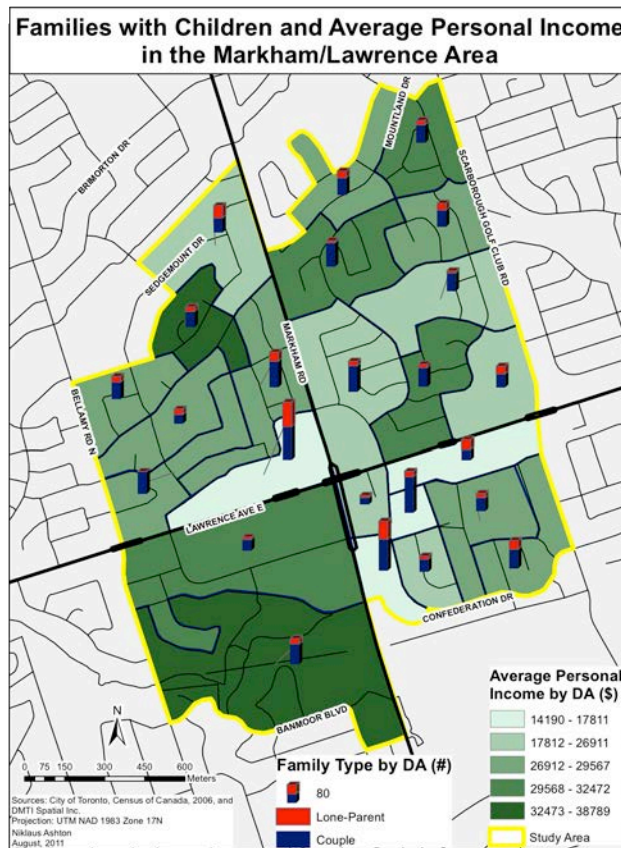


Figure 4.26

NOTE: The stacked bar in the legend represents 80 families equally divided between lone-parent and couple – larger bars represent more than 80 families, while smaller bars represent less than 80 families (proportionally).

### Disinvestment and Inadequate Government Policy

Similar to other mature suburban communities across the continent and the City of Toronto, both lack of investment by the private sector and inadequate government policies and funding have contributed to community decline in Markham-Lawrence. In terms of private sector actions, the neighbourhood has seen some major retailers leave, but a mass exodus of higher quality retail has not occurred as in some other inner suburban communities. A key informant familiar with the area mentioned a large abandoned building on Lawrence Avenue east of Markham Road that was previously inhabited by a major retailer as an example of retailer

withdrawal from the neighbourhood (Figure 4.27). Overall, though, the neighbourhood still retains major retail chains such as Canadian Tire, TD Canada Trust, LCBO, and Shoppers Drug Mart. The neighbourhood also recently saw the introduction of a Service Ontario branch at Cedarbrae Mall (Key Informant, personal communication, July 29, 2011). Although the retail sector in the neighbourhood may appear to be doing well, it is the only major economic sector that exists within the community outside of public institutions such as schools and libraries. A social planner familiar with the community is encouraged by opportunities in the financial services and non-profit sectors within the neighbourhood, but the dominance of retail-based employment opportunities remains a concern.

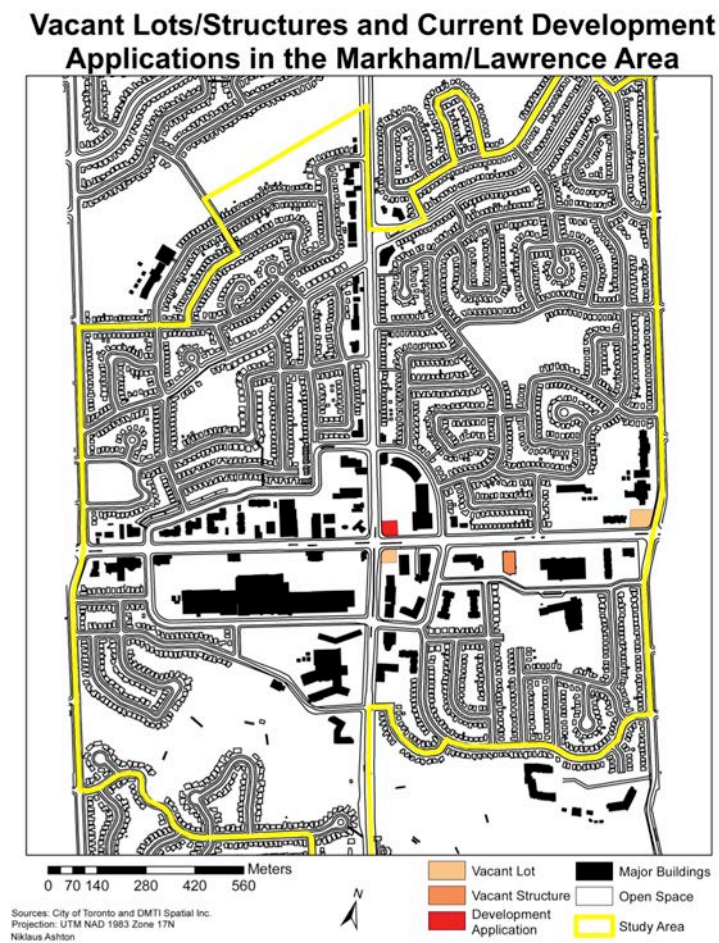


Figure 4.27

Other issues in the neighbourhood that are contributing to decline include lack of investment by private developers and lack of funding from senior levels of government. Land-use planners familiar with the neighbourhood indicate that there have been very few development applications within the neighbourhood for years, with a new Royal Bank branch on the north-east corner of the Markham Road and Lawrence Avenue intersection being the only active application in recent memory (Figures 4.27 and 4.28). The cost of redevelopment in an inner suburban neighbourhood such as Markham-Lawrence together with the inability to receive a substantially greater return on investment compared to other parts of the Toronto area are major factors in the reluctance of developers to invest in the area (personal communication, July 27, 2011). As a result, most of the properties along the community's major corridors remain highly underutilized, with several empty lots located at key intersections (Figures 4.27, 4.29, and 4.30). Investment is further discouraged in inner suburban areas such as Markham-Lawrence since both the provincial and federal governments have reduced transfer payments to cities, resulting in reduced infrastructure maintenance and scaled-back services and amenities. Both of which are crucial to improving quality of life and attracting investment.



Figure 4.28: New Royal Bank branch under construction



Figure 4.29: Empty lot on south-east corner of Markham and Lawrence



Figure 4.30: Empty lot on north-west corner of Scarborough Golf Club and Lawrence

### Lack of Appropriate Services and Amenities

Although not as poorly served as many other communities in Toronto's inner suburbs, the Markham-Lawrence area is lacking in terms of the provision and quality of social and community services, as well as in the quality of available shopping and cultural/entertainment opportunities. Social and community services that are present in the neighbourhood (Figure 4.31) include child care centres, senior housing/services (Figure 4.32), various forms of social housing, elementary schools (Figure 4.33) and a secondary school, numerous places of worship (Figure 4.34), an employment resource centre, a recreation/community centre, a swimming pool, a library (Figure 4.35), and several parks (Figure 4.36). The mere presence of these community services, however, does not mean that these facilities and their associated programs are meeting the needs of area residents. Especially since the existing provision of senior housing/services, social/affordable housing, and recreation/community centres is not adequate considering the size of the neighbourhood.



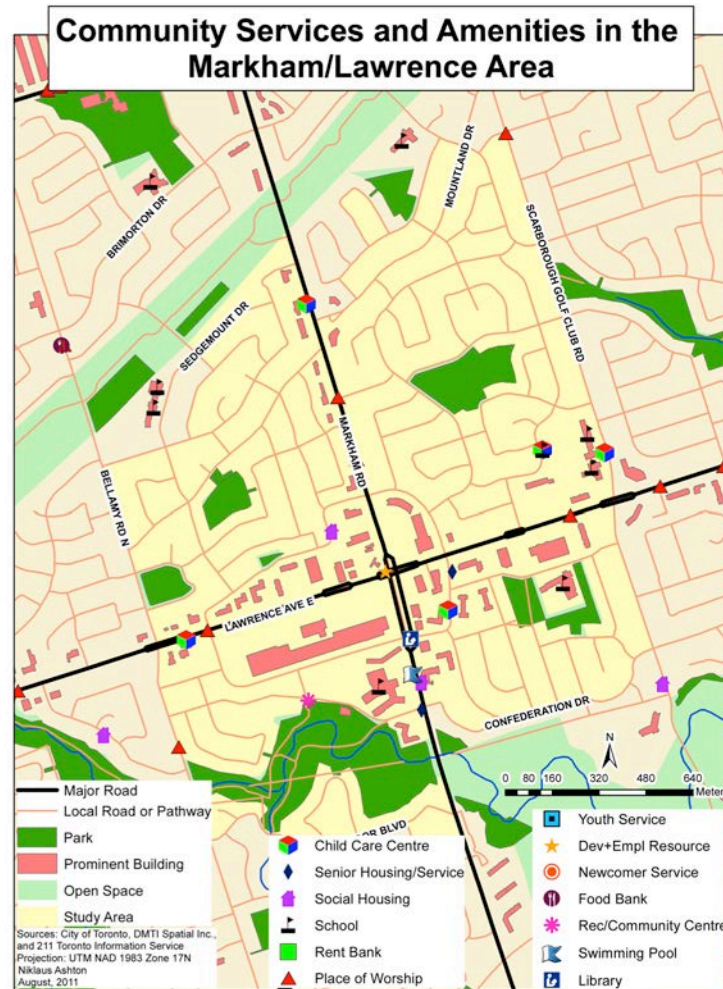


Figure 4.31



Figure 4.32: Retirement home



Figure 4.33: Elementary school



Figure 4.34: Church



Figure 4.35: Library



Figure 4.36: Park

Other issues with the existing social and community infrastructure in the area revolve around the inaccessibility of many of the facilities and the quality and suitability of programming provided. As Figure 4.31 indicates, child care centres, parks, social and senior housing, the employment resource centre, and places of worship are relatively well-placed in terms of access to and from transit, residences, and other services and amenities than the recreation/community centre and the elementary schools located in the northern half of the neighbourhood. The recreation/community centre is situated in an isolated location in the south-western quadrant of the community, far from transit, other amenities, and the residences in the other three quadrants

of the neighbourhood. Similarly, the two elementary schools to the very north of the area are located on the outskirts of the community far from transit, services and amenities, and many of the residences to the south that they serve. In addition, even though the library, secondary school, and community swimming pool are located along a transit corridor to the immediate south of the neighbourhood's main commercial node, residents in the northern half of the area must travel relatively far to access these facilities. These accessibility issues can be attributed to the separation of land-uses and the low-density, auto-centric built form characteristic of post-war communities such as Markham-Lawrence (see Inaccessibility and Immobility section below).

Quality and suitability of existing social programs and community facilities is also an issue in the area. On a positive note though, a key informant familiar with the Markham-Lawrence community indicates that the library is a valuable and highly utilized resource since it has several programs for children, newcomers, and other community groups. Nevertheless, the neighbourhood is in great need of additional after-school programs and a more diverse variety of human and social services (Key Informant, personal communication, July 29, 2011). As of now, the neighbourhood completely lacks youth oriented services/facilities, substantial newcomer services, food and rent banks, as well as community health centres and gardens (Figure 4.31). A tour of the area's parks also indicated that they are highly underutilized and lack recreation infrastructure and facilities that reflect the changing demographics of the community (Figure 4.36). Markham-Lawrence also lacks a community agency or board that could instil a sense of ownership and encourage civic engagement amongst neighbourhood residents (Key Informant, personal communication, July 29, 2011).

With respect to shopping and entertainment/cultural amenities, the Markham-Lawrence area has somewhat limited opportunities, although not as limited as many other inner suburban

communities. The neighbourhood does have an abundance of retail stores that meet almost all of the basic needs required by individuals and families, including grocery stores, pharmacies, clothing stores, hardware stores, banks, and other essential services (Figure 4.37). It also contains a wide variety of ethnic businesses that serve the needs of the increasingly diverse population (Figures 4.37 and 4.38). The major issue with shopping opportunities in Markham-Lawrence is inaccessibility – both to other shopping venues and to surrounding residences. With the exception of Cedarbrae Mall, different types of businesses are often located far from one another, making it difficult for pedestrians and transit users to meet their shopping needs in a reasonable amount of time in one convenient location. The low density, auto-centric built form also poses problems for those going to Cedarbrae Mall and any other shopping plaza in the community, as they are surrounded by parking lots and designed for customers arriving by automobile (Figures 4.39 and 4.40). With respect to accessibility to neighbourhood residences, those living around the Markham Road and Lawrence Avenue intersection are well served in terms of shopping destinations. In contrast, pedestrians and transit users living farther away (particularly in the far corners of the community) from the main commercial node face substantial barriers to accessing neighbourhood businesses and services (Figure 4.37). The situation is made worse by the absence of an appropriate number of direct linkages, including pedestrian pathways, bike paths, and straightforward public roads, from the residential subdivisions to the commercial activity located along the arterials and in the centre of the neighbourhood (see Inaccessibility and Immobility section below).



### Shopping Opportunities in the Markham/Lawrence Area

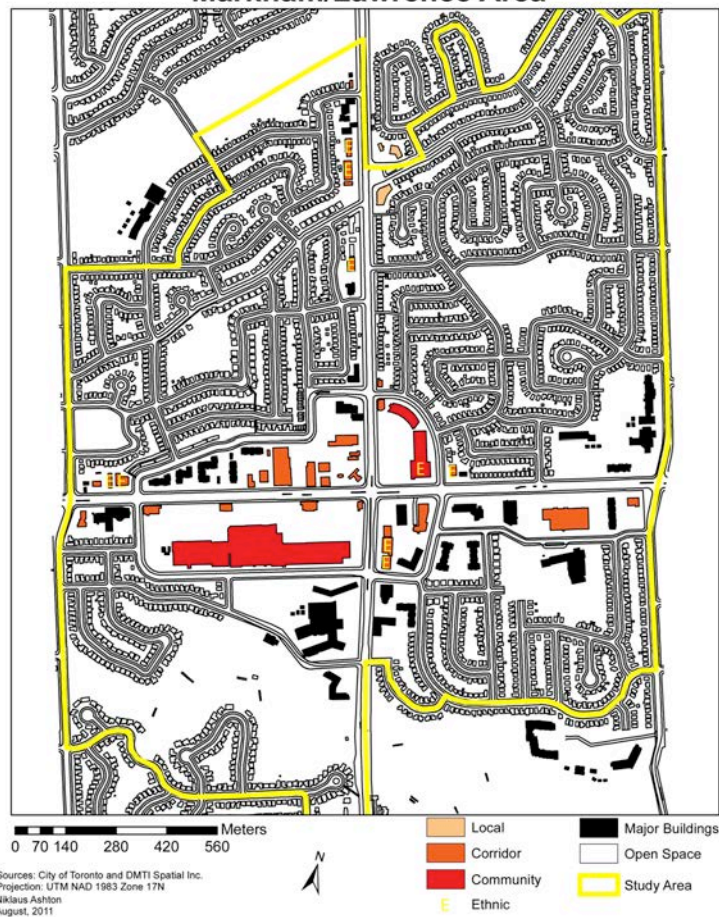


Figure 4.37



Figure 4.38: Ethnic businesses



Figure 4.39: Vast parking lot surrounding Cedarbrae Mall



Figure 4.40: Plaza with entrances near parking lot at rear for convenience of drivers

Quality of available shopping opportunities and the complete absence of important community building amenities are also issues facing Markham-Lawrence. The vast majority of the existing retail businesses are located in older, poorly maintained single-storey plazas with small parking lots in front (Figure 4.41). These plazas are out-dated and underutilized, and their poor conditions discourage pedestrian activity that has the potential to bring life and vibrancy to surrounding areas. Although the community does have shopping opportunities (albeit the bare basics), other amenities such as entertainment and cultural venues are almost non-existent in the area. There are no farmers markets, cultural festivals, movie or performance theatres, museums, art galleries, or concert halls capable of bringing excitement to the neighbourhood and showcasing its great diversity (Key Informant, personal communication, July 29, 2011). Publicly accessible open space that is designed to maximize resident usage is also severely lacking in the area, with most open space consisting of nothing more than asphalt and/or grass.



Figure 4.41: Older, poorly maintained, single-storey plaza

### Inaccessibility and Immobility

Like many other inner suburban communities across the continent, a low-density, auto-centric built form with different land-uses and activities separated by expansive roads and green space characterizes Markham-Lawrence. As Figure 4.42 reveals, the neighbourhood's low-rise residential sections are completely separated from the main commercial corridors and node, with high-rise apartment towers, institutional buildings, and a ring road acting as buffers between the two land-uses. The only land-uses located within residential areas are schools and parks, while small local commercial plazas exist on the edge of subdivisions along arterial roads. This physical separation of land-uses and activities combined with the auto-centric layout of the community's transportation infrastructure introduces major challenges for residents using alternative forms of transportation such as walking, cycling, and taking transit. Figure 4.43 provides a good overview of the auto-dominated characteristics of the neighbourhood. There are two major arterial roads with several lanes (Lawrence Avenue has six lanes and Markham Road has four lanes) that move high volumes of traffic and act as significant barriers to pedestrians trying to cross from one side of the community to the other (Figures 4.44 and 4.45). These arterials along with numerous driveways that disrupt pedestrian flows and parking lots that act as

obstacles to buildings (Figure 4.46), discourage and impede pedestrian activity within the neighbourhood due to the difficulties and inconveniences they impose. Within the residential subdivisions, curvilinear, discontinuous streets lined with poorly maintained sidewalks (which are often on only one side of the street – Figure 4.47) hinder the ability of pedestrians and cyclists to quickly and efficiently travel from their residences to the services, amenities, and transit available along corridors and in the central node. There are also few pedestrian pathways and bike paths providing linkages between residences and other land uses.

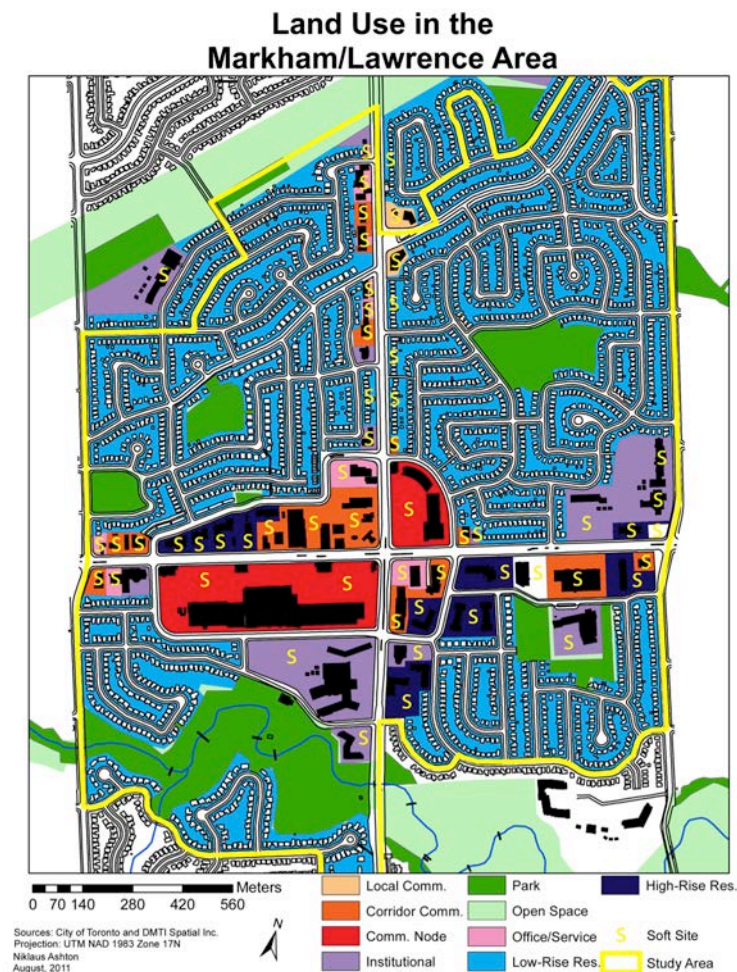


Figure 4.42



# Accessibility and Mobility in the Markham/Lawrence Area

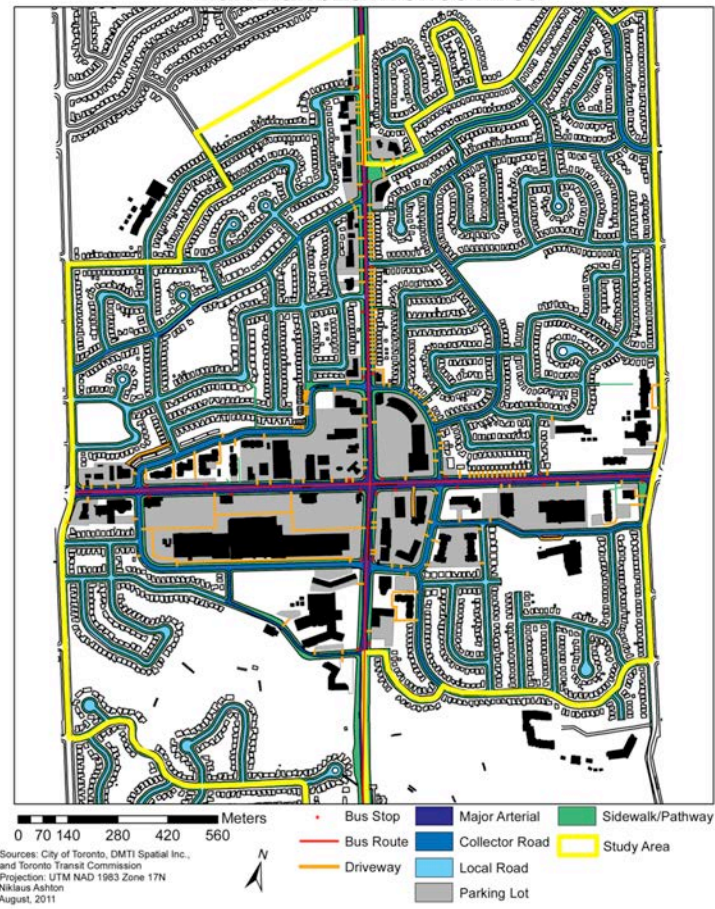


Figure 4.43

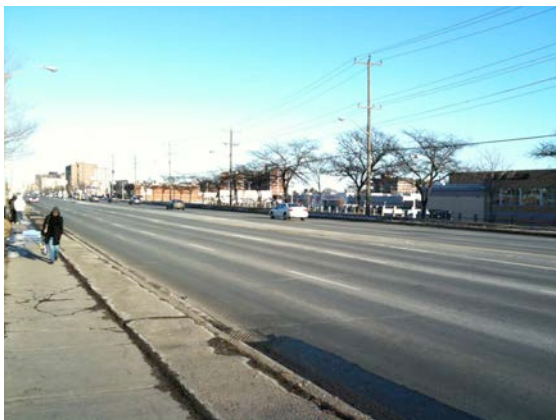


Figure 4.44: Expansive arterial road (Lawrence Avenue)



Figure 4.45: Auto-dominated intersection (Markham Road and Lawrence Avenue)



Figure 4.46: Vast parking lot between sidewalk and plaza



Figure 4.47: Poorly maintained sidewalk on one side of the road

Markham-Lawrence's auto-centric built form would not necessarily be as great an issue if the vast majority of neighbourhood residents owned and used vehicles as their primary means of getting around, but this is no longer the case in the Markham-Lawrence community. Figure 4.48 reveals that close to a third of area residents travel to work via transit, which is significantly higher than the percentage for the Toronto CMA. Correspondingly, the percentage of Markham-Lawrence residents travelling to work by car is lower than the Toronto CMA percentage. It is likely that the proportion of the neighbourhood's population using alternative forms of transportation is much higher with respect to non-work related trips. This assumption is supported by a comment made by a key informant concerning the increasing number of people moving around the community on foot (Key Informant, personal communication, July 29, 2011). The use of alternative forms of transportation is considerably higher in lower income sections of the neighbourhood located along Lawrence Avenue that are home to most of the area's high-rises (Figure 4.49). Residents in these parts of Markham-Lawrence are much more likely to take transit or walk to work than residents living in the higher income far corners of the community,

which are located farther from the arterials lined with transit (Figure 4.50) and shopping opportunities.

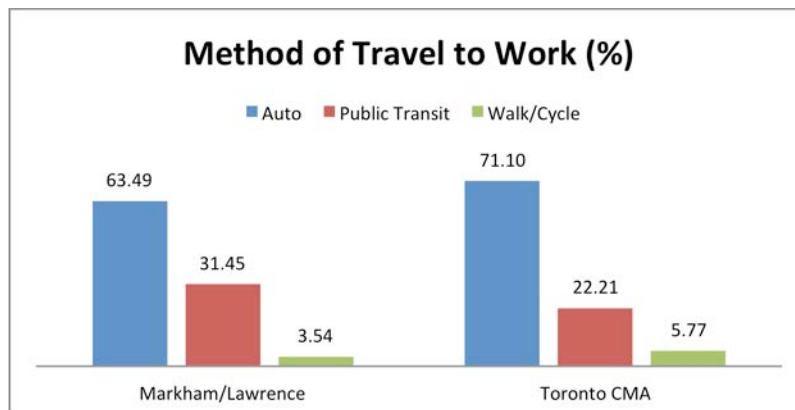


Figure 4.48

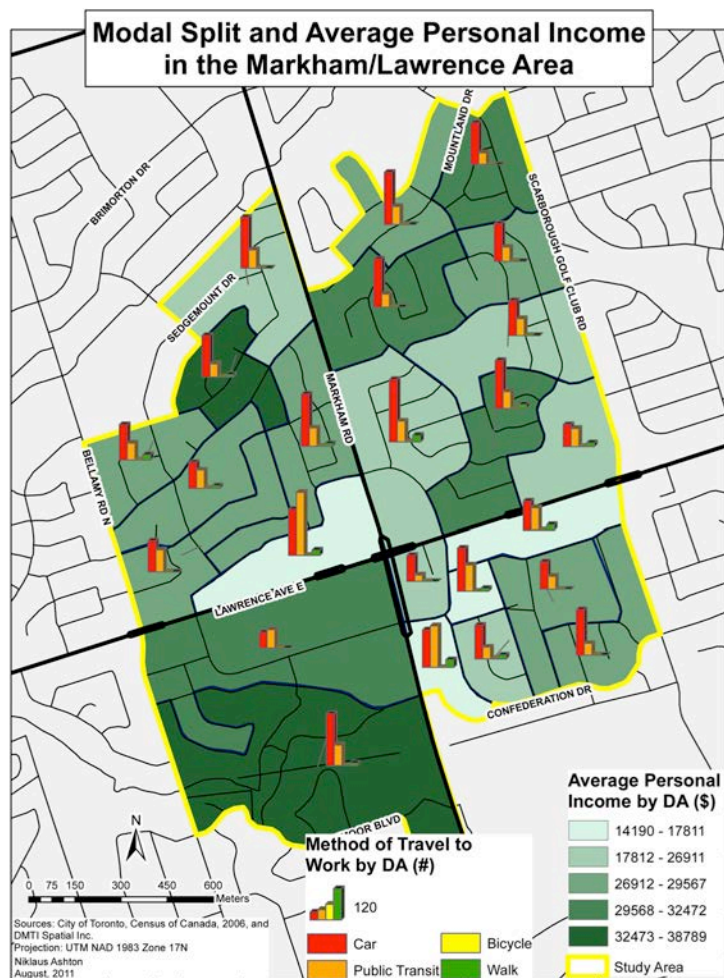


Figure 4.49

NOTE: The green bar in the legend above represents 120 people – larger bars represent more than 120 people, while smaller bars represent less than 120 people (proportionally).



Figure 4.50: TTC bus stop on Markham Road

## Conclusion

Figure 4.51 below summarizes the most significant and pressing issues facing the Markham-Lawrence community. These issues will be addressed in the following chapter, which outlines recommended strategies and suggests how and where such strategies could be implemented to ensure improved quality of life in the neighbourhood.



## ISSUES IN MARKHAM-LAWRENCE NEIGHBOURHOOD

### Aging Infrastructure and Housing

- Deteriorating Apartment Towers, Infrastructure, and Public Realm (dull, underutilized empty space)
- Limited Housing Options in terms of size (smaller), type (single-detached or apartment dwellings), and affordability (>30% of income on housing)

### Changing Social and Demographic Trends

- Below Average Income (\$27,000 vs. \$42,000)
- Concentrations of Racialized and Immigrant Poverty
- Relatively High Senior (17%), Immigrant (55%), and Racialized (65%) Populations with Unmet Needs
- Impoverished Lone-Parent Families (27%), Children and Youth (26%)

### Disinvestment and Inadequate Government Policy

- Existence of Some Abandoned Retail Properties
- Employment Opportunities Predominantly in Retail Sector
- Underutilized/Empty Lots, but Few Development Applications
- Reduced Infrastructure Maintenance and Scaled-Back Services and Amenities

### Lack of Appropriate Services and Amenities

- Inaccessible and Underdeveloped Social and Community Infrastructure (lacking after-school programs and diversity of social services)
- Existing Social Infrastructure Not Adapted to Changing Needs (e.g. parks and recreation)
- Shopping Opportunities are Inaccessible, Spread Far Apart, and of Poor Quality
- Complete Lack of Entertainment/Cultural Venues

### Inaccessibility and Immobility

- Low Density, Auto-Centric Built Form
- Separation of Residential Subdivisions from Commercial Activity (few linkages between them)
- Impediments to Active Forms of Transportation and Transit Use (e.g. expansive arterials, massive parking lots, numerous driveways, and curvilinear streets)
- Growing Proportion of Residents Taking Transit to and from Work (>30%)

Figure 4.51

## CHAPTER 5 – RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Thus far, this paper has provided an in-depth overview of literature regarding inner suburban challenges and revitalization, an explanation of the various data sources and research methods used to determine issues facing the inner suburban neighbourhood of Markham-Lawrence, and has presented the findings of an extensive analysis of existing conditions in that community. This final chapter contains a series of recommendations aimed at improving quality of life in the Markham-Lawrence neighbourhood through the implementation of strategies concerning built form and land-use, housing, social and community services, transportation and accessibility, and economic development and commerce. Recommendations for community improvement in the Markham-Lawrence area were developed by first summarizing the issues facing the neighbourhood and then selecting appropriate land-use and social planning strategies contained within the literature and discussed by key informants. As mentioned in the literature review, the categories used to group the recommendations (or planning strategies) do not directly correspond to the issue categories contained within the previous chapter. Please see Figure 2.2 in Chapter 2 for clarification regarding the relationships between issue categories (discussed in previous chapter) and their corresponding solution categories (discussed below). The paper concludes with a series of next steps that are necessary for the eventual implementation of any or all of the final recommendations.

### Recommendations

#### *Built Form and Land-Use Principles*

Recommendations regarding built form and land-use provide the parameters within which all other strategies should be implemented. Any modifications to the existing urban environment that are required for community improvement will be most effective and beneficial

if they adhere to the following built form and land-use guidelines. The goals of these recommendations are to encourage the development of higher density, compact, mixed-use communities that have services and amenities within walking distance of places of residence. Achievement of these goals in the Markham-Lawrence community is possible through the creation of a high-density identifiable neighbourhood node surrounding the Markham Road and Lawrence Avenue intersection (Recommendation 1). Numerous land-use interventions could be employed to transform the four large blocks (surrounded by the ring road) on each of the four corners of the intersection into a pedestrian friendly, compact node characterized by a myriad of uses and activities (Figure 5.1). Larger big-box format structures could be converted to alternate uses (e.g. entertainment venue), new uses could be added through infill on parking lots or through vertical additions to existing buildings, and total redevelopment could occur, resulting in the construction of a complete mixed-use centre.

**Recommendation 1:** Create a high-density identifiable node at the centre of the community surrounding the Markham Road and Lawrence Avenue intersection

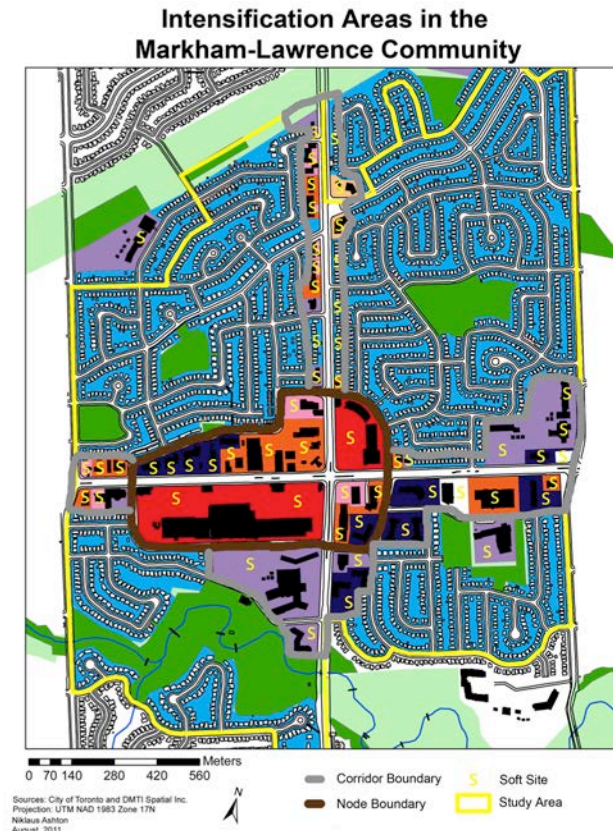


Figure 5.1

This compact and mixed-use built form should also be encouraged along the neighbourhood's major corridors (Markham Road and Lawrence Avenue – Figure 5.1), where there is also an abundance of underutilized land, and where higher density activities and public transit already exist (Recommendation 2). As Figure 5.1 indicates, both the central node and corridors contain the vast majority of the neighbourhood's soft sites, which are lots that are considered to be underutilized given their prominent locations at key intersections and along major arterials. Similar to the community node, intensification can occur through adaptive reuse, conversions, infill, vertical additions, and complete redevelopment, although densities should be lower than in the central node. To ensure maximum walkability and increase neighbourhood vitality, all forms of redevelopment in both the central node and along the corridors should be human-scale and pedestrian friendly (Recommendation 3). The most

effective way of implementing human scale development is through the construction of mid-rise buildings that are situated near the right-of-way in order to form a continuous street wall (Figure 5.2).

**Recommendation 2:** Intensification in the form of compact and mixed-use development should also continue along major corridors (Markham Road and Lawrence Avenue)

**Recommendation 3:** All forms of redevelopment in both the central node and along corridors should be human scale and pedestrian friendly (e.g. mid-rises situated near right-of-way)



Figure 5.2: Mid-rise mixed-use building at property line  
(Source: Granite Development Corporation, 2008)

### *Housing Construction and Renewal*

Recommendations concerning housing aim to ensure that there is a wide range of housing types within a community that are accessible, affordable, and of good quality. In order for Markham-Lawrence to appropriately house people from a variety diverse backgrounds, the community must incorporate a greater mix of housing in terms of size and type into the existing urban fabric (Recommendation 4). The introduction of a wider variety of housing types can be accomplished through conversions, vertical/horizontal additions, infill, and total redevelopment

(Figure 5.3). With respect to conversions, garages, basements, and bedrooms can be transformed into self-contained units for seniors, students, and other people looking for smaller-sized accommodation. Entire houses can also undergo conversion into multi-unit dwellings with several apartment units. In the Markham-Lawrence community, conversions are most appropriate for single-family homes located along major arterials, the ring road, and near higher density residential sites, although minor conversions could occur within the residential subdivisions as well (Figure 5.3). Single-family dwellings throughout the neighbourhood could also add new units through vertical or horizontal additions, including the construction of back-lot houses. More extensive types of vertical additions could occur above existing strip malls along both Markham Road and Lawrence Avenue, where two to three storey additions that are in keeping with the low-rise character of the surrounding community would result in additional apartment units or townhouses (Figures 5.3 and 5.4).

**Recommendation 4:** Incorporate a greater mix of housing types (type and size) within the existing urban fabric through conversions, vertical/horizontal additions, infill, and total redevelopment



## Implementation of Housing Strategies in the Markham-Lawrence Community

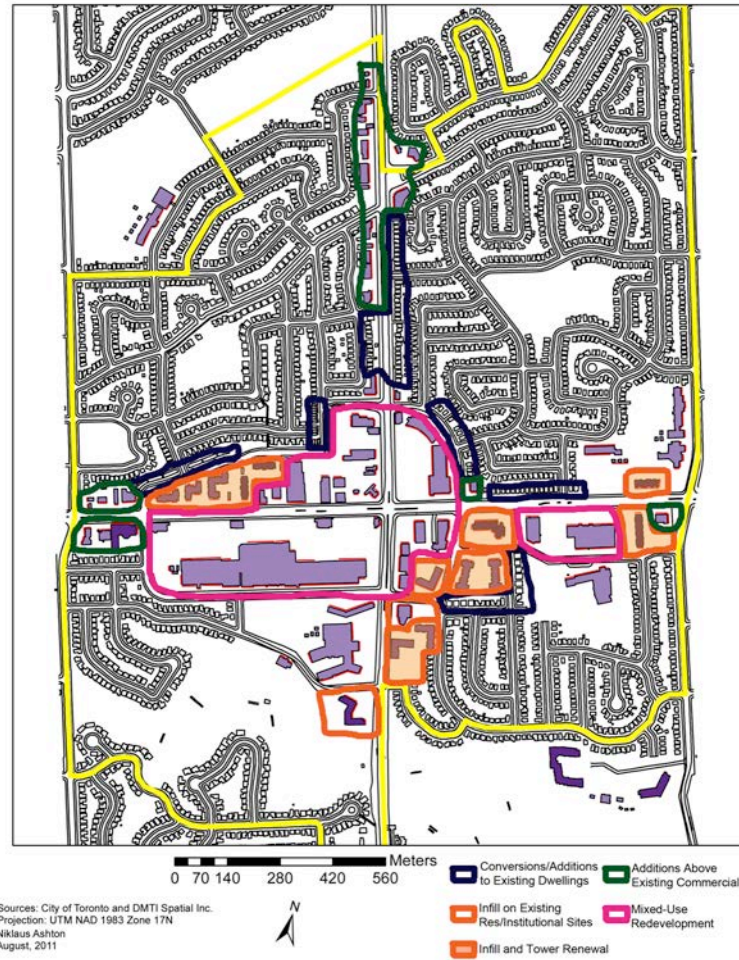


Figure 5.3



Figure 5.4: Strip plaza with two storeys of residences above (Source: Mid America Land Services Inc., n.d.)

Infill is another strategy that has the potential to incorporate a greater variety of housing units into the area. Existing large apartment and institutional sites are the most appropriate locations for residential infill to occur (Figure 5.3). Townhouses and low to mid-rise apartment buildings could be constructed on underutilized portions of these sites (Figure 5.5), or residential units could be included within new infill mixed-use buildings. Finally, new housing could also be introduced to Markham-Lawrence via a complete redevelopment of large commercial parcels surrounding the major intersection and along Lawrence Avenue (Figure 5.3). Although additions and infill are possible on these sites, a total redevelopment into compact, mixed-use communities (Figure 5.6) is likely to be far more successful due to the size and positioning of existing buildings and the sites on which they are situated.



Figure 5.5: Infill apartment buildings on large institutional site (*Source: Argast, n.d.*)



Figure 5.6: Mixed-use redevelopment (*Source: Fuller-Sears Architects, n.d.*)

Housing quality and affordability issues within the Markham-Lawrence community should be addressed through the expansion of existing government housing programs. Tower Renewal initiatives should be implemented within the mid and high-rises throughout the neighbourhood to ensure that residents are not subject to poor housing conditions



(Recommendation 5). Similarly, affordable housing programs that provide rent supplements and allowances for low income tenants, second mortgages for prospective moderate income homeowners, and development incentives to encourage the construction of affordable homes by developers should be utilized to increase access to housing for all (Recommendation 6).

**Recommendation 5:** Tower Renewal initiatives should be implemented to ensure proper housing conditions in apartment buildings

**Recommendation 6:** Affordable housing programs that provide rent supplements, second mortgages, and development incentives should be utilized to increase access to housing

#### *New and Improved Social and Community Services*

The main issues with regards to social and community services within the Markham-Lawrence community are that there are not enough services for children, youth, and newcomers and that existing services are undeveloped and/or inaccessible. One of the ways to better facilitate the social inclusion of all members of the Markham-Lawrence neighbourhood is by introducing new facilities and programming into the area. The introduction of new facilities and programs would address the absence of key social services and complement existing services to ensure better delivery across the entire community. New facilities and programming can be introduced into the existing urban fabric using methods discussed previously. Existing strip mall units and unused space within apartment buildings can be converted into community agencies offering social programs or multi-use space available for local residents (Recommendation 7 - Figure 5.7 and Table 5.1, which is an extended legend for Figure 5.7). Similarly, libraries and

schools are key neighbourhood institutions that can be further developed into relatively accessible multi-use centres (Figure 5.8) providing a multitude of services beyond current functions (Recommendation 8 – Figure 5.7 and Table 5.1).

**Recommendation 7:** Convert unoccupied strip mall units and apartment building common rooms into social service agencies and/or multi-use space that can be accessed by the wider community

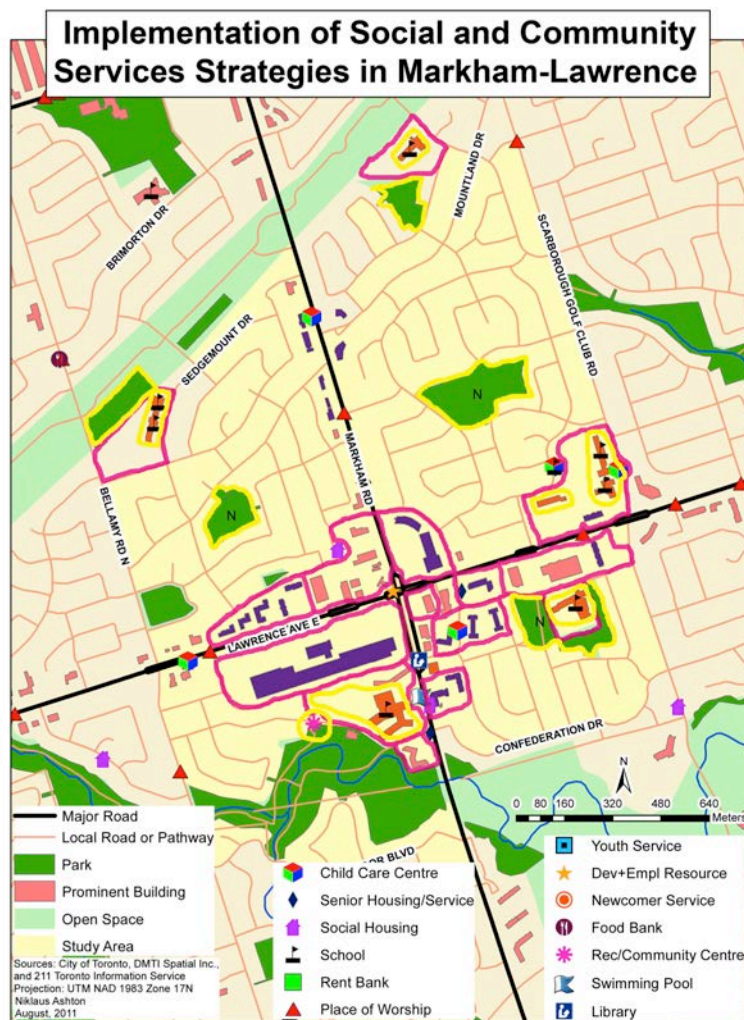


Figure 5.7





Description of Social and Community Service Improvement Strategies	
Map Symbol	Description
	Conversion of Space in Apartment Buildings/Plazas
N	Creation of Neighbourhood Common House
	Transform Schools/Libraries into Multi-Use Centres
	New Facilities/Additions on Underutilized Land
	Improvements/Upgrades to Existing Facilities/Parks

Table 5.1



Figure 5.8: A multi-use building with a school, daycare, and community centre (*Source: Raine, 2009*)

**Recommendation 8:** Transform schools and libraries into multi-use service delivery centres

With respect to the construction of brand new facilities, many opportunities involving additions to existing buildings and infill on underutilized land exist. More specifically, social infrastructure can be introduced through additions to existing shopping centres and retail plazas, and infill can occur on large apartment sites and commercial parking lots, most of which are located in the centre of the Markham-Lawrence area or near major arterials serviced by transit (Recommendation 9 – Figure 5.7 and Table 5.1). Neighbourhood common houses (Figure 5.9) containing a community kitchen, meeting rooms, study areas, and other amenities should also be considered for developable parts of existing parks and open spaces located within subdivisions (Recommendation 10 – Figure 5.7 and Table 5.1). The construction of such facilities would

place much-needed services and amenities within walking distance of many residences within the subdivisions, and could potentially foster greater bonds between community members.

**Recommendation 9:** Introduce new social and community infrastructure through additions and infill on larger apartment and commercial sites located in the node and along corridors



Figure 5.9: Neighbourhood common house (*Source:* The Wellston Loop, 2011)

**Recommendation 10:** The construction of neighbourhood common houses on developable land in centrally located community parks should be considered

Enhancements to existing facilities and programming should also be considered, especially as a way to adapt to changing demographics and trends within the Markham-Lawrence area. Programming and facilities in neighbourhood schools, the community centre, and in local parks should be upgraded and adapted to better suit the needs of area residents (Recommendation 11 – Figure 5.7 and Table 5.1). Field observations together with information from key informants indicate that neighbourhood sport, recreation, and leisure facilities and

infrastructure are especially obsolete as they are run-down and do not reflect the interests of the wider community. For instance, many of the parks and school playgrounds have poorly maintained baseball diamonds that are rarely used. These baseball diamonds may have been utilized by the original post-War residents, but are now virtually abandoned due to the lower popularity of baseball amongst today's ethnically diverse residents. The inclusion of a greater variety of sport and recreation facilities such as cricket patches (Figure 5.10) and soccer fields might be utilized a great deal more than existing infrastructure as they may better reflect the interests of the neighbourhood's current population (Key Informant, personal communication, July 29, 2011).

**Recommendation 11:** Programming and facilities in neighbourhood schools, the community centre, and in local parks should be upgraded and adapted to better suit the needs of area residents



Figure 5.10: Cricket patch within a park (*Source:* Bebee, 2009)

### *Transportation Improvements and Greater Accessibility*

Transportation and accessibility recommendations are intended to both improve connectivity between different parts of the inner suburban neighbourhood and increase accessibility by facilitating pedestrian activity. In terms of greater connectivity, the Markham-Lawrence area is in need of better linkages between the residential subdivisions and the major arterials and central node. Taking into consideration the area's existing low density built form and discontinuous transportation network, one of the most feasible and effective ways of improving connectivity is to use new pedestrian pathways (Figure 5.11) to break-up the large blocks that line the community's major arterials (Recommendation 12 – Figure 5.12). These blocks act as barriers for pedestrians trying to get from their houses to bus stops, shopping venues, and institutions situated on the major roads. Connectivity can also be improved by adding bike lanes (Figure 5.13) to the major arterials (Markham Road and Lawrence Avenue) and the collector roads (the ring road, Confederation Drive, Holmfirth Terrace, Hiscock Boulevard, and Painted Post Drive), providing cyclists with an easier and safer way to travel throughout the community (Recommendation 13 – Figure 5.12).

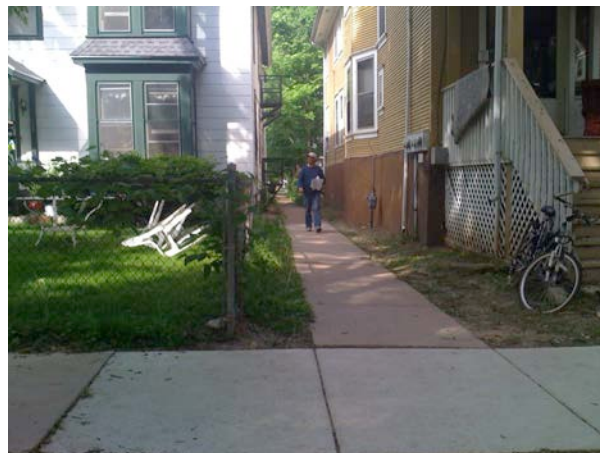


Figure 5.11: Mid-block pedestrian pathway (*Source: Heller, 2011*)



**Recommendation 12:** Introduce new pedestrian pathways to break-up large blocks that act as barriers between residences and major arterials

**Implementation of Transportation  
and Accessibility Strategies in Markham-Lawrence**

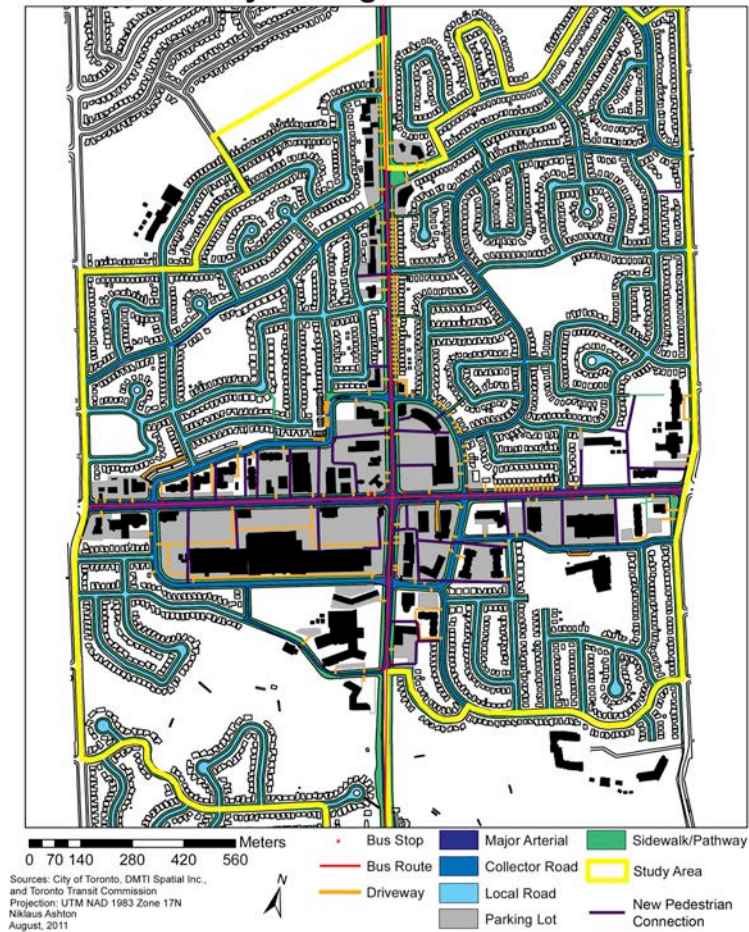


Figure 5.12



Figure 5.13: Bike lanes situated adjacent to curb  
(Source: Tin Box, 2011)

**Recommendation 13:** Add bike lanes to major arterials and collector roads in order to provide cyclists with a safer and easier way to move throughout the neighbourhood

Measures to further facilitate pedestrian activity range from streetscape upgrades to the complete overhaul of the organization of arterial roads. Streetscape upgrades should be implemented on both major arterials as well as on the collector roads mentioned above, all of which see the greatest amount of pedestrian and vehicular activity in the neighbourhood (Recommendation 14 – Figure 5.12). Upgrades could include the widening of sidewalks (Figure 5.14), increased landscaping, and the introduction of street furniture and pedestrian-scale lighting (Figure 5.15). The two major arterials should also undergo more extensive changes involving alterations to their existing physical organization in addition to the streetscape improvements mentioned above. Markham Road should see the introduction of planted medians to mitigate its relatively immense scale, with the addition of transit and bike lanes appropriate options as well aimed at facilitating movement within the community and to other parts of the City (Recommendation 15). The even greater enormity of Lawrence Avenue means that the arterial



requires a more extensive overhaul in order to mitigate its anti-pedestrian effects. Ideally, Lawrence should be transformed into a multi-way boulevard, with four sections divided by medians that act as buffers and safety ‘islands’ for pedestrians (Recommendation 16). There are typically two curbside sections for lower speed traffic that can contain parallel parking and pedestrian friendly sidewalks, and two middle sections that are dedicated to higher speed through-traffic (Figures 5.16 and 5.17).

**Recommendation 14:** Streetscape upgrades such as the widening of sidewalks, increased landscaping, and the introduction of street furniture and pedestrian-scale lighting should be implemented on major arterials and collector roads



Figure 5.14: Wide, pedestrian friendly sidewalk  
(Source: Azenha, 2010)



Figure 5.15: Pedestrian scale lighting  
(Source: Mary, 2005)

**Recommendation 15:** Markham Road should see the implementation of planted medians to mitigate anti-pedestrian effects, as well as the addition of bike and transit lanes to facilitate movement

**Recommendation 16:** Lawrence Avenue should be transformed into a multi-way boulevard to mitigate the anti-pedestrian effects of its immense scale



Figure 5.16: Smaller-scale multi-way boulevard  
(Source: Tung, 2009)

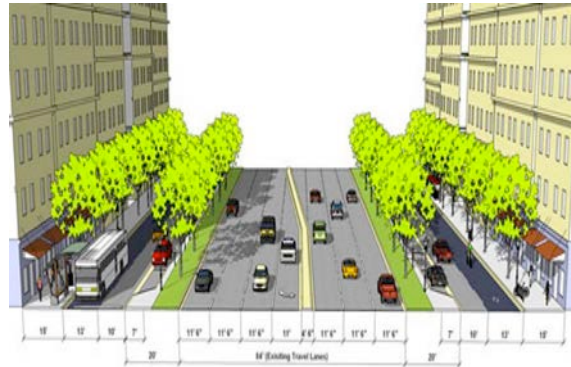


Figure 5.17: Larger-scale multi-way boulevard  
(Source: AECOM, 2011)

### *Economic Development and Commercial Revitalization*

Reinventing existing retail strips and shopping nodes and supporting local small businesses are two of the most important goals when it comes to encouraging economic revitalization within an inner suburban community. The reinvention of neighbourhood commercial nodes and strips can be accomplished through public realm improvements (as discussed in the previous section – Recommendation 14), the creation of new and exciting public spaces, and the introduction of a greater variety of uses and activities. New public gathering spaces are key to the rejuvenation of Markham-Lawrence’s commercial areas and should therefore be created at prominent sites near key intersections, along arterials, and bus stops, where pedestrian traffic is likely to be higher (Recommendation 17 – Figure 5.18). These new public spaces should be aesthetically pleasing and functional, and be capable of hosting events

and activities such as outdoor marketplaces and festivals that encourage the use of such space by neighbourhood residents (Figure 5.19).

**Recommendation 17:** New public spaces that are aesthetically pleasing, functional, and capable of hosting outdoor events should be created at prominent sites near key intersections, major arterials, and bus stops

### Implementation of Economic Development and Commerce Strategies in Markham-Lawrence



Figure 5.18



Figure 5.19: Functional and well-used public space  
(Source: New York City Department of Transportation, 2009)

A greater mix of uses and activities is also essential to the revitalization of commercial functions within the Markham-Lawrence area. Ideally, commercial uses should be intermixed with residences, institutions, entertainment and cultural venues, social and recreational facilities, and offices. This co-location of a variety of uses results in increased attractiveness for an area, resulting in a larger customer base for businesses and the use of space at all times of day. It also provides convenient one-stop shopping for community residents, many of whom do not have access to automobiles. Due to the many benefits of co-location, a multitude of new and varied uses and activities should be introduced into existing commercial sites within the Markham-Lawrence area (Recommendation 18 – Figure 5.18). Intermixing can be achieved through either additions and/or infill on larger commercial sites along the major arterials and in the central node (Figure 5.20). It would be best achieved, however, through the complete redevelopment of the commercial buildings and sites situated at the Markham Road and Lawrence Intersection into a compact, mixed-use community (as discussed in the Built Form and Land-Use Section – Recommendation 1).



**Recommendation 18:** A multitude of new and varied uses and activities should be introduced into existing commercial sites within the Markham-Lawrence area through additions, infill, and/or complete redevelopment



Figure 5.20: Mixed-use commercial/residential strip  
(Source: Mike in TO, 2007)

Supporting local businesses is also important in stimulating economic development in the Markham-Lawrence community. This is especially true given the large role ethnic businesses, the majority of which are independently owned, play in the local economy. A major issue for smaller businesses is access to suitable and affordable space, which can be secured through the conversion of existing unused space. One such space exists in the form of an abandoned building located on the south side of Lawrence Avenue east of the ring road. It is suggested that the abandoned building in question be converted into a neighbourhood small business hub, where local start-ups and entrepreneurs can build their businesses (Recommendation 19 – Figure 5.18). Small business hubs could also be incorporated into underutilized spaces in apartment buildings, existing plazas, and in new mixed-use developments. The community’s small businesses could

also benefit from the formation of a local Business Improvement Area (Recommendation 20), which could bring business owners together to promote the area's commercial functions and spur revitalization strategies (Key Informant, personal communication, July 27, 2011).

**Recommendation 19:** Small business hubs should be incorporated into abandoned buildings and in underutilized spaces in apartment buildings, plazas, and in new mixed-use developments

**Recommendation 20:** Local businesses should form a Business Improvement Association to promote community businesses and spur commercial revitalization

### Next Steps

The emphasis of this paper has been on the generation of ideas and solutions to the issues and challenges facing the Markham-Lawrence community of Scarborough, not on determining the feasibility of proposed interventions or the fine details of their implementation. All of the findings and recommendations outlined throughout the paper are meant to be a first step in the journey towards the revitalization of inner suburban communities such as Markham-Lawrence. For the process to continue, a more in-depth investigation into appropriate policy and financial tools capable of facilitating the eventual implementation of the above recommendations must be conducted. The feasibility of all of the recommendations must also be assessed and barriers to implementation need to be understood, so that strategies can be developed to overcome potential obstacles. Following these steps, the production of an action plan is required to guide and ensure the implementation of important land-use and social planning strategies. In the end, it is hoped

that this research will help spur a greater interest in developing neighbourhood revitalization plans for inner suburban neighbourhoods across Toronto and North America, leading to improved quality of life and more just and successful cities.

## APPENDIX A – KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Introduction:

Hi, my name is Niklaus Ashton (graduate student, Ryerson University), pleased to meet you. I would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. As discussed before, I will be asking you questions regarding the challenges facing the Markham/Lawrence community and strategies that have the potential to address such challenges. You have the right to refuse to answer any of the questions asked, and can end the interview at any time you see fit. Your identity will remain completely confidential and you will have the opportunity to review and approve/disapprove of any comments or opinions before they are included in the major research paper (MRP).

### Getting to Know the Interviewee:

-Can you tell me a bit about the organization you work for (mission, goals, objectives, services provided)?

-What is your role in the organization?

-How long have you worked in the Markham/Lawrence area?

### **Main Question 1: What specific issues and challenges exist in the Markham and Lawrence area of Scarborough?**

-greatest weaknesses of community? (transit, built form, provision of services, shopping opportunities, accessibility, infrastructure, open space)

-greatest challenges? (social issues, lack of opportunities, inaccessibility)

-less formidable challenges?

-what are the priority issues that need to be addressed?

-do challenges affect all people equally?

*-Can you elaborate/provide examples (for each of the above)?*

### **Main Question 2: What neighbourhood revitalization strategies and policies are best suited to meet the needs of the Markham/Lawrence community?**

-greatest opportunities/assets in community?

-what needs to be done in order to solve the identified priority issues?

-examples from other jurisdictions/parts of the city?

*-Can you elaborate/provide examples (for each of the above)?*

### **Main Question 3: How might some of these strategies/policies be implemented in the Markham and Lawrence area?**



- how do we finance commitments?
  - who needs to be involved?
  - what role should community members play?
  - specific ideas/proposals to improve the neighbourhood?
- Can you elaborate/provide examples (for each of the above)?*

Conclusion:

Thank you again for taking the time to participate in this interview. The information, ideas, and opinions you provided will be extremely helpful in preparing my final recommendations. If anything you shared today is to be included in the major research paper, I will provide you with a verbatim outline of the comments to be included via e-mail. The comments will not be included unless a response containing your approval is received. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact me by e-mail at [nashton@ryerson.ca](mailto:nashton@ryerson.ca).

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