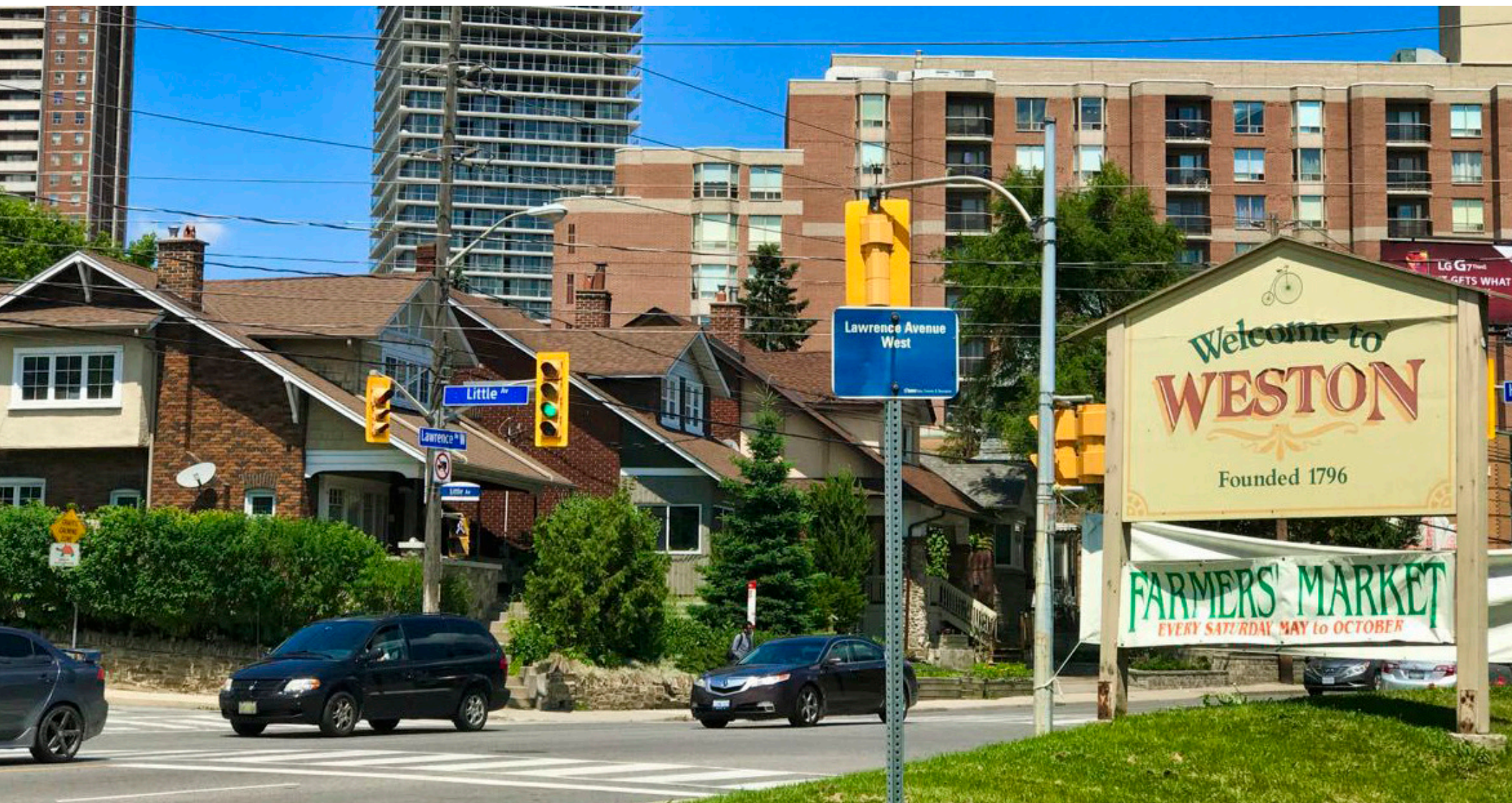


# WESTON TAP 2.0

Technical Assistance Panel Report 2 | September 2018



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The Weston community is passionate and highly engaged. Community members care deeply about each other and the future of their neighbourhood.



# 1. The Context

Weston is an area with rich history as a former village in the City of Toronto. The neighborhood is located in the northwest of the City, bordered by the 401 highway to the north, the Humber River to the west, Jane Street to the east and south of Lawrence.

The Weston community is passionate and highly engaged. Community members care deeply about each other and the future of their neighbourhood. There are several long-standing groups devoted to keeping the neighbourhood safe and the improving the lives of local residents. The Weston Village Residents Association acts as the umbrella association. The Weston Historical Society has a deep historical memory of the community and the sense of direction for its future based on the rich history of the community and geography. The Weston Baptist Church has been active in Weston since the 1800's and continues to play an important community building role. Frontlines offers a variety of programs to children and youth from Weston and surrounding neighbourhoods, ranging from homework clubs to culinary training, to employment programs. Urban Arts is a not-for-profit Community Arts Council, offering programs in visual, digital, culinary and media arts, theatre, dance and music.

There have been a number of recent changes in Weston. Metrolinx and Go Transit have built a rapid transit rail system between Pearson International Airport and Union Station, with a mid-way stop in Weston. Weston now has the benefit of all day train service to both the Airport and downtown in less than 20 minutes using the UP Express train. GO Transit service along this corridor has also been improved.

A number of new development projects are planned or currently underway. Weston Common, being developed by Rockport Group and Artscape is leading the way. The project, which is now well under construction, includes a new rental apartment building with a mix of market rental and affordable

rental units, a large public outdoor space which will be the permanent home of the successful Weston Village Farmers' Market, a new community/cultural hub and affordable artist live-work studios. The positive change in the neighbourhood is inspiring and provides an opportunity.

At the same time, Weston is an area in need of revitalization. Recognized as a Neighbourhood Improvement Area (NIA) by the City of Toronto, the area's residents have lower average incomes and a higher unemployment rate than other areas of the city. There are also complex safety and crime issues in Weston that need to be addressed. The main street, while home to many well-loved shops and services, lacks vibrancy and the critical mass of people to support local businesses.



IMAGE SOURCE: WestonWeb.ca <https://www.westonweb.ca/tag/weston-farmers-market/>

# WESTON NEIGHBOURHOOD

## Spotlight on Development Projects

### Commercial

- 1391 Weston Road  
(Gas station, pending approval)

### Institutional

- 23 George Street  
(St John the Evangelist Catholic School, pending approval)

### Residential

- 82 Buttonwood Avenue  
(West Park, 6 storey healthcare institution, pending approval)
- 10 Wilby Crescent  
(The Humber, 22 storey, 233 unit affordable condo)
- 22 John Street  
(Weston Common, residential development with 370 rental units, 7 townhomes, and 26 live work spaces)
- 2270 Weston Road  
(12 storey, 110 unit residential building)
- 2346 Weston Road  
(15 storey, 157 unit residential building with affordable rental)

### Residential/Mixed-use

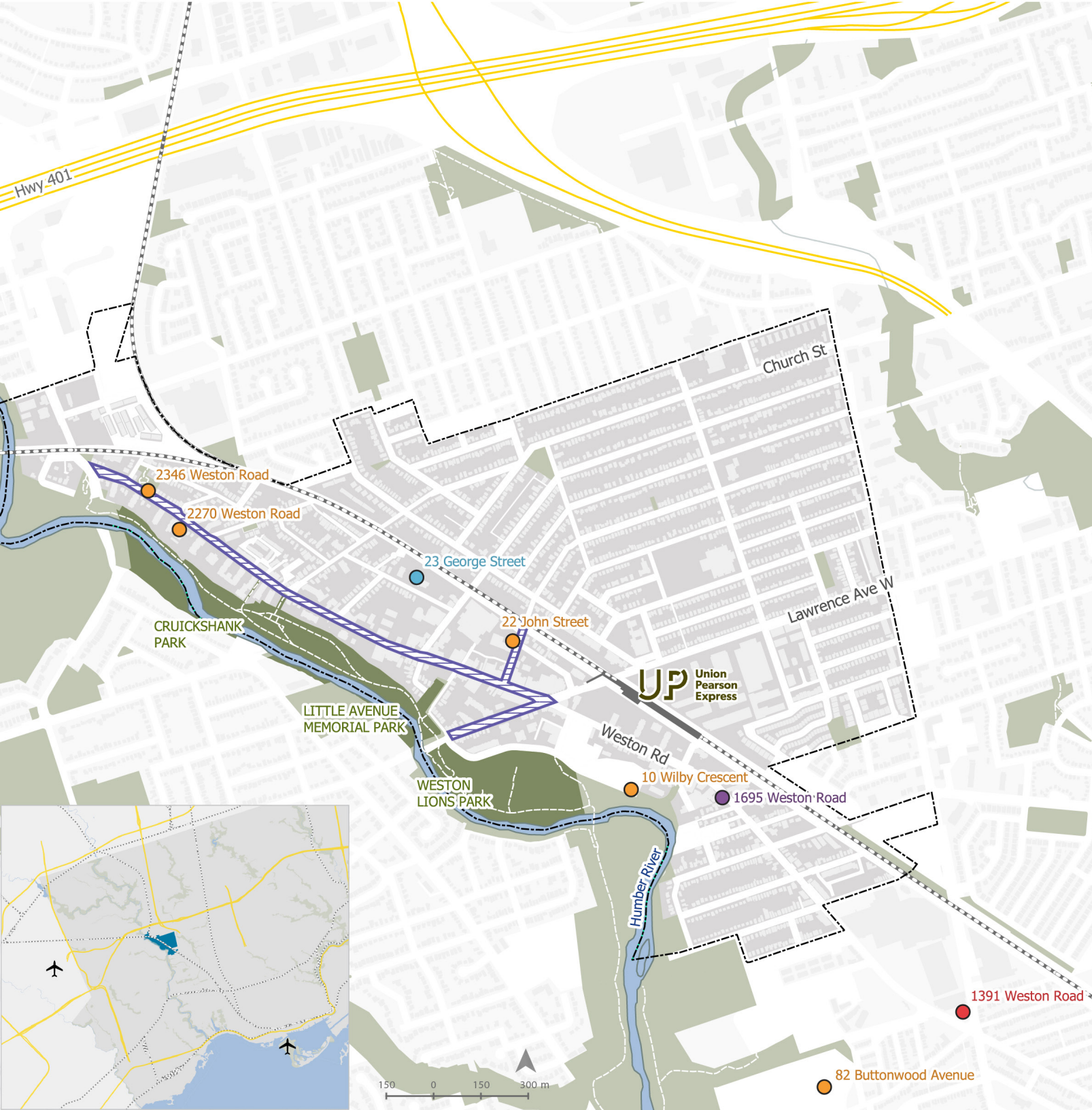
- 1695 Weston Road  
(25 storey, 240 unit residential mixed-use building)

### Streetscape Improvements

1. Widening of sidewalks on Weston Road, from Lawrence to Little Ave
2. Resurfacing of Weston Road from Lawrence to St. Phillips Road
3. John Street improvements from Weston Road to the railway tracks to make for a safe, pedestrian and cyclist-friendly street with flexible space, trees, landscaping
4. Planning Framework Study for Weston Village

### Other Initiatives

5. Planning Framework Study for Weston Village
6. Feasibility study on closing the mid-Humber Gap





## 2. Weston TAP 2.0

The ULI Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) is a high-profile industry program that brings together the finest expertise in the real estate, planning and development fields to collaborate on complex land use and redevelopment projects. Weston TAP 2.0 was organized by ULI Toronto with the aim of exploring the evolution and potential of the Weston neighbourhood and developing a vision for its retail environment. The panel was to follow-up and build on the findings from the original 2011 Weston TAP.

Weston TAP 2.0 included a group of 9 planning, design, community and economic development experts from ULI Toronto's membership (See Appendix A – TAP Panel Bios). The 9 TAP members attended a full-day session on Saturday June 23, 2018 at Urban Arts in Weston. The session included a series community of panel discussions, a walking tour, and a working session, facilitated by Pru Robey (See Appendix B – Agenda and Focus Questions).



IMAGE SOURCE: patrickmoher.com

## 3. The Assignment

The task assigned to the TAP was to provide a galvanizing vision for economic development in the Weston Village retail district in a manner that is sensitive to the local community.

TAP members were asked to review background materials, listen to the stories and ideas of community members, organizations and residents, and attend a tour exploring the neighbourhood.

With this information and using their expertise in planning, economic and community development, and design, TAP members worked together to come up with a series of ideas and recommendations for Weston around four main themes: retail, public realm, infrastructure and programming. The following pages include: a Vision for Weston, 5 Big Ideas, and TAP Findings: 23 Initiatives



IMAGE SOURCE: patrickmoher.com

Weston is a place where people of diverse socio-economic backgrounds, cultures and age groups live together and embrace diversity. There are good job opportunities and anyone, including youth, newcomers and young families can find an affordable place to live.

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## 4. A Vision for Weston

### UNIQUE COMMUNITY, DISTINCT IDENTITY

Weston is a neighbourhood with its own unique identity. It embraces its history while also being open to change.

### DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE

Weston is a place where people of diverse socio-economic backgrounds, cultures and age groups live together and embrace diversity. There are good job opportunities and anyone, including youth, newcomers and young families can find an affordable place to live.

### NATURE-FOCUSED

Weston is a “riverfront village” where residents and visitors embrace the river and the local park system. The community is known for its beautiful open spaces, diverse eco-system and recreational opportunities, including bicycle trails.

### FUN AND VIBRANT

Weston is a safe and welcoming place where there are always people on the streets. It has a village feel that reflects the diversity of the community. There are lots of things to do, places to visit and events to attend.

### ACCESSIBLE AND CONNECTED

Weston is a walkable community with a variety of transportation options, including train, bus, bike and light rail. It's known for its excellent transit access to downtown and to the airport.

## 5. Five Big Ideas

### 1. PROMOTE AND PLAN WESTON AS A RIVERFRONT COMMUNITY

Weston's location on the Humber River is one of its greatest assets, offering incredible access to nature and recreation. Panel members envisioned Weston as a "riverfront community", with the river playing a central role in the identity and daily life in the community and making Weston a unique and desirable place for both people and companies to invest. Wayfinding signage and marketing could be used help to emphasize the importance of the river in Weston. Physical improvements, such as pathways or new access points, could also be created to make it easier for people to see and access the river. The panel also saw the river as a way to attract visitors from outside of Weston and drive economic development. People would come to Weston by bike, train or car to experience and engage with the river, and then go into the neighbourhood, to visit the local businesses and restaurants. The panel even suggested that a "Brickworks-style" campus could be built near the river (but not on the flood plain) providing nature-based programming and a variety of opportunities to engage with the river.

### 2. MARKET WESTON AS AN AFFORDABLE COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL LOCATION FOR AIRPORT WORKERS

Toronto Pearson Airport is a mere 15 minutes and one-stop from Weston on the UP Express. The TAP saw this as a big opportunity and suggested that Weston should develop a strategy to market itself as an affordable residential location for airport workers. A recent study found that there are 49,000 direct jobs at the airport . This includes taxi-drivers, baggage handlers, flight crew, security staff and service workers. The same study

also found that the Pearson labour force is expanding, with the growth of the airport itself. Weston could provide an affordable and convenient place to live for this growing airport labour force. The influx of approximately 1,500 new residential units into Weston over the coming years could provide both affordable rental and condo housing choices. Attracting middle-income earners to live in Weston would help to provide the critical mass of people needed to support local businesses. Some panel members also suggested that Weston could be a location for commercial back-offices associated with the airport, such as Air Canada. This would support economic development in Weston by creating local job opportunities as well as bringing a daytime population with disposable income to Weston Village.



IMAGE SOURCE: WestonWeb.ca <https://www.westonweb.ca/tag/cruickshank-park/>



### 3. BRING A BREWERY TO WESTON

Establishing a brewery to Weston would be a way to attract people from within and outside the neighbourhood to Weston Road, while at the same time providing employment opportunities. A brewery would help to create a ripple effect of economic activity, leading to more foot traffic and spin-off businesses on Weston Road. Breweries can also act as public gathering places that bring communities together. The existing stock of commercial buildings, low rent, and easy access to downtown make Weston a good spot for a brewery. The brewery's brand could build on the unique local heritage of Weston, such as the CCM bicycle factory. In fact, in celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Central restaurant in Weston, and the BIA's annual street festival, a new beer called "Weston's Bicycle Brew" was created, a great name for a future brewery or beer from Weston.



IMAGE SOURCE: Weston Village BIA archives

### 4. BUILD PARTNERSHIPS WITH UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

The TAP panel gave specific consideration to the potential of Weston to attract a satellite campus outpost or building of a regional post-secondary institution, leveraging the enhanced transit accessibility of the area, as a means of stimulating more pedestrian traffic, commerce etc. While such a development would likely prove positive (and could be encouraged), the consensus was that the likelihood of this happening is low. Subsequent discussion, however, has surfaced an idea that perhaps a more temporary "pop up" presence of one of a post-secondary faculty could be courted as a "living lab" opportunity to advance the practical city building and economic development considerations, from architecture and urban design, public realm, recreation, business incubation, retail etc. Another way to do this is by creating an enabling environment for local residents to develop and grow small businesses. TAP members suggested creating a retail incubator program that would allow entrepreneurs to set-up pop-up shops in empty stores along Weston. Another approach would be to create a place where small business owners could rent small, flexible retail spaces. Both Market 707<sup>1</sup> and Simcoe Mall in Oshawa were suggested as good retail incubation models. This bottom-up, community-led approach uses the energy and ingenuity of the local community to drive the revitalization of the retail environment, while at the same time creating local job opportunities and driving economic growth.

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<sup>1</sup> Toronto Pearson – Global Hub Economic Impact Study <https://www.torontopearson.com/en/economicimpact/globalhubstudy/#>



## 5. ESTABLISH A CO-OP GROCERY STORE

With the closing of Asian Farms, Weston needs a grocery store and Weston residents need better access to healthy, affordable food. To address this need, panel members suggested that a co-op be formed to establish and run a grocery store in Weston. The co-op would give the community control over the sale and distribution of the food within the neighbourhood, while at the same time creating a more desirable retail environment for current and future residents and creating jobs for local residents. Foodshare is located close by on Industry Street and could be a valuable resource. There are a number of precedents in Toronto that can be used as models or inspiration. The West End Food Co-op in Parkdale provides food direct from farmers at a seven day a week grocery store and also runs educational community kitchen. It started in the basement of a nearby church and is run by the local community with a focus on local and organic food.

Toronto Pearson Airport is a mere 15 minutes and one-stop from Weston on the UP Express. The TAP saw this as a big opportunity and suggested that Weston should develop a strategy to market itself as an affordable residential location for airport workers.

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## 6. TAP's Findings: 23 Initiatives

### GENERAL

1. **Leverage Weston Village's Built & Natural Heritage** - Weston Village is steeped in natural and built heritage. Much of this legacy remains in the vast inventory of heritage architecture from private residences to public and commercial buildings. The Humber River was also the aboriginal 'Carrying Place Trail' a thoroughfare used to travel inland from Lake Ontario north to Lake Simcoe. These assets should be leveraged to enhance the full placemaking potential of the area, which has a distinct identity that can enhance the pride, livability, business climate and labour attractiveness of the area.
2. **Support existing groups to drive Weston's revitalization** - Community organizations currently play a critical role in keeping Weston safe and improving the lives of local residents. These groups are in the best position to lead the ongoing revitalization of Weston, as well as benefit from the change. The panel suggested a variety of ways to do this, such as providing opportunities for entrepreneurs to start and run local retail business or by providing funding for the existing groups to drive the revitalization initiatives.
3. **Leverage new development** – TAP members suggested using community benefits agreements<sup>2</sup> to ensure that the community directly benefits from the development that is planned for Weston. Another way to leverage the development would be to bring together the developers working in Weston, and ask them what they would like to see for the

<sup>2</sup> Community Benefits Agreements are formal agreements between a real estate or infrastructure developer and a coalition that reflects and represents people who are affected by a large development project. <http://communitybenefitsagreements.ca/>

future of the area. There may be initiatives they want to support or lead that would benefit both their projects and the community. This was done successfully several years ago as part of the 2011 Weston TAP.

4. **Think beyond Weston Road** - The initial task for the TAP was to develop a vision for Weston's main retail strip, Weston Road. However, TAP members concluded that a focus solely on Weston Road misses the opportunities associated with the river and greenspaces, and that there should be a broader focus for economic development.
5. **Imagine Weston as a destination** – The Weston neighbourhood, and particularly the river, could become a destination that attracts Torontonians from other parts of the city. TAP members envisioned visitors coming to Weston for a day of cycling and picnicking on the Humber and then stopping on Weston Road for a coffee or dinner at a local restaurant. Most panel members agreed that turning Weston into a destination is a longer-horizon idea; however, some felt that Weston wasn't ready to focus its efforts on being a destination as it wouldn't necessarily help to achieve the immediate objectives of the community.

### RETAIL AND AMENITIES

6. **Expand food offerings through micro-retail** – The Weston community identified a need for more restaurants and places to buy food locally. A model like the Market 707 could help to expand local food offerings, while at the same time giving residents opportunities to develop their own food businesses.



7. **Create a culinary food hub with Frontlines** – Another food-related idea was to support the expansion of the Frontlines catering program to create a food hub in Weston. The 519, as well as Regent Park Paint Box have successfully created food-based social enterprises that provide job and training opportunities in the food sector. Expanding the food offerings of Frontlines would be a way to increase the availability of local food, support job creation, and could also help to animate Weston Road.
  8. **Bring a fitness centre to Weston** – The local community identified the need for an indoor facility for fitness and recreation. TAP members suggested partnering with the YMCA. This would allow the community to take advantage of YMCA's subsidy programs, employment programs, and other offerings. Some discussions with YMCA have already taken place.
  9. **Attract flexible daytime workers to Weston** – While there was agreement on the importance of attracting commercial businesses and employers to Weston, some TAP members felt that it would be difficult to attract a large-scale employer anytime in the near future. It was suggested that Weston could instead focus on creating more flexible working spaces for small businesses and entrepreneurs in industries like technology, media and advertising.
  10. **Support cycling entrepreneurship** – Building on Weston's historical ties to cycling manufacturing, TAP members felt there was an opportunity to support cycling entrepreneurship in Weston, such as cycling retail, repair shops, small-scale. Weston could become a hub for cyclists and cycling culture, drawing people to the neighbourhood, while also providing local job opportunities.
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## **PUBLIC REALM & INFRASTRUCTURE**

11. **Improve wayfinding and access to the river** – Despite being such a prominent feature of the Weston neighbourhood, the Humber River is somewhat hidden. Signage could be used to help local residents and visitors to find the river and remind them its there. The panel also suggested looking for ways to improve access to the river, such as pathways or better access points.
12. **Create a central public square** - Despite having three beautiful greenspaces and a new town square being built in front of the Artscape Weston Common, Panel members felt there was a need for a more central public square to act as a hub for civic activity and to help to create a sense of place in Weston. There is an opportunity to work with the new wave of developers in the community to create a central public square. Opportunities associated with future redevelopment projects adjacent to the Weston GO and UP Express train station also exist.
13. **Creating anchors along Weston Road** – Anchors are important places or attractions that draw people to and through a neighbourhood. TAP members recommended that Weston attract a large commercial employer and an institutional use to act as anchors along Weston Road. These anchors, along with other key uses, such as a hotel and the proposed theatre inside the new cultural hub, would help to attract people to Weston Road and slow down pedestrian and car traffic. As noted above, some TAP members felt that a large commercial employer would be unlikely to locate in Weston at this stage.
14. **Beautify and animate Weston Road** – There is an obvious need to improve and beautify Weston Road. Panel members thought there was an opportunity to leverage the skills of local organizations, such as Frontlines and Urban Arts to animate the street, storefronts, and surrounding public realm. Placemaking was also suggested as an approach to animating Weston's parks and public spaces.

15. **Consider side streets or a longer-term horizon for patios on Weston Road** – While Weston Road is the main retail corridor, it likely isn't ready for patios. Panel members suggested that some of the side streets may be better suited for patios until public realm improvements are implemented along Weston Road. ULI did this as a pilot on John Street but the BIA was not ready.
  16. **Extend the west end bike rail path** – The West Toronto Railpath path currently ends in the Junction. Panel members suggested extending the bike path to Weston.
  17. **Connect Weston's north and south neighbourhoods** - Panel members discussed the importance of connecting the neighbourhoods on either side of the rail tracks. They suggested building pedestrian bridges and roads that would make it easier for residents from east/west of tracks to travel down to Weston Road.
  18. **Support façade improvements** – Weston Road would greatly benefit from façade improvements of its commercial buildings. The City of Toronto BIA's Office has a Façade Improvement Program, which provides funding to commercial and private property owners to renovate or restore commercial or industrial building façades. This program still requires investment on behalf of the property owner, which likely makes it cost prohibitive for most businesses in Weston.
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## PROGRAMMING

19. **Smaller block developments** – Much of the area around Weston Road is characterized by large blocks. While large block sizes are attractive to developers, panel members felt that as development occurs, the larger block should be broken up into smaller parcels, creating a more pedestrian scale environment.

20. **Use cultural programming as a community building exercise** – A variety of programming opportunities were discussed by the panel, such as an outdoor movie night, a night market, music or food festivals. Both an outdoor movie night and several food festivals have been done before in Weston. The panel recommended that a key focus for programming be on bridging the cultural and social divide and celebrating the local cultural diversity.
  21. **Plan for Weston as an arts hub** – A new wave of artists are set to arrive in Weston in 2019 with completion of the Artscape Weston Common. Panel members acknowledged the role that artists often play in the revitalization process and felt there was an opportunity to engage artists in the change process in Weston.
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## INSTITUTIONAL

22. **Explore the idea of a community hub for social services** – Panel members suggested exploring the idea of establishing a community hub for medical and social services in Weston. The United Way has a community hub model that has been successfully used in other Neighbourhood Improvement Areas. A similar facility already exists on Jane Street, not far from Weston Road.
23. **Engage post-secondary students to support revitalization** – Many post-secondary institutions are looking for experiential learning opportunities for their students. TAP members felt there was an opportunity to work with university or college professors to engage students in hands-on projects related to retail, as well as economic development, community development, design and place-making. One particular idea was to work with students from university retail programs to support local businesses with merchandising or other marketing needs.



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## 7. What We Learned

The TAP's ideas and findings were based on what they were able to learn about Weston in a short period of time. The stories and insights provided by the community through the three panel discussions and the walking tour were critically important and provided the foundation for the TAP's recommendations.

### A. ASSETS – WHAT'S WORKING WELL

- **Great parks and open spaces** - Weston has three major parks. Cruickshank Park is on the Humber River and is known as a place for seeing wildlife, including beavers, ducks and spawning salmon. A number of bike trails intersect in this park. Weston Lions Park, located south of Lawrence Avenue, contains a number of recreation facilities, such as a football pitch, soccer field, baseball diamond, tennis and basketball courts, an ice arena, swimming pool and skatepark. Little Avenue Memorial Park is a small greenspace with a newly renovated amphitheatre, often used for hosting concerts, live theatre, arts and crafts shows, and holiday celebrations
- **Strong community sector** – There are several long-standing community groups in Weston devoted to keeping the neighbourhood safe and the improving the lives of local residents. The Weston Village Residents Association acts as the umbrella association for most. The Weston Baptist Church has been active in Weston since the 1800's and continues to play an important community building role. Frontlines offers a variety of programs to children and youth from Weston and surrounding neighbourhoods, ranging from homework clubs to culinary training, to employment programs. Urban Arts is a not-for-profit Community Arts Council, offering programs in visual, digital, culinary and media arts, theatre, dance and music.

“We support young people from the neighbourhood who may have gotten into trouble otherwise. Many people from our programs end up into careers in the arts.”



IMAGE SOURCE: WestonWeb.ca <https://www.westonweb.ca/tag/york-weston-tennis-club/>

“Weston has so many different cultures. People are very friendly.”



“We want Weston to reflect the various of income brackets that exist in the community - in a cohesive not segregated way.”



IMAGE SOURCE: Urban Arts Toronto

“Artscape is a big catalyst for change. This is just the beginning.”

- **Cultural and built heritage** – Weston is an area with rich cultural and built heritage, and a unique small-town identity. There are many well-preserved historic buildings that were constructed as early as the 1850's. The Carrying Place Trail, an Aboriginal thoroughfare used to travel inland from Lake Ontario north to Lake Simcoe, runs parallel to the Humber River through the Weston neighbourhood.
- **Improved transit service** – Metrolinx located one of the two new UP Express train mid-route stops making travel to downtown and the airport from Weston easy and efficient (in about 15 minutes). The Crosstown LRT on Eglinton also has a planned stop for Weston and Eglinton, which will further improve transit access.
- **Private investment and increasing density** – There are currently 14 new development or redevelopment projects planned or proposed for Weston over the next several years. Weston Common includes a new rental apartment building with a mix of market rental and affordable rental units, a large public outdoor space, a new community/cultural hub and affordable artist live-work studios. The Humber is another new development pending approval. It will consist of a 16-storey condominium with 233 affordable condo ownership units and retail on the ground floor. The new investment and the resulting increase in density will have a major impact on the Weston neighbourhood. If done well, the increased development will positively impact the Weston community and retail environment.
- **Growing artist community** – The Artscape Weston Common includes 26 live-work units dedicated for artists as well as indoor and outdoor cultural programming space, promising to bring a new wave of artists to the area. Urban Arts also plays an important role in developing and nurturing artists in Weston.

- **Long-standing Farmers' Market** – The Weston Farmers' Market is one of the oldest markets in the GTA. It is one of the few places where local residents can purchase healthy, affordable food in Weston. The market moved last year to the new GO Parking lot, but will move to its permanent home on John Street when the project is finished in 2019.
- **Community-focused local businesses** – There are several long-standing businesses in Weston that attract customers from both within and outside the neighbourhood. Businesses like supercoffee and Squibb's see their role as more than just a place to buy coffee or books. They operate as social enterprises and acts as community gathering places.

“supercoffee is run as a social enterprise/ non-profit. I try to hire people from the neighbourhood.”



## Spotlight on Initiatives in Weston

There is a total of 1522 residential units, across ten sites, planned or proposed for Weston. Three of these projects specifically incorporate affordable units into their proposals. Many are in close proximity to Weston Station, which is serviced by GO Rail, as well as the Union Pearson Express.

Examples of **residential projects** proposed for Weston:

- 10 Wilby Cres (The Humber) developed by Options for Homes - 22 storey, 233 unit affordable condo ownership building
- 1695 Weston Road - 25 storey, 240 unit residential mixed-use building
- 2270 Weston Road - 12 storey, 110 unit residential building
- 2346 Weston Road - 15 storey, 157 unit residential building with affordable rental
- 22 John Street developed by the Rockport Group (Weston Common) - a residential development with 370 rental units, 7 townhomes, and 26 live work spaces

There are also several **commercial and institutional** proposals currently pending approval, including:

- 1391 Weston Road - a new corner gas station
- 82 Buttonwood Ave - West Park Healthcare Centre Rebuilding of the West Park Healthcare Centre to include various forms of care facilities and senior housing options
- 23 George Street - Expansion of the St. John the Evangelist Catholic School

There are also **public realm initiatives** planned for Weston starting in 2018.



## B. CHALLENGES – WHAT’S NOT WORKING

- **Need to reinvigorate the business area with a stronger BIA** – The Weston Village BIA was established in 1979 and is one of the longest standing BIAs in Toronto. While the BIA has played an important role in the success of the Farmers’ Market and other initiatives in Weston, it needs to adapt to the needs of a modern retail environment and find ways to engage the broader business area.
- **Socio-economic issues** – Weston is designated a Neighbourhood Improvement Area by the City of Toronto, meaning that it is an area in need of investment to address problems such as higher-than-average crime or a shortage of services. Recent census data also shows that the area has lower average income, a higher rate of low-income and a higher unemployment rate than other neighbourhoods in the city.
- **Poor pedestrian environment on Weston’s main street** – Weston Road is the area’s main commercial street. The street has ‘the bones’ of a great main street, with a low-rise scale, historic buildings, and well-loved businesses. However, the existing streetscape and pedestrian environment needs improvement.
- **A growing food desert** – With the only grocery store in Weston recently closing, there is nowhere within walking distance for residents to purchase healthy, affordable food. The closest grocery store requires travel by bus and the farmers’ market is only open once a week from May to October. The community would also like to see a wider variety of restaurants.
- **Geographically and socially divided neighbourhood** – Geographically, Weston is divided down the middle by the rail tracks. There are distinct socio-economic differences between the neighbourhoods on either side. Those who live to the north and east generally have higher-income. The housing stock also differs; while the south has a mix of housing types and includes many aging tower apartment buildings,

“What the youth say is missing is affordable groceries, restaurants and places to shop. They also really want an indoor fitness space.”



IMAGE SOURCE: patrickmoher.com

“It’s a challenge to run a ‘bricks and mortar’ business. Good retail operations need more support that you can imagine.”



north of the tracks is characterised primarily by single-detached Victorian homes. Those who live on the east side of the rail tracks often don't travel south to Weston Road and go elsewhere for fulfilling their daily retail needs.

- **Lack of daily needs retail** – A key message coming from the local community was that Weston lacks the shops and services to meet their daily needs, such as a bakery, butcher and grocery store. Local convenience stores provide a wide range of goods, but many are saturated with highly processed foods and non-perishables.
- **Difficult retail environment** – The retail businesses on Weston Road struggle to make a profit. While some people embrace the idea of shopping local, many residents go elsewhere for their daily needs. The residential areas surrounding main street tend to be lower income households, meaning that those directly adjacent to Weston Road do not have the disposable income to support local retail.

## 8. Recommendations

**City of Toronto Economic Development:** The findings summarized in this report will be presented to City of Toronto Economic Development for inclusion in the Economic Development/Culture Capacity Building Program to help... The report will help the City to identify priorities and partnership opportunities for the Weston neighbourhood, and inform on-going work with the Weston Village BIA. The TAP Findings of the 23 Initiatives will be referenced by City of Toronto Economic Development....

**City of Toronto Public Realm:** The City of Toronto is expected to initiate a planning (public realm?) study for the Weston neighbourhood in 2019. The TAP's findings and recommendations can help to inform that process.

**Stakeholder group:** The report will be shared with the Weston community, including all the individuals and organizations that participated in the workshop on June 23. All community groups are encouraged to read and share the report with their networks, as well as look for opportunities to move the ideas forward.

**Developer roundtable:** The developers working in Weston should be brought together to discuss opportunities for improving the neighbourhood and ensuring that future development benefits the local community.

**Parks and TRCA:** The report will be shared with the TRCA and City of Toronto Parks Forestry and Recreation Department.

**Toronto Pearson Airport Authorities:** The report will also be shared with the Greater Toronto Airports Authority (GTAA). A meeting with the GTAA could be organized to discuss the idea of marketing Weston as an affordable commercial and residential location for airport workers.

**Partnerships with Universities:** The City of Toronto Economic Development and/or the TAP organizing committee can engage local universities to identify ways of engaging students to support the growth of Weston's retail environment.



## 9. The Team

### PANEL MEMBERS

- John Archer, Chief Development Officer - Three Sixty Collective
- Alex Dow, Director, Neighbourhood Initiatives - United Way Greater Toronto
- Alex Elgin, Senior Urban Designer, Associate - B+H
- Mitch Gillin, Director Investments - Hullmark Developments
- Ulrike I. Gross, AVP Facilities and Asset Management - Wilfrid Laurier University
- Timea Jakab, Retail Design Manager - Gensler
- Mary Mowbray Senior Vice President, Retail Group - Colliers International
- Gay Stephenson, Co-Chair - Danforth East Community Association
- Scott Torrance, Practice Leader, Landscape Architecture Studio - Forrec

### COMMUNITY PRESENTERS

- Dave Bennett, Chair - Weston Village Residents Association
- Stachen Frederick, Executive Director - Frontlines
- Cherri Hurst, President - Weston Heritage Conservation District
- Candice Laidlow, ACORN Canada
- Marlene Mckintosh, Executive Director - Urban Arts
- Cassandra Nicolaou, Owner - supercoffee
- Marion O'Sullivan, Coordinator and Event Planner - Weston BIA
- John Frogley-Rawson, Deacon - Weston Park Baptist Church
- Suri Weinberg-Linsky, Proprietor & Manager - Squibbs

### FACILITATOR

- Pru Robey, Pru Robey Consulting

### TAP ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

- Paul Bedford, Weston TAP Chair
- Robyn Brown, Manager, Planning - IBI Group
- Ariana Cancelli, Canadian Urban Institute (Report writer)
- Richard Joy, Executive Director - Urban Land Institute
- Alfredo Landeata, Urban Designer - Daniels (ULI Volunteer)
- Mike Major, Manager, BIA Office - City of Toronto
- Gervais Nash, Ryerson Graduate (ULI Volunteer)
- Kathryn Randle, Development Manager - Rockport
- Alexandra Rybak, Director - Urban Land Institute
- Marianne Szczuryk, Economic Partnership Advisor, BIA Office - City of Toronto
- Mike Verity, Principal - Boszko & Verity

### TAP PARTICIPANTS

- Laura Alderson, Coordinator - Mount Dennis BIA
- Alyssa Cerbu, Planning Intern - IBI Group
- LoriAnn Girvan, Artscape - Chief Operating Officer
- Sarah Henstock, Area City Planner - City of Toronto
- Mick Mrambilla – Development Coordinator - Urban Arts
- Lensa Simesa, Operations Manager - Urban Arts

Special thanks to Councillor Frances Nunziata.

# Appendix A

## A. THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE – ULI

ULI is a nonprofit research and education organization supported by its members. Founded in 1936, the institute now has nearly 30,000 members worldwide representing the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines, working in private enterprise and public service.

As the preeminent multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information and experience among local, national and international industry leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places. ULI's mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in the creation of thriving and sustainable communities worldwide. Members say that ULI is a trusted idea place where leaders come to grow professionally and personally through sharing, mentoring and problem solving. With pride, ULI members commit to the best in land use policy and practice.

## B. ULI TORONTO DISTRICT COUNCIL

ULI Toronto is part of a global network of real estate and land development professionals with a mission to provide leadership and a forum for discussion around city building and responsible use of land and in sustaining and creating thriving communities worldwide. ULI Toronto carries forth that mission by serving the Greater Toronto Region's public and private sectors with pragmatic land use expertise and education. Presently, ULI Toronto has nearly 1,700 members.

## C. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL PROGRAM (TAP)

The ULI Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) is a high-profile industry program that brings together the finest expertise in the real estate, planning and development fields to collaborate on complex land use and redevelopment projects. The program is organized by the ULI Outreach Committee and typically convenes 6-12 members of the ULI Chapter to provide a meaningful contribution toward the revitalization of a city neighbourhood or district. At the conclusion of the TAP program, ULI compiles a summary of the presentations and recommendations in a TAP Report to be presented to the clients. The client for the Weston ULI TAP program is the City of Toronto BIA Office.

## Appendix A

### WESTON TECHNICAL ADVISORY PANEL 2.0 – BIOS

#### John Archer, Chief Development Officer - Three Sixty Collective

John has 20 years of experience as a retail and commercial consultant for both the public and private sectors in Canada, U.S., India, Russia, and the Middle East. The basis of the work specializes in translating economic information into livable communities. He specializes in urban and mixed use real estate, including site selection, gap analysis, consumer market research, feasibility studies, impact assessments, business district revitalization, branding, farmers' and public markets, shopping centres, and infill projects. John also sat for six years on the executive committee of the Toronto District Council's Urban Land Institute.

#### Alex Dow, Director, Neighbourhood Initiatives - United Way Greater Toronto'

Alex Dow is the current Director of Neighbourhood Initiatives at United Way Greater Toronto following his suburb-building and community work at a number of non-profit agencies operating from Rexdale to Malvern in Toronto's outer 416. His previous work focused on community building through civic engagement, the development of neighbourhood assets, and engaging diverse populations. United Way's partnership with the City of Toronto in 2005 through the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force drew renewed attention to growing poverty in these areas & launched a new approach to coordinating funding and policy efforts targeting the original 'priority neighbourhoods'. Since then United Way has increased funding to Toronto's inner suburbs and supported local leadership to champion change. UW continues to work on key policy and program initiatives in partnership with the City of Toronto such as community hubs and poverty reduction initiatives.

#### Alex Elgin, Senior Urban Designer, Associate - B+H

Alexander graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture from Bezalel Academy of Arts & Design in Jerusalem, Israel. He also holds a Postmaster Diploma in Urban Design and Territorial Planning from ENSAPB – National Superior School of Architecture in Paris-Belleville. Architect and Urban Designer with a rich foundation of more than 10 years of international experience in both masterplanning and architectural projects across Canada, France, Middle East, Russia and China, for both public and private sector clients. His work focuses on formulating urban design strategies and design solutions that achieve socio-economic objectives optimizing the broad public benefit of redeveloping and promote transformative city-building.

#### Mitch Gillin, Director Investments - Hullmark Developments Ltd

Mitch is the Director, Investments Commercial Real Estate at Hullmark Asset Management his responsibilities include acquisition/dispositions, partnerships & developments. He also oversees a multi-sector portfolio of assets across downtown Toronto. Mitch started his career at TD Bank in the National Real Estate Group providing financing solutions to developers across the Greater Toronto Area. Subsequently, Mitch joined TD Securities in the Real Estate Investment Banking Group providing advisory services to leading Canadian Real Estate companies. Mitch holds a Bachelor of Commerce from Queen's University and is a CFA Charterholder. Outside of work, you can catch Mitch dodging streetcars on his bike.



**Ulrike I. Gross, P.Eng. MBA - AVP Facilities and Asset Management - Wilfrid Laurier University**

As AVP - Facilities and Asset Management at Wilfrid Laurier University, Ulrike oversees the university's property portfolio comprised of over 3 million square feet, including responsibility for facilities operations, capital projects, campus planning, parking, real estate and the sustainability office. Ulrike's engineering career began in the oil industry, including roles in facilities and supply planning, regional budget oversight and building product mergers & acquisitions. After completing an MBA, Ulrike moved on to spend 25 years in the real estate industry, which enabled her to build broad based experience in green & brown field development, land planning, profitable asset management, property management, brokerage/business development and revitalization/repurposing of buildings and districts. Ulrike has worked in various primary and secondary markets in Canada and the United States. Further, her work experience has included most property product types including educational facilities, office, industrial, retail, resort and multifamily. A savvy negotiator, Ulrike has negotiated purchase/sale and lease contracts related to millions of square feet of transactions.

**Timea Jakab, Retail Design Manager - Gensler**

With over a decade of experience, Timea is committed to helping Canadian retailers flourish. On commercial retail developments and large-scale renovations throughout North America, Timea has brought her passion and unique understanding of the industry to each project to help refresh and elevate the brands she's worked with. A registered architect in Ontario, Timea believes in and promotes a holistic design approach that considers the many opportunities in shaping a strong customer experience. Utilizing her design background, Timea pairs an understanding of human behavior with the exploration of environmental, architectural, retail and graphic design solutions. Committed to supporting her community, Timea sits on the Executive Committee for Building Equality in Architecture Toronto (BEAT).

**Mary Mowbray Senior Vice President, Retail Group - Colliers International**

Mary leads Colliers Retail Group in the Greater Toronto Area. She has a strong understanding of every major retail market in Canada, including enclosed and open-air shopping centres and street retail areas. Mary's success is based on her ability to fully understand her clients' objectives and businesses, beyond their immediate real estate needs. She brings a strategic perspective and extensive market knowledge to her clients' real estate requirements. Mary is a past President of Toronto CREW (Commercial Real Estate Women) and served for five years on its board. Through Toronto CREW, she was instrumental in starting a mentoring program for young women in Toronto commercial real estate industry. In 2007, she worked to develop a mentoring program for Colliers Toronto area offices and the program has since been rolled out to all Colliers' offices. Mary also serves on the board of the Canadian Women's Foundation ([www.cdnwomen.org](http://www.cdnwomen.org)), Canada's only national public foundation for women and girls. She is a past co-chair of CWF's board. She was a REX award finalist in 2001, an industry excellence award sponsored by NAIOP and The Globe and Mail. Mary also serves on Colliers North American Retail Steering Committee.

**Gay Stephenson, Co-Chair - DECA Danforth East Community Association**

Passionate about working with communities and individuals towards positive change, Gay Stephenson combines nearly two decades of experience in project management, web communications, and community outreach and has co-run DECA's Pop-Up Shop Project as part of an ongoing community economic development position at WoodGreen Community Services. DECA's (Danforth East Community Association) Pop-up Shop Project was part of their ongoing renewal efforts to fill empty storefronts along Toronto's Danforth East neighbourhood. Focussed along an area of the neighbourhood which was facing decline, property owners were approached to make their otherwise empty space available to

business owners for a small period of time. The project aimed to improve the walkability of one of the neighbourhood's commercial areas, while providing support to new retailers for up to a six month period. The project which has since hosted 32 Pop-up shops providing entrepreneurs valuable experience running and operating their own business. Since the project's launch, the vacancy rate in the neighbourhood has dropped from 17% to a healthy 6%.

#### **Scott Torrance, Practice Leader, Landscape Architecture Studio - Forrec**

Scott leads the landscape architecture studio at FORREC Ltd., a global entertainment design company. He is an award-winning landscape architect with more than 22 years' experience, including 12 years as head of his own firm, Scott Torrance Landscape Architect, which joined FORREC Ltd. in 2016. A certified Green Roof Professional and recognized expert in the field, Scott led a distinguished team to author the City of Toronto Guidelines for Biodiverse Green Roofs. At FORREC, Scott leads our landscape architecture work for Canadian and global clients, allocating resources, overseeing designs and motivating his team to excellence.

# Appendix B

## WESTON TAP 2.0 – AGENDA & FOCUS QUESTIONS

June 23, 2018

8:30am – 9:00am: Welcome and Introductions

- Richard Joy - ULI Toronto
- Paul Bedford - Weston TAP Chair
- Councillor Nunziata
- Pru Robey, Pru Robey Consulting
- Sarah Henstock, Area City Planner - City of Toronto
- Marianne Szczuryk, Economic Partnership Advisor, BIA Office - City of Toronto

9:00am - 10:30am: Overview and Introductions to Weston (Community Panels)

Retail Presenters (facilitated by Paul Bedford)

- Marion O'Sullivan, Coordinator and Event Planner - Weston Village BIA
- Cassandra Nicolaou, Owner - supercoffee
- Suri Weinberg-Linsky, Proprietor & Manager - Squibbs

Community Organizations (facilitated LoriAnn Girvan)

- Stachen Frederick, Executive Director - Frontlines
- Marlene Mckintosh, Executive Director - Urban Arts

Residential Presenters (facilitated by Pru Robey)

- Candice Laidlow - ACORN Canada
- Dave Bennett, Chair - Weston Village Residents Association

10:30am - 12:00pm: Walking Tour

- LoriAnn Girvan, Artscape - Chief Operating Officer
- Suri Weinberg-Linsky, Proprietor & Manager - Squibbs
- Cherri Hurst, President - Weston Heritage Conservation District Board

12:00pm – 12:15pm: Break

12:15pm – 1:00pm: Working Lunch

1:00pm – 3:30pm: TAP Panelist Working Sessions

### Focus Questions

1. What is your vision for a great Weston Village main street/retail environment? Does Weston have any of these elements already? What are they lacking? What needs protection or improvement?
2. What shops, services, and institutional uses would contribute to improving Weston as a main street? What needs protection or improvement?
3. What infrastructure or public realm improvements should be considered (including traffic operations & pedestrian experience) to enhance the Weston Village experience. What elements of the public realm need protection?
4. Architecturally, what must be preserved or improved? What could be changed or redeveloped?
5. What additional local programming could be considered to meet the needs of the community? What programming must be preserved or enhanced (e.g. Farmers Market, Santa Claus Parade)?

3:30pm – 4:00pm: Conclusions

4:00pm – 4:15pm: Wrap up



For more information contact ULI Toronto  
Tel: 647-258-0017 or Email: [toronto@uli.org](mailto:toronto@uli.org)

