



# THE VILLAGE OF UNIONVILLE

MAIN STREET UNIONVILLE  
COMMUNITY VISION PLAN

VERSION 3.1

NOVEMBER 4, 2014.







## CHARACTER IS EVERYTHING

From the railroad tracks, we're ready to walk into the commercial centre of Unionville. For practical purposes, we'll explore opportunities for the core in three sections: West Side South, West Side North, and East Side.

Consider that many of these buildings were almost lost to progress at the end of the 1960s. Municipal officials wanted to widen Main Street to accommodate growing traffic volume – destroying most of the historic structures in the process. Alarmed citizens called attention to the problem by closing the street and holding an open-air festival.

The protest was so effective, the Town built the Kennedy Road Bypass instead. And, every year

since 1970, the community has gathered along Main Street on the first weekend in June to celebrate its triumph at the Unionville Festival.





# MAIN STREET VILLAGE CORE

## Unionville Village Core Area

The Village Core is the centrepiece of the design effort. It is the principal commercial precinct, easily walkable, and what most visitors currently understand to be Main Street -Unionville. It has many challenges that have prevented reinvestment and stymied sustainable retail. While the core area is an integrated whole, the plan addresses three focus areas:

- West Side North
- West Side South
- East Side

## Total Proposed Village Core Program

Retail	2300 S.M.
Condominiums-	75 Apt.
Apartments	31 Apt.
Townhouses	16 T.H.
Hotel	30 Rms.

## Parking Required

Retail	166 Sp.
Condominiums	113 Sp.
Apartments	37 Sp.
Townhouses	32 Sp.
Hotel	30 Sp.

**Total Parking Required      378 Sp.**

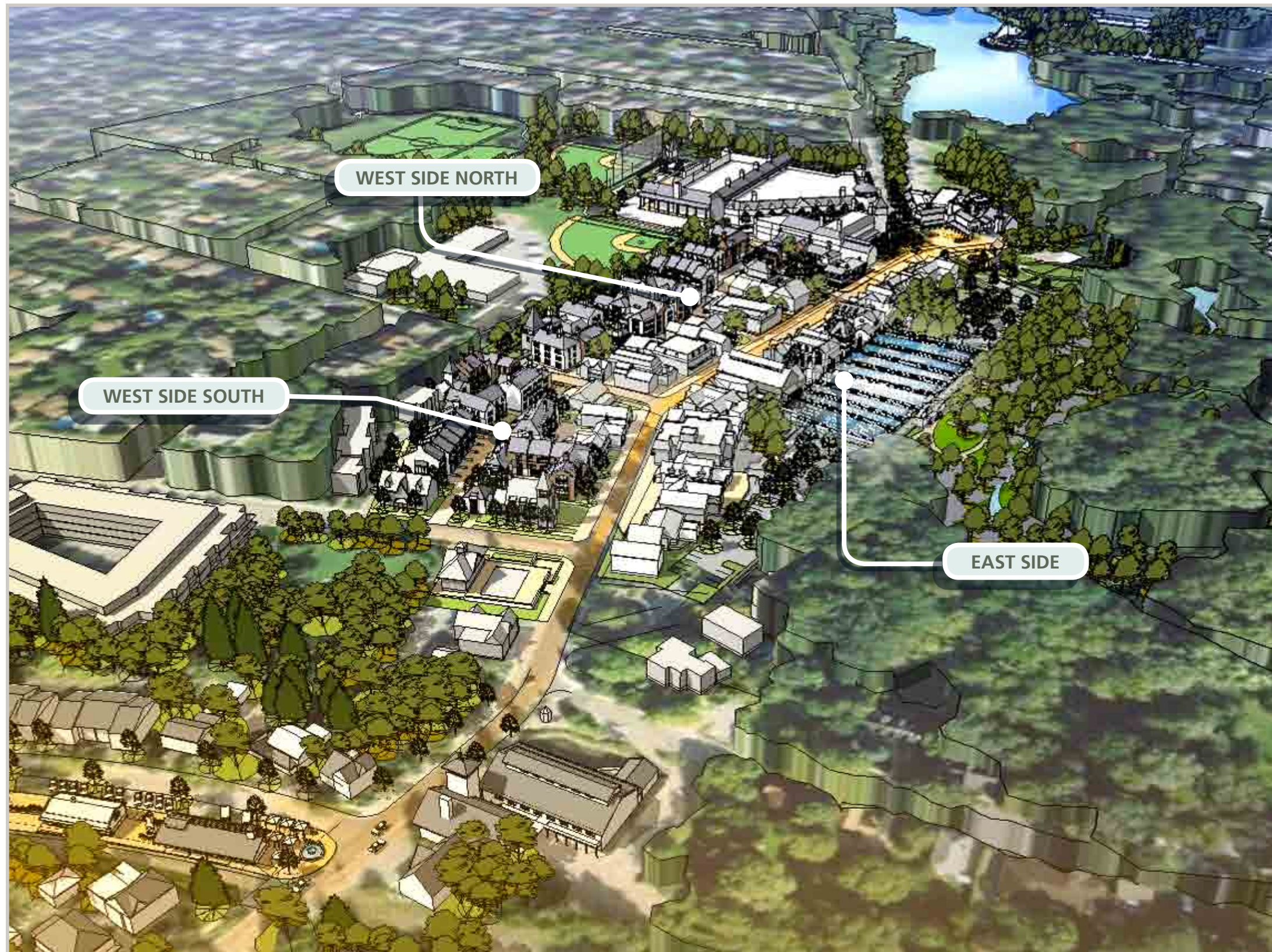


Illustrative Site Plan





## MAIN STREET VILLAGE CORE



Aerial View of Village Core outlined in red dash

The principal design issue in the Core Area relates to the opportunity to use the large amount of underutilized space behind and between existing buildings to create additional residential and retail space. For Unionville to function as a traditional village that provides for local needs while maintaining its unique appeal to those from across the province, it is essential that additional space be provided in a manner that allows the Village to grow gently over time and maintain its existing unique character. The built form of the existing and new structures will together promote a diverse program of retail, dining and residential that is relevant to both local residents and visitors. Another significant challenge is increasing parking capacity within the core, to accommodate existing and new customers and residents, while providing for the increased demand generated by festivals and special events. By providing a comprehensive solution to park the core area, the Vision Plan redistributes parking spaces from some existing locations to a central parking facility, thereby making those former parking sites available for more valuable infill opportunities.

In addition to parking, a central premise of the Vision Plan is to promote residential uses behind the existing buildings on the West Side of Main Street Unionville to bolster the year-round livability and use of the street. Most Main Streets are not solely dependent on retail to maintain year-round viability. The introduction of a residential program would counterbalance the singular dependence on destination retail, promote a diverse program of uses by adding year-round residents, and create new retail opportunities to serve local needs.









# INSPIRING DESIGN

Unionville is blessed with a wealth of heritage buildings, well preserved from the 19th and early 20th centuries.

At the northwest corner of Main and Fred Varley Drive stands the iconic Congregational Church, 1879 (known locally as the Vet’s Hall). Its architect, E.J. Lennox, later designed such Toronto landmarks as Old City Hall, the King Edward Hotel and Casa Loma. On the other side of Fred Varley Drive, the Millennium Bandstand, a popular public event venue built in 2001, pays tribute to Lennox’s unique arches and multi-form columns.

North of the church, the huge lilac hedge on our left marks the front of the Mark Braithwaite

property, still owned by descendants of the family. It’s one of many fine examples of classic Gothic Revival architecture throughout the Village.

This portion of the core ends where the street makes a right-hand bend, at the public laneway and walking path that lead west to Fonthill Boulevard.





# MAIN STREET WEST SIDE SOUTH

## West Side Concepts

The concept design for the West Side of Main Street Unionville expands the depth of the Village fabric while providing sustainable growth opportunities through the addition of infill buildings behind those that currently front Main Street. This area is currently underutilized and mainly devoted to surface parking. Expanding the village fabric in this manner will provide additional retail and residential space, promoting the social and economic sustainability at the heart of a functional Village. Furthermore, a second, delicately crafted layer of buildings on the West Side of Main Street will create a richer pedestrian experience by providing additional walking routes within the core and to the surrounding neighbourhoods.

The West Side of Main Street Unionville comprises two distinct focus areas: West Side South is bounded by Fred Varley Drive to the south and Fonthill Lane to the north, while West Side North extends from Fonthill Lane to Crosby Arena. While the Crosby Arena and Curling Club are located within the West Side North focus area, they are addressed separately as a distinct focus area due to the unique challenges they pose. The principal constraint for reinvestment on the West Side as a whole is the existing framework of small, individual lots, which are difficult to access in the rear for parking and service.



Illustrative Plan







Aerial View of West Side South



# MAIN STREET WEST SIDE SOUTH

## Proposed Village Core West Side South Additional Program

Retail	600 S.M.
Condominiums	30 Apt.
Townhouses	6 T.H.

### Parking Required

Retail	43 Sp.
Condominiums	45 Sp.
Townhouses	12 Sp.

Total Parking Required 100 Sp.

LAND USE DIAGRAM	
<div></div>	Residential
<div></div>	Existing
<div></div>	Mixed Use Res over Retail



Land Use Plan





Laneway Mews to be located behind Main Street



Laneway Mews Precedent - rear garages designed to make interior streets



The laneway behind the block can be designed to be pedestrian scaled adding another unique passage in the rich network of walkable streets.



## West Side South Concepts

In the spirit of the overall West Side Concept, the concept of the West Side South focus area is to expand the Village fabric and fill in missing gaps in the streetwall. The West Side South strategy however, is programmatically less dense and includes a vehicular laneway running from south to north between Fred Varley Drive and Fonthill Lane.

### The plan has the following aspects:

1. EJ Lennox Way is fronted on the east side with new town homes completing this small street.
2. The deep lots fronting Main Street Unionville in West Side South allow for the creation of additions to the existing buildings. These additions are sited to create courtyards and passageways providing further walking depth to the area. Specifically, 154 Main Street Unionville gains a rear addition, with a new infill courtyard building created immediately to its south. Residents of these buildings and the old Congregational Church building on the corner of Fred Varley Drive and Main Street Unionville share a small below-grade garage that is accessed from Fred Varley Drive.
3. A complex of three new residential buildings lies behind 154 and 158 Main Street immediately south of Fonthill Boulevard. These small apartment buildings are grouped around a courtyard with one level of parking below ground, accessed off of Fonthill Lane.









# BRINGING HISTORY TO LIFE

This focus area embraces the west-side buildings from the bend in the road up to the edge of the Crosby sports complex. It also reaches back into the laneways and parking lots behind the street, to the grounds of Parkview Public School.

Here we see the best and the worst of Unionville – fine heritage buildings with distinctive character, as well as underutilized areas and gaps that illustrate the “missing teeth” syndrome affecting the district.

Along Main Street, admire the historic wheel-and-wagon shop from 1835, later a blacksmith and now a restaurant. Beside it is the Old Fire Hall with post-modern brick addition added in

the 1980s, fitted with a functioning bell tower. The Queen’s Hotel was built in 1871 when the railway came – a social centre of the village for decades, now expanded and housing retail and executive offices. Beside it are reminders of the village’s early general store, post office, the “Doctors’ House,” the 1907 Charles Stiver House (at one point a funeral parlour), and the Regency-style 1829 Eckardt-Stiver House – the oldest surviving building in Unionville.

The potential for enhancing this sector, including the land behind Main Street, is excellent if parking can be arranged elsewhere in the District.





# MAIN STREET WEST SIDE NORTH

## West Side North Concepts

The heritage buildings that front Main Street Unionville in the West Side North focus area are at the heart of the retail core. The vision for West Side North shows how the concept of adding depth to the Village fabric would be realized.

### The concept design for the West Side North has the following aspects:

1. The design proposes the addition of infill buildings behind the existing buildings fronting Main Street Unionville. The proportions, or ‘massing,’ of these buildings, and the style of their architecture will be compatible with the heritage character of Main Street Unionville. Individual buildings are conceived to be sympathetic to the existing buildings and are sited in a manner that creates an intimate urban pedestrian space that becomes a ‘natural’ extension of the village.
2. Fonthill Lane is reconnected to Fonthill Boulevard to the west. Reestablishing this connection provides an important second means of ingress and egress to the Main Street Unionville core area from the neighbourhood. However, in light of the concerns raised about the possibility of increased vehicular traffic through the neighbourhood, the addition of removable bollards in Fonthill Lane is proposed at the western boundary between the Main Street Unionville core area and Parkview Public School. These bollards can be raised and lowered at specific times to limit Fonthill Lane’s use as a thoroughfare for vehicular traffic while maintaining its availability as a pedestrian connection. Fonthill Lane will also serve to provide access between Main Street Unionville



Unionville Lanes



Unionville Lanes

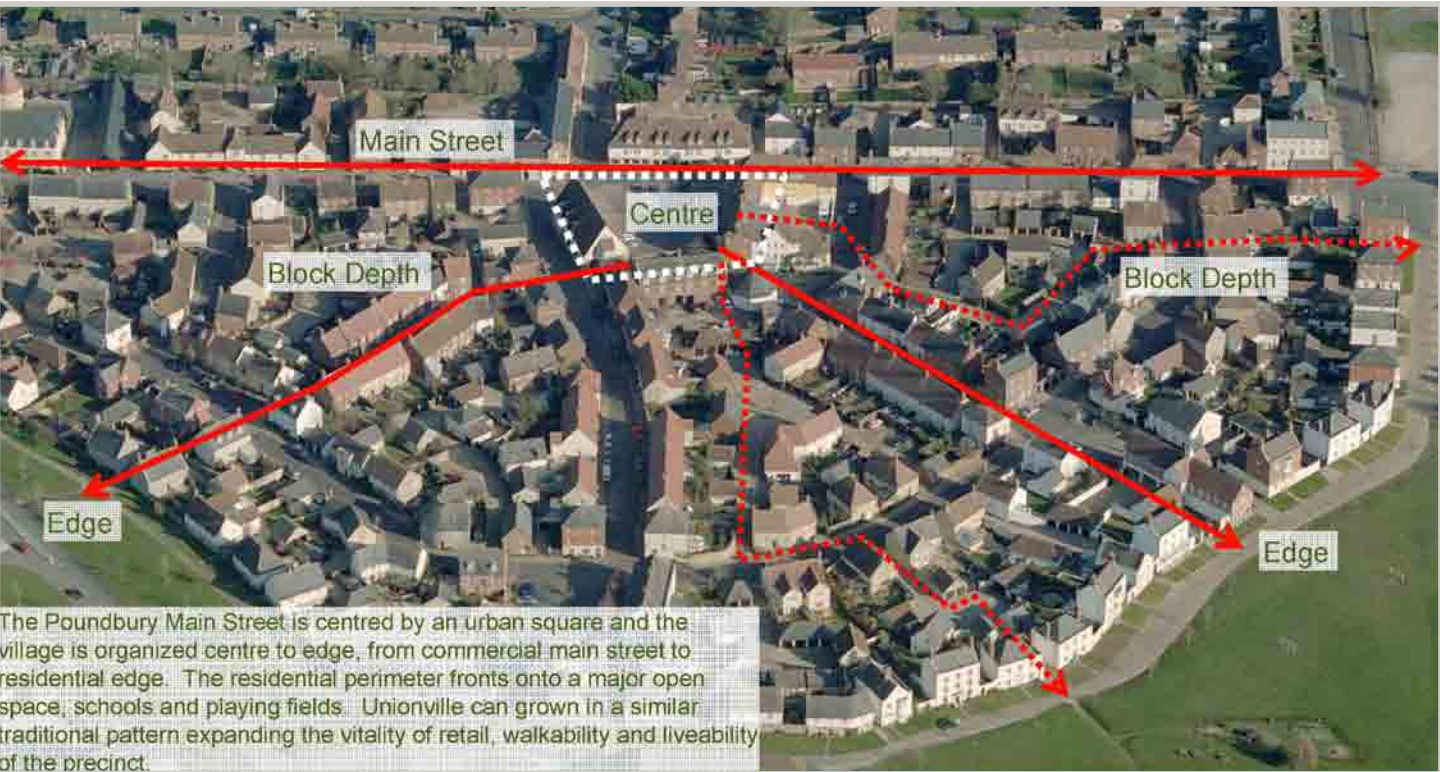


Existing Main Street



West Side looking East

Existing lanes can be carefully designed as a continuous paved area with retail, residential buildings, and spaces scaled to fit seamlessly into the village.



The Poundbury Main Street is centred by an urban square and the village is organized centre to edge, from commercial main street to residential edge. The residential perimeter fronts onto a major open space, schools and playing fields. Unionville can grow in a similar traditional pattern expanding the vitality of retail, walkability and liveability of the precinct.

Aerial View of Poundbury - Prince Charles' prototype for a contemporary "traditional" village where there is a reverence and respect for traditional architecture and pedestrian-scaled placemaking.



# MAIN STREET WEST SIDE NORTH



- and two small, below-grade garages for residents in the new buildings.
3. The proposed infill buildings are mainly oriented, or 'grained,' in an east-west direction, similar to the existing heritage buildings that front Main Street Unionville. This allows the side yards and passageways between the existing buildings to become a series of connections to a network of village-scaled courtyards and alleyways mainly surrounded by residential buildings, known as 'mews.' With commercial parking relocated to the East Side of Main Street Unionville, the existing vehicular alleys between buildings can also become 'Unionville Lanes,' an interesting and vibrant series of pedestrian passageways similar to the much-admired Yorkville Lanes in Toronto. This adds a new depth of experience to the core area, creating a secondary system of movement beyond the north-south axis of Main Street Unionville.
  4. The new infill buildings align at the rear to create an edge comprised of residential façades which front a walkway running along the Parkview Public School property line from Fonthill Lane to the Crosby Community Centre. The residences here which line Parkview Walk will serve as 'eyes on the park,' enhancing security within the school grounds and Crosby Park. A decorative wrought iron fence and a line of trees will provide further security and create a transition between the schoolyard and residential area.

Unionville Lanes - The Firehall Confectionery and the Queen's Hotel - These existing vehicular alleys are some of the most unique and intimate spaces off of Main Street. This concept plan works with this found condition and simply adds another layer of fabric behind the block to enclose and shape the pedestrian realm following this historic vernacular theme.



# MAIN STREET WEST SIDE NORTH

5. The existing Stiver House at the north end of Main Street Unionville functions as the lobby and amenity space for a new Stiver House Inn built immediately to its rear. The dual driveways that currently exist between the Stiver House and the building to its immediate south are combined into a single two-way vehicular lane, with the excess space used to create a charming building ensemble serviced by a drop-off court accessed from the lane. The urban parking concept for this hotel would incorporate valet parking with remote parking within the district.



Retractable Bollards applied to Fonthill Lane



Illustrative Site Plan





Bird's Eye View of West Side North



MAIN STREET WEST SIDE NORTH

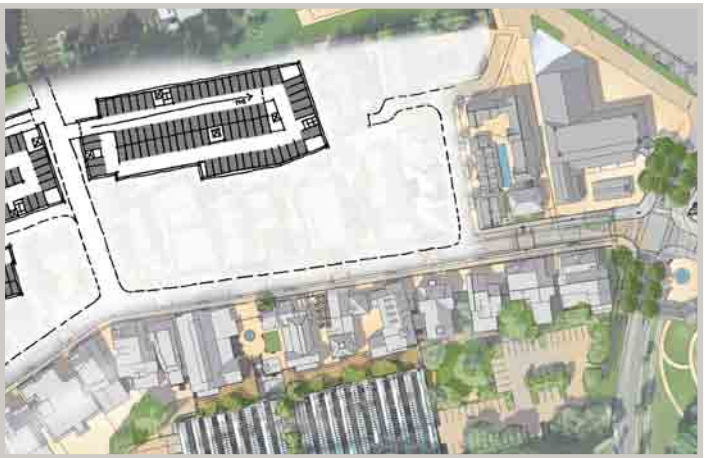
Proposed Village Core West  
Side South Additional Program

Retail	600 S.M.
Condominiums	30 Apt.
Townhouses	6 T.H.

Parking Required

Retail	43 Sp.
Condominiums	45 Sp.
Townhouses	12 Sp.

Total Parking Required      100 Sp.



Main Street - West Side Underground Parking



Land Use Plan

LAND USE DIAGRAM	
	Residential
	Residential over Retail
	Existing
	Hotel







Unionville Lanes - Transforming existing vehicular lanes into intimately scaled pedestrian walkways, mews and passages that lead one deep into the block. Unionville Lanes expand walkability east to west, and provide opportunities for much needed additional patio space and sitting areas off the Main Street in the "nooks and crannies" that further enhance the unique, almost bespoke urbanism of Unionville.



# MAIN STREET WEST SIDE NORTH



Poundbury along the Park



Parkside Walk north to Crosby Community Centre



The residential buildings on the west side completes the block and the neighbourhood, establishing a Parkside Elevation along the Village edge facing Parkside School and Crosby Park





Stiver House Inn



The Stiver House - The small footprint works well as a lobby for an inn. A similar concept, The Victorian Villas in Niagara-on-the-Lake, incorporates a collection of small buildings to form a village-scaled inn on a historic main street.



The Smithy - lobby and front desk for the Victorian Villas



Victorian Villas - Precedent for a new building in a historic style.



# MAIN STREET WEST SIDE NORTH



Unionville Lanes - Residential buildings are scaled to mirror the relative size, scale and character of the existing Main Street. The arrangement of buildings creates interesting spaces and walking routes west to the Parkside Walk and Crosby Park.



Old Quebec City - Lower Town - 100% pedestrian quarter, the scale and massing of this unique area is compatible with Unionville Lanes



Old Quebec City - Lower Town - Pedestrian mews and passages create wonderful places to explore and the narrow cross-section can span decorations for seasonal events.







Aerial View of West Side along Parkview Public School Frontage









## THE OPPORTUNITY TO INNOVATE

Changing elevations govern the properties of the village's east side. The land slopes away from Main Street down to the Concession Road bypass and towards the Bruce Creek. This creates a generous, if somewhat fractured parking zone east of the buildings – and a floodplain that must be intelligently managed.

As Unionville spread south from Union Mills in the mid-1800s, buildings sprang up in a variety of architectural styles. They served all kinds of community needs – dressmaking, a butchery, another blacksmith, workers' cottages, and later stores that specialized in antiques, books, gardening supplies and more. A public stairway at a midpoint along the east side links the street with the lower parking lots.



In recent decades, the street has evolved into a blend of shopping and entertainment. As consumer habits change, it will take creative, interdependent solutions to sustain a vibrant commercial district well into the future.





# MAIN STREET EAST SIDE

## East Side Concepts

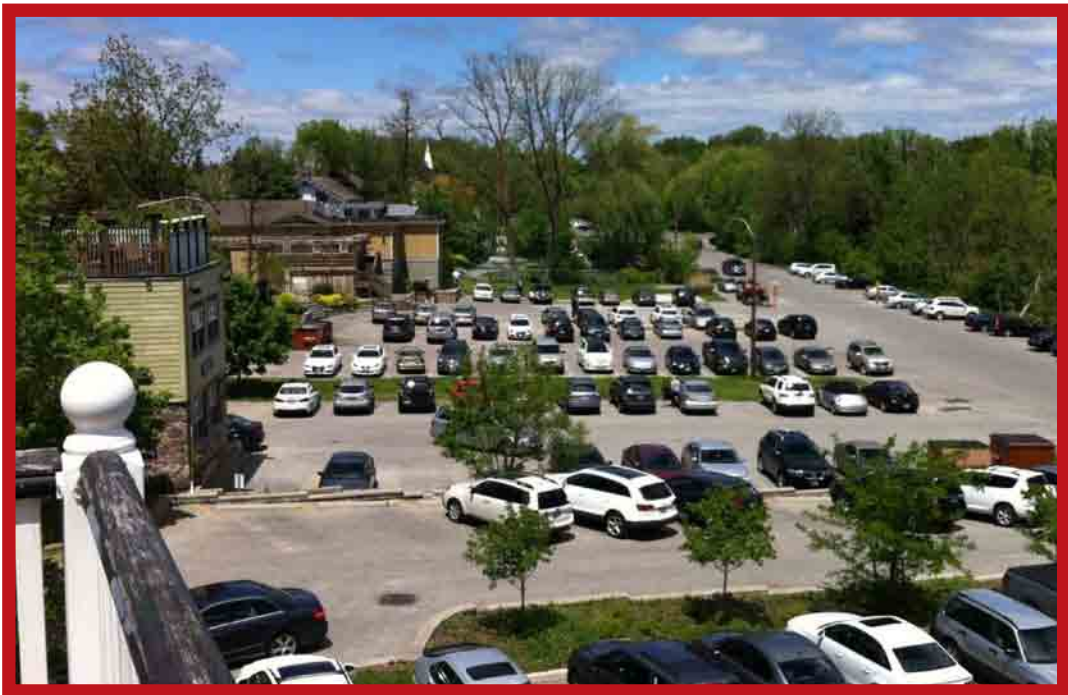
The East Side of Main Street Unionville faces a very different set of physical characteristics than the West Side. Main Street Unionville developed and grew atop a ridge immediately west of the Concession Road because early settlers knew the dangers of building in the Bruce Creek floodplain. It is for this reason that buildings fronting the East Side of Main Street Unionville are relatively shallow, as the steep grade change down to the Concession Road below has prevented significant additions or expansion outside the floodplain. There is, nevertheless, a silver lining in all of this: the Concession Road itself provides ready and convenient access to the rear of every lot. These rear lots have become the primary source of parking in the Village core area.

The Vision Plan makes use of the conveniences inherent in the configuration of the East Side of Main Street Unionville by proposing a central, shared parking facility for the core area, situated on the site presently occupied by the majority of the rear surface lots. This facility would supply sufficient parking for both the East Side and for all other commercial uses throughout the Village core. The parking facility would have two levels: one at the lower grade of the Concession Road, the other on a deck elevated to the same level as Main Street Unionville—the upper level would therefore appear as surface parking from the perspective of one standing on Main Street Unionville. This deck could provide a platform for an array of solar panels, supplying the Village core with a supplementary and sustainable source of power.

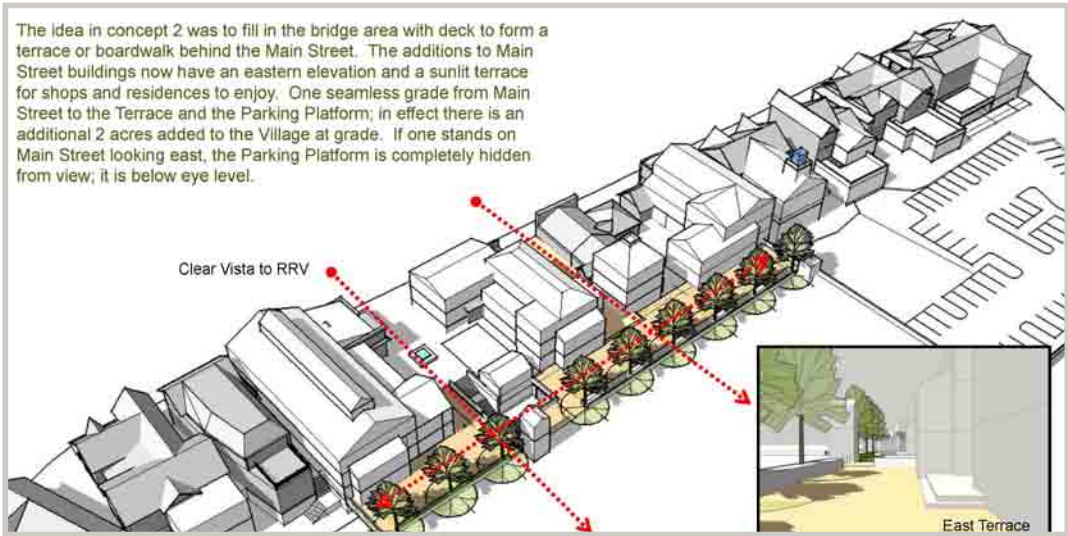
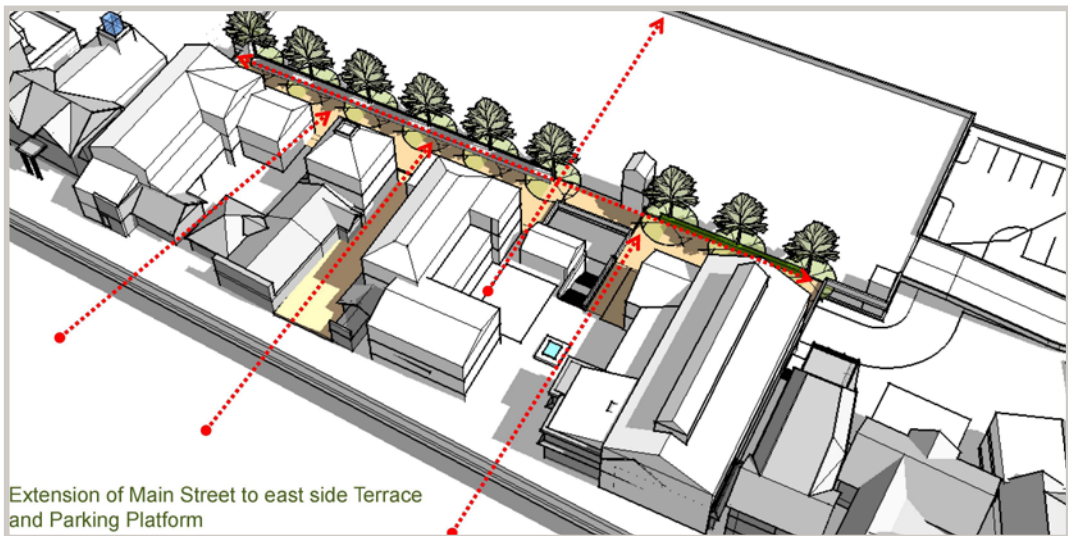
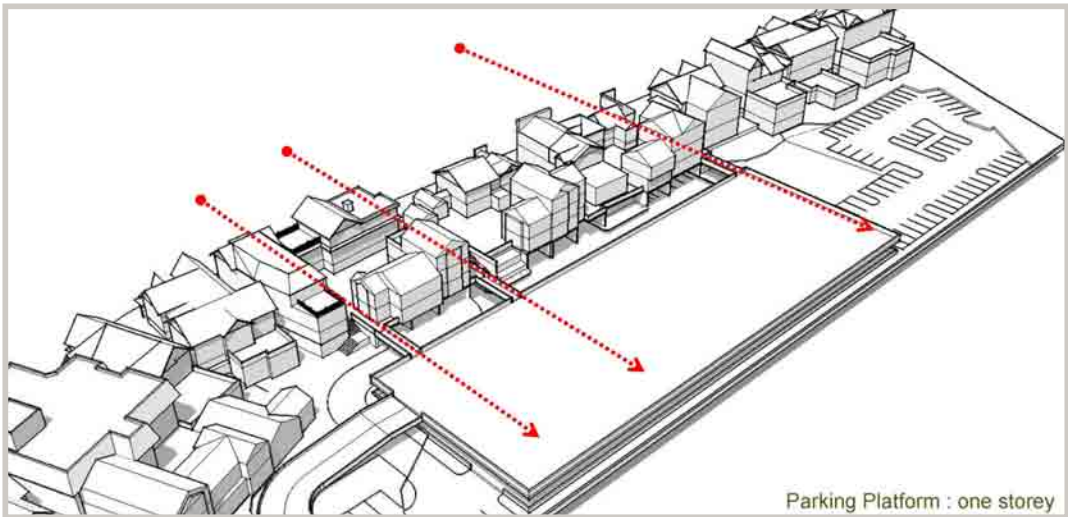
An elevated boardwalk would extend from north to south immediately behind the existing East Side buildings, connecting the East Side frontage to



The introduction of a parking platform on the east side would functionally fit into the existing grade-change between Main Street and the floodplain. The view from Main Street would be unobstructed and the platform would provide much-needed parking supply for this retail district.



View over the east side and existing parking field in the floodplain



Initial concept sketches



## MAIN STREET EAST SIDE



the upper deck of the parking facility. Atop this deck, existing retail buildings could be gently expanded and augmented with new, compatible buildings, providing additional retail space. Together, these buildings would be linked atop the boardwalk by a sequence of inviting retail courts and passages leading to Centre Square, a new central gathering place for retail and civic activity. Centre Square would provide the main connection to the parking deck and to the Rouge River Valley Trail beyond, via a graceful stairway (supplemented by an elevator in Centre Square) down to the park's western edge.

This plan will require cooperation among landowners, businesses, and municipal and regional authorities. Land ownership constraints exist, as well as the need to address the issues relating to parking facility ownership, financing, maintenance, and gaining the permission to locate it in the floodplain. It is important to remember that none of these obstacles are insurmountable, and they can be addressed separately, carefully, and incrementally during the implementation phase.

### Specific aspects of the East Side concept plan are:

1. An empirical study of the existing retail conditions revealed that the shops on the East Side are very much constrained by their small-footprint buildings. The East Side of Main Street Unionville, being at the centre of the core retail area, is where one would expect the greatest level of retail intensity. The Vision Plan therefore expands the retail program by locating additions on the back of Heritage structures as well as providing new infill buildings. This creates viable retail footprints and opportunities for second/third floor residential intensification.

Aerial View looking east showing intensification of retail on Main Street and the parking platform nestled into valley lands at the rear



# MAIN STREET EAST SIDE

2. A two-level municipal parking structure—the parking ‘platform’—is located over the existing parking at floodplain level, effectively doubling parking capacity in this area. While there are many challenges to implementation, the authors of this Vision Plan firmly believe that the future sustainability of the Village depends on this municipal parking solution:
  - The two-level structure allows the upper level to be accessed directly from Main Street Unionville, and the lower level from the Concession Road below. From Main Street Unionville the parking facility is approached on foot through a public square to be located on the city-owned parcel. By automobile, a ramp from the Concession Road utilizes the existing change in grade to allow arrival at the upper level with very little effort. Otherwise the parking on the lower level is accessed as it is today. The upper deck extends over the Concession Road itself to allow additional room for expansion of the existing buildings fronting Main Street Unionville.
  - The parking facility also serves as an enhanced gateway to the Rouge River Valley trail system. From the public square off of Main Street Unionville, a walkway is created that passes across the platform to a stair that takes one down to the trail system.
  - Solar panels could be located above the parking spaces on the second level to reduce the heat island effect in the summer and to cover the pavement from inclement weather in the winter. The solar panels can generate enough electricity to power the lights on Main Street as well as potentially other equipment. The feasibility of solar panels still requires further study.





## MAIN STREET EAST SIDE



The River or Rouge Walk concept establishes a terrace on the eastern elevation of Main Street

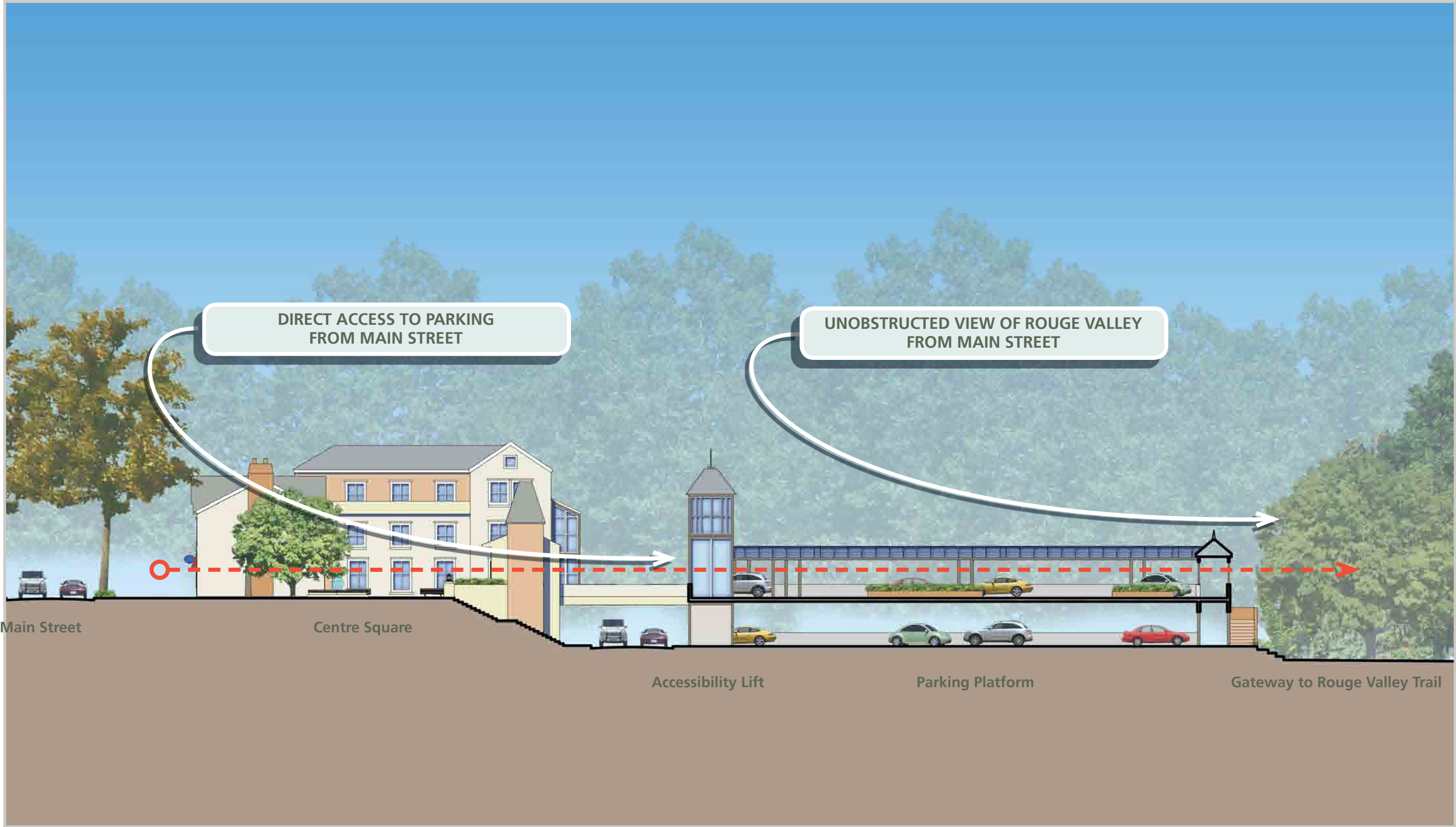
3. The small Centre Square is the gravitational centre of Main Street. It is the centralized access to the parking areas, and the natural location for public washrooms and an accessibility lift.
4. Adjacent to Centre Square is located a larger building to accommodate a junior-anchor size retail store with convenient access to parking. Locating a retail anchor on Main Street will intensify retail activity in the centre of the Core Area and provide a 10-13,000-square-foot footprint to attract a destination tenant. Every effort should be made to incorporate the heritage buildings on site and be designed to fit into the scale of Main Street.
5. The backside of the buildings on the East Side and their additions gains a new identity as an eastern elevation looking out onto the Rouge Valley. This elevation is given a means of pedestrian movement through construction of a linear north-south boardwalk, or River Walk, accessible from Main Street Unionville by passages located between buildings. It is anticipated that the boardwalk would be animated by retail shops fronting onto sitting areas that enjoy the morning light, panoramic views of the Rouge Valley and access to parking. The River Walk boardwalk adds another layer of complexity and another system of pedestrian movement to the East Side of Main Street Unionville.



Linear boardwalk



MAIN STREET EAST SIDE



Diagrammatic Cross-Section thru the East Side showing the integration of the parking platform in the valley lands. The platform level is coincident with Main Street with an unobstructed view of the creek.







The Centre Square off of Main Street establishes a centre point in the overall plan. Public Washrooms, an accessibility lift and access to structured parking functionally support the vitality of Main Street.



# MAIN STREET EAST SIDE - ALTERNATE PLAN

## Alternate Plan for the East Side

Plan refinements were made to the original concept that respect the integrity of heirtage buildings fronting on Main Street. As the following plans and illustrations show, the alternate east side concept retains, in place, the Andrew Eckardt Worker's Cottage, 187 Main Street (c.1850) and the John Devlin Harness Shop, 177 Main Street (c.1870), and proposes building program entirely behind these structures.

This plan concept will be the scheme that governs all programmatic tabulations in the community vision plan.



187 Main Street



177 Main Street



Aerial of Centre Square



MAIN STREET EAST SIDE - ALTERNATE PLAN



Main Street - East Side Alternate Plan



Main Street - East Side Surface Parking



Main Street - East Side Structured Parking



Land Use

Proposed Village Core  
East Additional Program

Retail	1300 S.M.
Apartments	31 Apt.

Parking Required

Retail	94 Sp.
Apartments	37 Sp.

**Total Parking Required 131 Sp.**

LAND USE DIAGRAM	
	Residential over Retail
	Retail
	Civic
	Existing