

Faculty of Community Services

# Centre for Urban Research and Land Development



## Warden Woods: A Case Study of Building Affordable Market Family Housing on Former Industrial Lands

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# Warden Woods: A Case Study of Building Affordable Market Family Housing on Former Industrial Lands

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY<sup>1</sup>

This report traces the transformation of 68 hectares (168 acres) of land in the former city of Scarborough from an under-performing industrial area to the family-oriented residential community now known as the Warden Woods Community. The research undertaken for this report was used as input into CUR's Policy Commentary No. 2 *Reusing Older Industrial Areas: An Effective Tool for Providing Affordable Market Housing for Families in the City of Toronto* released in December 2014.

It briefly describes conditions in the larger industrial area of which the Warden Woods lands were a part around the year 2000, and provides insights into the numbers and types of housing built and the characteristics of residents occupying the new homes. The bulk of the report provides a chronology of the planning process that led to the conversion of the Warden Woods lands from industrial or commercial uses to a sizable lower-density residential community.

The City's promotion of the creation of a new community with a large component of affordable market ground-oriented housing for families has been a success in Warden Woods, and its intentions were realized. The keys to this success include:

- Relatively low land prices which were linked to a mature industrial area which was in decline as an employment area;
- The commitment of city planners and politicians to the redevelopment of an older industrial area to create a new residential community of affordable market ground-oriented housing;
- A subway station in or near the redevelopment area and access to nearby employment nodes via car or bus;
- No permissions for higher density apartments on any of the land parcels owned by private interests;
- Developers who foresaw the redevelopment potential of then industrial or commercial lands for the housing units that have been built in Warden Woods; and
- Proximity to an existing residential community where both communities can jointly use existing community amenities which resulted in infrastructure efficiencies.

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<sup>1</sup> This report was authored by Dr. Frank A. Clayton, Senior Research Fellow, CUR with research assistance provided by Colin Wolfe and Zach Youngerman. The opinions expressed in this research report are those of the author only and do not represent opinions and views of either CUR or Ryerson University.

# 1. OVERVIEW AND METHODS

## **Historical Development of the Warden Avenue Corridor within a Larger Industrial Area**

The Warden Woods area was the southern end of a large industrial area that was home to many prominent corporations. It suffered from a number of global stresses and, as macroeconomic conditions shifted, had become less economically productive as an industrial area. Retail ventures in the area met mixed success and eventually proved to be unviable in the transitional industrial context in which they were located.

## **Planning Process and Milestones leading to Re-designation (Official Plan and Zoning)**

Background studies and city policy documents culminating in the 2002 Toronto Official Plan favoured the conversion of poorly-performing industrial areas to residential development. Development pressure along the Warden Avenue corridor along with the potential value of under-used parking at the Warden Station prompted the city to hire a team led by the planningAlliance to study the area comprehensively. The consultants, and later city staff, supported managing, rather than resisting, residential development. However, issues of the scale and type of housing – ground-oriented versus mixed-use and high-density – created ongoing tension between planners’ visions and developers’ market imperatives.

## **Characteristics of the Housing Built and the Residents in the Warden Woods Community**

Overall, the character of the housing that was built in the newly redeveloped Warden Woods area has taken the form of ground-oriented housing typologies which are affordable from a market perspective. The rapid sellout indicates the existence of a sizable untapped demand for this type of housing.

The new housing which was built in Warden Woods has attracted a preponderance of home-owning families with children at home — many neither English nor French as their mother tongue.

### **1.1 Research Approach**

The approach used for this report includes reviewing City of Toronto and Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) planning documents including official and secondary plans, staff and consultant reports, and zoning by-laws. This information is supplemented with news sources to provide context.

An assessment of the characteristics of the housing built and residents of Warden Woods was obtained from Statistics Canada, Environics Analytics, and RealNet Canada Inc.

## 1.2 Report Structure

The report is divided into four chapters in addition to the introduction.

Chapter 2 describes the history of industry along the Warden Avenue corridor and the economic conditions at the turn of the millennium.

Chapter 3 describes the milestones, including the Official Plan and TTC planning efforts, which culminated in the Phase 3 Planning Study and the Warden Woods Community Secondary Plan, which ultimately recommended the creation of a new residential housing community.

Chapter 4 investigates the Census of Canada, Environics and RealNet data on the typology of the housing which was built and looks at the population and household characteristics of the new Warden Woods community.

## 2. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE WARDEN AVENUE CORRIDOR WITHIN A LARGER INDUSTRIAL AREA

### 2.1 Industrial Area Context

The area that is now Warden Woods was part of an extensive employment district. Planning policy for Employment Districts (often through secondary plans) was intended to preserve stable employment lands for future job security, growth and regional economic prosperity. According to the Scarborough Official Plan, which remained in force after amalgamation, the future Warden Woods lands fell under two secondary plans.<sup>2</sup> These were the Golden Mile Employment District Secondary Plan and the Oakridge Employment District Secondary Plan. The Golden Mile was named after an industrial concentration in England and had been the site of a munitions plant during WWII. Companies in the Golden Mile and Oakridge districts included auto manufacturers, Canadian General Electric, Pilkington Glass, Becker's Milk and Bell Canada.

Despite some heterogeneity in uses and relative resilience after the 1992-1994 recession, larger trends began to undermine the viability of the area.<sup>3</sup> An increasingly globalized economy, and free trade agreements, shifted manufacturing south and overseas. Computerized production displaced labour with investment in capital. Locally, the expansion of the 400 series highways neutralized the facilities' locational advantages of being adjacent to the CN rail lines, and it increased competition from suburban companies on lower-cost land.<sup>4</sup>

A survey of employment districts across Toronto, which was conducted as part of the Official Plan update in 2002, describes and quantifies trends which drove the changes in areas like the Warden Woods lands. *Historical Profiles of Employment Districts, 1991-2000* divides the geography of employment in the city into 18 districts. The Golden Mile and Oakridge Employment Districts were combined with employment areas as far North as Highway 401 in a district which was referred to as "Scarborough South West."<sup>5</sup>

During the ten-year period, employment declined 7.6% and the number of businesses declined 12.8% in the larger Scarborough South West. Of the group of 18 districts in the city of Toronto, six had declines, but only the gentrifying Weston Road/Junction district had a greater drop in employment than did Scarborough South West. Given the loss of 4,000 manufacturing jobs in

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<sup>2</sup> According to the Toronto Official Plan "Every official plan of the City that was in force on January 1, 1998 by virtue of Section 45 of the *City of Toronto Act, 1997 (No. 2)* and that remains in force on the day on which this section comes into force, (a) deemed to be an official plan of the City; and (b) remains in force, in respect of the part of the City to which it applied on December 31, 1997, until city council repeals it or amends it to provide otherwise." 2006, c. 11, Sched. A, s. 421. The New Official Plan was adopted by City Council in December 2002, and came into force in June 2006 through an OMB decision.

<sup>3</sup> Urban Development Services, City Planning Division, *Employment Areas: New Futures for Industrial Land* (City of Toronto, 2000), 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p.10. Generally characterizes underperforming employment areas as having a "rail orientation and relatively poor access to the highway system."

<sup>5</sup> Urban Development Services, City Planning Division. *Historical Profile of Employment Districts 1991-2000* (City of Toronto, 2002).



Scarborough South West, it is not surprising that parts of the Golden Mile and Oakridge Employment Districts became the objects of study as potential transition areas.

## 2.2 Conditions of Warden Avenue Corridor at the Turn of the Millennium

Prior to the redevelopment, the Warden Avenue Corridor was lined with manufacturers and the Warden Woods area included local landmark like the Lily Cup Company, which featured a two-storey painted “cup” intersecting the otherwise plain brick building. Other prominent facilities were the Becker’s Milk Plant, which processed and distributed milk and other products for their chain of convenience stores, and the Pilkington – later Ford – Glass factory at 350 Danforth Road.

Beyond manufacturing and warehousing, Centennial College (a career-oriented institution) offered courses in healthcare, nutrition and administration. It occupied a decommissioned government facility starting in 1966. North of St. Clair Avenue, the Warden Woods mall, built in 1970, was revamped in the mid-1990s as a so-called Power Centre with four anchor tenants: The Sports Authority, Future Shop, Michaels, and Petstuff. A media article about the redevelopment lists a “generous [advertising] launch budget of \$1 million.”<sup>6</sup> However, financial success of the Power Centre was not there for the mall, eventually leading to its demolition in 2005.

The conditions along Warden Avenue before redevelopment tell a story of an area in transition. A patchwork of historical manufacturing and industrial uses were beginning to diversify, as adaptive re-use of industrial buildings and new retail development gradually changed the makeup of the area.

## 2.3 Chapter Summary

The Warden Woods area was the southern end of a large industrial area that was home to many prominent corporations. It suffered from a number of global stresses and, as macroeconomic conditions shifted, it became less economically productive as an industrial area. Retail ventures in the area met mixed success and eventually proved to be unviable in the transitional industrial context in which they were located.

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<sup>6</sup>“Mall morphs into Power Centre,” *Strategy*, April 17, 1995, accessed July 30, 2014, <http://strategyonline.ca/1995/04/17/10444-19950417/>.



### 3. PLANNING PROCESS AND MILESTONES LEADING TO OFFICIAL PLAN AND ZONING REDESIGNATION

This chapter provides a chronology of the planning process which led to the conversion of the Warden Woods lands from an underused Employment Area to a lower density residential community. The objective of this section is to trace the evolution of planning thought about how to proceed with these lands. As will be illustrated, planning policy struggled to keep pace with development pressure and stakeholder eagerness to redevelop the area. The complexity of the redevelopment effort was increased due to the need to balance the priorities of the TTC, the City of Toronto and a variety of local industry, landowner and resident interests.

#### 3.1 Timeline

**1994** – In October, Scarborough Council requested the Golden Mile Land Use Review Study to consider the introduction of retail and commercial uses into this established industrial area.

**1996** – City of Scarborough passed Employment District Zoning By-law No 24982 on December 10, 1996. It was a consolidation of all of the Employment District zoning by-laws in Scarborough. The original by-laws for Golden Mile and Oakridge were first adopted well before that – probably in the early to mid-1960s.

**1997** – The Ontario Government of Premier Mike Harris cut provincial funding to TTC.

**1998** – The municipalities of Scarborough, North York, Etobicoke, East York and York amalgamated with the City of Toronto, a process initiated by Premier Mike Harris’s government.

**1999** – Scarborough Community Council submitted a report on amending the zoning of properties in the Birchmount Park Employment District, very near the south-eastern boundary of the future Warden Woods. The report described the outcome of a public meeting with eight property-owners and Councillor Ashton. It stated that a number of industries had closed or relocated, alternatively leasing their properties or leaving them vacant. As the council report makes clear, “The consensus was that a broader mix of land uses in addition to the existing industrial uses would be beneficial in improving the current situation.”<sup>7</sup>

**2000** – TTC convened a joint working group with the city of Toronto to investigate the potential of more ambitious sale or redevelopment of TTC assets. They considered spinning off a subsidiary to become a true property developer. This task force was established to “review properties used for transit purposes and to identify and prioritize those properties that have the highest development

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<sup>7</sup> Scarborough Community Council, City of Toronto, Official Plan Amendment Application SP1999004, Zoning By-law Amendment Application SZ1999007, December 8, 1999.

potential and marketability.”<sup>8</sup> Specifically, the group evaluated potential properties according to the planning context, operational issues for the TTC, and real estate issues.

**2000** – City of Toronto released *Employment Areas: New Futures for Industrial Land* as part of the background for the Official Plan. The report focused on 14 large Industrial Employment Areas in the city, but did not discuss these areas individually. Warden Woods was included within a larger area called the South West Scarborough Industrial Area.

The *Employment Areas* report recommended that strategic Employment Areas be protected, while others faring poorly be managed explicitly as “transitional areas” to be redeveloped for residential, retail and other “higher order uses”.

The recommendation that not all Employment Areas be preserved was based on the assessment that some older industrial sites would be “very expensive and risky” to reconfigure for future employment uses. At the same time, “strong demand” for residential uses, specifically ground-related housing, was putting pressure on older sites and would continue well into the future.<sup>9</sup>

The Warden Woods area has all of the characteristics which were described as being in the poorly performing areas: “older central area or inner suburban industrial districts, often linear in shape, typically with a rail orientation and relatively poor access to the highway system.”<sup>10</sup>

Those characteristics, and others which differentiate strong from weak employment areas, were formalized into seven criteria which were recommended as the basis for determining whether or not employment areas should be retained for employment uses or rezoned for other uses. The seven criteria which were outlined in the report are:

- Health of an Area (taking into consideration prediction of future employment trends)
- Presence of Appropriate Transportation
- Presence of Existing Uses
- Critical Mass (a diversity of building stocks able to accommodate and adapt to economic shifts)
- Composition of the Employment Mix
- Infrastructure Needs
- Future Potential (an open-ended vision as to whether another use better serves city-wide needs)

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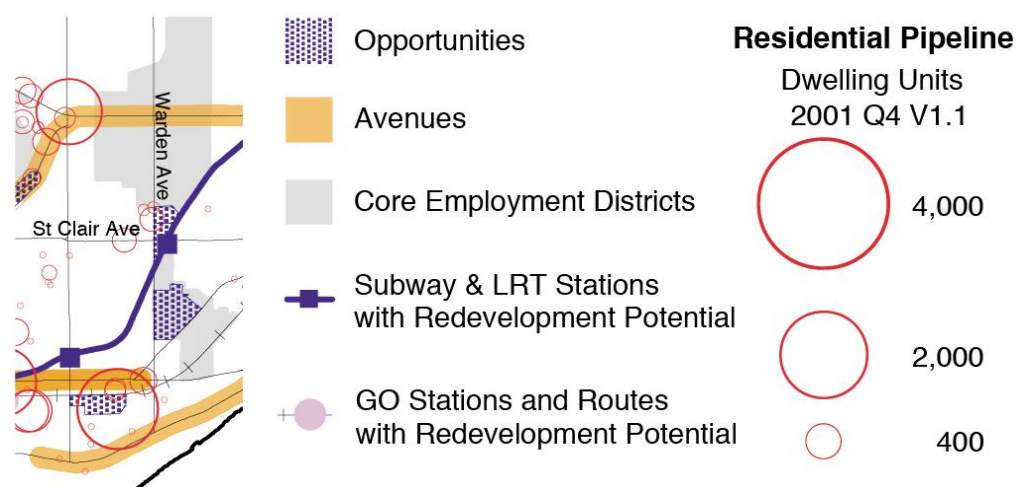
<sup>8</sup> Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief General Manager, TTC to Administration Committee and Toronto Transit Commission, “Review of TTC Properties,” March 12, 2002, City of Toronto, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Urban Development Services, City Planning Division, *Employment Areas: New Futures for Industrial Land*. (City of Toronto, 2000), 15.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.12

2002, May – Toronto Urban Development Services released *Flashforward: Projecting Population and Employment to 2031 In a Mature Urban Area.* Map 2 of that report, titled “Opportunities to Concentrate Projected Growth” identified Victoria Park and Warden Avenue Stations as having “redevelopment potential” (See Figure 1). These areas, which included much of what would become the Warden Woods community, were seen as opportunities partly because of their proximity to subway stations, as increasing the number of residents would make better use of existing transit infrastructure.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 1:**  
**Detail from Map “Opportunities to Concentrate Projected Growth”**



Source: Map 2, “Opportunities to Concentrate Projected Growth” in *Flashforward: Projecting Population and Employment to 2031 In A Mature Urban Area.* (Toronto: City of Toronto, 2002), 13.

2002 – Most pre-amalgamation employment areas were included in the Employment Districts on Map 2 of the new Official Plan which meant that conversion to residential use was not permitted. Some employment areas were not including the Warden Woods area. The Official Plan was “silent” about conversion of these areas which were still designated as Employment Areas in the Official Plan but were not designated as Employment Districts on the Land Use Plan. Once conversion had been agreed on, the Official Plan provided direction for redevelopment.

The direction was that Secondary Plans should be prepared for areas with “large tracts of vacant or underused land which would benefit from comprehensive planning” and “areas where development is occurring, or proposed, at a scale, intensity or character which necessitates reconsideration or

<sup>11</sup> Urban Development Services, City Planning Division *Flashforward: Projecting Population and Employment to 2031 In A Mature Urban Area.* (City of Toronto, 2002), 13.

reconfiguration of local streets, block plans, public works, open space or other public services or facilities.” Secondary plans also set out guidelines for density and parking.

One new designation category was “Regeneration Area”, which was inspired by the success of rezoning aging industrial uses in the King-Spadina and King-Parliament areas of downtown Toronto. The rationale behind Regeneration Areas was explained in the following passage:

*Regeneration Areas* open up unique areas of the City to a wide array of uses to help attract investment, re-use buildings, encourage new construction and bring life to the streets. These areas are key to the Plan’s growth strategy, reintegrating areas of the City that are no longer in productive urban use due to shifts in the local or global economies. In *Regeneration Areas*, commercial, residential, live/work, institutional and light industrial uses can be mixed within the same block or even the same building<sup>12</sup> [italics in original]

The new Regeneration Area classification reflected official thinking about the changing economy, vacancy rates, and lifestyles, particularly in the Downtown. The language suggested a more flexible and fluid approach to industrial lands that needed to adapt to the shifting economies and a broader suite of land uses.

**2002** – A joint TTC/City of Toronto task force reported on 10 “Schedule A” properties that had a high probability of redevelopment within 5 years. Within that group, the North Commuter Parking Lot of Warden Station was described as having a medium probability of success. The group reported that the site was attractive for redevelopment and that the replacement of the commuter parking was a “marginal operational difficulty”. When Warden Station served as the easternmost terminus of the Bloor-Danforth line from 1968 to 1980, commuter parking was an important component of intermodal transfer.<sup>13</sup> A report by TTC that same year said that Warden Station had some of the lowest passenger volumes in the system and was ranked 28 of 31 for population and employment density.<sup>14</sup> A more significant obstacle, the group wrote, was that “it would not be prudent to attempt to redevelop this site” before completion “of a planning framework study which would enable the City to maximize on the development potential.”<sup>15</sup>

Warden Station was one of many properties which the task force felt, “despite their potential, are difficult to develop and require a concentrated staff effort over a period of time to ensure that redevelopment occurs consistent with City and TTC goals and objectives.” Overall, the report suggested that policy needed to take the lead to realize the development potential of lands like

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<sup>12</sup> City Planning Division, *Toronto Official Plan* (City of Toronto, November 2002), 31.

<sup>13</sup> Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division to Planning and Transportation Committee, Toronto Staff Report “Phase 3 Warden Corridor Land Use Planning Study,” September 21, 2005, <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2005/agendas/committees/plt/plt051006/it001.pdf>, accessed April 20, 2015. This report states that the North Lot contained 1,341 spaces and was never more than half-full, p.14.

<sup>14</sup> “TTC Rapid Transit Expansion Study,” cited in planningAlliance *TTC Subway Lands - Warden Corridor and Victoria Park Station, Phase 1 Warden Corridor Planning Study* (2004), 54.

<sup>15</sup> “Review of TTC Properties” (2000), 8.

Warden Woods. A planning framework study was seen as a prerequisite to a redevelopment effort, as it would help to guide the redevelopment process with a long-term scope.

**2003** – City of Toronto hired a consultant team of planningAlliance, McCormick Rankin, and Metropolitan Knowledge International to perform a two-phase land use and planning study for redeveloping the Warden Corridor. The City wanted to assess the economic viability of the then-current uses, whether there was adequate physical and social infrastructure for new residential development, and how it should respond to development proposals. The team took a broad view of the work, stating that “Warden Station parking lots should not be studied in isolation from other lands in the Warden Corridor that have been the subject of developer interest.”<sup>16</sup>

**2004, April** – planningAlliance released a Phase 1 report, *Land Use Planning Study TTC Subway Lands Warden Corridor and Victoria Park Station*. A map delineating the study area boundary was broadly consistent with the locations of approved and potential private development north and south of Warden Station. In total, fifteen properties were categorized as having recently approved applications, current applications, or pre-application interest in a several square kilometre area extending from Eglinton Avenue to Danforth and from Birchmount Road to a non-linear border to the west. Surprisingly, several properties in various stages of development west of Warden Avenue were excluded from the smaller area of “Potential Land Use Change.” How the boundary of the smaller area was defined was not described. However, the report stated that Becker’s Milk and Centennial College which were in the smaller area were considering relocating and that the remaining businesses “are viable uses but are relatively low-value properties.”<sup>17</sup>

This mixed but generally negative assessment continued in the economic overview of the study area. The authors stated that the area “considerably underperforms other comparable areas in Etobicoke and North York.” While a City of Toronto staff report which was cited in the report had listed a number of firms which had grown in the study area, the uptick in employment was concentrated at Eglinton and Birchmount – outside the boundary of Potential Land Use Change. A map showing the distribution of employment in the Potential Land Use Change area had a lot of empty space. The greatest concentration of employment was at Becker’s Milk on Warden Avenue north of Danforth Road.<sup>18</sup>

**2004, May** – planningAlliance held a design charrette which was conducted “in consultation with those with a direct interest in the future of the two Study Areas, including residents and service providers, the TTC and other area developers and landowners and the two City Councilors.”<sup>19</sup>

**2004, July** – Consultants held a meeting specifically with landowners. This group stressed that any proposed planning framework needed to create realistic development scenarios that allowed for

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<sup>16</sup> planningAlliance, “TTC Subway Lands – Warden Corridor and Victoria Park Station, Phase 1 Warden Corridor Planning Study” (2004), 2.

<sup>17</sup> planningAlliance, “TTC Subway Land,” (2004), 51.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 52.

<sup>19</sup> planningAlliance, McCormick Rankin, and Metropolitan Knowledge International, “Land Use Planning Study - TTC Subway Lands, Warden Corridor and Victoria Park Station, Phase 2 Consultants Report” (2004), 1.

flexibility in response to market considerations. Namely, the stakeholders wanted to avoid a plan that would require them “to develop denser and taller buildings than they [were] interested in pursuing, based on their reading of market demand”.<sup>20</sup> In response, the consultants reduced the overall number of proposed dwelling units from 4,700 to 3,300 in the development scenarios. The developers also pressed to make sure that parkland requirements were equitable and recognized where each property owner was in the development and approval stage.

**2004, September** – Centennial College officially closed its Warden Avenue location and relocated to an existing campus location at Markham and Highway 401.

**2004, November** – planningAlliance released its Phase 2 report describing a 10-sector comprehensive vision for future development balancing economic opportunities, public realm enhancements, and green space provisions. The consultants recognized shifting conditions in the area and the need for planning policies to reflect these changes:

Our response to the fundamental land use issue posed by the Study is that there is little to be gained by refusing to consider a redesignation to permit residential and mixed use development within the Employment Area south of the Warden station. In fact, in our view, it represents better planning to develop a comprehensive plan that accommodates currently proposed as well as anticipated future residential development, rather than to try to maintain the status quo and have individual residential/mixed use conversions make it through the process on an ad hoc basis.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, the report recommended protecting viable Employment Areas, while promoting residential and non-residential development as much as compatible. The section on land-use recommended mixed-use development “to encourage economic diversity and live-work opportunities,” as well as potential community services.<sup>22</sup> The new recommended land use framework can be seen in Figure 2.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 22.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 25.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 11.



**Figure 2:  
Warden Woods Corridor Recommended Land Use Framework**



Source: planningAlliance et al., Figure 19: Recommended Land Use Framework: Warden Corridor, in "Land Use Planning Study, Phase 2 Consultants Report" (2004), 43.

The consultants removed one small property from the study area west of Warden Avenue on the basis that it was part of an Employment District outlined in the Official Plan's Urban Structure Plan. According to the Official Plan, such areas were part of the long-term employment structure of the city and were to be protected for employment uses only.<sup>23</sup> The team felt that an attempt to redesignate this parcel for non-employment uses would set a bad precedent for future redesignation of other Employment Districts.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 25.



The consultants proposed a hierarchy of road-networks and housing such that “mid-rise densities are along major streets and higher densities are adjacent to subway stations.”<sup>24</sup> Massing and public realm controls were advocated as methods for making high-rise buildings more pleasant at street level than existing residential towers and for transitioning to a low-rise residential fabric which was compatible with adjacent established neighbourhoods. The mix of housing products which was “encouraged” was intended to accommodate a range of household types and people of varying income levels. Retail was proposed for ground floor space along Warden Avenue.

**2005 or Earlier** – TTC strategy was to relocate 850 parking spaces from the TTC-owned North parking lot to the Hydro corridor south of St. Clair. Relocation and realignment of the bus terminal in the South parking lot would free 1.2 hectares for development.<sup>25</sup>

**2005, February** – In consultation with Ward 35 Councillor Altobello, representatives from Mattamy Homes and Goldman Group submitted redevelopment applications to the Scarborough Community Council for a total of nearly 1,500 residential units. The proposals covered the four largest parcels of land within the Warden Avenue Corridor. These sites included the former Warden Power Centre, the Centennial College property, the Becker’s Milk property and the Patterson Engineering property. Redevelopment applications included the Mattamy Homes proposal for 520 townhouses and condominiums and the Goldman Group proposal for 450 plus townhouses on Warden Avenue; and 477 single-family, semi-detached, and townhouse units on Danforth Road.<sup>26</sup>

**2005, April** – City Council adopted a Status Report recommending the redevelopment of the Warden Corridor provided that community facilities and services would be enhanced.

**2005, June** – The Committee of Adjustment approved dividing the Becker’s Dairy site into four parcels (671, 673, 675 and 679 Warden Avenue) and a future road along the southern limit of 673 Warden Avenue.

**2005, June** – City staff organized a day-long workshop to discuss options around the community services and facilities component of the redevelopment. The consultation included input from 40 participants, as well as TTC staff. Participants discussed options relating to the location and configuration of a new community centre and forthcoming greenspace assets. Retail amenities and built form were also key components which were raised by participants:

The Workshop participants identified the need for new development in the Warden Corridor to include a variety of commercial uses such as a grocery store, ground floor convenience retail, a bakery, and restaurants (including a pub) and cafes on the basis that the new community should be well served by supporting commercial amenities, and the sense that the existing surrounding communities are lacking in these amenities. The Workshop participants generally supported mid-rise building heights along Warden Avenue, and felt that it would be essential for building heights to transition down toward the surrounding residential communities. Higher building heights near the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> Toronto Staff Report “Phase 3 Warden Corridor Land Use Planning Study” (September 21, 2005), 14.

<sup>26</sup> Stuart Green, “Warden Planning Meeting Slated” *The Scarborough Mirror*, February, 2005.

subway station were felt to be acceptable, at a general maximum of 8 storeys, with one group taking the view that up to 15 storeys should be permitted.<sup>27</sup>

**2005, September** – City planning staff released Phase 3 report *Warden Corridor Land Use Planning Study*. The final phase of the report (implementation) presented land use suggestions and recommendations for a secondary plan, a conceptual Master Plan to coordinate private and public investment, and amendments to the Official Plan and zoning by-laws. Phase 3 culminated in the creation of the Warden Woods Community Secondary Plan, which was intended to “support private and public investment in the creation of a new community, integrated with the surrounding residential communities” as well as ravine systems, and remaining employment uses.<sup>28</sup> It included Neighbourhoods, Apartment Neighbourhoods, and Mixed Use land use designations.

Messaging in the report argued for a balance between existing industrial uses and potential new residential development. Staff supported the permanent protection of employment lands north of the new Warden Woods area. They also stated that the new Warden Woods Community Secondary Plan created a framework which required new developers to study the interface between potentially conflicting uses and might require “appropriate mitigation measures, such as buffers, screening source...and warning clauses” for approval.<sup>29</sup>

However, the report noted that the existing (M) zoning for the southern portion of the Golden Mile Employment District was the most restrictive industrial land use. Any use deemed “offensive” by virtue of its physical impact was already “prohibited,” according to the “general zoning provision.” Staff also recommended that industrial uses which were most likely to impact nearby residences be removed from the zoning designation. They dismissed the concern expressed by business operators that new residential development would prove problematic, citing that “separation distances between existing industry and proposed new residential uses...are comparable to those which exist in many instances throughout Toronto.”<sup>30</sup>

The report stated that the City was negotiating with the Goldman Group over subdivision applications for 350 Danforth Road and other properties. Developers, including the Goldman Group, Mattamy, and Ranka, agreed to provide a community centre in a new park north of Warden Station, according to the report. Staff recommended “timely provision of community facilities,” in response to a strong desire expressed by local residents.

Staff suggested that two new parks on either side of St. Clair be achieved “through application of the alternative parkland dedication provisions of Section 42 (3) of the Planning Act for residential development at the rate of 0.4 hectares per 300 dwelling units.”

Staff recommended “pre-zoning” 10 hectares (24 acres) of city-owned land, which was under TTC title and used for commuter parking. According to the report, this would “provide a strong

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<sup>27</sup> Toronto Staff Report, “Phase 3 Warden Corridor Land Use Planning Study” (September 21, 2005), 5.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 37.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

indication of the City's objectives" and "establish value" for them."<sup>31</sup> These lands north and south of Warden Station were to accommodate 950 dwelling units in towers which would be permitted to heights of 12-15 storeys.

**2005, September** – As part of the Phase 3 report, Staff included a draft official plan amendment for the Warden Woods Community Secondary Plan. The plan "establishes a framework to guide the coordinated development of new mixed use and residential neighbourhoods with all the ingredients for success including adequate community facilities, excellence in urban design, and a balanced transportation system."

The housing policies pursued a mix of housing types and resident incomes; these would be consistent with the housing policies of the Official Plan.

The Secondary Plan seeks the provision of a broad range of housing types, sizes and affordability for Warden Woods residents, including ownership and rental housing to ensure the development of a diverse, mixed income community.

On large sites generally over 5 hectares (12.4 acres) in size, the Plan requires a minimum of 30% of new housing to be in forms other than single and semi-detached houses, and a minimum of 20% of new housing units to be provided at affordable rents or purchase prices.<sup>32</sup>

Active development applications, primarily for residential redevelopment of the area totaled 1,788 dwelling units at the time of the Phase 3 report.

Three land use designations were suggested in the draft plan. The Neighbourhood land use designation prioritized residential uses in ground-oriented houses with "interspersed walk-up apartments" to "respect and reinforce the physical patterns and character of established Neighbourhoods." The Apartment Neighbourhood land use included the uses permitted in Neighbourhood designation, as well as apartment buildings, retail, and institutional and community facilities. Mixed Use designated areas "consist of a broad range of commercial, residential, and institutional uses." The only stand-alone retail store permitted was a supermarket. The Phase 3 report outlined the intent of the land-use framework as follows:

In general, mid-rise mixed-use buildings (4 to 8 storeys) are encouraged along Warden Avenue and Danforth Road frontages, except for areas near the Warden Avenue and St. Clair Avenue intersection, where taller mixed-use buildings (9 storeys and above) are promoted to take advantage of the close proximity to the TTC Warden Station.

At Warden Station, the plan recommended "landmark" buildings with podiums to "define the streets and emphasize the significance of the intersection."

**2005, October** – City Council adopted new Zoning By-law No. 950-2005 for the lands to be known as Warden Woods Community. Warden Woods Community Secondary Plan Official Plan

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p. 20.

Amendment No. 1145 was also adopted.

### **3.2 Chapter Summary**

Background studies and city policy documents culminating in the 2002 Toronto Official Plan favoured the conversion of poorly-performing industrial areas to uses like residential development. Development pressure along the Warden Avenue corridor, together with the potential value of under-used parking at the Warden Station, prompted the city to hire a team led by the planningAlliance to study the area comprehensively. The consultants, and later City staff, supported managing, rather than resisting, residential development.

## **4. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HOUSING BUILT AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESIDENTS IN THE WARDEN WOODS COMMUNITY**

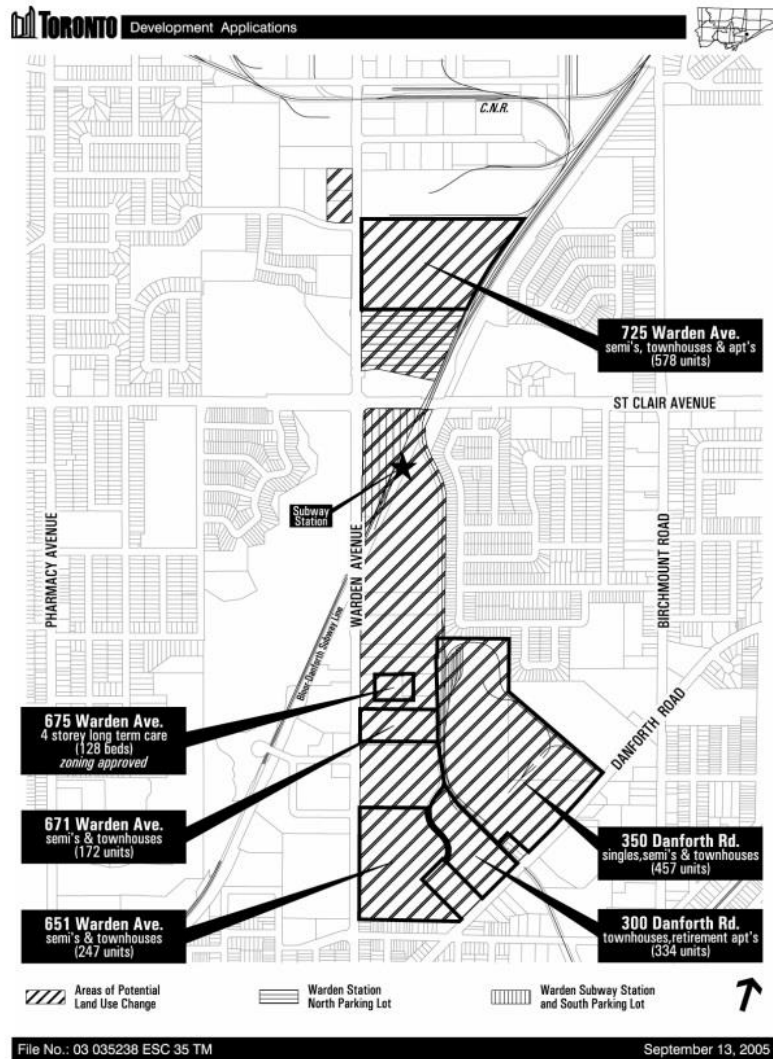
This chapter considers what the redevelopment of the Warden Woods area looks like and the characteristics of the residents that live there.

Housing, population and household data for this chapter were obtained through RealNet Canada, Inc. (the number and type of new units) and Environics Analytics, which is part of the Environics group of companies. Environics provided information based on the 2006 and 2011 Census of Canada, and the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS). The attributes of the housing were ground-truthed during a driving tour in November, 2014.

### **4.1 Housing Characteristics – Development Applications**

Figure 3 shows the range and density of development proposals and applications in Warden Woods in 2006 and 2007. Most parcels south of St. Clair Avenue were designated for subdivisions of semi-detached homes and townhouses while parcels north of St. Clair Avenue were designated for apartments and townhouses.

**Figure 3:  
Development Applications for Warden Woods  
and Nearby Areas, 2005-2007**



Source: Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division to Planning and Transportation Committee, Toronto Staff Report "Phase 3 Warden Corridor Land Use Planning Study." (September 21, 2005), 26.

## 4.2 Developers and Developments

The majority of the housing was built between the spring of 2006 and spring of 2008, with additional units constructed in 2011 and 2012. By May of 2008, only four years after the initial land use study, a staggering 1,100 units had been built and sold.

Goldman Centennial Developments built the Regal Crest Homes at 651 Warden Ave, where Centennial College had been. Semi-detached homes and townhouses were first sold in August, 2006.

Arista Homes built the Lily Factory Towns at 300 Danforth Road, where the Lily Cup Factory had been. The first townhouses were sold in July 2011.

The Monarch Corporation built the Upper Danforth Village at 350 Danforth Road, where Pilkington Glass and Patterson Engineering had been. Detached, semi-detached, and townhouse units were first sold in May, 2006.

Mattamy Homes built the Summerside at 725 Warden Avenue, where the Warden Power Centre had been. They sold semi-detached homes and townhouses starting in October 2006. They started selling low-rise apartment units in March, 2007.

First View Homes built Warden Woods at 725 Warden Avenue, where the CN Rail spur had been. The first townhomes were sold in May, 2012

The Goldman Group built the Ina Grafton Gage Home for seniors at 40 Bell Estate Road, and the Stafford Homes and Brookfield Homes at 80 Bell Estate Road. These townhouses and stacked townhouses first started selling in April, 2008. Both properties had been part of the historic Thornbeck-Bell Estate. The former address was 671 Warden Ave and was the location of the Becker Milk facility.

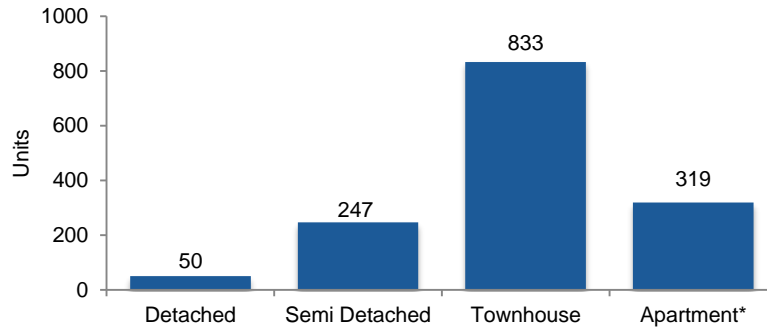
In contrast to the vision of the phase 2 and phase 3 reports, and the Secondary Plan, developers did not build 4-storey to 8-storey residential and mixed use apartments along Warden Avenue. Instead, new housing along this avenue is predominantly 3-storey walk-up townhouses and a long term care facility. The greatest divergence from the planning vision is at Warden and St. Clair, city and TTC lands, where no buildings have yet been built. This Mixed Use area (Map 20 – Land Use in the Official Plan) was expected to take on the greatest heights and densities in the form of transit-oriented development given its proximity to Warden Subway Station. Why the Warden and St. Clair area has not yet developed at the same rapid rate as the surrounding lower-scale townhouses is not within the scope of this analysis.

### **4.3 Housing Sales by Type of Unit**

According to RealNet, 1,449 units were sold from 2006 to September 2014. As illustrated in Figure 4, over half of the new development consisted of townhouses, followed by low-rise apartments and semi-detached homes. No high-rises have yet been constructed or sold in the area. This split in unit types is very similar to the changes in households by type of housing occupied which the Census of Canada shows from mid-2006 to mid-2011.



**Figure 4:  
New Housing Units Sold in Warden Woods by  
Type, 2006 – 2014 (Jan – Sept)**

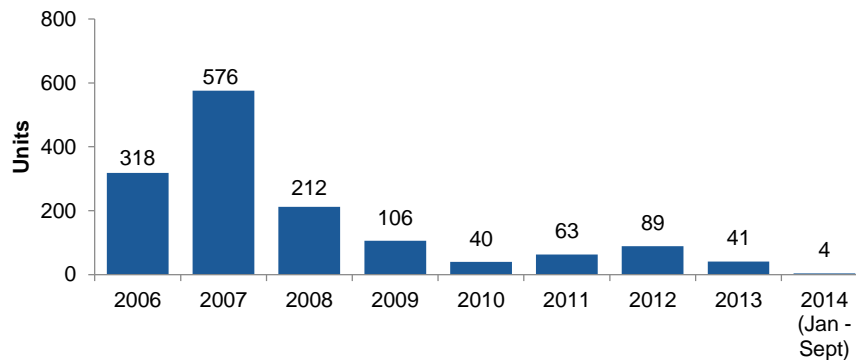


\*Apartments include stacked townshouses

Source: RealNet

Figure 5 illustrates how rapidly the new housing in Warden Woods was marketed and sold in just two years. Over 60% of the 1,449 sales took place in the first two years.

**Figure 5:  
Home Sales Per Year in Warden Woods, 2006-2014**



Source: RealNet

According to the National Housing Survey (as adjusted by Environics), median home prices are about the same as citywide averages, despite newly constructed housing typically costing more than equivalent existing housing stock. The median value of owner-occupied dwellings in Warden Woods

in mid-2011 was \$397,511, compared with the citywide average of \$401,400. Over 85% of the approximately 1,300 occupied units were owner-occupied in mid-2011.<sup>33</sup>

#### **4.4 Characteristics of Residents<sup>34</sup>**

Figures 6 and 7 highlight the characteristics of the population residing in the two Census of Canada Dissemination Areas approximating the new Warden Woods community in mid-2011.

The people living in Warden Woods in 2011 (approximately 80% are new since 2006) tended to be younger, with persons aged 55 years and over accounting for just 16% of the residents. It is likely that most of the older people were living in the area prior to the development of the new Warden Woods housing beginning in 2006. A sizeable number of people have neither English nor French as their mother tongue. The bulk of new residents moved from elsewhere in the city of Toronto during the 2006-2011 period. A much smaller number of people moved from parts of Canada, outside the city of Toronto or moved from other countries.

About half of the working residents travelled to and from work by automobile and half by public transit. Travel by public transit is supported with the Warden subway station located within the Warden Woods community. The average commute time in one direction was 35.1 minutes.

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<sup>33</sup> Census of Canada, 2011 adjusted National Household Survey.

<sup>34</sup> Statistics on the housing and demographic characteristics of the Warden Woods community are based on information provided by Environics Analytics, which is part of the Environics group of companies, based on the 2006 and 2011 Census of Canada, and the 2011 National Household Survey.

It should be noted that Dissemination Areas 20482 and 203503 encompass an area larger than the Warden Woods community. In mid- 2006, prior to housing in Warden Woods being occupied, there were 400 occupied dwellings in these two dissemination areas.

**Figure 6:  
Warden Woods Population Characteristics, 2011**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
0-14 years	1,090	19
15-24 years	799	14
25-34 years	979	17
35-44 years	1,022	18
45-54 years	875	15
55-64 years	455	8
65+ years	433	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,653</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Language - Mother Tongues</b>		
English	2,103	41
French	44	1
Non-Official Languages	2909	58
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,056</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Mobility Over Past 5 Years</b>		
Non-Movers	1,015	21
Moved Elsewhere in the City of Toronto	3,020	61
Moved from Elsewhere in Canada	385	8
Moved from Outside of Canada	505	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,925</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Transportation Mode to Work</b>		
Automobile	1,405	51
Public Transit	1,290	47
Walked, Bicycle or Other	35	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>2745</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Median Commute Time</b>	35.1 minutes	

Source: Census of Canada and Environics Analytics

Figure 7 shows the characteristics of residents by household (or dwelling unit) in Warden Woods.

The heads of households in Warden Woods in mid-2011 spanned the age groups from the 25-34 year olds to the 55 years and over age group. The households headed by an older person were likely the households living in Warden Woods before 2006. The ages of heads of household, in combination with the data on family households with children at home, indicate that there is a range of younger and middle-aged families with children.

Most households consist of families in contrast with people living alone or living with others but not in a married or common-law arrangement. The vast majority are homeowners. The median household income in 2011 was \$66,211 and the median value of owned house occupied was \$397,511.

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**Figure 7:  
Warden Woods Household Characteristics, 2011**

<b>Age of Household Maintainer</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Under 25 years	40	2
25 to 34 years	405	23
35 to 44 years	455	26
45 to 54 years	420	24
55 years and over	410	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,730</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Households by Type</b>		
One-Family	1,277	75
Multiple-Family	101	6
Non-Family	33	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,711</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Census Families in Households</b>		
Families with Children	1,108	75
Families without Children	380	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,488</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Presence of Children</b>		
Without Children	324	28
With Children	846	72
<b>Total Couple Family Households</b>	<b>1,170</b>	<b>100</b>
*Private Households Only		
<b>Tenure</b>		
Owner	1,495	86
Renter	240	14
<b>Total Number of Households</b>	<b>1,730</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Median Household Income</b>	<b>\$66,221</b>	
<b>Median Value of Owned Dwellings</b>	<b>\$397,511</b>	

Source: Census of Canada and Environics Analytics

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## 4.5 Chapter Summary

Overall, the housing that was built in the newly redeveloped Warden Woods area has been ground-oriented and affordable from a market perspective. Its rapid sellout indicates that there is a sizable untapped demand for this type of mainly ownership housing. This housing has also attracted a

preponderance of families which have neither English nor French as their mother tongue and who have children at home.