

Planners Identify Development Opportunities

YUDC is now at the mid-point of its three-phase planning process which began last fall and will produce a Concept Plan and Development Strategy for campus development by the end of March. In Phase I, spring semester '87 extensive surveys were carried out to elicit the concerns and viewpoints of students, faculty and administrative staff. Substantial input was also received from the Advisory Council which includes City and adjacent neighbourhood officials. The results of these surveys (details on page 4) were analyzed. The planners compared their findings with the original 1963 York University Master Plan to determine which of the original concepts should be retained or enhanced and which modified.

The findings have been presented to the Advisory Council for its review in Phase 2 so that the planners may proceed, based on the Council's advice, to prepare a final draft plan in Phase 3 (final phase).

The planners' report to the Advisory Council and the YUDC Board identified a range of possible solutions to campus and space deficiencies in the short term as well as longer range development options for the overall 600-acre York land holdings.

Campus Density

The Planners suggest that there is ample area left within the existing academic campus to accommodate all of the future building needs of the University. Rather than expanding the size of the campus, which would further extend walking distances, new buildings should be infilled and connected to existing buildings so as to maintain the pedestrian-only precinct of the inner campus and provide the opportunity for weather-protected links between buildings (as opposed to the original concept of pedestrian tunnels under streets.)

Campus Open Space

The planners conclude that even with more buildings, there can be ample open space. Indeed, proper planning and landscape design will provide a more rational system of improved open spaces and walkways. The planners have identified three opportunities for open space around which new University buildings would develop:

- "University Common" at the foot of the Ross building serving as a landscaped entrance to the University from Keele;
- "Osgoode/Atkinson Green" would serve as the landscaped University entrance from the south;
- The area leading to Black Creek, around Stong Pond, where pedestrian use is now complicated by service and parking lanes and buildings which do not offer adequate ground level access.

Key Building Sites

A pedestrian-oriented inner campus with an improved network of open spaces would create the opportunity for a number of prominent building locations. In the next phase of planning, specific sites will be considered for key buildings such as a new Students' Centre; a possible Convocation Hall; improved pedestrian access to the podium level of Ross; expanded retail and service facilities, including shops and cafes; a possible hotel/conference centre; and major academic buildings which could also include space for related public/private research.

Parking

The planners suggest that the original concept of large, remote parking lots can be modified to provide parking closer to campus buildings and more directly linked to well lighted, weather protected walkways for increased comfort and safety. As the land now used for parking becomes more valuable as building sites, it will become cost-effective to build low parking decks (half level down, half level up) and attach them to existing and new buildings. Thus 50 percent of the land now used for parking would be built on in the future without reducing the total parking supply and, at the same time, better accommodating the driver.

Transit

As parking improvements are made, so must improvements be made to the frequency and routing of buses and the provision of TTC rapid transit. The planners' report progress in the long range thinking of transit authorities who are considering a

number of alternatives which would improve rapid transit access to York. These options include the future rapid transit connection from a transit "gateway" near the Highway 400/future Highway 407 intersection through the York campus connecting with the Spadina Subway line at Wilson, and a possible future east-west rapid transit route along the hydro right-of-way corridor adjacent to the University's southern boundary. While the concepts are at present uncommitted planning visions, they are of great significance to the development of York and therefore will form part of York's future development plans.

Murray Ross Parkway

A right-of-way is currently held by North York as part of the original York University Master Plan for the building of the Murray Ross Parkway within the flood plain of the Black Creek Valley. Four-lane intersections have already been constructed at both Steeles and Keele for this intended arterial street. The planners are critical of this proposal for two reasons: its impact on the very significant natural environment along Black Creek and its nature as a high speed arterial rather than an urban street serving the campus.

The planners suggest an alternative "diagonal street" using sections of the existing loop road and becoming, sometime in the future, a more direct route to the campus from a possible transit station near Finch. The suggested diagonal street would also serve to bring local transit service to more convenient points near the campus.

Rationalized Street Pattern

The campus would have three major streets serving the campus; Steeles, Keele and the new diagonal street. This would allow local service loops to accommodate service trucks and decked parking while continuing to maintain and reinforce the pedestrian character of the inner campus. Other modifications would include lay-bys at bus stops to relieve local congestion, elimination of traffic circles in favour of controlled three and four-way intersections, improved lighting and signage, and improvements to pedestrian walkways and bike paths to serve higher volumes of pedestrians, joggers and cyclists.

Development Precincts

Increased density on the existing campus not only makes sense in terms of linking buildings and maintaining the desired pedestrian scale of the campus, it also results in making areas of University land adjacent to the campus available for other forms of compatible development over time (the financial returns from which could then be reinvested in the campus building program). The planners have identified a number of future development precincts, while preserving existing natural site features such as Black Creek, wood lots, etc. Although more precise definition of the appropriate land uses for these precincts will be the subject of more detailed analysis and Advisory Council discussions, in Phase 2, the planners have suggested guidelines for various areas as follows:

- the southwest area appears best suited for residential uses, including faculty and student housing and a 25-acre area for general market housing (sales or rental);
- the southeast area should be reserved as a high-density mixed use area of shops, offices, apartments and institutional activities served by a future rapid transit station near Finch on Keele; and
- frontage sites on Keele and Steeles including the northwest area of the York Lands where certain playing fields could be relocated to sites near Black Creek.

