



# **Concord West**

**Urban Design Framework + Streetscape Plan** 

November 2012 FINAL DRAFT



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This study represents the outcome of a collaboration led by consulting firm Janet Rosenberg & Studio with invaluable input from City of Vaughan staff and the Concord West community.

**Study Contents:** 

1

Introduction to the Study

pages 1-2

2

Urban Design Framework

pages 3-18

3

Streetscape Plan

pages 19-44

4

Streetscape Implementation Strategy

pages 45-52



1.1	Role of the Study	2
	Structure of the Document	2



Introduction to the Study



Section 1 Introduction to the Study

## 1.1 Study Introduction

### 1.1.1 Role of the Study

The Concord West Urban Design Framework + Streetscape Plan establishes the vision and design concepts that will lead to the development of a high quality, sustainable, and cohesive urban environment along the Highway 7 and Keele Street corridors, integrated with the existing Concord West residential community. The study covers two unique components, each defined by a unique study boundary - an Urban Design Framework (Figure 1.1.1) and a Streetscape Plan (Figure 1.1.2). Though this document represents the most detailed look at the study area, it should be utilized in conjunction with a variety of related documents (Table 1.1.3).

### 1.1.2 Structure of the Document

This study document is structured into the following sections:

#### 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduces the study and its components.

#### 2: Urban Design Framework

Outlines the broad urban design vision and design concepts for the study area.

#### 3: Streetscape Plan

Details concepts for the study area streetscapes and community gateways.

#### 4: Streetscape Implementation Strategy

Provides an implementation timeline, outlines jurisdictional responsibilities and funding sources, and includes cost estimates for streetscapes and gateways.

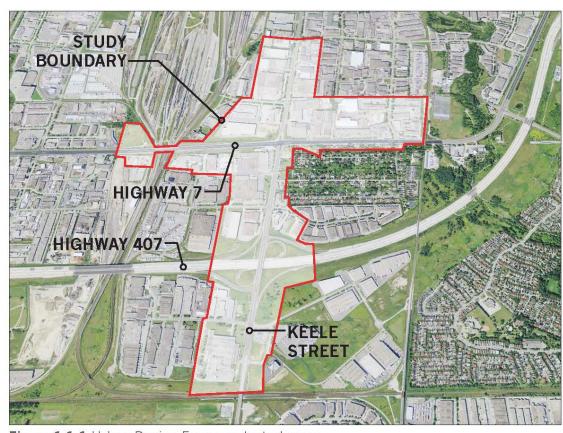


Figure 1.1.1 Urban Design Framework study area.

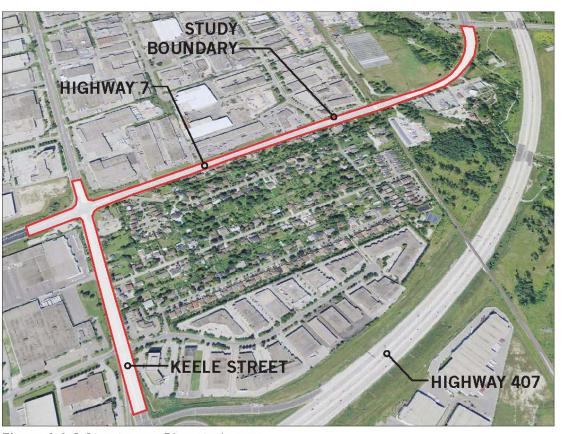


Figure 1.1.2 Streetscape Plan study area.

City of Vaughan – Active Together Master Plan for Parks, Recreation, Culture and Libraries (2008)

City of Vaughan - By-Law 1-88

City of Vaughan - The Corridor and Employment Area Design Standards Study

City of Vaughan - Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

City of Vaughan - Highway 7 Land Use Futures Study (2001)

City of Vaughan – Official Plan (2010) and Offical Plan Amendments (OPA)

City of Vaughan - Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan Study (2008)

Green Directions Vaughan – Community Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan (2009)

Making It Happen! The York Region Centres and Corridors Study

Government of Ontario – Places to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2006)

Government of Ontario - The 2005 Provincial Policy Statement

Planning for Tomorrow – York Region Growth Management Study (2006)

Regional Transit-Oriented Development Guidelines (2006)

Toronto Region Conservation Authority – Don River Watershed Plan (2009)

Vaughan Tomorrow – A Plan for Transformation

Vaughan Vision 2020 - The City of Vaughan Strategic Plan

Viva Rapidway Design Standards (2007)

York Region - Official Plan (2009)

York Region – Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan (2008)

York Region – Street Tree Preservation and Planting Design Guidelines (2009)

York Region - Sustainability Strategy (2007)

York Region - Transit Coordinated Street Furniture Urban Design Guidelines

York Region – Transit Highway 7 Corridor and Vaughan N-S Link Public Transit Improvements Environmental Assessment

York Region – Transportation Master Plan (2003)

Table 1.1.3 List of related documents for additional reference.

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### Section Contents: 2.1 Site Analysis 2.1.1 Study Area......4 2.1.3 City of Vaughan Official Plan 2010......5 2.1.4 Current Land Use Designations......6-7 2.2 Urban Framework 2.2.1 Overview......8 2.2.2 Street Network......9 2.2.3 Block Structure......9 2.2.6 Natural Areas & Planted Buffers......11 2.3 Development Framework 2.4 A Vision for Concord West 2.5 Framework Component Matrix

Urban Design Framework

# 2.1 Site Analysis

### 2.1.1 Study Area

The study area for the Concord West Urban Design Framework encompasses approximately 1.7 square kilometres along Keele Street and the Highway 7 intensification corridor - the primary intensification corridor within the Concord West employment area (Figure 2.1.1). The area is immediately situated between the GO Transit rail corridor to the east and the CN rail yards to the west, and between Rivermede Road to the north and the CN rail corridor to the south. The area also sits between three major zones of future urban intensification - the Concord GO Centre to the east, the Vaughan Metropolitan Cantre to the west, and the Steeles West District to the south. The Concord West residential community abuts the study area, and its characteristics shall be respected by and integrated into future development of the area in a complementary manner. The study area currently consists of predominantly commercial and industrial land uses, severely lacking in any form of street grid to organize development into a cohesive urban form. Also included in the study area is a Highway 407 interchange, located to the south of the Concord West residential community and occupying a large amount of inaccessible land along Keele Street.



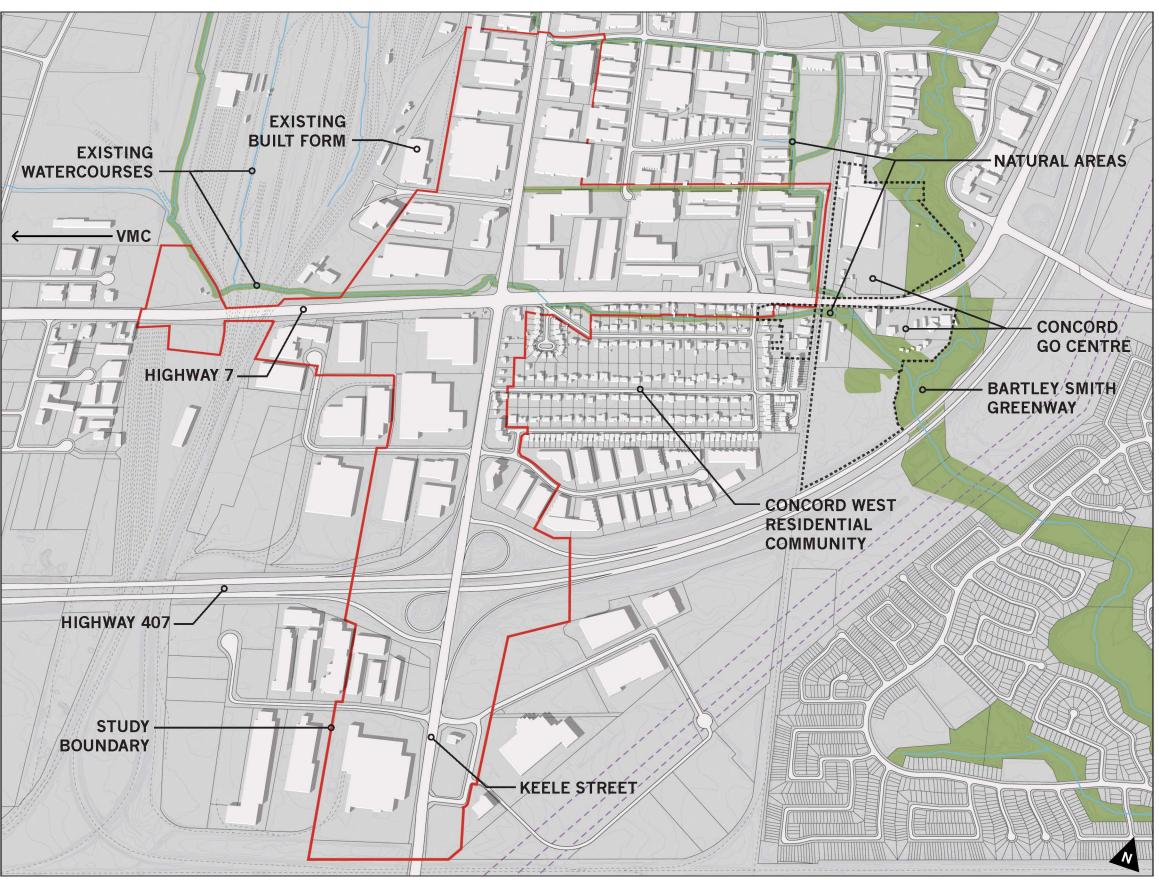


Figure 2.1.1 Concord West Urban Design Framework study area.

Figure 2.1.2 Aerial view of existing Concord West study area.

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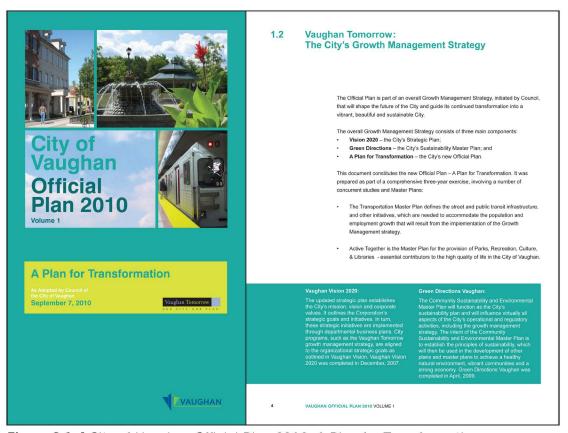


Figure 2.1.4 City of Vaughan Official Plan 2010: A Plan for Transformation.



Figure 2.1.3 Detailed aerial view of typical existing conditions within the study area.

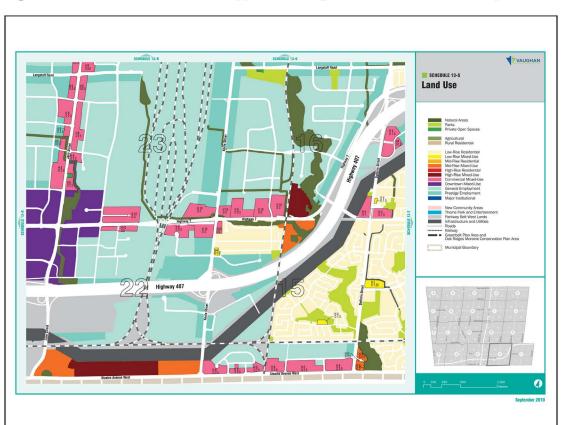


Figure 2.1.5 City of Vaughan Official Plan 2010: Land Use Schedule.

### 2.1.2 Existing Conditions

Currently consisting of predominantly lowrise commercial and industrial developments, the Concord West study area faces many challenges to overcome in the next stages of its necessary redevelopment and intensification (Figure 2.1.2). The study area's existing framework consists of large tracts of land contained within a very limited formal street network - a high percentage of its surface area covered with impermeable paving dedicated to vehicles, with little to no landscape features and a nonexistant pedestrian realm (Figure 2.1.3). Adjacent to the study area exists an established pocket of low density residential developement - a neighbourhood that is a unique enclave within the broader community, as well as the upper West Don River within the Bartley Smith Greenway.

### 2.1.3 City of Vaughan Official Plan 2010

The City of Vaughan Official Plan is part of an overall Growth Management Strategy that will shape the future of the area and oversee its continued transformation into a vibrant, beautiful and sustainable city (Figure 2.1.4). Adopted by Council on September 7, 2010, this plan defines a vision and guidelines that shall be at the foundation of ALL future development in the Concord West study area. Within the Official Plan, Schedule 13-S identifies new land use designations for the Concord West study area (Figure 2.1.5). These new designations will support the planned redevelopment of the Highway 7 and Keele Street corridors, and provide a starting point for the re-visioning of Concord West.

### 2.1.4 Current Land Use Designations

As outlined in the Official Plan 2010, located within the Concord West study area are four land use designations - Commercial Mixed-Use, Low-Rise Mixed-Use, Prestige Employment, and General Employment (Figures 2.1.6-10):

Commercial Mixed-Use areas are located along the Highway 7 intensification corridor, and shall include predominantly commercial uses appropriate for non-residential intensification and make use of existing and planned transit investments. These areas shall be developed with commercial buildings that allow for a variety of business uses to occur in close proximity to each other in order to assist the City in achieving its overall employment targets and intensification objectives.

**Low-Rise Mixed-Use** areas are located on arterial or collector streets. They will allow for an integrated mix of residential, community and small scale retail uses intended to serve the local population.

**Prestige Employment** use areas shall be characterized by high quality buildings in an attractive pedestrian-friendly and transit-oriented working environment. A variety of lot sizes will be made available to provide flexibility for attracting and accommodating a wide range of employment uses.

**General Employment** areas shall be predominantly industrial areas characterized by low scale buildings with a variety of lot sizes to provide flexibility for attracting and accommodating a wide range of industrial and associated employment uses. Development in such areas shall be designed with pedestrian amenities to serve the daily employee population and to facilitate access to public transit.

All land use areas shall be carefully designed with a high standard of architecture and public realm, and well integrated with adjacent areas.

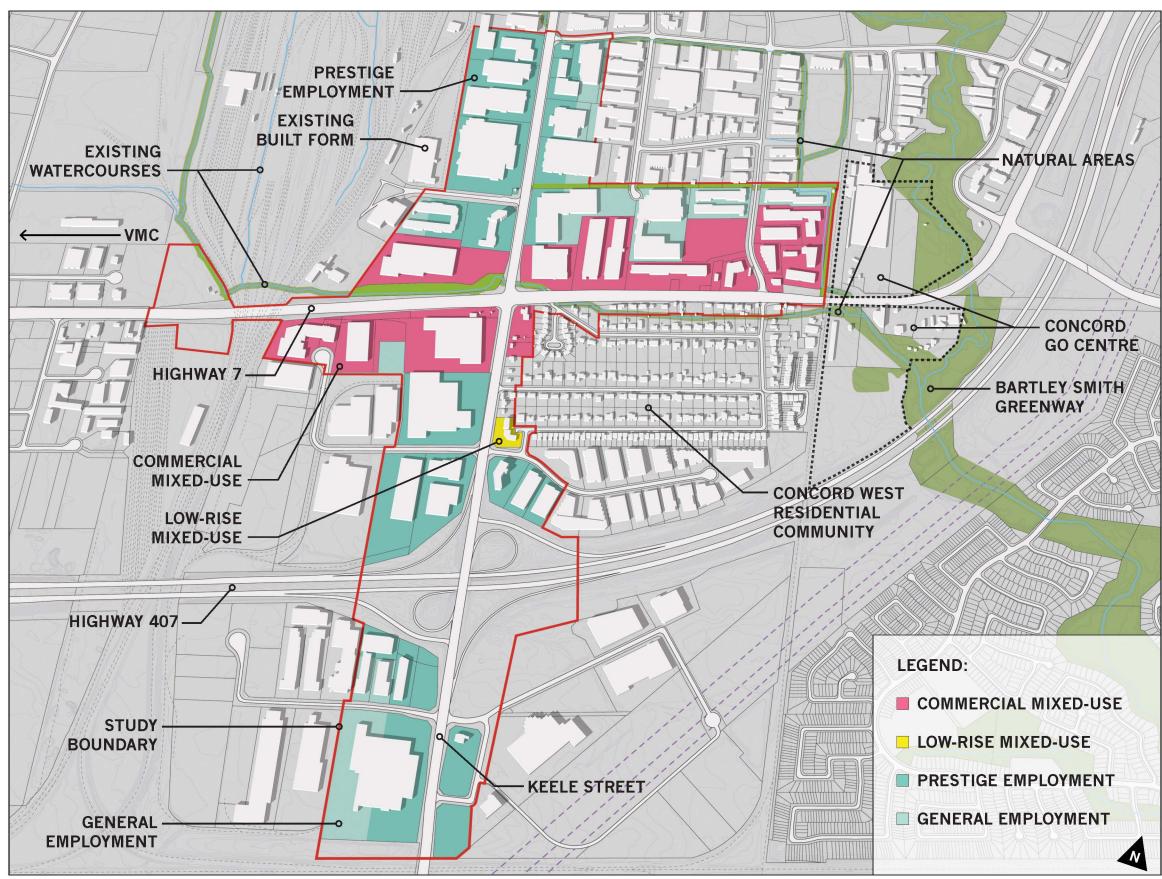


Figure 2.1.6 Study area showing new land use designations from the Council-approved Vaughan Official Plan 2010.

Figure 2.1.7 View from south (showing land uses from Vaughan Official Plan 2010).



Figure 2.1.9 View from south (showing land uses from Vaughan Official Plan 2010).



Figure 2.1.8 View from southeast (showing land uses from Vaughan Official Plan 2010).



Figure 2.1.10 View from west (showing land uses from Vaughan Official Plan 2010).

#### Commercial Mixed-Use

- **a.** The following uses are permitted: Office (max. of 12,500 sq m), Hotel, Retail, and Gas Station (subject to certain criteria).
- **b.** Retail uses shall not exceed 50 percent of the total gross floor area of all uses on the lot.
- **c.** The following building types are permitted: Mid-Rise, Public and Private Institutional, and Gas Station.

#### Low-Rise Mixed-Use

- **a.** The following uses are permitted: Office, Small Scale Hotel, Retail, Residential Units, and Home Occupations.
- **b.** The ground floor frontage of buildings shall predominantly consist of retail uses or other activities that animate the street.
- **c.** The following building types are permitted: Townhouse, Stacked Townhouse, Low-Rise, Low-Rise, and Institutional.

### ■ Prestige Employment

- **a.** The following uses are permitted: Industrial, Office, Retail, Gas Station (all subject to certain restrictions).
- **b.** Separation distance measures shall be applied to achieve compatability between these land uses and other adjacent areas.
- **c.** The following building types are permitted: Employment/Industrial, Low-Rise, Mid-Rise, and Gas Station.

### **■** General Employment

- **a.** The following uses are permitted: Industrial, Office, and Retail (all subject to certain restrictions).
- **b.** Separation distance measures shall be applied to achieve compatability between these land uses and other adjacent areas.
- **c.** The following building types are permitted: Employment/Industrial, Low-Rise, and Mid-Rise.

## 2.2 Urban Framework

### 2.2.1 Overview

Future urban development within Concord West will be focused along both Highway 7 and Keele Street. The successful development of this area will require a long-term commitment initiated by the vision described in this study, and further guided by additional plans and guidelines of increasing detail. This section lays out the underlying components that will form the study area's new *Urban Framework*. Included in these components are: a new *street network* and *block structure, urban corridors, stormwater buffers, natural areas and planted buffers,* and *street trees and boulevard plantings* (Figure 2.2.1).

Note: The future street network and block structure shown in this study document is intended for conceptual purposes only. Though a denser block pattern will inevitably be implemented to achieve the vision for Concord West, further traffic and urban studies will need to be undertaken to determine its exact structure and alignment.



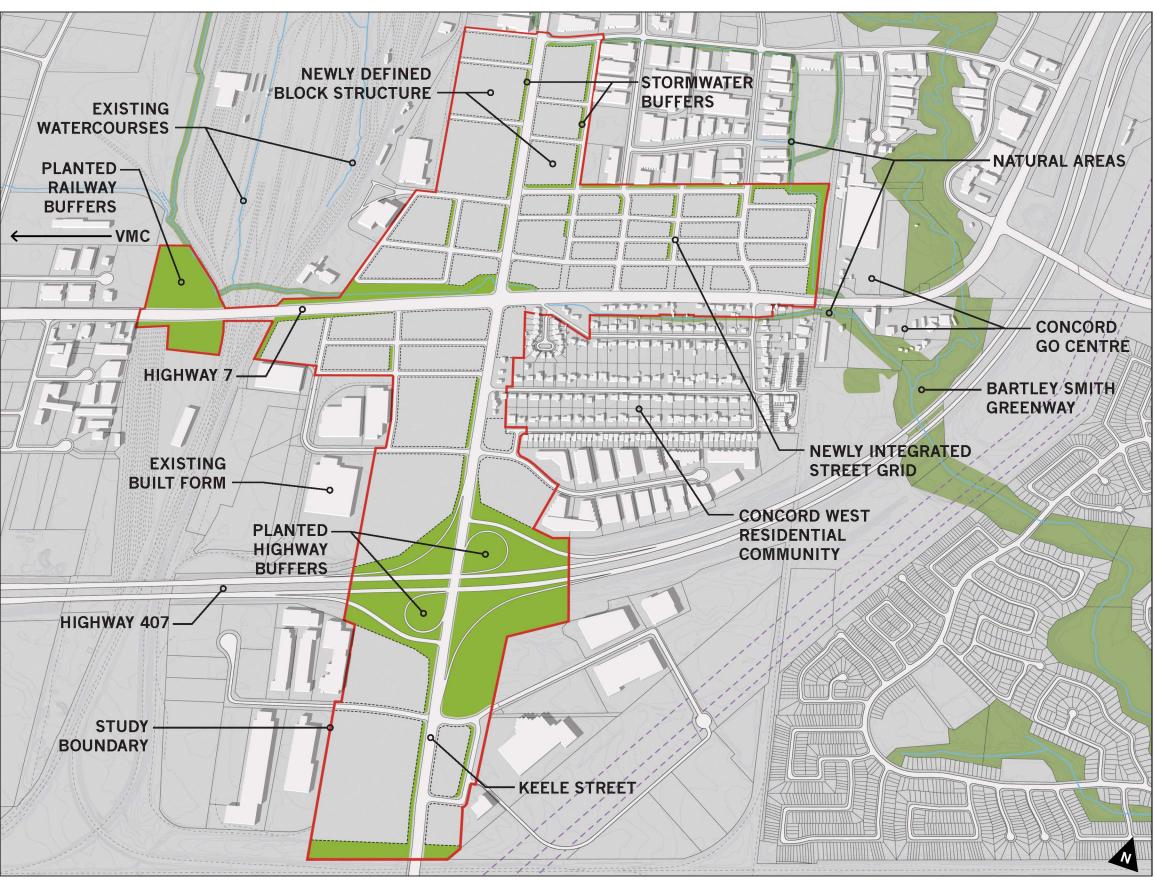


Figure 2.2.1 Study area showing conceptual urban framework (subject to further traffic analysis).

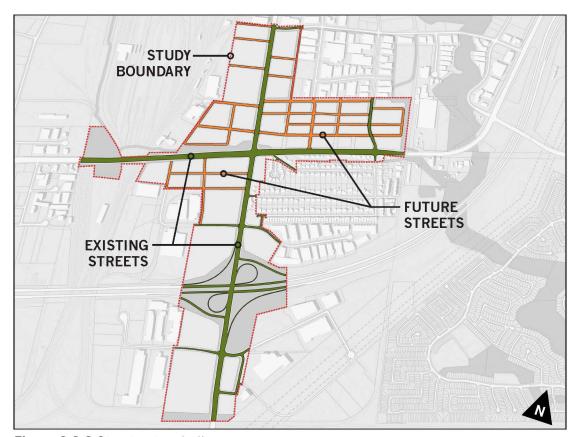


Figure 2.2.2 Street network diagram.



Figure 2.2.4a Development in Portland, OR.



Fig. 2.2.4b Development in San Francisco. Fig. 2.2.4c Development in Austin, TX.





Figure 2.2.3a Streetscape in Austin, TX.



Figure 2.2.3b Streetscape in Portland, OR.

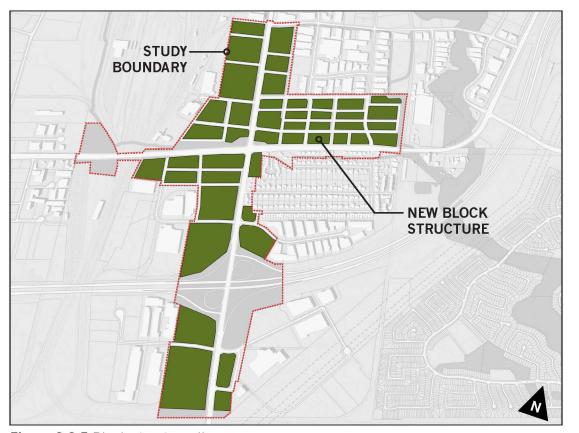


Figure 2.2.5 Block structure diagram.

#### 2.2.2 **Street Network**

Within the study area there currently exists a very limited street network. This network lacks the necessary structure and connectivity required for a successful and sustainable urban intensification. A new street network overlay will need to be implemented into the Concord West study area (Figure 2.2.2). This network should be designed with a hierarchy of street types and a sensitivity to the surrounding context - based upon a rationale that allows for expansion through continued growth and change. Future studies should be undertaken to determine a master plan for this enhanced street network. Many successful and healthy streetscape precedents exist within the North American context and serve as reference, such as the examples displayed here (Figures 2.2.3a/b).

### 2.2.3 **Block Structure**

As a direct result of a newly interpolated street network, the block structure within the Concord West study area should become further defined with a finer grain (Figure 2.2.5), and thus more compatible with urban development planned to occur along the Highway 7 and Keele Street intensification corridors. Block sizes should be varied, and generally no larger than 100 x 200 metres. Although this will not always be achievable, a strong effort should be made to adhere to these standards along Highway 7 in particular. Future studies of the area should reference the many successful urban block precedents found throughout similar North American contexts (Figures 2.2.4a/b/c).

### 2.2.4 Urban Corridors

The key to a vibrant future intensification of Concord West is through the development of successful urban corridors along Highway 7 and Keele Street (Figure 2.2.6). A healthy development of these corridors - such as the Route de Vanne precendent in Nantes, France (Figures 2.2.7a/b) - will help to carry energy further into the study area, activating the internal blocks and encouraging a more robust development. Highway 7, in particular, will see dramatic changes over the next few years as it undergoes its transformation into a VivaNext rapidway - supporting integrated bus transportation as well as expanded pedestrian and cyclist accommodation. Further detail regarding these streetscapes, including the Highway 7 urban promenade (Figure 2.2.7c), can be found in Section 3.

### 2.2.5 Stormwater Buffers

With the relevance and immediacy of environmental issues and sustainability at the forefront of our contemporary context, it is imperative that Concord West strive to take its own steps to mitigate the impact of urbanization on the environment. By locating landscaped stormwater buffers along Keele Street and adjacent to employment parcels throughout the Concord West study area (Figs. 2.2.8c & 2.2.9), a step is taken to naturally filter and manage stormwater locally. In addition, these buffers provide attractive landscape features that help screen employment buildings and parking areas from adjacent streetscapes. Precedents for this type of rain garden exist in cities across North America (Figs. 2.2.8a/b). More detail regarding these buffers can be found in Section 3.

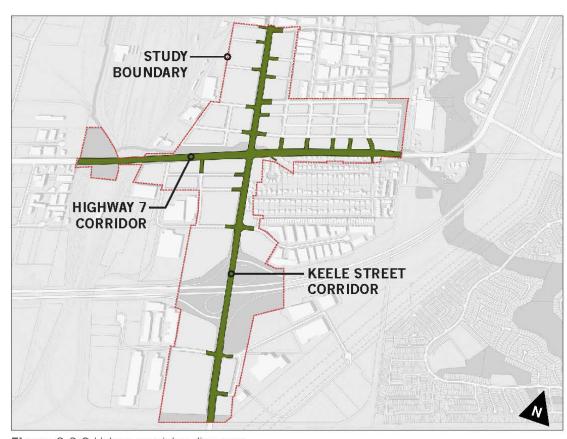


Figure 2.2.6 Urban corridor diagram.



Fig. 2.2.8a Rain garden in Portland, OR.



Fig. 2.2.8b Rain garden in Seattle, WA.

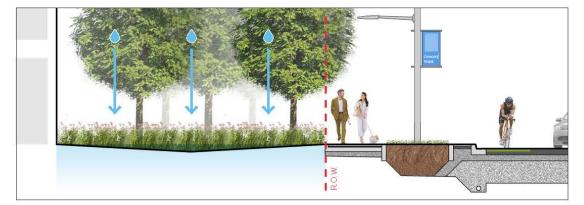


Figure 2.2.8c Stormwater buffer section (see Section 3.3.2 for further detail).





Figures 2.2.7a/b Route de Vanne urban corridor in Nantes, France.



Figure 2.2.7c Highway 7 urban promenade section (see Section 3.3.1 for further detail).

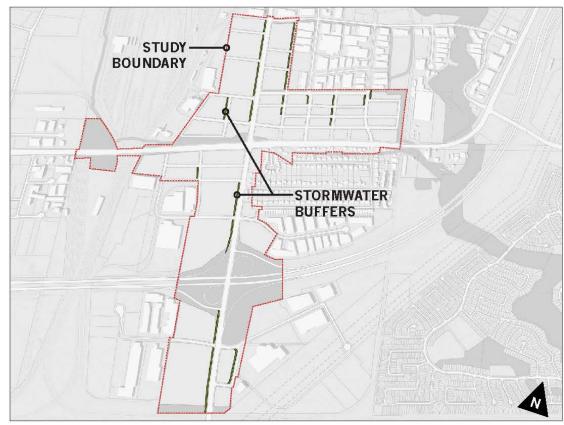


Figure 2.2.9 Stormwater buffer diagram.

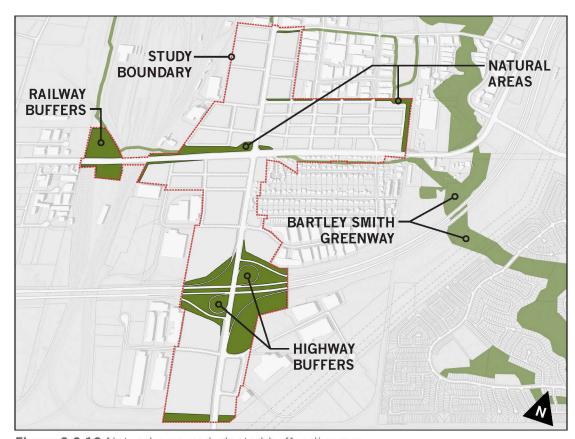


Figure 2.2.10 Natural area and planted buffer diagram.



Fig. 2.2.12a Healthy urban streetscape.



Fig. 2.2.12b Street tree canopy.



Fig. 2.2.12c Bioswale boulevard planting.



Fig. 2.2.11a Bartley Smith Greenway.

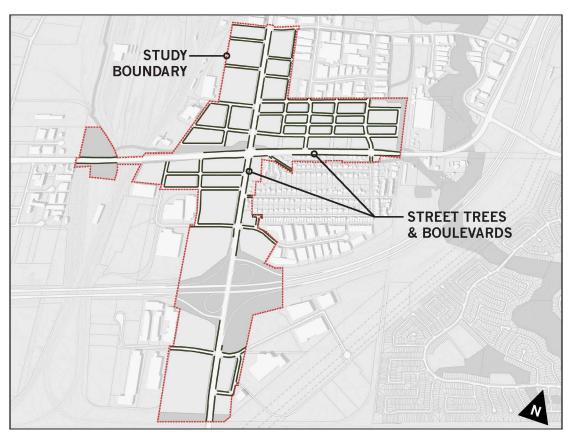


Figure 2.2.13 Street trees and boulevards diagram.



Fig. 2.2.11b Natural forest.



Fig. 2.2.11c Planted interchange.

### 2.2.6 Natural Areas & Planted Buffers

Concord West sits adjacent to a major greenspace - the Bartley Smith Greenway (Figure 2.2.11a) - offering the community a soft contrast to its otherwise industrial context. Due to the community's proximity to this greenway, efforts should be made to naturalize the study area's urban integration through multiple means (Figure 2.2.10). Several natural areas are designated within Concord West in the Official Plan's land use schedule. These areas should be preserved and renaturalized (Figures 2.2.11a/b). In addition, opportunities exist for further planted natural areas to be established as visual and acoustic buffers adjacent to the CN rail yard, railway corridors, and the Highway 407 interchange (Figure 2.2.11c).

## 2.2.7 Street Trees & Boulevard Planting

Highly important to the success of future urban development within Concord West is the creation of pedestrian-friendly streetscapes along new local roads in the study area - including a standardized network of street trees and boulevard plantings (Figure 2.2.13). Healthy street trees are an important feature of vibrant urban streetscapes (Figures 2.2.12a/b), and should play such a role in the development of a new urban framework for Concord West. To add a layer of sustainability to the area, the inclusion of bioswales as a method of managing stormwater should be considered (Figure 2.2.12c).

### 2.2.8 Conceptual Land Use Designations

As Concord West undergoes its urban transformation and adapts to a finer grained street network, the Official Plan's land use schedule will need to be replotted over the area's newly defined block structure and property divisions in order to provide a clearer planning vision. The diagrams here illustrate how that reassessment might look (Figures 2.2.14-18). Land use designations for the study area include Commercial Mixed-Use (Fig. 2.2.19) predominantly along Highway 7, Low-Rise Mixed-Use (Fig. 2.2.20), Prestige Employment (Fig. 2.2.21), and General Employment (Fig. 2.2.22). Within the study area, the Official Plan assigns maximum building heights of 8 or 10 storeys for Commercial Mixed-Use and 4 storeys for Low-Rise Mixed-Use. These new land use designations have the potential to recreate the character of the area over the coming years, creating an identity for the community in the form of a Concord West Mixed-Use District, as highlighted in Fig. 2.2.14.

Note: Refer to section 2.1.4 for detailed land use designation descriptions.



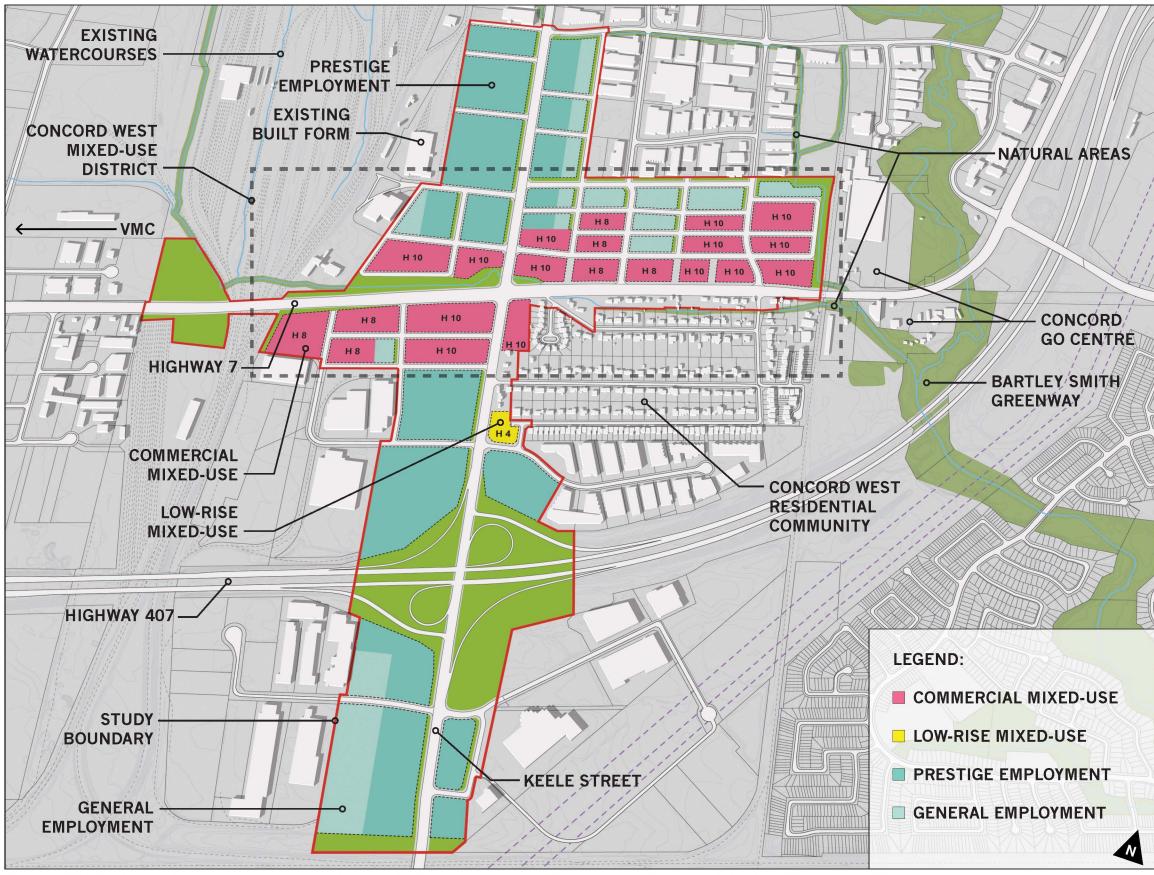


Figure 2.2.14 Study area showing conceptual urban framework with land uses derived from the Council-approved Vaughan Official Plan 2010.



Fig. 2.2.15 View from south (with land uses derived from Vaughan Official Plan 2010).



Fig. 2.2.17 View from south (with land uses derived from Vaughan Official Plan 2010).



Fig. 2.2.16 View from southeast (with land uses derived from Vaughan Official Plan 2010).



Fig. 2.2.18 View from west (with land uses derived from Vaughan Official Plan 2010).



Fig. 2.2.19 Commercial Mixed-Use.



Fig. 2.2.20 Low-Rise Mixed-Use.



Fig. 2.2.21 Prestige Employment.



Fig. 2.2.22 General Employment.

# 2.3 **Development Framework**

### 2.3.1 Overview

Filling the voids within the public realm of the *Urban Framework* is the private realm *Development Framework*. This section provides initial guidelines for the development of the private realm within the Concord West study area - the major components of this framework being *building street frontage* and *pedestrian connections* (Figure 2.3.1). The appropriate proportioning and composition of these components will contribute to a successful future intensification. A commitment to these ideals will result in a reversal of the anti-pedestrian industrial patterns that the community has seen in recent decades.

Note: The future street network and block structure shown in this study document is intended for conceptual purposes only. Though a denser block pattern will inevitably be implemented to achieve the vision for Concord West, further traffic and urban studies will need to be undertaken to determine its exact structure and alignment.



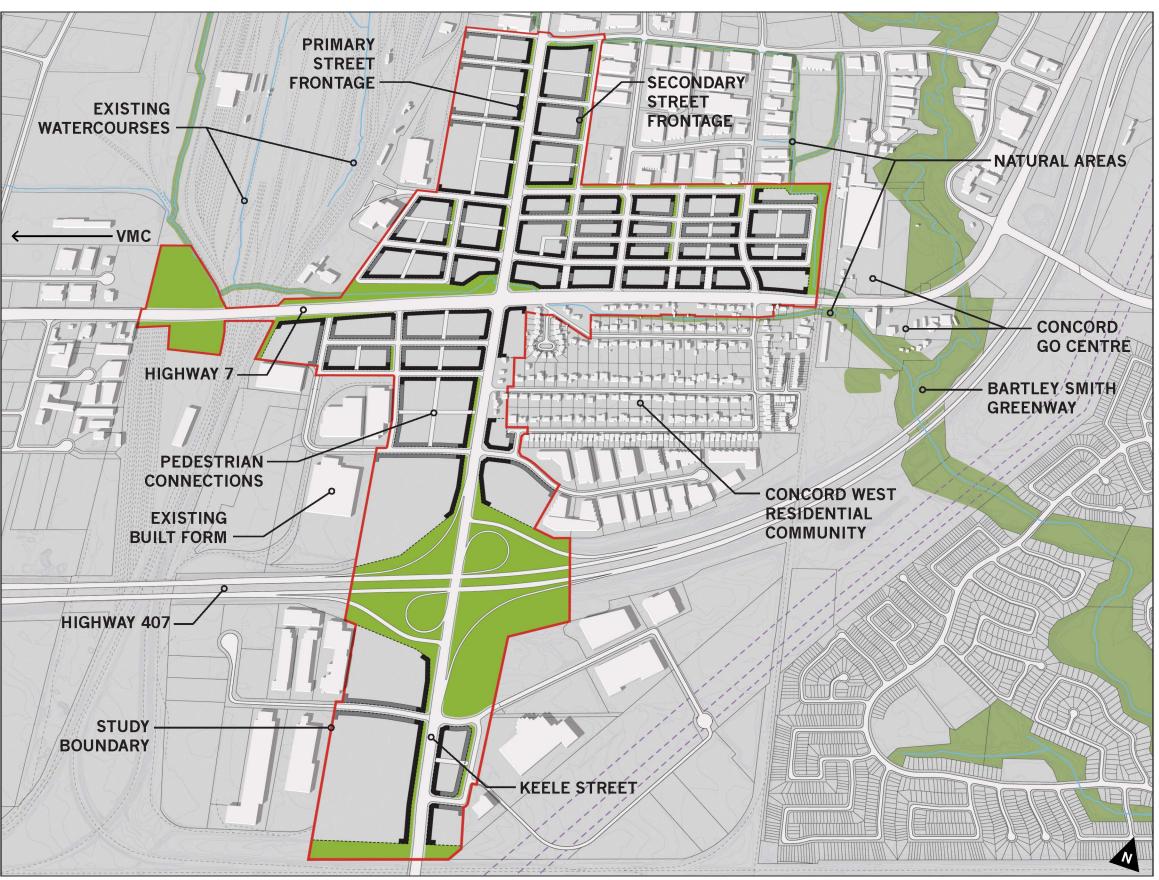


Figure 2.3.1 Study area showing conceptual development framework.

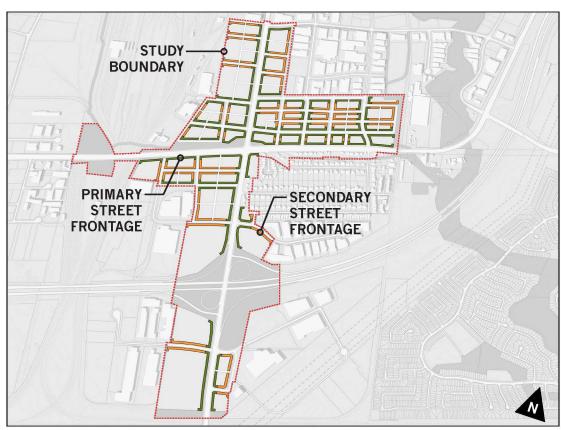


Figure 2.3.2 Building street frontage diagram.

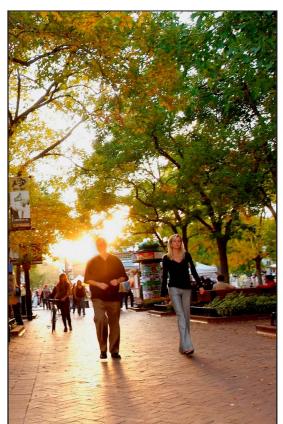


Figure 2.3.4a Walkway in Denver, CO.



Fig. 2.3.4b Treed pedestrian connection.



Fig. 2.3.4c Connection in Portland, OR.



Fig. 2.3.3a Street front retail amenities.



Fig. 2.3.3b Raised street front patio.

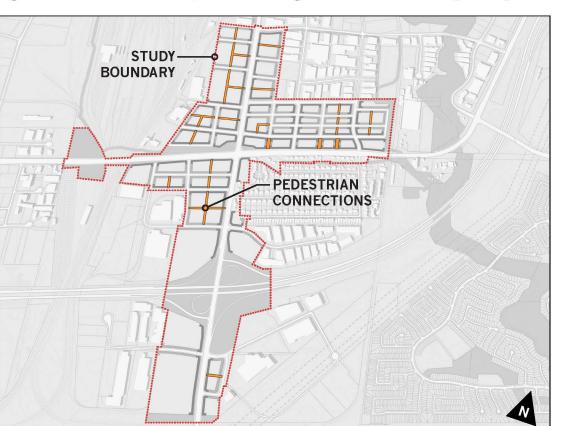


Figure 2.3.5 Pedestrian connections diagram.



Fig. 2.3.3c Mid-rise building frontage.

2.3.2 **Building Street Frontage** 

A key characteristic of activated, pedestrian-friendly urban neighbourhoods is the appropriate proportioning of building frontage located at the streetfront. This conceptual diagram highlights street frontages of primary and secondary importance (Figure 2.3.2). Of primary importance are the frontages along arterial streets and local throughways. These frontages should make the greatest attempt to maintain a continuous built streetfront presence (Figures 2.3.3a/b/c). Of secondary importance are the various local streets that complete the urban block pattern. Efforts should be made to maintain a continuous building presence along these frontages, and where not possible, parking areas should be screened from the streetscapes by trees and landscape areas.

#### 2.3.3 **Pedestrian Connections**

As a strategy to further break down the private realm within the development blocks of the Concord West study area, mid-block pedestrian connections shall occur whenever a block exceeds 140 metres in any direction (Figure 2.3.5). These connections will create porosity of the urban environment for pedestrians, and shall provide refuge within a setting balanced between hardscape and softscape (Figures 2.3.4a/b/c). Whether these connections bypass building or parking area, they should be formally distinguished as screened passageways to move people through large block developments. Efforts should be made to align connections along multiple blocks, where appropriate, to create pedestrian throughway alternatives to the main street network.

## 2.4 A Vision for Concord West

## 2.4.1 Massing Demonstration Plan

Through a successful urban intensification guided by the implementation of the framework initiated by this document, Concord West has the potential to become defined by a distinct urban fabric connecting the surrounding community to the Highway 7 and Keele Street urban corridors (Figures 2.4.1-5) - one composed of healthy urbanization, green amenity spaces, public amenity spaces, and sustainability features (Figures 2.4.6-9). Development within the study area should maximize the amount of permeable surface and green amenity space to reduce stormwater runoff and contribute to a healthier community.

Note: This massing demonstration plan is intended for conceptual purposes only, and as such should serve as a reference point to convey the vision for all future development within Concord West.



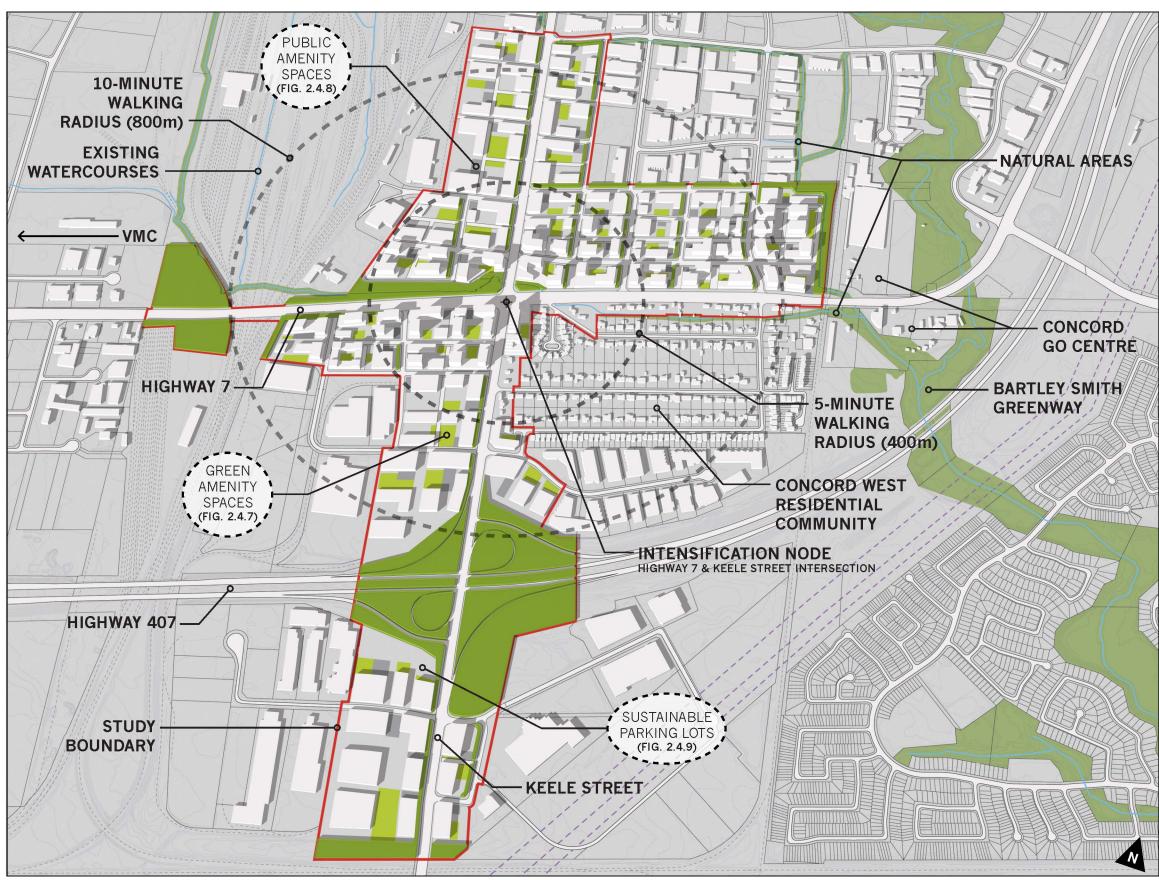


Figure 2.4.1 Study area showing massing model in conceptual urban framework.



Fig. 2.4.2 View from south showing massing model in conceptual urban framework.



Fig. 2.4.4 View from south showing massing model in conceptual urban framework.



Fig. 2.4.3 View from southeast showing massing model in conceptual urban framework.



Fig. 2.4.5 View from west showing massing model in conceptual urban framework.



Fig. 2.4.6 Urbanization precedent



Fig. 2.4.7 Green amenity space precedent.



Fig. 2.4.8 Public amenity space precedent.



Fig. 2.4.9 Sustainable parking precedent.

# 2.5 Framework Component Matrix

## 2.5.1 Component Matrix

This series of diagrams identifies the various component layers that define the conceptual *Urban Framework* (UF) and *Development Framework* (DF) for Concord West. They are represented as follows:

#### **Urban Framework Components**

**UF.1** - Street Network

UF.2 - Block Structure

**UF.3** - Urban Corridors

**UF.4** - Stormwater Buffers

UF.5 - Natural Areas & Planted Buffers

UF.6 - Street Trees & Boulevard Planting

#### **Development Framework Components**

**DF.1** - Building Street Frontage

**DF.2** - Pedestrian Connections

Note: The future street network and block structure shown in this study document is intended for conceptual purposes only.

