

# Appendix D: Kingston Road Cliffside Community Case Study

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## Introduction

Kingston Road is a major arterial corridor in the City of Toronto, stretching west from Queen Street East through Scarborough and onwards towards Kingston. The road once served as a major commercial street and a principal link eastwards from Toronto to Kingston and Montreal, but saw this role vanish following the construction of the 401 in the 1960’s. High crime rates in the area during the 1980’s helped to drive growing commercial vacancies. Over the past decade a series of studies and projects have examined parts of Kingston Road and its communities with the aims of revitalizing the area. The street is a significant corridor for transit, a major artery for automobile traffic, and a long connector with diverse neighbourhoods along its length. While each area has its own local context, several studies have highlighted common issues along the length of Kingston Road – commercial vacancies, commercial-to-residential conversions, lack of development, insufficient transit service, a lack of infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists, and ongoing congestion.

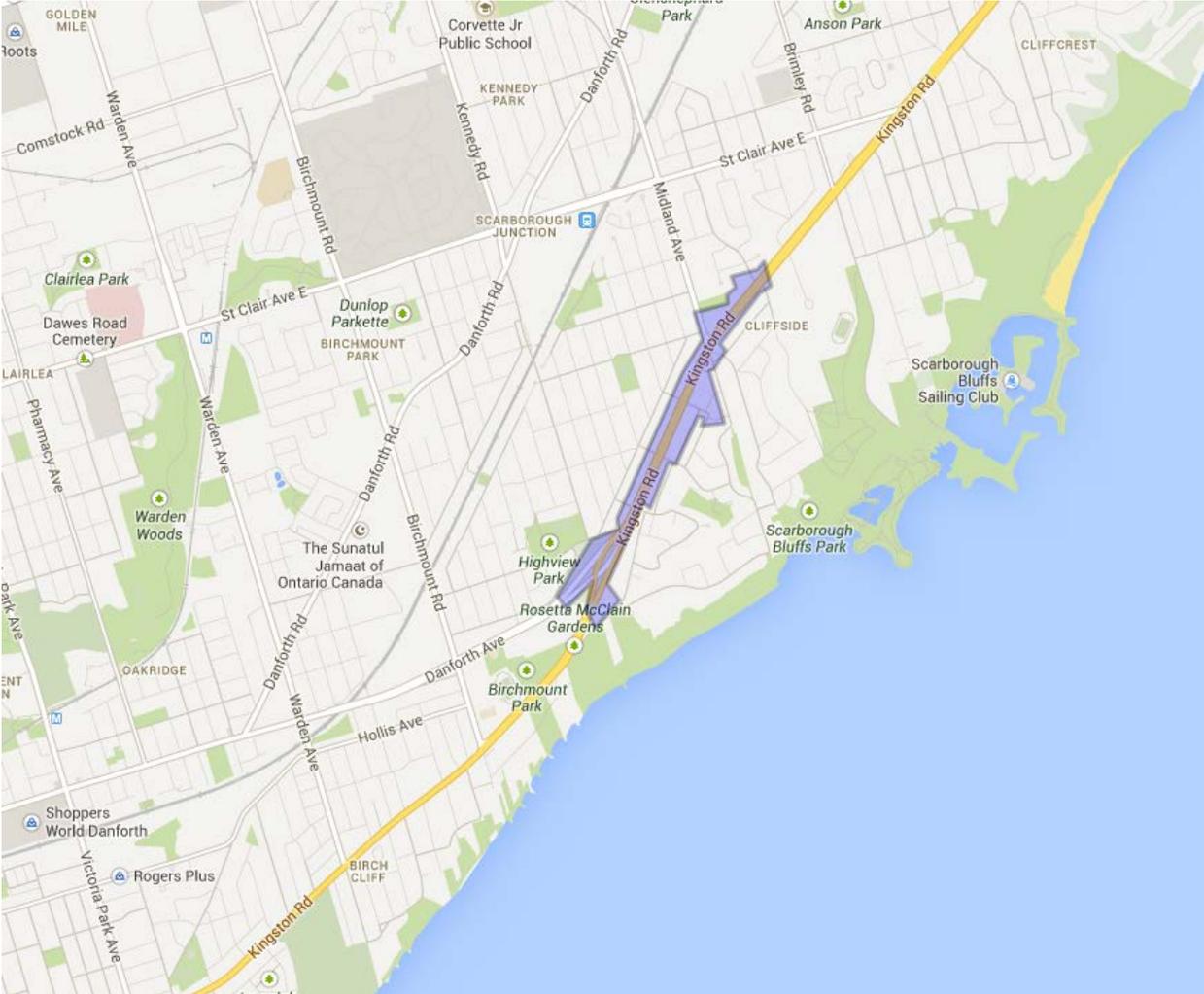
This case study will address how new active transportation infrastructure was planned for in the case of the Kingston Road Cliffside Community. This study will aim to understand how policies related to the creation of active transportation infrastructure are or are not operationalized into concrete projects and how the planning process can promote or prevent such active transportation implementation.

## Study Area

In the context of Toronto’s Official Plan, Kingston Road is designated as an Avenue, which indicates it as an important main street intended as an appropriate local street for densification and redevelopment. As part of the City’s plan to manage growth, Avenues such as Kingston Road are meant to accommodate new housing, retail, employment and community

facilities – all linked to public transportation.<sup>i</sup> Such changes are meant to take place within the given local contexts, encouraging mid-rise development and intensification of use through the addition of additional floorspace above existing buildings.

Kingston Road is also identified in the Official Plan as a Higher Order Transit Corridor, a route where transit service will be improved or expanded in the future, although without explicitly defined technologies, priorities or timelines. Higher order transit routes are defined in other planning documents as transit routes with exclusive rights-of-way and corridors allowing transit priority within road rights-of-way.<sup>ii</sup>



**Process**

The Kingston Road ‘Avenue’ Study in Cliffsides Community began in March of 2008, which was during the time an Environmental Assessment of Kingston Road’s length was being conducted regarding improvements to transit. The Cliffsides study aimed to “create a framework

for new development and identify needed service, transportation or streetscape improvements.<sup>iii</sup> Public consultation for the study in June of 2008 highlighted the current car-focused orientation of the street and the need for greater pedestrian amenities and safety, comments which were echoed by the attendees.

The creation of a Local Advisory Committee and a series of subsequent meetings led to the creation of guiding principles for the planning process which set out ideals for the community including a number of provisions for promoting active transportation through both land use and transportation infrastructure. These included:

- **Progressive Community**
  - Promote the use of transit, cycling and walking as viable modes of transportation, reducing the overall dominance of cars in the area.
  - Minimize motor vehicle-related features such as surface parking and traffic lanes to accommodate an improved pedestrian and cyclist environment. Harmonize movement and connectivity within the study area and to adjacent areas to achieve a better balance between pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and transit.
- **Safe, Secure, and Accessible**
  - The physical environment will be designed to foster comfort and safety and will accommodate people of all abilities and ages. A balance will be achieved between pedestrian, cyclist and motor vehicle movement that will maximize safe and controlled interfaces within the study area while creating fluid connections to adjacent communities.
- **Pedestrian Place**
  - Encourage a mix of uses and built form that promotes high quality, attractive and vibrant places that elevate the experience of the pedestrian.
  - Restore the urban street wall, encourage retail, commercial or public uses at grade and reduce the dominance of vehicles in the corridor. Create an organized, beautiful and green infrastructure for pedestrian movement that addresses linkages to existing community assets and includes a new civic place for the community and destination for visitors.

A design charette in September of 2008 reiterated the earlier community comments, including the need for wider sidewalks, efforts to slow and reduce traffic, and dedicated bicycle lanes. Public feedback on potential organization of the right of way demonstrated the greatest support for a layout which featured a removed centre median, a dedicated transit Right of Way, two lanes of traffic in each direction, dedicated bike lanes, and one lane of parallel parking on each side.

The final Local Advisory Committee meeting in October 2008 summarized the feedback on proposed changes to the streetscape, with public support throughout the process favouring

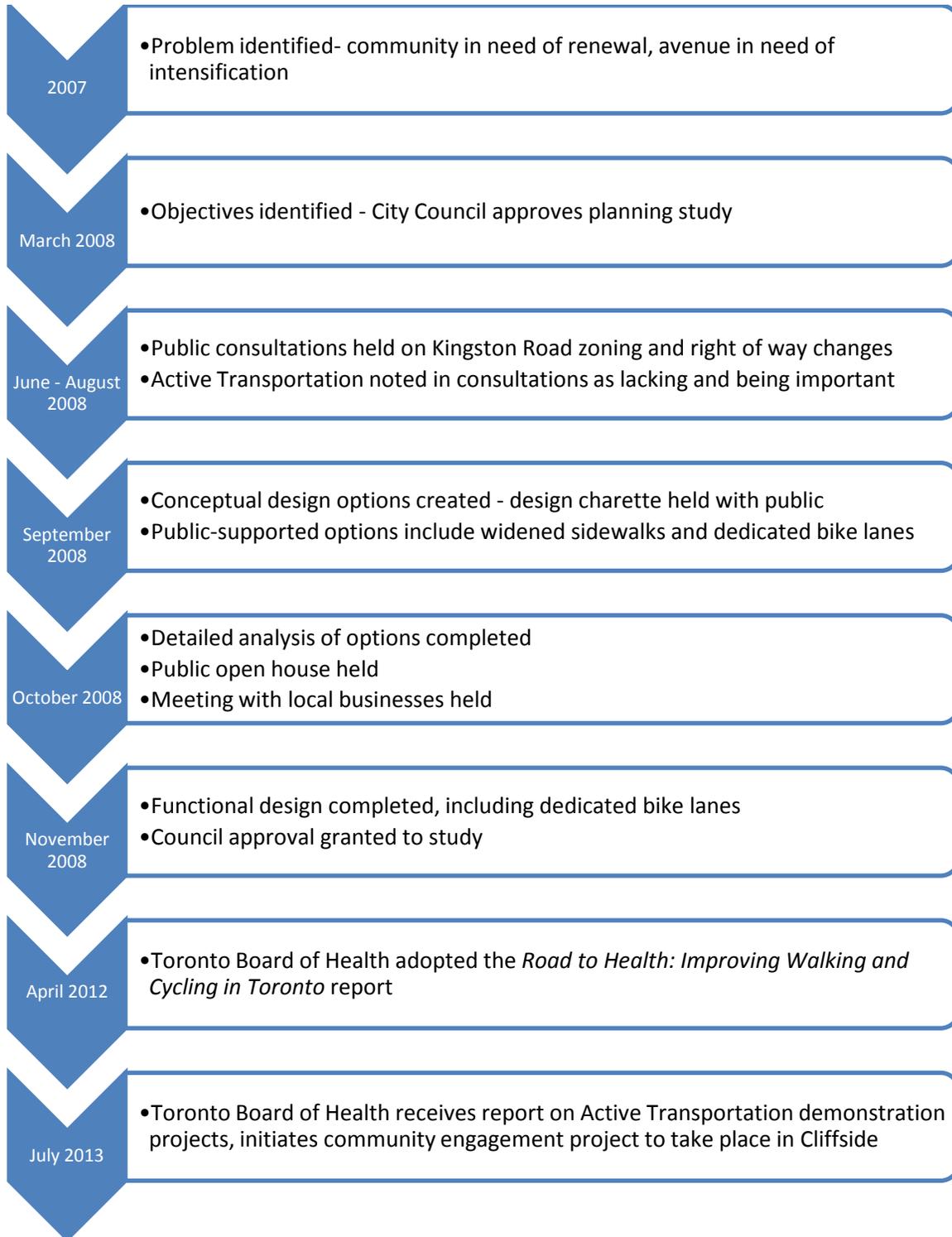
widened sidewalks, a row of trees, dedicated bike lanes, two lanes of traffic in each direction, a dedicated transit lane, and on-street parking or left turn lanes as needed.

Following a meeting with the local business community, staff presented recommendations to Scarborough Community Council, and to Toronto City Council, recommending, among other actions, that “City Council adopt the Urban Design Concept Plan and Urban Design Guidelines shown in Attachment 6 to the report (October 16, 2009) from the Director, Policy and Research, and the Director, Community Planning, Scarborough District.”<sup>iv</sup> This Urban Design Concept Plan included provisions for on-street bike lanes and the discussed streetscape elements from the community consultation, which were adopted by Council.

Adopted in the final year of the mandate of the 2006-2010 Toronto City Council, the design standards were not yet operationalized into interventions in the Kingston Road Cliffside community. The streetscape design has thus been approved in concept, but has had no funding allocated to the project and no construction slated for the street.

As a part of a later planning process, further study of the Cliffside community has been undertaken. In April of 2012 the Toronto Board of Health adopted the *Road to Health: Improving Walking and Cycling in Toronto* report, which led to Toronto Public Health to launch four active transportation demonstration/pilot projects.<sup>v</sup> One of the identified communities for study is the Cliffside community, based on its previously-identified need for and support of active transportation.<sup>vi</sup> TPH has retained a private urban planning consultancy to carry out a neighbourhood-level community engagement process on the subject of active transportation in Cliffside, with consultation events scheduled to happen in November of 2013. These engagement processes are efforts to build local awareness of the benefits of and opportunities for active transportation while sharing information on challenges, opportunities, and community vision in the Cliffside community<sup>vii</sup>.

## Timeline



## Lessons

Public support for active transportation can add it to the agenda outside of the political process. While changes to the right of way were not a primary focus of the avenue study undertaken for Kingston Road, the role of bike lanes and widened sidewalks were frequently raised by the public in the consultation and charette process. This helped to bring active transportation into the final design.

Low-visibility active transportation infrastructure such as bicycle parking zoning requirements can be implemented without great controversy. While much discussion during the planning process was focused on building size and shape, land use, and streetscape design, other elements of supporting active transportation were included at a zoning level with little discussion or controversy. For example, minimum provisions for bicycle parking and the standards associated with it were included in a new zoning bylaw for the area, supporting active transportation in every new development

Adoption of a plan, even after much consultation, is no guarantee of its implementation. The Kingston Road study of the Cliffside community was approved by the Scarborough Community Council and adopted by Toronto City Council, and the zoning changes were enacted. Actions were recommended in the report, such as the reconstruction of the streetscape, changes to the right of way, improvements to street furniture, and upgrades to public transit, but funds have not been allocated and reconstruction has not begun.

Delays in implementing planned physical interventions for active transportation infrastructure do not indicate failure to do so. Rather, the diverse range of involved parties – from developers to community groups – can influence the likelihood of action. Past studies and plans can act as supporting evidence to better evaluate the requirements of potential interventions and build community support in future engagement efforts.

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