

## ACTION ITEMS

The City Staff Team, in collaboration with PPS, has begun to create a short term implementation plan, based on the detailed program and vision outlined above, that would highlight a series of activities and improvements that could be implemented and tested during the summer of 2006. This effort would be kicked off by a series of remarkable initiatives introduced to the civic centre and the Living Arts Center during the summer of 2006 to make downtown feel like a place. This would begin a year-long series of experiments that will make these places event-friendly and people-friendly, and that will test strategies for their overall management. The focus would be on testing to see which ideas resonate best with the community, work well in the spaces provided, and could become ongoing, regular events.

- Launch the Outdoor Community Centre in June to coincide with the reopening of the Farmers Market in the parking lot across Duke of York, facing the City Hall. The first step could be to: add vendors selling ethnic foods; plan a festival; put out flowers in the planters and add outdoor lighting under the trellis. A series of plays, concerts, and outdoor movies could be planned for every evening of the opening week. This cultural program could continue throughout the summer.
- Because there are a number of key city institutions who did not play as active a role in this planning process as is now warranted based upon the significant future role they are being asked to play by the citizens of Mississauga, a series of stakeholder meetings should be held with high

level staff and leadership of the Library, LAC, and Department of Transportation & Works to review the short term implementation and longer term ideas generated for their institutions. These key city centre partners need to be 100% vested and committed to participating in transforming the city centre into the kind of destination the people of Mississauga want it to become. Much is being asked of them. Therefore, the City should be prepared to support them in their efforts. At the same time, other partners could be identified to fund, manage, design and implement desired changes to their public spaces. At the end of February, the City of Mississauga hosted a forum titled “Moving Forward” which brought together government representatives, corporate and community stakeholders and renowned experts in city building to discuss ideas related to building livable, accessible and vibrant downtowns for suburban cities like Mississauga. This marks a promising step towards further engaging this important civic and cultural institution in the Placemaking process.

- PPS has conducted a number of Placemaking training exercises for and with City staff. However, it would be suitable to tailor more specific training to certain city departments. These include the Division of Policy Planning within the Planning and Building Department (who are working on the City’s official plan) and the Department of Transportation and Works who would receive training in Context Sensitive Transportation Design and Solutions.

As of June 2006, Mississauga has already begun implementing programs and improvements based on ideas that came out of the Placemaking process.



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR MOVING FORWARD

We recommend that the implementation of the city centre Placemaking Plan proceed using five principles that are largely parallel.

### 1ST PRINCIPLE: DEVELOP CIVIC SPACES AS AN OUTDOOR COMMUNITY CENTRE

One of the recurring themes of this study is that the city centre should be perceived as an outdoor community centre, with a budget, staff, and program similar to that of a community centre, which will draw at least as many visitors as any of the city's indoor community centres. To achieve this, a full-time Public Space manager should be hired and provided with dedicated staff and a budget. This would go a long way towards demonstrating the City's commitment to programming and management of the city centre.

The manager would also be a key member of the team leading detail design of the New Parklands and the redevelopment of the existing Civic Squares. This will ensure that the experiences of programming the spaces guides detail design resulting in new places are functional as well as aesthetically pleasing.

### 2ND PRINCIPLE: PARK DEVELOPMENT THEME AND UNIFYING ELEMENTS

Upon finalization of the park concept plans developed in partnership with the key stakeholders, the City will develop a tender for detailed design and park construction for the specific park sites. During the process of detailed design a unifying park theme related to the 1st principle needs to be clearly articulated that captures the PPS vision but will also visually tie all the spaces together. The designers should also consider the use of artistic elements and a consistent pallet of high quality materials to be used in park and streetscape construction that will also unify the spaces. Once completed, the detailed design would be presented to the City Manager, Leadership Team, Mayor and Council for their approval.

### 3RD PRINCIPLE: CONTINUE TO ENGAGE THE PUBLIC

Engaging the public must be an ongoing process. This provides opportunity to get many more people involved. A variety of partners will result in innovative ideas, and valuable resources such as volunteers. Prior meeting participants could be tapped and trained as "Placemaking Promoters." They could go out to the public in groups, and give presentations of the plan to their neighbours, colleagues, and fellow civic association members. By doing this, the responsibility for "selling the plan" to the rest of the City is not only dependent on City staff, but on potential users of the parks and public spaces themselves.



#### **4TH PRINCIPLE: ENGAGE IN SYMBOLIC ACTS:**

While tangible actions are required, symbolic gestures aimed at demonstrating the City's commitment to Placemaking in the city centre will go a long way towards instilling public trust in the city and in the process itself.

The idea of removing the sections of wall at City Hall that obscure the plaza from public view has taken on a life of its own. People have repeatedly called for the opening up of the view corridors and sight lines through the plaza from the surrounding streets, which can only be achieved by demolishing these walls.

The Mayor and Council need to feel confident that the ideas and program developed for the new city centre and parks spaces are fully endorsed by residents, as represented by the nearly 1000 participants in this planning process. We recommend a public meeting involving the council, where PPS would present the short term implementation plan as a large poster, and the public would be invited to literally sign it with a marker as their vote of confidence and approval.



#### **5TH PRINCIPLE: YOU'RE NEVER FINISHED!**

The success of a public space is heavily dependent on a community vision and excellent management plan. No matter how good the design of a space is, it will never become a true place unless it is well managed. This is especially true as good places are not static – they are continually changing. Good management is flexible, and will be able to adapt to the changing needs of the space. Public space management can be done at various levels, from paid city staff to community volunteers. In some cases, partners from the private sector can also be included in the process. As plans are put into action they should be constantly evaluated to ensure that the goals of making places for people are achieved.



## CONCLUSION: FUTURE ACTIONS TO CREATE A VIBRANT CITY CENTRE

Mississauga is a new city whose roots in suburbia and Square One have determined its current form as a city without a strong centre, where residents live in quiet enclaves. Now, as the City approaches a population of 700,000, and new highrise residential towers rise in the City Centre, an explosion in the downtown population is occurring. As these apartments are rented and condominiums sell, the City must redefine itself and deliver the promise that all cities make to their downtown residents: to provide quality of life and city amenities. This means places to go, things to do, street life, active public spaces and walkability. In this defining moment, Mississauga has the chance to emerge from its awkward adolescence and truly become a distinctive major urban centre in Canada.

In addition to the specific park development and park program concepts presented in this report, other guiding principles and development guidelines need to be adopted to ensure the creation of a great downtown:

- A comprehensive retail strategy is essential to building up downtown's streets into walkable corridors that reduce reliance on cars and help attract more downtown residents. In the core, every building should have ground floor retail offering a variety of goods and services to residents, workers and visitors.
- Redevelop Duke of York Boulevard, from Burnhamthorpe Road north to Princess Royal Drive or

beyond into a neighbourhood commercial main street, lined with shops in two and three storey buildings, with active ground floor uses spilling out onto the sidewalk. On the east side of the plaza facing the library, an art gallery, restaurant or greenhouse could be housed in a new building. A permanent market shed could be constructed for the farmers' market, which is a vital local institution and has been around for such a long time that it has potential to become a daily, instead of weekly, market.



- The City needs to adopt a flexible approach to street standards that results in streets that fit a more urban environment and population. There are numerous examples world-wide where cities have adopted "Context Sensitive Solutions" to ensure that a road fits its context and supports and benefits the communities it passes through.



- Although the public regards Burnhamthorpe Road as a barrier to pedestrian movement the City could utilize its wide right-of-way to reconfigure the road into a Grand Boulevard. This will change the image of Mississauga even while the new boulevard will continue to handle large traffic volumes.
- As downtown developers are beginning to realize, the City's blocks are too large, making walking an unappealing prospect. A study is needed of how to subdivide the "superblocks" in the future with new cross streets.
- All intersections in the City Centre area, including Burnhamthorpe Road, should be paved with prominent crosswalks.
- Special roadway treatments should be introduced on all the streets that intersect the parklands and civic spaces to help unite them and promote walking in the downtown. We also recommend traffic calming, narrowing roads, adding on-street parking, raising some streets to sidewalk level, and other techniques where possible to slow traffic and foster safer pedestrian movement.
- Square One mall must continue to be engaged as a partner in the redevelopment of a denser, mixed use, pedestrian-friendly downtown. The

mall, too, must evolve as its context changes, and a more urban form is necessary, where buildings line the streets rather than parking lots. The new trend toward lifestyle centres, which recreate the experience of walking on a Main Street, is a perfect fit for Mississauga. With at least 130 lifestyle centres now built in North America, and about 20 more set to open in 2006, developers are hailing them as the best new strategy to invigorate old or failing malls. Furthermore, any future redevelopment of the mall should consider opportunities to incorporate a finer grid pattern to support enhanced pedestrian movement.

- Buildings should have a more active, inviting presence. For this to happen, participants noted, City Centre buildings must become more open and less insular. The ground floors and lobbies of each building could be made more accessible and transparent by moving internal public uses – such as art galleries and restaurants – out into the public spaces, keeping the building lobbies open seven days a week, and adding new retail activity to the ground floor of each facility. New infill buildings were also suggested to add activity, particularly for the site east of the library, which was envisioned as a possible restaurant, art gallery, greenhouse or "great hall."



- Management and programming for public spaces is absolutely essential. Not budgeting for public space management is like building a community centre and not hiring a staff to run it. Events, outdoor vendors, regular farmers and arts markets, seasonal festivals, performances, and film screenings are all part of the mix that will resuscitate Mississauga's barren spaces, and all will need management.
- City Centre needs recreation spaces for exercising and enjoyment, from walking routes to picnic areas to ice skating to tai chi classes. Basketball, hockey, skateboarding, volleyball, bocce, and shuffleboard were also mentioned, with the thought that games could welcome different age groups, from teens to seniors, to activate these civic spaces.
- The City's Policy Planning Division should be encouraged, empowered and funded to continue its update of the Mississauga Plan using a community- and placemaking-based approach. By bringing each neighbourhood and district into the planning process, a much more feasible yet far reaching plan for the City will begin to emerge. In addition, issues and challenges that require attention in the near term will become clear and can be accorded the appropriate level and priority of funding.

One of the underlying principles behind creating a great city centre is that it should "reach out like an octopus." In the long term, the city centre should reach out further into other areas of the City. Parks and bike trails could eventually join the City's developed areas to natural areas such as the Credit River, exponentially expanding residents' access both to recreation and to the centre's services. Light rail, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), and bike trails could link the city centre to Toronto. Even people flying into Toronto Pearson Airport should see signs of Mississauga's City Centre, through advertising and promotions, and wayfinding markers leading you to or from downtown.

We predict that the proposed new parks will begin this process of reaching out, by connecting areas within the City core in a way that will attract people from all over the city. They represent a significant amenity that new and existing residents will value and enjoy and that will add to the city's growing list of achievements.

