

## 4.0

# The Opportunity for Tower Neighbourhood Renewal in the Greater Golden Horseshoe

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Many of the goals that are typical of Tower Neighbourhood Renewal initiatives in European jurisdictions coincide closely with recent areas of provincial policy development. Increasing transit use, reducing poverty, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and creating complete communities are central tenets of Tower Neighbourhood Renewal. They are also key areas of provincial interest. Through recent initiatives such as The Big Move - Metrolinx's Regional Transportation Plan, the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the Go Green Action Plan on Climate Change, and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Province is seeking to achieve a number of the same goals that Tower Neighbourhood Renewal has successfully achieved elsewhere.

In this section, we explore the links between Tower Neighbourhood Renewal and these areas of provincial policy interest, and suggest locations in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) where there may be particularly high potential for Tower Neighbourhood Renewal to help achieve these provincial priorities.

This analysis places focus on large apartment clusters, which are defined as groupings of five or more Apartment Towers.

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## 4.1 Supporting Regional Transit Investment and Alternative Transportation Modes

### Context

The Big Move - Metrolinx's 2008 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) - sets out a series of strategies, policy recommendations and infrastructure investment priorities that are intended to transform the region's transportation system into a truly multi-modal system that is seamless, coordinated, efficient, equitable and user-centred.

### The 25-year vision of the RTP includes:

- reducing the distance that people drive every day by one-third;
- reducing reliance on private automobiles such that one-third of trips to work are taken by transit, and one in five are taken by walking or cycling; and
- reducing per person GHG emissions from passenger transportation by half.

### Key strategies in the RTP include:

- building a comprehensive regional rapid transit network across the GTHA;
- implementing integrated walking and cycling networks for the GTHA;
- planning a system of connected mobility hubs at key intersections in the transit network; and
- planning, designing and building the transportation system to create pedestrian-, cycling-, and transit-friendly communities.

Tower Neighbourhood Renewal provides an opportunity to support these RTP strategies.

### Discussion

As discussed earlier in this report, residents of Apartment Towers tend to have higher than average transit ridership. They also exhibit higher than average rates of walking and cycling, and lower than average rates of car ownership. These findings, as well as the tendency for Apartment Towers to be clustered in groupings of higher density, strongly suggest that Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods are important markets for alternative modes of transportation.

The challenge currently is the poor access that these towers have to fast, frequent regional rapid transit. While most of them have access to varying levels of local bus service, only 17 per cent of Apartment Towers are in close proximity (within 500 metres) to regional rapid transit. The RTP's 25-year regional rapid transit network would significantly improve this situation. The first phase of the RTP, the "Big Five" projects, will provide direct access to 28 per cent of Apartment Towers, and the full 25-year Metrolinx Plan will provide direct access to 64 per cent of towers.

Given the already strong tendencies of Apartment Tower residents to use transit, and their relative dependence on transit due to lower than average car ownership rates, Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods have significant potential to function as the ridership anchors of the RTP transit network. While the RTP network will bring transit to the doorsteps of many more residents in the region, Apartment Towers can generate the riders that will make that network viable.

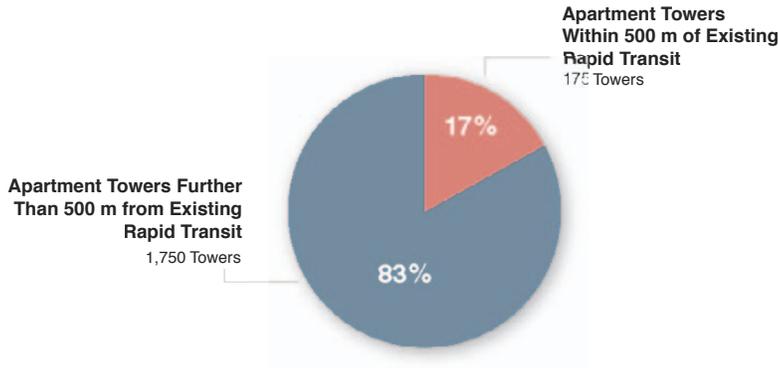


01

### The Metrolinx "Big Five"

The RTP identifies 15 priority transportation projects to be implemented over the next 15 years. Of these, five projects were identified as the most immediate priorities. They are referred to as "the Big Five" and include light rail transit lines in the City of Toronto on Sheppard Avenue East, Eglinton Avenue and Finch Avenue, the upgrade and extension of the Scarborough RT, and the Viva bus rapid transit system in York Region.

### Apartment Towers Within 500 m of Existing Regional Rapid Transit

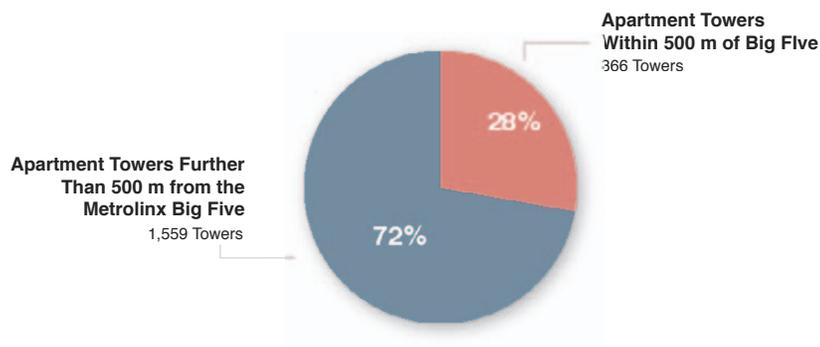


02

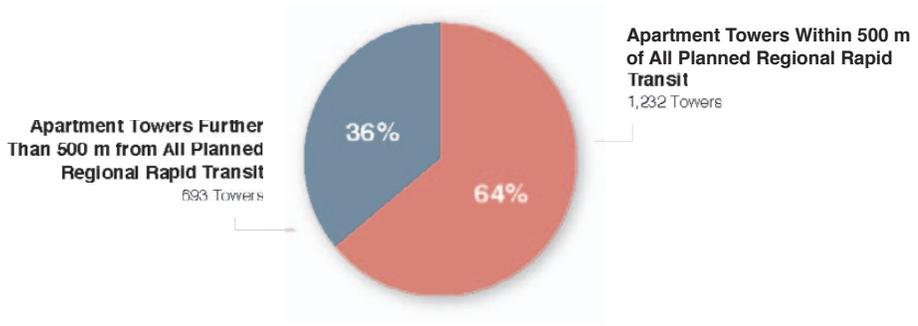
#### Images

- 01) Cover of Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan, The Big Move: Transforming Transportation in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area
- 02) Metrolinx full system map, as planned

### Apartment Towers Within 500 m of Metrolinx 'Big Five'



### Apartment Towers Within 500 m of Metrolinx Plan 25-Year Regional Rapid Transit Network



Total Towers in GGH: 1,925

As detailed planning proceeds for the RTP transit network, an understanding of Apartment Towers can help to guide decisions on routing and station location. With 18 per cent of Apartment Towers in the GTHA within planned mobility hubs (measured as 800 metres from the station site), there is an opportunity to improve their integration as part of mobility hub master plans.

A key implementation mechanism for the RTP will be municipal Transportation Master Plans (TMPs). With 72 per cent of Apartment Towers still more than 500 metres from regional rapid transit after the completion of the initial Big Five projects, and 36 per cent more than 500 metres away after full RTP implementation, the role of local transit will be critical to providing service and access to the residents of these neighbourhoods. Likewise, the Active Transportation Master Plans that the RTP suggests be undertaken as part of municipal TMPs can explore ways to shift more of the short trips originating in these neighbourhoods onto walking or cycling.

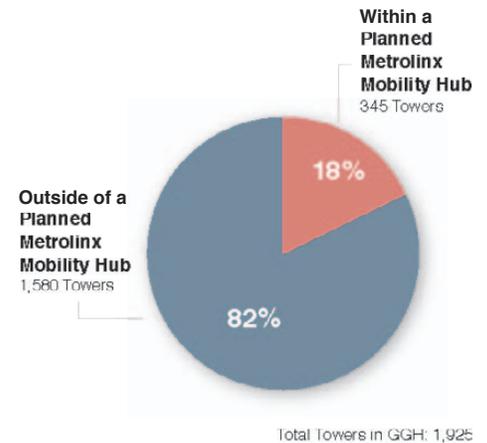
The Ministry of Transportation's Transit Supportive Land Use Planning Guidelines (TSLUG), which are currently being updated, are another opportunity to recognize the important role that Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods can play in fostering high levels of transit use. Land use guidelines tailored to the unique circumstances of Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods would be a valuable component of the new TSLUG. This would be facilitated by further analysis of individual tower neighbourhoods to identify the different neighbourhood typologies and the types of transit supportive land use changes that may be appropriate in different circumstances.

### Taking A Closer Look - Large Cluster Analysis

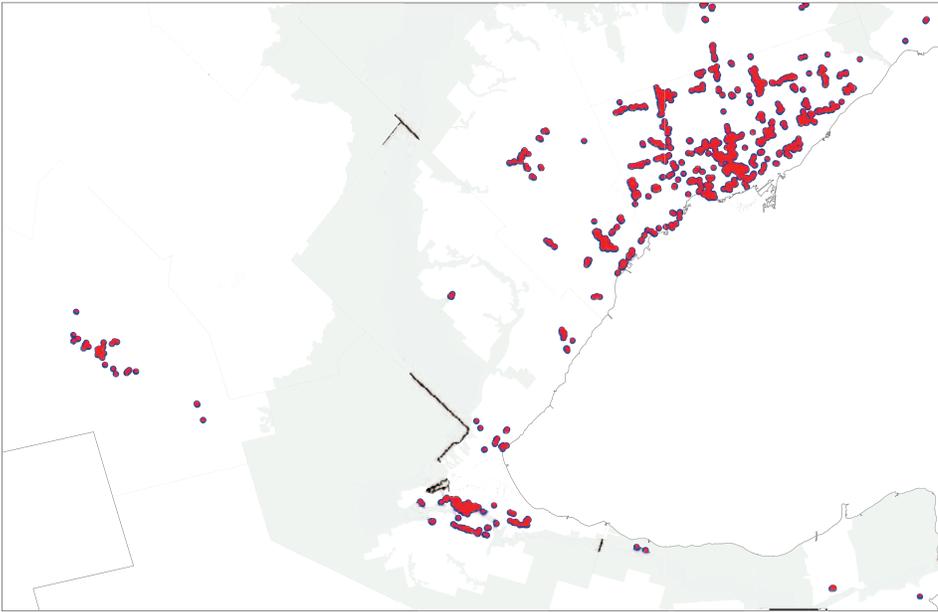
While all Apartment Towers are potentially important buildings blocks of the transit system, areas with large clusters of several buildings warrant a particularly strong emphasis.

The series of maps beginning on page 56 show locations within the GGH with clusters of five or more Apartment Towers that currently exhibit higher than average transit ridership. Collectively, these represent nearly half of all Apartment Towers in the GGH (43 per cent).

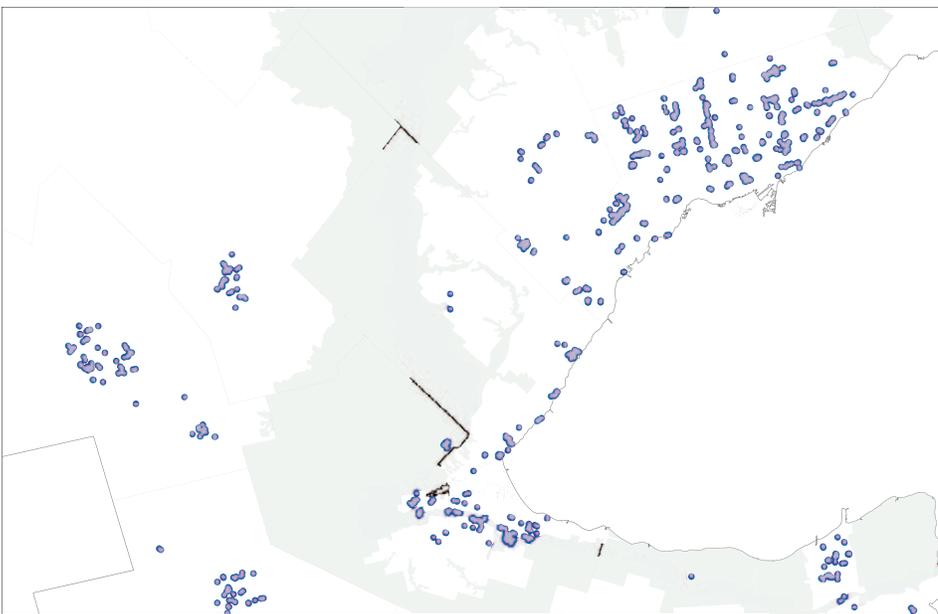
### Apartment Towers Within Planned Metrolinx Mobility Hubs



Apartment Towers and Planned Rapid Transit



Location of Apartment Towers within 500 m of Metrolinx 25-year Regional Rapid Transit Network



Location of Apartment Towers further than 500 m of Metrolinx 25-year Regional Rapid Transit Network

150km

Legend

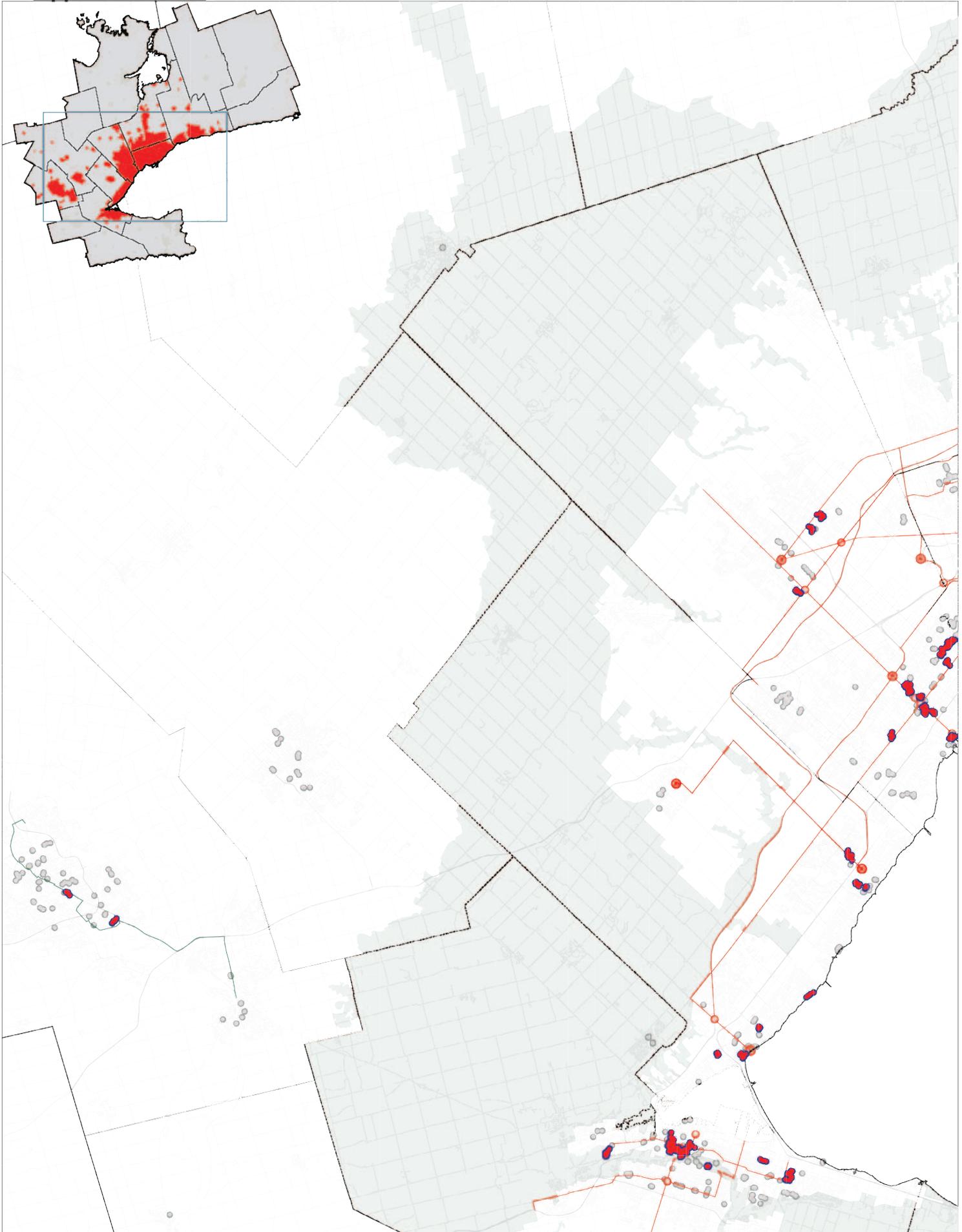
- Apartment Towers within 500 m of Metrolinx 25-year Regional Rapid Transit Network
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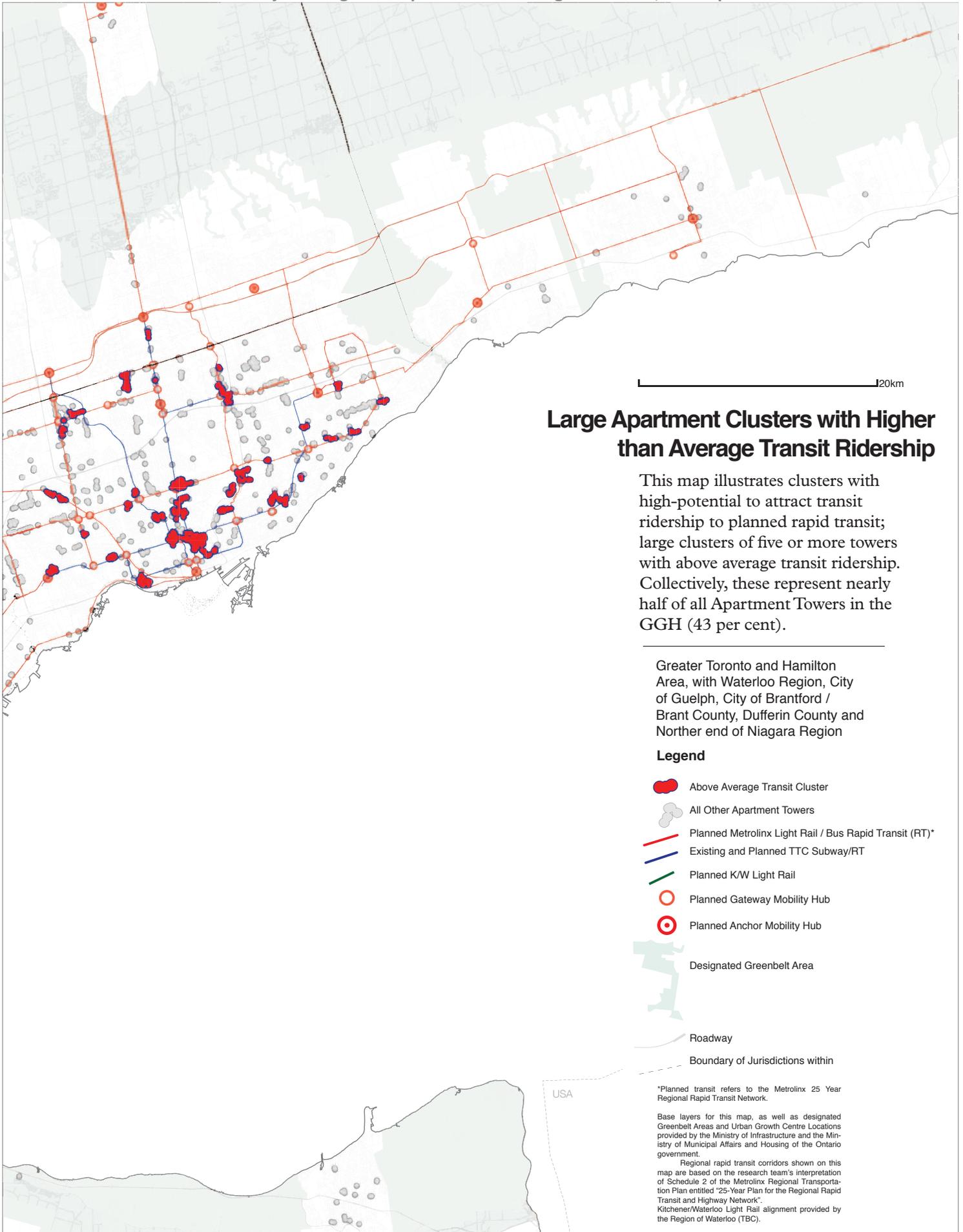
- Designated Greenbelt Area
- Roadway
- - - Boundary of Jurisdictions within GGH

Base layers for this map, as well as designated Greenbelt Areas and Urban Growth Centre Locations provided by the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing of the Ontario government.

Regional rapid transit corridors shown on this map are based on the research team's interpretation of Schedule 2 of the Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan entitled "25-Year Plan for the Regional Rapid Transit and Highway Network". Kitchener/Waterloo Light Rail alignment provided by the Region of Waterloo (TBC).

# Opportunities 4.1 Tower Neighbourhood Renewal in the Greater Golden Horseshoe





### Large Apartment Clusters with Higher than Average Transit Ridership

This map illustrates clusters with high-potential to attract transit ridership to planned rapid transit; large clusters of five or more towers with above average transit ridership. Collectively, these represent nearly half of all Apartment Towers in the GGH (43 per cent).

Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, with Waterloo Region, City of Guelph, City of Brantford / Brant County, Dufferin County and Northern end of Niagara Region

**Legend**

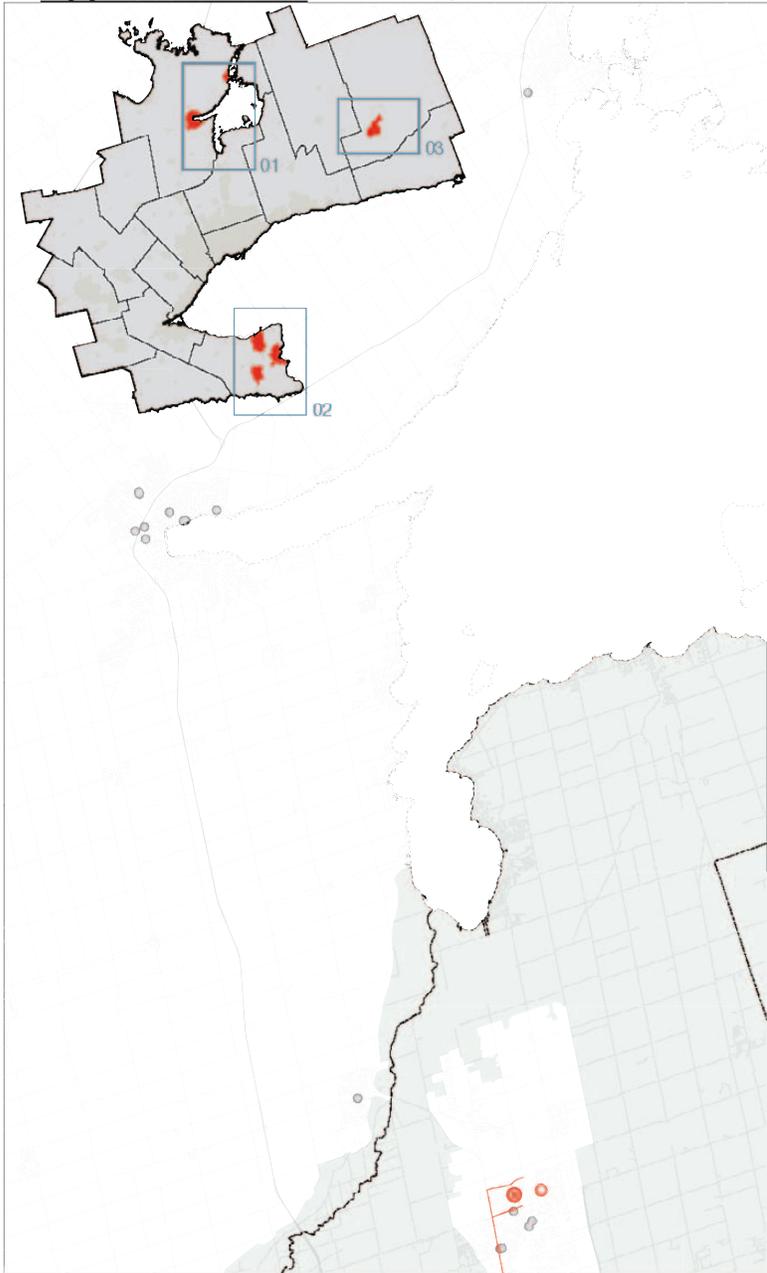
- Above Average Transit Cluster
- All Other Apartment Towers
- Planned Metrolinx Light Rail / Bus Rapid Transit (RT)\*
- Existing and Planned TTC Subway/RT
- Planned K/W Light Rail
- Planned Gateway Mobility Hub
- Planned Anchor Mobility Hub
- Designated Greenbelt Area
- Roadway
- Boundary of Jurisdictions within

\*Planned transit refers to the Metrolinx 25 Year Regional Rapid Transit Network.

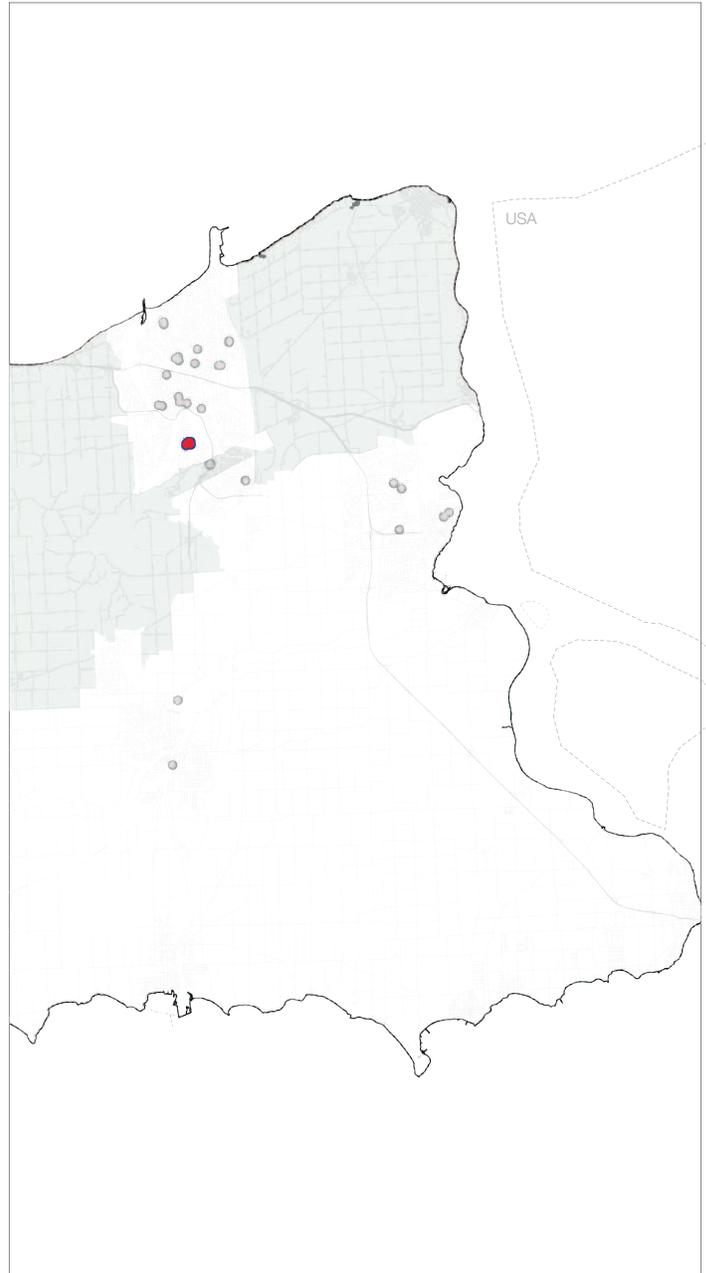
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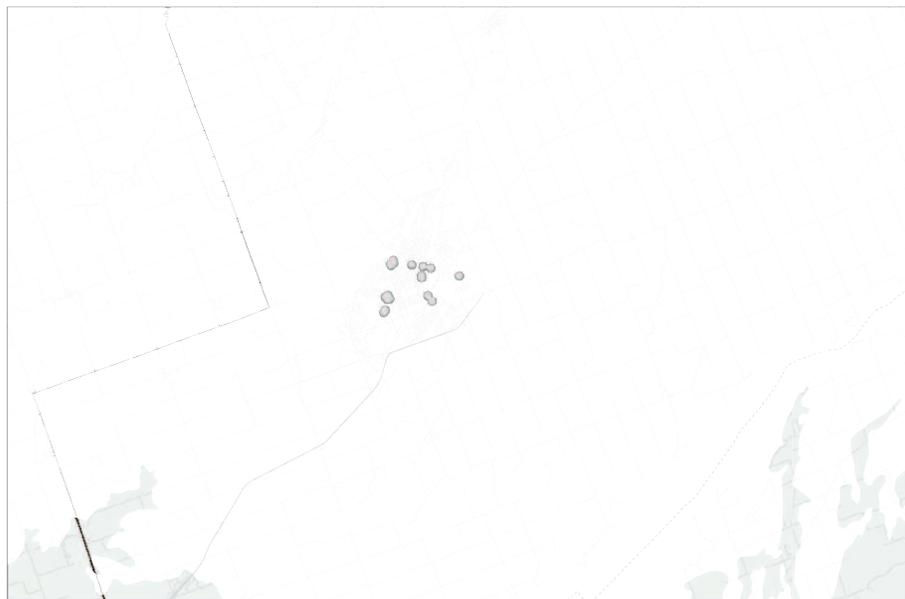
# Opportunities 4.1 Tower Neighbourhood Renewal in the Greater Golden Horseshoe



01) Simcoe County



02) Niagara Region



03) City of Peterborough

20km

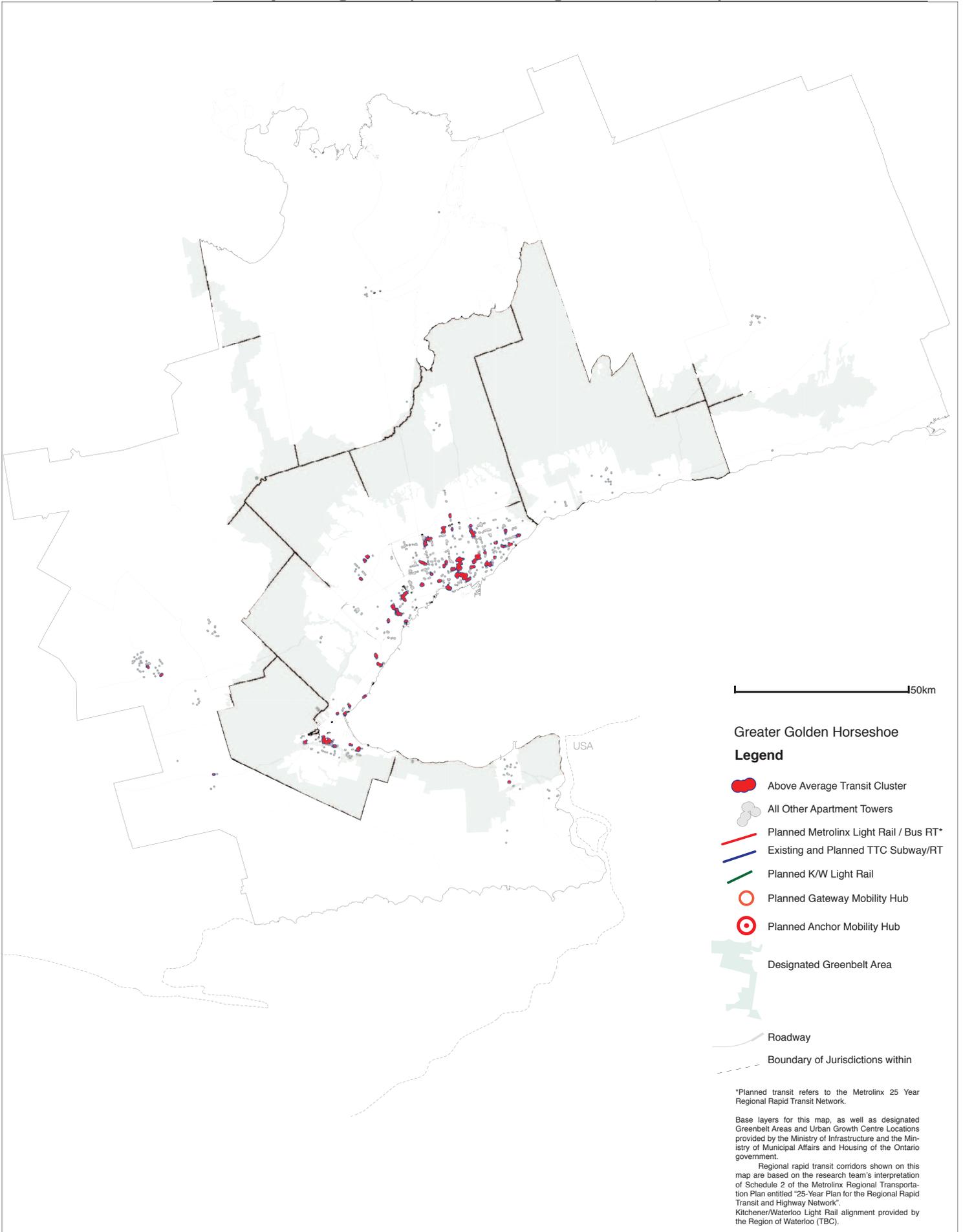
### Legend

-  Above Average Transit Cluster
-  All Other Apartment Towers
-  Planned Metrolinx Light Rail / Bus RT\*
-  Existing and Planned TTC Subway/RT
-  Planned K/W Light Rail
-  Planned Gateway Mobility Hub
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### **European Best Practices in Integrating Transit Investment within Existing Apartment Neighbourhoods**

Similar to the GGH, many modern Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods found in European cities were conceived as master-planned communities with a well-defined neighbourhood centre organized around a transit connection to the city centre. In other cases, new transportation hubs have been inserted into existing tower neighbourhoods as part of Tower Neighbourhood Renewal strategies, bringing rapid transit, as well as new investment, to these neighbourhoods.

The following are a series of strategies related to transit investment within Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods, and the pictures on the following page illustrate several examples.

### **Integrating Transit Stations with Apartment Towers**

In Amsterdam's Bijlmermeer, renovated metro stations are situated along two lines that bound the edges of this Apartment Tower neighbourhood (07). Attractive and comfortable new transit stations are integrated into the street in Hammarby Sjostad, Stockholm (03), and a convenient and safe LRT, bicycle and pedestrian-only transit corridor winds through Rietlanden and the Eastern Docklands in Amsterdam (05).

### **Transit Investment as Tower Neighbourhood Renewal Catalyst**

In Vällingby, a master-planned post-war neighbourhood on the outskirts of Stockholm (08), transit passengers emerge from the metro into a vibrant commercial plaza, at the centre of an Apartment Tower Neighbourhood that has recently undergone extensive restoration and redevelopment. In Halle Neustadt in Germany, a new metro station has facilitated commercial investment and a new public square at the centre of an existing tower community (04). In both of these cases, the station creates heavy pedestrian traffic that makes the centre of the neighbourhood an attractive and viable location for retail and commercial activity.

### **Improved Pedestrian Environment**

Many Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods in Europe have been renewed to include safe, attractive and convenient streets, paths and sidewalks that encourage residents to walk or bike for many of their local trips (09 to 13). In the Bijlmermeer, bicycling and walking around the neighbourhood has been improved by the introduction of a vast network of paths, many of which tunnel through the base of the original tower blocks (01 & 02). These cycle and pedestrian networks connect Apartment Towers to rapid transit stations.

### **High Quality Bicycle Infrastructure**

Part of what makes bicycling a viable option for high-rise living is finding secure and convenient ways to store your bicycle. Bicycle storage structures established as part of Swedish Tower Neighbourhood Renewal initiatives in Hammarby Sjostad, Stockholm (14), and Backa Rod, Göteborg (16), offer security and convenience, and help animate the shared outdoor spaces that surround them.

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#### **Image**

Commercial Plaza Atop Metro Station in Vällingby Tower Neighbourhood, Stockholm, Sweden



European Best Practice  
Transit strategies



01



02



03

01-02) Improved connectivity: bicycle paths through towers in Bijlmermeer, Amsterdam, NL  
03) LRT station in Hammarby Sjostad, Stockholm, Sweden  
04) New U-Bahn station and plaza as part of renewal in Halle Neustadt, Germany  
05) LRT routing through neighbourhood in Rietlanden, Amsterdam, NL  
06-07) New metro station(s) in Bijlmermeer, Amsterdam, NL



04



05



06



07



08



09



10

- 08) New metro connection catalyst to new commercial plaza, Halle Neustadt, Germany
- 09) Bicycle paths and pedestrian environment in Amsterdam, NL
- 10) Bicycle environment in suburban Amsterdam, NL
- 11) Pedestrian environment in Marzahn, Berlin, Germany
- 12) Pedestrian environment on new main street in Bijlmermeer, Amsterdam, NL
- 13) Lijnbaan Pedestrian shopping street, Rotterdam, NL
- 14) Bicycle storage facilities in Hammarby Sjostad, Stockholm, Sweden
- 15) Bicycle storage facilities at University of California Berkeley, California
- 16) Bicycle storage facilities in Backa Rod, Göteborg, Sweden



11



12



13



14



15



16