

4.0

The Opportunity for Tower Neighbourhood Renewal in the Greater Golden Horseshoe

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.

4.4 Supporting the Creation of Complete Communities Through Mixed-Use Infill and Intensification

Context

Ontario adopted the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe in June 2006. The Growth Plan calls for the creation of more compact and complete communities with an emphasis on infill and intensification within existing urban areas. It is part of a suite of new provincial policies adopted in the past five years – including the 2005 Provincial Policy Statement and the Greenbelt Plan – that collectively seek to better manage growth and development in the region.

Among the Growth Plan’s key policy directions are the following:

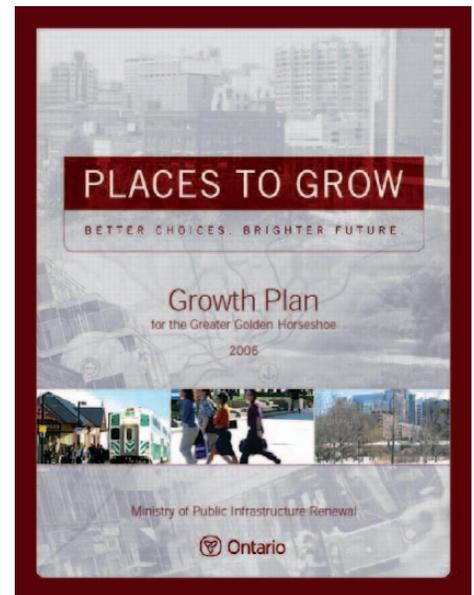
- accommodating at least 40 per cent of future residential development through intensification;
- reducing dependence on the automobile through the development of mixed-use, transit-supportive, pedestrian-friendly urban environments;
- encouraging the development of complete communities; and
- planning urban growth centres as focal areas for investment and for population and employment growth.

Municipalities across the region are currently in the process of developing and implementing Official Plan policies and strategies to implement the Growth Plan. This includes developing local intensification strategies that identify appropriate forms and locations for intensification. Tower Neighbourhood Renewal, through the thoughtful intensification of apartment clusters, can provide an important opportunity to support these local Growth Plan implementation efforts.

Discussion

For the most part, municipal intensification strategies being developed pursuant to the Growth Plan have focussed on identifying intensification opportunities such as brownfields, greyfields, vacant lands, and underused commercial areas along major arterial roads. Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods are generally not being examined as potential areas for intensification. Yet, as was discussed earlier, these sites often sit on large, underused parcels of land. Forty-seven per cent of Apartment Tower parcels in the GGH are greater than one hectare, and many of these parcels are clustered. The total land resource in the GGH on which Apartment Towers are situated is 2,197.5 hectares. If the Growth Plan’s minimum greenfield density target of 50 people and jobs combined per gross hectare were applied to this land area, it would accommodate more than 100,000 people and jobs (detailed study is required on a site specific basis to determine realistic scenarios that take into account local conditions).

Not only is there significant land associated with Apartment Towers, but many of them are located in parts of municipalities that have high potential for intensification. Fourteen per cent of Apartment Towers are located within urban growth centres, which are identified in the Growth Plan as key locations for intensification. Fifty-five per cent are located along arterial roads, which the Growth Plan identifies as potential intensification corridors. There is also a strong correlation between Apartment Towers and shopping centres. Forty-three per cent of Apartment Tow-



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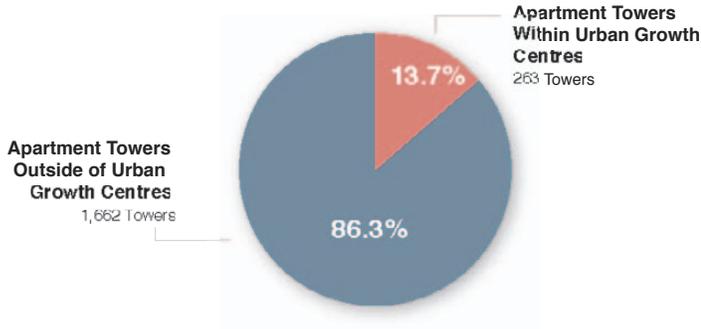
Images

01) Cover of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

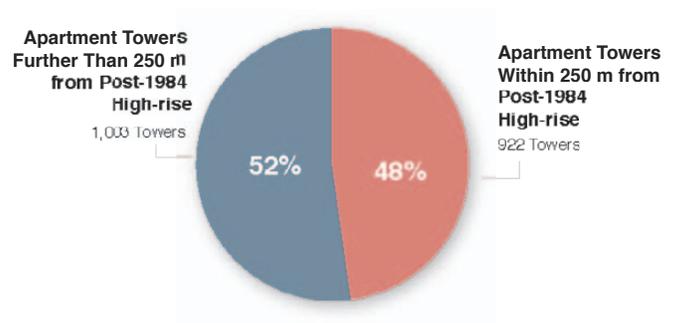
02) Infill housing among Tower Blocks in Berlin’s Marzahn Neighbourhood, Germany

03) Commercial infill between tower blocks in Berlin’s Markisches Viertel, Germany

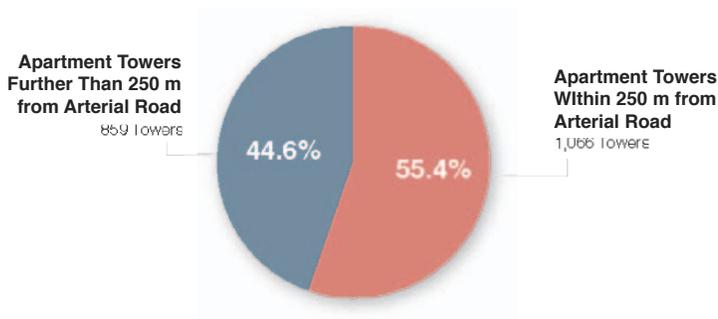
Apartment Towers Within Urban Growth Centres



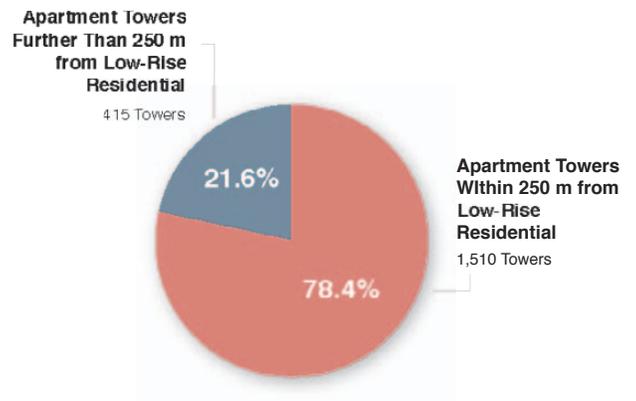
Apartment Towers Adjacent to Newer High-Rise Residential



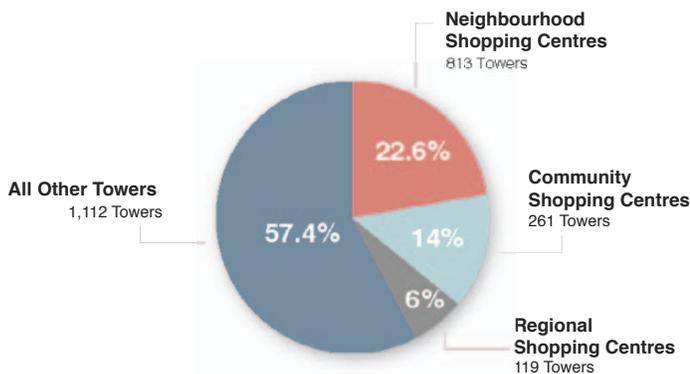
Apartment Towers Within 250 m of Arterial Road



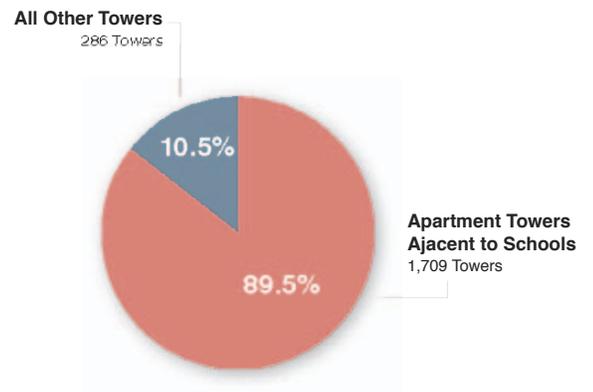
Apartment Towers Adjacent to Low-Rise Residential



Apartment Towers within 500 m of Shopping Centre



Apartment Towers within 500 m of Elementary or High School



Total Towers in GGH: 1,925

ers are located within 500 metres of shopping centres. Most shopping centres have large tracts of surface parking which are frequently identified in municipal intensification strategies as potential areas for infill or redevelopment.

The combination of large, underused parcels located in areas that are prime for intensification suggests that Apartment Towers could be considered as potential intensification areas, particularly after the “low hanging fruit” of brownfields, greyfields and vacant sites begin to redevelop.

Thoughtful and appropriate mixed-use growth within these sites can also contribute to the complete community and placemaking goals of the Growth Plan. Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods are often isolated, with relatively poor access to key community services, employment, cultural facilities and shopping opportunities. Mixed-use growth, as well as the community development strategies discussed in Section 4.2, provide an opportunity to introduce these types of amenities, particularly in areas identified for future regional rapid transit, as outlined in Section 4.1.

However, it is important to note that the surrounding urban context of Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods is highly varied, and would suggest caution in determining which Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods are appropriate for intensification, and what form of intensification would be appropriate. Many Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods were originally developed as part of master planned communities with a mix of housing types. Seventy eight per cent of towers are within 150 metres of existing single-detached housing and 48 per cent are within 250 metres of newer high-rise buildings (developed since 1985). Clearly, the context of each Apartment Tower Neighbourhood would need to be considered on a case-by-case basis, but the observations from this report suggest that Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods could be looked upon as potential intensification areas that help to achieve the growth and complete community objectives of the Growth Plan.

A better understanding of how these sites could intensify, including visualizations, best practices and model official plan and zoning policies, would be a useful tool to assist municipalities to integrate Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods into local intensification strategies.

Taking A Closer Look - Large Cluster Analysis

Determining which Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods have intensification potential would need to be done at the site specific level, but there are a number of characteristics that could suggest a particularly high potential for intensification. Clusters of towers that sit on larger parcels would be expected to have the highest amount of land potentially available, and could allow for land assembly that would facilitate larger scale infill developments. Similarly, clusters located in urban growth centres or along key arterial corridors would also be strong candidates, given the Growth Plan’s emphasis on increasing density and mix of uses in these locations. Where such clusters are near existing or proposed regional rapid transit would also be expected to have a stronger market for redevelopment.

The series of maps beginning on page 92 show locations within the GGH with clusters of five or more Apartment Towers that are either on parcels greater than one hectare in size, or are located in an urban growth centre. Together, these represent 60 per cent of Apartment Towers in the GGH.



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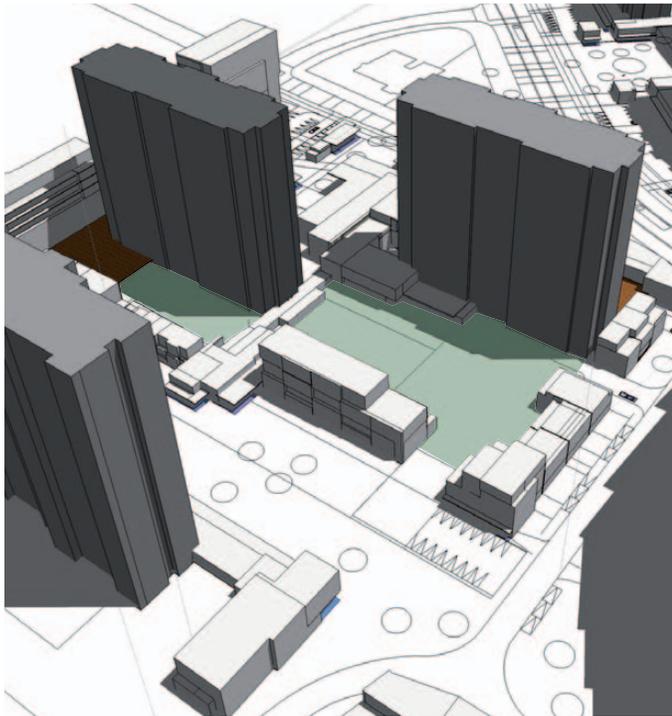
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Proximity of Towers to Schools

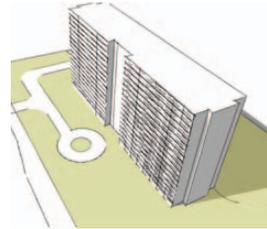
Almost ninety per cent of Apartment Towers in the GGH are located within 500 metres of a public school. This relatively high percentage is a result of the post-war community planning that was based on the neighbourhood unit, in which low and high density housing was arranged around centrally located schools and community parks. Schools have the potential to support typical Tower Renewal initiatives such as community gardens, youth initiatives, community recreation activities and so on. The large land areas of schools also offer potential for geothermal and other district energy installations.

In Toronto, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) has shown leadership through the establishment of the TDSB Environmental Advisory Committee. This committee is looking at opportunities for TDSB properties, such as geothermal and photo-voltaic installation, and community gardens, as well as investigating the potential role it can play in Tower Neighbourhood Renewal.

Schematic Analysis of Infill Potential for Family Housing on Apartment Tower Sites



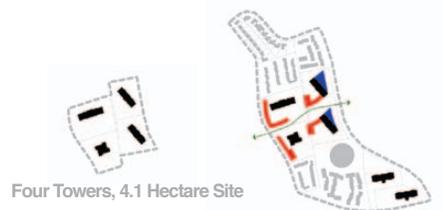
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Typical Apartment Tower Site 05



Potential Infill Scenario 06



Four Towers, 4.1 Hectare Site



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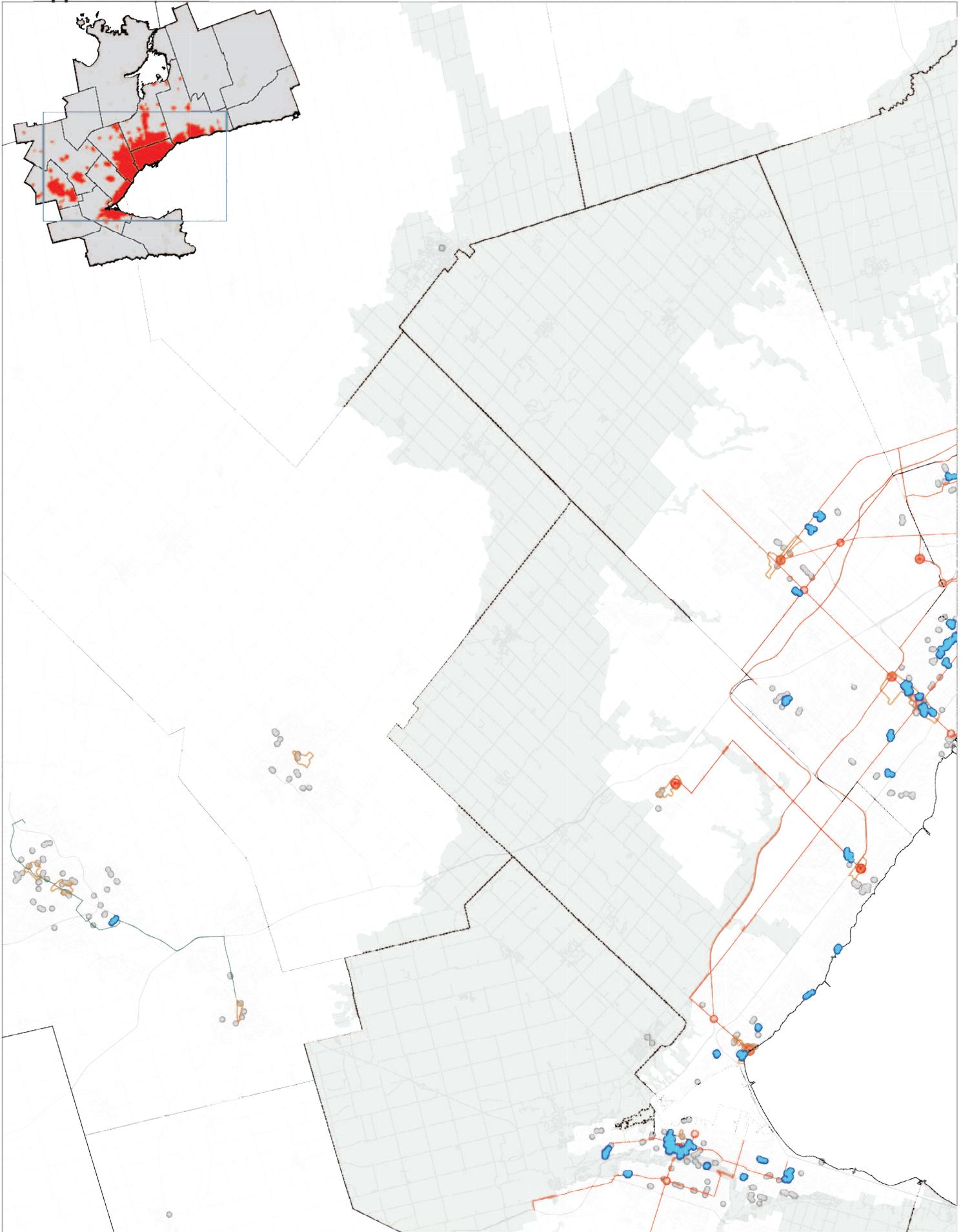


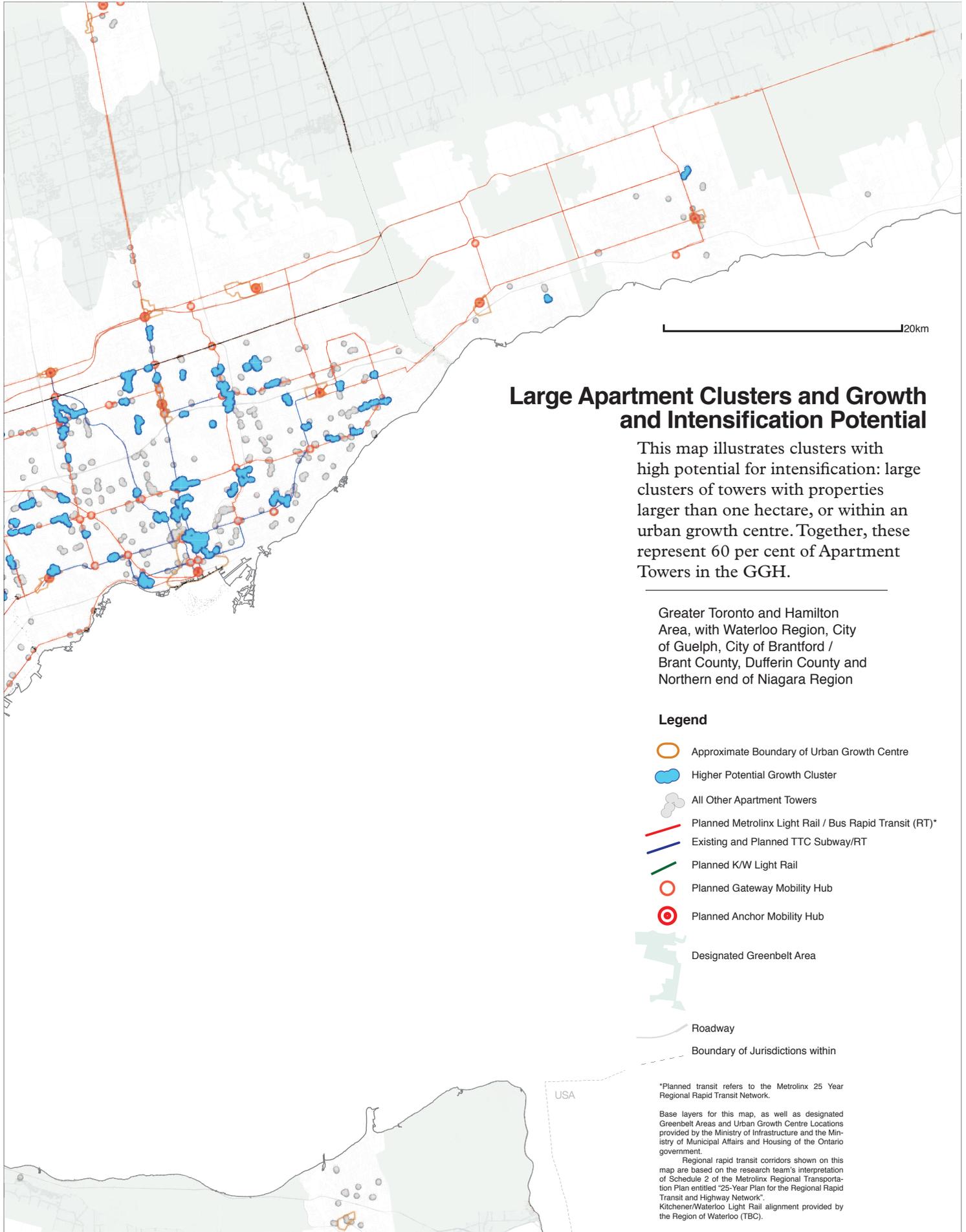
09

Images

- 01) Typical Apartment Tower and site, with large, underused property, Etobicoke
- 02) Apartment Neighbourhood adjacent to community shopping centre, Ajax
- 03) New condominiums developed adjacent to existing Apartment Towers, Mississauga
- 04 - 06) Schematic introduction of townhouse and mid-rise housing on typical Apartment Tower site
- 07) Schematic introduction of townhouse and mid-rise housing in cluster of four apartment towers, introducing new pedestrian and cycling connections
- 08) New mixed-use development and public space adjacent to Apartment Tower, Port Credit
- 09) Visualization of infill potential, creating cohesive public space within currently fragmented Apartment Neighbourhood

Opportunities 4.4 Tower Neighbourhood Renewal in the Greater Golden Horseshoe





Large Apartment Clusters and Growth and Intensification Potential

This map illustrates clusters with high potential for intensification: large clusters of towers with properties larger than one hectare, or within an urban growth centre. Together, these represent 60 per cent of Apartment Towers in the GGH.

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

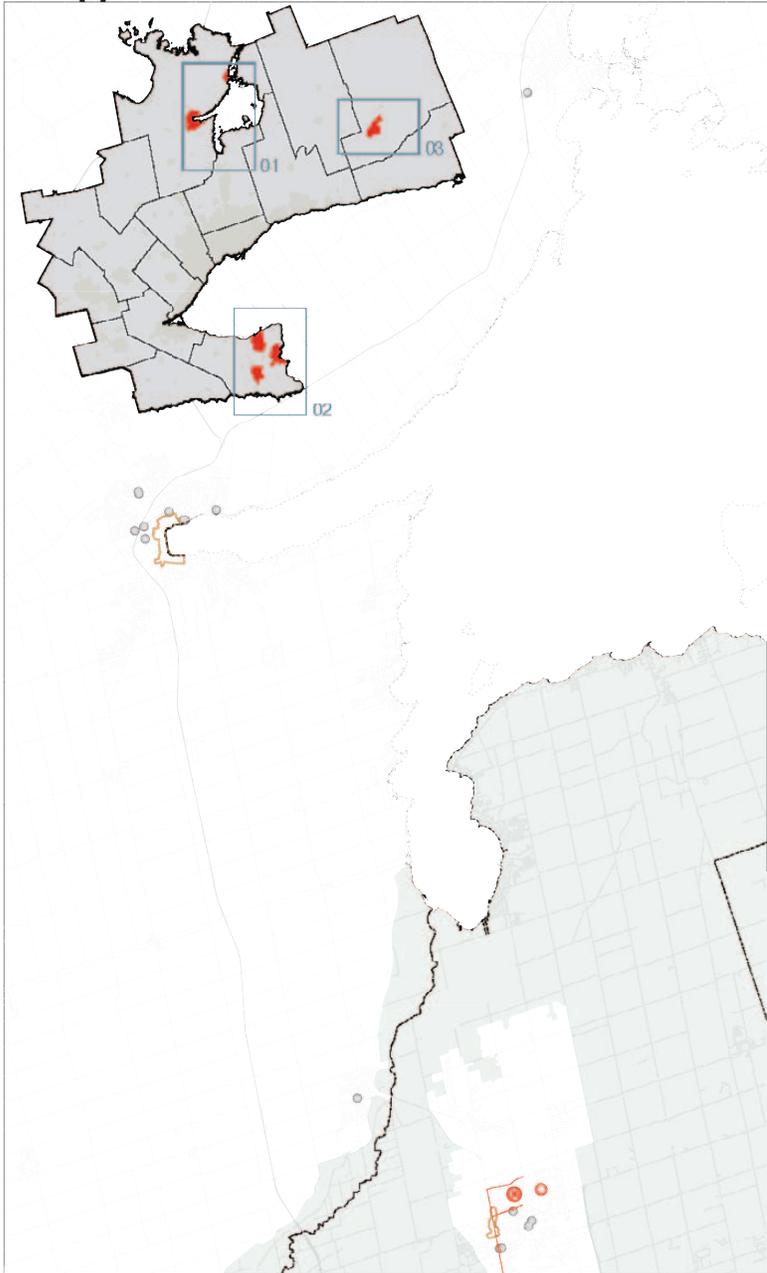
- Approximate Boundary of Urban Growth Centre
- Higher Potential Growth Cluster
- All Other Apartment Towers
- Planned Metrolinx Light Rail / Bus Rapid Transit (RT)*
- Existing and Planned TTC Subway/RT
- Planned KW Light Rail
- Planned Gateway Mobility Hub
- Planned Anchor Mobility Hub
- Designated Greenbelt Area
- Roadway
- Boundary of Jurisdictions within

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

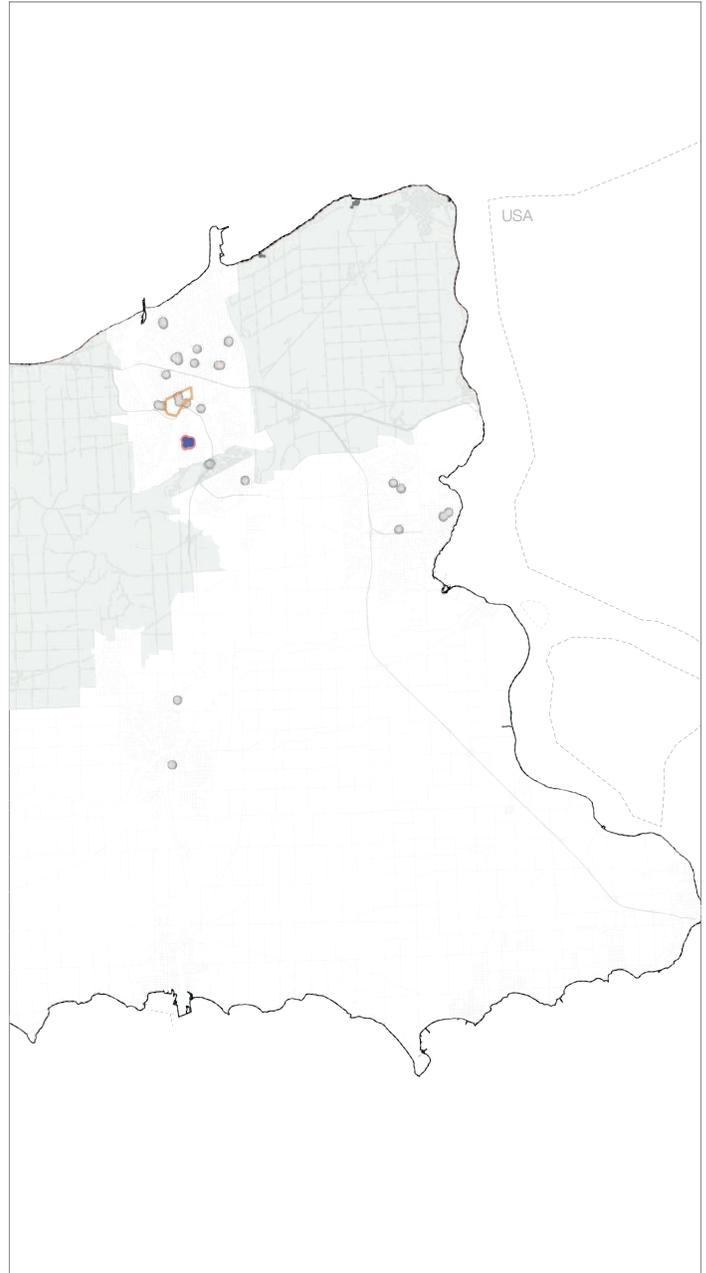
Base layers for this map, as well as designated Greenbelt Areas and Urban Growth Centre Locations provided by the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing of the Ontario government.

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).

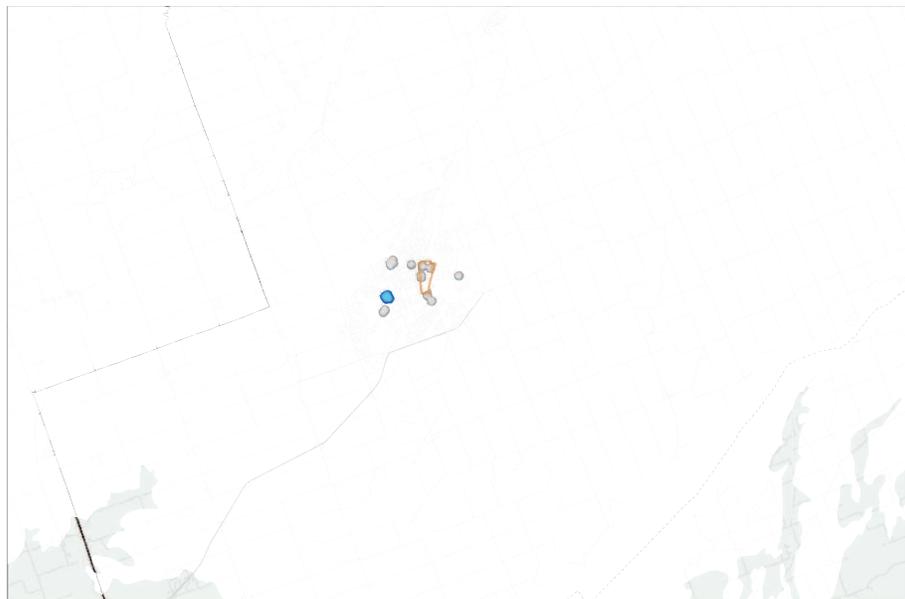
Opportunities 4.4 Tower Neighbourhood Renewal in the Greater Golden Horseshoe



01) Simcoe County



02) Niagara Region



03) City of Peterborough

- 01) Simcoe County
- 02) Niagara Region
- 03) City of Peterborough

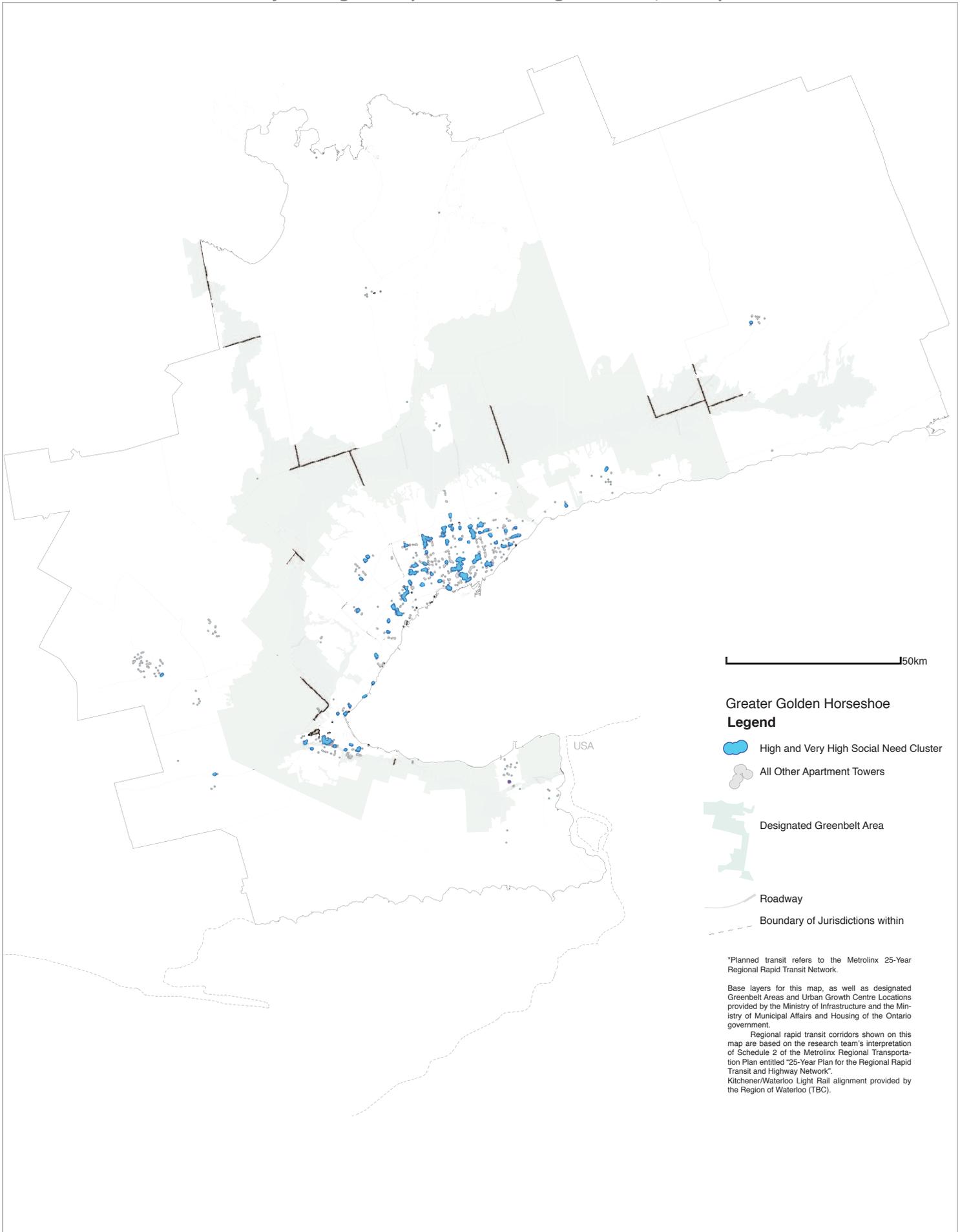
Legend

- Approximate Boundary of Urban Growth Centre
- Higher Potential Growth 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
- Planned Anchor Mobility Hub
- Designated Greenbelt Area
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50km

Greater Golden Horseshoe Legend

-  High and Very High Social Need Cluster
-  All Other Apartment Towers
-  Designated Greenbelt Area
-  Roadway
-  Boundary of Jurisdictions within

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

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).

European Best Practices in Supporting Mixed-use Growth to Foster Dynamic and Complete Communities within Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods

Across the European Union, older Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods have evolved into dynamic communities, though new residential and commercial infill developments as part of comprehensive renewal projects. Infill and intensification in tower neighbourhoods can provide a variety of housing types and tenures, new commercial amenities, community services, vibrant public spaces and employment opportunities.

The following are a series of strategies related to achieving well designed mixed-use growth within Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods, and the pictures on the following page illustrate several examples.

Introducing Shops, Service and Amenities

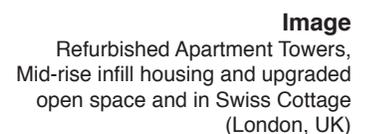
Numerous Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods in Europe have improved conveniences for local residents through the introduction of shops, services and amenities. Among many examples, the Chrisp Street Estate in East London integrates retail at the base of towers (01), as does a tower in Avedore, Copenhagen (04). Local vendors and farmers markets, such as the one in Marzahn, Berlin (07) are another common strategy that create local economic development opportunities, activate the public realm, and bring culturally appropriate offerings to local residents.

New Housing Types and Tenures

In Amsterdam's Bijlmermeer neighbourhood, new market (owner and rental) and subsidized housing has been created throughout the neighbourhood in a range of building types to help encourage a healthier socio-economic mix (09 & 10). Additionally, part of the refurbishment of some Apartment Towers in the Bijlmermeer has included unit restructuring, such as the introduction of two storey family units at grade (06). New housing in low-rise, mid-rise and high-rise forms are introduced in many tower neighbourhoods in London as a means of intensifying neighbourhoods, providing greater housing choice, as well as generating revenue for wide scale neighbourhood renewal (08, 11,12).

High Quality Open Space and Public Realm

Infill development in tower neighbourhoods helps to transform large, underused and often anonymous open spaces into human-scaled, legible and vital new parks (13, 15), plazas (03, 07) and streets (09), that include space for passive and active recreation, transportation, play, markets, as well as festivals and events (04, 05).





European Best Practice

Mixed-use infill and intensification strategies



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- 01) Retail amenities in the Crisp street estate, London, UK
- 02- 03) Retail amenities at Markisches Viertel, Berlin, Germany
- 04) Retail amenities in Avedore, Copenhagen, Denmark
- 05) Neighbourhood square in Amsterdam, NL
- 06) Commercial infill, Brunswick Centre, London, UK
- 07) Neighbourhood square and market in Marzahn, Berlin, Germany



03



06



04



05



07



08



09



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- 08) Low-rise infill housing in Tower Hamlets, London, UK
- 09) Infill family rowhousing in Bijlmermeer, Amsterdam, NL
- 10) Infill midrise housing in Bijlmermeer, Amsterdam, NL
- 11) Infill family rowhousing in Camden, London, UK
- 12) Infill high-rise housing in Tower Hamlets, London, UK
- 13) Mid-Rise Infill, Tower Hamlets Community Housing, London, UK
- 14) Private gardens and shared outdoor space in Java Eiland, Amsterdam, NL
- 15) Upgraded open space in Poptahof, Delft, NL



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