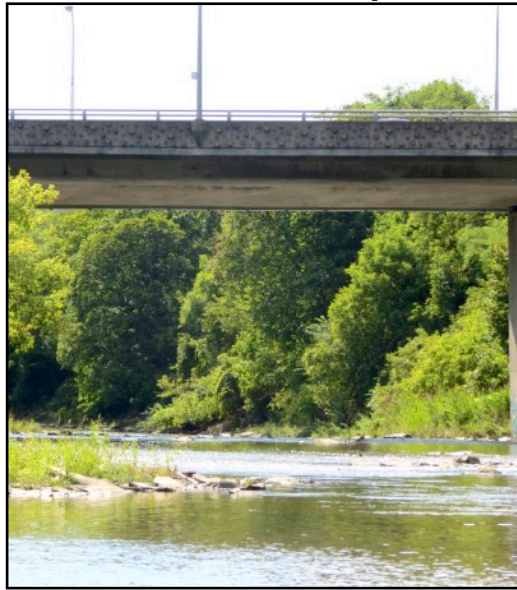




Mount Dennis Community Association



Two views of the Humber River in Mount Dennis, looking upstream and downstream

**INSIDE:
Redevelopment
happening in our
community & learn how
we can influence change**



MOUNT DENNIS

"INTO THE RAVINES" EVENT - SEPTEMBER 25

MDCA invites all ages to join us as we walk Into The Humber Valley on Saturday, September 25th. Updated details are available at mountdennis.ca.

To allow for social distancing, smaller groups will be ushered through the event from 11am until about 3pm.

The event will start just west of the Emmett Ave. parking lot – watch for “Into the Ravines” signs!



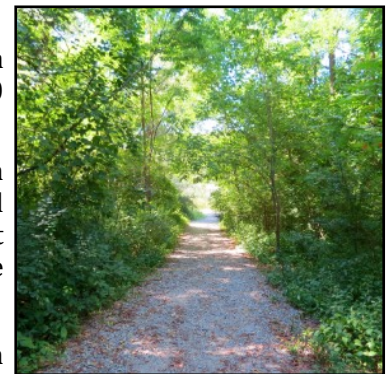
The Humber valley was a First Nations transportation corridor called the Carrying Place Trail, connecting Lake Ontario to Georgian Bay and the upper lakes. Fast forward to 2021 where the elevated Crosstown LRT from Mount Dennis to Etobicoke will cross this section of the Humber River beside Eglinton Flats. This summer Metrolinx has been carrying out a natural heritage inventory and doing soil tests to determine the best way to build the supports that will allow the LRT to cross the Humber with no harm to the river. We will visit the exact locations where the bridge supports will be built, and Metrolinx staff will be available on site 12-2pm, with an insight into how the elevated section will be built.

As we head north, we will pass the location of the ‘Lost Piggery’ of what used to be called “The Toronto Hospital for the Consumptive Poor”. Now renamed West Park Health Care Centre, it is undergoing massive reconstruction. We will review the local history of Mount Dennis with epidemics and incurable disease.

In 1954, Hurricane Hazel washed away homes and drowned dozens of residents in the area we are walking. The scars remain visible to this day. But we will also see what nearly 70 years of naturalization has achieved.

Several Indigenous groups have been working in the valley in recent years to help it return to its historic state of being a forest garden (a curated forest) where desirable trees and plants are nurtured, and less desirable species gradually eradicated. In clearings, forest agriculture is employed to grow food and medicinal plants. Our indigenous partners will be on site 1-3 pm.

This program is made possible by a grant from the City of Toronto and the Balsam Foundation with support by Park People. Water and snacks will be provided, and we ask everyone to participate in keeping the Humber River litter-free. See you on Sept 25th!



The trail into the Humber Valley from Portage Gardens



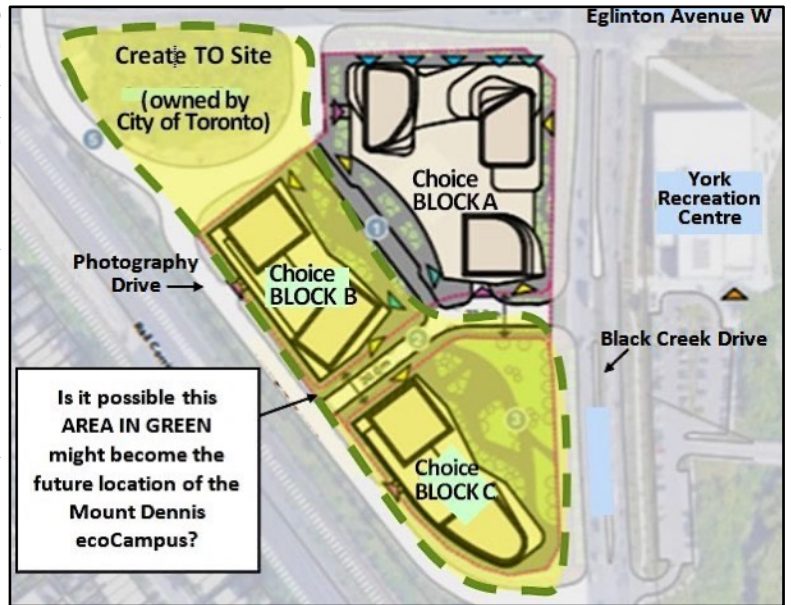
NO FRILLS SITE TO BE REDEVELOPED

In August, Choice Properties REIT sent the City a plan to redevelop its land south of Eglinton between Black Creek Drive and the rail corridor – where No Frills, its parking lot and a gas station are today. The City is now reviewing the proposal.

Block A, the area closest to Eglinton and likely the first to be built, is planned to include a relocated grocery store and three tall residential towers on a podium with retail uses and parking. Block B (where No Frills is today), and Block C (the gas station) will be built later. Four more towers above large podiums are planned on these two parcels.

MDCA has always expected the LRT to attract new investment to Mount Dennis. We welcome the Choice REIT proposals, but have some serious concerns:

First, new condo residents are likely to make our community more affluent, which will be good for local retailers. But it looks as if very little of the planned housing will be affordable for growing families who now live in Mount Dennis. As City Planning reviews the Choice REIT proposals and works on its Mount Dennis growth policy study, it will need to make sure gentrification does not push out many local residents and business people.



Images from Choice REIT drawings

Second, despite taking part in MDCA's spring meeting of the ecoCampus Development Planning Group, Choice has provided no space for a future campus and no affordable housing for lower income essential workers or students.

Third, Choice REIT's proposed development would put pressure on recreational facilities, library and schools, but beyond generic "amenity space", it does nothing to meet these needs.

Finally, MDCA has been advocating that Mount Dennis become a pilot "Net Zero Neighbourhood". This has been greeted with enthusiasm at recent meetings, but Choice has proposed no serious action – just bike parking, and nice-to-have green roofs on top of the condo tower. By skirting the City's deadline for advancing the green building standard, Choice has ignored its responsibility for the energy impacts of large buildings which will last well beyond Canada's target for a carbon neutral economy.

As an important developer owning significant land in Mount Dennis, Choice REIT could create the best of sustainable development. Will we get this, or just "business-as-usual"?

<p>Faisal Hassan MPP York South–Weston</p> <p>Community Office: 1965 Weston Rd. 416-243-7984 fhasan-co@ndp.on.ca</p> 	<p>FRANCES NUNZIATA CITY COUNCILLOR YORK SOUTH–WESTON WARD 5</p> <p><i>Let's stay in touch!</i></p> <p>COMMUNITY OFFICE 2221 Keele St, Unit 102 416-338-0220 councillor_nunziata@toronto.ca www.councillornunziata.com</p> 
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MOUNT DENNIS DEVELOPMENT REVVING UP!

With the Eglinton LRT and Mount Dennis station expected to open next year, property developers are flocking to the areas near the station, buying up single-family homes which they want to replace with high-rises. Our station will be Toronto's third largest transit hub, with GO trains, the UP Express and extra bus routes all helping to attract more new residents.

You may already know about last year's application to build a 34-storey apartment at the end of Locust Street near the rail corridor. A similar-sized building is proposed for the end of Hollis Street, and a third developer has bought the block on Weston Road between Hollis and Locust. Our No Frills site redevelopment story (*page 2*) and the "Quilt" one (*page 7*) describe other development plans.

South of Eglinton, widespread redevelopment is expected on both sides of Weston Road, likely with the tallest buildings closest to the station. Partial redevelopment of the St.Mary & St.Martha church lands is anticipated, though we understand the original historic church will remain intact.

Many local residents are hoping that the newly-built high-rises will be close to the rail corridor, with mid-rise buildings of 6-8 storeys on Weston Road itself – thus preventing our main street from becoming a canyon of tall structures casting shadows everywhere.

All local residents are encouraged to watch for information on public consultations about future development. Please express your opinions and flag any concerns. MDCA will certainly be involved in doing its best to ensure Mount Dennis remains a very livable area.

HOW TO WRECK A HILLSIDE!

Perhaps you remember the "Local Woodlands Destroyed" article from our Summer 2020 newsletter. The former Kodak site contained 2,200 trees when Metrolinx bought it, and our story told how it had decided that Spring, with City approval (but with no public consultation and for reasons that remain unclear) to cut down almost all the remaining trees, including some that were well over a century old! Many local residents were outraged, and MDCA urged that new trees be planted as soon as possible. Metrolinx agreed to plant at least some new trees, but for no obvious reason (and despite MDCA's urging to act quickly) they decided not to replant until fall 2021. The result? Earlier this summer, a major rainstorm washed away huge quantities of topsoil from the Industry Street hill (and smaller amounts from the hill facing Black Creek), eroding the hillside and clogging city drains. So large extra amounts of public funds have had to be spent installing new soil and re-contouring the landscape for replanting.



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LRT TO RUN BESIDE EGLINTON FLATS PARKS

Earlier this year, Metrolinx hosted a meeting with Mount Dennis area residents including MDCA members to discuss plans for the LRT extension from Mount Dennis to Etobicoke. Metrolinx's original plan was to route the guideway just *inside* the NE and NW Eglinton Flats parks, but in response to pressure from MDCA and others it now plans to run them mostly *outside* the parks, on the north edge of the Eglinton right-of-way near the pedestrian walkway. There will be overhead stations at Jane and Scarlett, a bridge over Emmett Ave. and a much larger bridge spanning the Humber River. These Metrolinx illustrations give an idea of how it may look after about 2030.



Looking north from Eglinton, west of Jane St.



Looking south towards Eglinton from Fergy Brown Park

Designs are for illustrative purposes and may change through further review and input (source: Metrolinx)

Some residents have pressured Metrolinx to build the new line's Eglinton Flats section underground, while others have serious concerns about under-water stations. While none of us like the idea of trains running overhead beside our parks, we believe the proposed guideway will be acceptable assuming steps are taken to minimize noise and danger to birds.

PEAREN PARK WATER PLAY PLAN NIXED

There are many young children in our area who dearly miss opportunities for summer water play - including some whose parents are MDCA Board members! This is an especially big issue for those who live in apartments. The City has 93 splash pads, but none within walking distance for Mount Dennis families.

Two years ago MDCA asked if the City could install a splash pad in Pearen Park, but were told the multi-million dollar cost meant a wait time of a least ten years. This year, MDCA presented an alternative plan to the City: we would use the Park's special water system to provide a water-play area used only when trained adult volunteers were present to supervise. The plan seemed foolproof, since MDCA and other volunteers were used to flooding a rink and supervising its use in the same park. But after a three week wait the City gave a flat "NO", saying that Council had approved community-operated rinks in its parks, but not community-operated water play - and could be liable if anything went wrong. MDCA is continuing to explore options for children's water-play in Mount Dennis.



Area in Pearen Park proposed for MDCA's water-play program

SCARLETT WOODS GOLF COURSE

This summer, the City has been exploring increased community use of its five golf courses, and some local residents took part in a session about Scarlett Woods. Suggestions included using part of the site for a community garden, having a mini-golf course (to attract young people to the sport), and having a cafe or restaurant overlooking the course. Some wanted the footpath on the east side of the Humber River, south of Eglinton, to be continued alongside the golf course.

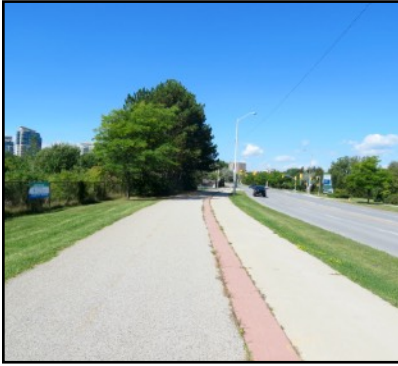
Winter admission to the course is allowed for walkers or snowshoers, but only via the main entrance on Eglinton. People felt it would be helpful to also have entrances near to Scarlett Road and Jane Street. All in all, it was felt that there was room for more attractions on the site which would serve a larger group of local residents than the golf course does at present.



COMMUNITY GARDENS BRIGHTEN LOCAL STREETS!

At least two Mount Dennis streets have community gardens - previously desolate, overlooked areas of City-owned space - which local residents have chosen to improve with flowers and ongoing care. The one on Somerville Ave. (left photo) is now in its second year, and is entirely the work of local residents. The one on Bartonville started about five years ago. This area fell into disrepair when nearby trees died and changed the site's light and character, but this year, with help from the City and MDCA, local residents have restored and expanded it with a wider range of plantings. Do other Mount Dennis streets have similar opportunities?

OUR NEW BIKE PATH



The City is building two new pathways on the north side of Eglinton, running east from Jane to Pearen Park. They mirror those that run west from Jane on the south side of Eglinton (*see photo*): a standard-sized pedestrian sidewalk and a much wider multi-purpose trail to accommodate two-way travel by cyclists, wheelchair-users and others. MDCA is happy to see these paths being built, since they will help people travel safely eastwards from Jane Street. But we have been frustrated by two aspects of the project.

(1) When MDCA first learned details of this project we were very concerned about the number of trees that would be destroyed, but were assured by City staff that they would take steps to minimize it. As things turned out, despite the City's prominent "Every Tree Counts" signs, only ONE tree remains from the more than fifty that used to be on this side of Eglinton Ave., and several more have (unnecessarily?) been removed from Pearen Park.

(2) The multi-purpose trail is supposed to be part of a much larger project to create bicycle paths in both directions along Eglinton Avenue, and provide good bike access to and from Mount Dennis Station. Yet the City has decided that cyclists travelling west from the station should be routed **north** up Weston Road to Glenvalley Drive (where there is no traffic light to ensure a safe crossing), then past the new daycare and all along Glenvalley until they connect with the north-south path now built up through Pearen Park from Eglinton. (Eastbound cyclists will follow this route in reverse).

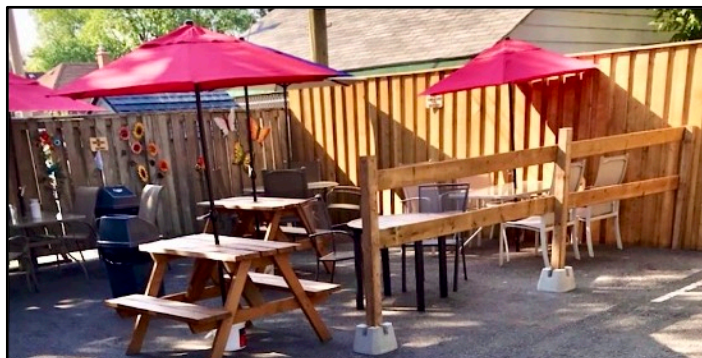
MDCA understands that it would be unsafe to have cyclists cross all the driveways along Eglinton, but we have proposed an alternative. There could be an east-west route through Pearen Park immediately behind the homes on Eglinton, which would then join a safe bike-path between Weston and Pearen along the north side of Eglinton (replacing a little-used Eglinton acceleration lane, and also allowing for a wider sidewalk in this area). At least one City official has privately acknowledged this will probably be the long-term solution. But for now, at least, cyclists will have to use a longer and perhaps more dangerous route.

NEW FIRST NATIONS CENTRE

On June 21st, National Indigenous People Day, a new Aboriginal Child and Family Centre opened at 1290 Weston Road. Its programs will meet the needs of early years, youth and Elder/seniors wellness. The building is a large space where a circular skylight shines the outline of a turtle onto the floor. The outside area, expected to accommodate seasonal feasts, family cultural nights and drum socials, includes a play area, ceremonial space, a medicinal garden, a fire pit and a sweat lodge. All services will be culture-based and designed to support early learning and make connections for families who have unique needs as urban indigenous residents. Some programs will include sharing circles and access to Knowledge Keepers and Elders. The Centre also aims to build positive relationships with local service providers and the Mount Dennis community.



The Aboriginal Centre is part of Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, founded in 1986 to meet indigenous families' needs that were not addressed by existing support services. Originally just in the downtown area, NCFST now has three centres in Scarborough and this new one serving the west end. Mount Dennis has a large indigenous population whose needs will be well served by this beautiful new space. We all look forward to seeing this impressive new centre thrive in our community.



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WILL MOUNT DENNIS GET A CAMPUS?

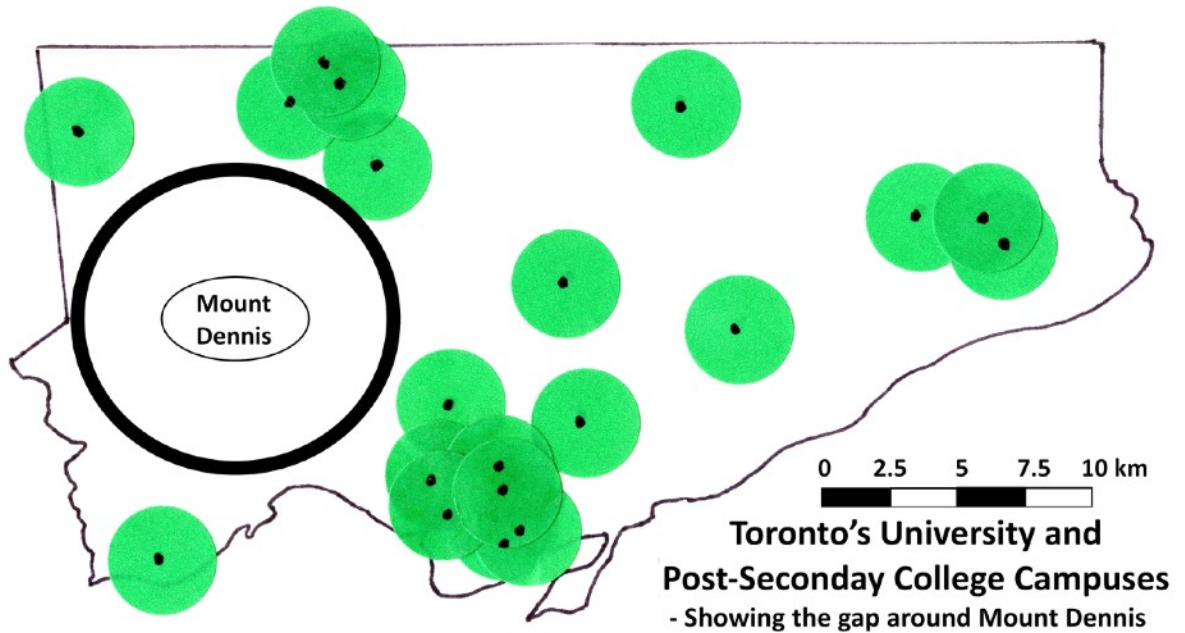
The MDCA's ecoNeighbourhood Initiative has been working with government and local participants for the past year to define a community vision statement for attracting a post-secondary institution into the area, as recommended by the City.

This summer, MDCA has hosted a community engagement session to discuss interest in shaping the education program, discussing types of facilities and a potential location. In addition, we are working with member groups of the Neighbourhood Improvement Network of York South Weston to hold similar discussions with community members (including Urban Arts, Progress Place Community Hub and others).


The aim is to attract a satellite educational facility that will bring learning research and innovation into Mount Dennis. Ours is a "gap" area (*see below*) where there are no nearby college or university campuses. Yet Mount Dennis is also a part of Toronto with higher numbers of families with children, and fewer high school students moving on to higher education.

In our draft vision, we call it an "ecoCampus", to focus on bringing all peoples together in dealing with our climate crisis and learning to develop a sustainable future. Our York South Weston politicians Councillor Frances Nunziata, MPP Faisal Hussain and MP Ahmed Hussen have all have been involved and supportive of this initiative. Councillor Nunziata is particularly recognized for getting City Council's approval to have Economic Development, CreateTO and other city agencies get behind the plans.

Moving forward we face two big challenges: location and institutional partnership. The City's Economic Development unit has had expressions of interest from several local universities and colleges. But with Covid delaying the availability of decision-makers, it will now be into October before we can gain commitments from specific schools. So stay tuned, or contact MDCA to learn more about the ecoCampus Development Planning Group.



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QUILT ON WESTON ROAD

The Learning Enrichment Foundation, which has been providing community services in Mount Dennis for 40 years, has an exciting new project. The organization is still based at 116 Industry Street, but has sold its space at Weston and Ray.

LEF has now bought the low-rise apartment buildings at 1240 and 1246 Weston Road, just north of Glen Valley Drive. It plans to develop this new site, nicknamed "Quilt on Weston Road", as a multi-use complex with a vibrant streetscape, community services, and affordable housing to serve the needs of the neighbourhood. So far, LEF has held two virtual community consultations, learning what residents think would be useful and attractive on that site. Suggestions have included everything from art-work to a community market! Tell LEF your own ideas and priorities by completing their survey at lefca.org/quiltonwestonroad.



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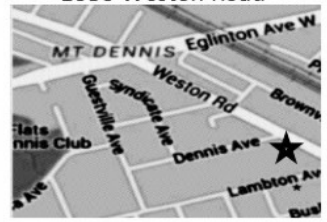
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