

HURON SUSSEX WORKING GROUP –REPORT

AUTUMN, 2011

At the request of the University of Toronto Area Liaison Committee and with the agreement of the University, a joint working group of representatives from the University and the community was convened to explore options for short, medium and long-term community planning in the Huron-Sussex neighbourhood.

The objective of the working group was to encourage discussion between the University, City and the Huron Sussex Residents Association to develop a framework for future planning in the Huron Sussex neighbourhood. The working group met several times throughout 2010 and 2011, reviewed precedents in other jurisdictions, examined the physical condition of the buildings in the area, the built form in the neighbourhood, and discussed diversity, opportunities for expansion and replacement, community vibrancy, academic opportunities, environmental opportunities and economic viability.

Upon concluding discussions, the Working Group recommends that the University, in collaboration with the community (via the University of Toronto Area Community Liaison Committee), initiate a more detailed long-term planning study in the Huron Sussex neighbourhood, using this document as a basis for discussion.

The sections that follow are written to initiate an informed conversation on developing a workable model for the neighbourhood. The report also seeks to provide parameters for a balanced planning approach that serve the University's objectives in the neighbourhood.

Preface:

The Huron-Sussex neighbourhood, located in the northwest quadrant of the University of Toronto's St. George Campus, has an active and lively mix of residential and institutional activities. It has been identified as an Area of Special Identity in the City of Toronto Official Plan. As stated in the document Huron-Sussex 20/20: *"The opportunity exists for the University and the residents to work in partnership to develop a vibrant, exciting and safe community – an enviable place in which to live."*

At the request of the University of Toronto Area Liaison Committee and with the agreement of the University, a joint working group of representatives from the University and the community was convened to explore options for short, medium and long-term community planning in the Huron-Sussex neighbourhood.

In discussions leading up to the establishment of the working group, the University noted that its feedback at the working group is framed through its core institutional mission for the education of students and the creation of transfer of knowledge through research, scholarship partnerships and innovation.

The working group established a central goal: *That Huron Sussex will exist as a sustainable, house-form mixed-use community engaged with the University* – and developed Terms of Reference and principles to:

- Explore opportunities for short and long term development;
- Recommend planning principles for the Huron-Sussex area that will provide a framework for ongoing discussions and outcomes;
- Support an ongoing sustainable community in the City of Toronto;
- Consider options that address environmental sustainability; and
- Identify economic strategies that will enable opportunities including, but not limited to, the expansion of residential units and institutional activities within this area.

Meeting several times throughout 2010 and 2011, the working group developed this discussion document as a framework for planning in the Huron-Sussex neighbourhood.

Members of the Working Group:

- Elizabeth Sisam, Assistant Vice President, Campus and Facilities Planning, University of Toronto
- Tim McTiernan, Assistant Vice President, Government, Institutional and Community Relations, University of Toronto
- Mike LeSage, Office of Government, Institutional and Community Relations, University of Toronto
- Anne MacDonald, Director, Ancillary Services, University of Toronto
- Councillor Adam Vaughan, Ward 20 Trinity Spadina, City of Toronto
- Rebecca Hewitt, Office of Councillor Adam Vaughan, Ward 20 Trinity Spadina, City of Toronto
- Julie Mathien, Huron Sussex Residents' Organization
- David Powell, Huron Sussex Residents' Organization
- Grace D'Sousa, Huron Sussex Residents' Organization
- Sue Dexter, Harbord Village Residents' Association

Area Overview:

The Northwest Sector of the University precinct is within the original City street grid with the Huron-Sussex residential district remaining largely intact within the structure of these blocks.

The Huron-Sussex area is fragment of the City's historic residential neighbourhoods built between 1850 and 1900. The house-form buildings of a 'bay and gable' style are small scale, on tree lined streets and lanes. This style of house is tall and narrow, frequently three stories in height with a peaked gable over bay windows. The front door is located to the side of the house and most houses have painted wooden porches. Some of the buildings have been converted to institutional uses by the University.

Most front yards have soft landscaping with grass and gardens, some with fences and well developed gardens and others without. The houses have a consistent set-back, are primarily semi-detached. Each pair is separated by a narrow laneway leading to the rear. Access to the rear yards is by a common laneway from the streets within the neighbourhood.

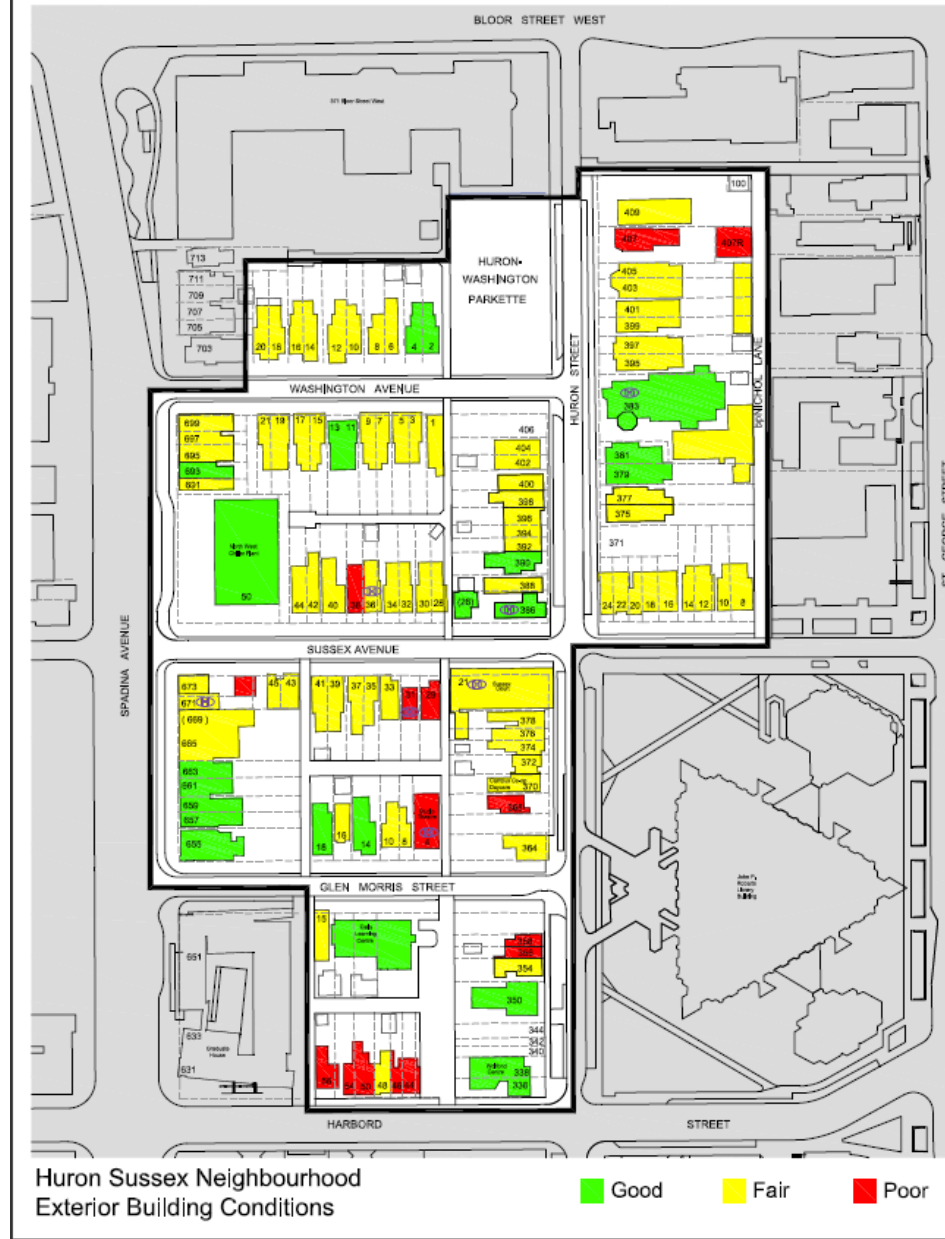
This area is defined in the University of Toronto Area Part II Plan as an area of special identity. The Huron Street Parkette is defined as University Open Space (UOS). No development on the UOS space is permitted.

The University of Toronto Area Secondary Plan (1997) describes this area as "a low-density residential enclave which houses students, faculty and staff of the university and other homeowners and tenants. The area includes an incidental mix of small-scale commercial and institutional uses which serve the neighbourhood or are related to the University of Toronto. Secondary Plan objectives for the Huron-Sussex Area of Special Identity are to: retain the character of residential uses and houseform buildings along tree-lined streets; encourage improvement of existing housing stock and the development of infill housing on vacant lands; and encourage both a year round use of residential units and a mix of long

term and temporary residents.” Development would be permitted where appropriate to provide a transition between the residential neighbourhood and adjacent areas of higher density and activity.

Exterior

This map depicts building conditions, limited to a visual review of the exterior of the properties. The primary components of concern were roofs, masonry (and other cladding materials), and foundations. The resulting map illustrates a range from “poor” to “good”.



Generally speaking, buildings denoted as “poor” exhibited either poor roofing conditions, masonry in need of stitching and significant re-pointing, and/or shifted or crumbling foundations which would result in deterioration of the building fabric. Buildings denoted as fair appear to require some masonry re-pointing and aesthetic and environmental improvements (ie: new windows), but generally appear in reasonable structural condition. “Good” buildings are generally either new, or have had work done to maintain roof, masonry, and foundation

components in quality condition. An evaluation and analysis of physical infrastructure which describes annual maintenance improvements is included later in this report.

Of a total of 79 building exteriors, 25% are in good condition, 59% are in fair condition and 16% are in poor condition.

Context

This map illustrates key area features, including building character, open space and identified heritage resources. The area shown in yellow illustrates intact original residential fabric, primarily Victorian houses. The inner area remains largely residential in use, while the Spadina Avenue streetscape also accommodates University uses and a restaurant.



Public open space is depicted in green. The most prominent space is the Huron Washington parkette. Smaller spaces along Huron Street have been created out of vacant lots at Washington Avenue and Glen Morris Street, including a garden developed for the Wolfond Centre, immediately north of their building. Open space that is fenced off or otherwise restricted has not been noted.

Listed heritage buildings are shown in purple. The interior condition of these buildings is outlined on page 7 of this report.

Built Form:

Mapping of current buildings

The inner portion of the Huron-Sussex neighbourhood is defined by a relatively coherent grouping of mostly semi-detached houses erected in late years of the nineteenth century. An overview of each street is provided below, running north to south, then east to west.

Washington Avenue

Washington Avenue has retained its original residential character, with built form dating entirely from the nineteenth century. The use remains residential, with houses in generally fair condition. The Huron-Washington parkette is a focal point of the street. There is a vacant lot directly across from the parkette, which is an undeveloped, basic open space.

Sussex Avenue

Sussex Avenue has retained its original residential character, both between Spadina and Huron streets, and along its north side between Huron and St. George streets. The major exception is the northwest corner of Sussex and Spadina, which is dominated by the University's chiller plant. This facility breaks from the scale, typology and setbacks of the Area, and makes no contribution to the public realm. The chiller plant has been identified as a development site, In the University of Toronto Area Plan- 1997 with proposed as-of-right-development re-establishing building line on Spadina Avenue, rising to a maximum height of 23m.

Sussex Court is a prominent six storey building at Sussex and Huron, formerly a residence, but now housing student clubs and the campus police. The scale and use are different from the adjacent residential area.

Glen Morris Street

The south side of Glen Morris Street is dominated by the Early Learning Centre and the Graduate House. There is one house remaining between the two facilities, but permission has been granted through the OMB to permit a building envelope of 32.54m x 9.28m, with a total gross floor area of 1,850sm (approximately 5-1/2 times the footprint).

A small "bare bones" parkette has been created at the southwest intersection of Huron and Glen Morris.

The north side of Glen Morris Street has retained its original residential character. The one exception is the Studio Theatre, which is used by the University for academic and theatrical purposes. However, the building is in keeping with the other heights and setbacks established by the adjacent residential built form, and is a listed heritage building.

Harbord Street

The remaining residences on the north side of Harbord Street are generally in poor condition and are sandwiched between the new Graduate House and Wolfond Centre developments. This area of Harbord Street is a busy, non-residential thoroughfare, different in scale and character from the rest of the Huron-Sussex Area, with the exception of a few houses.

Huron Street

Huron Street has a strong edge condition from Harbord to Sussex, as a result of the Robarts Library on the east side of the street. The residential built form along this stretch now accommodates a variety of uses, including fraternities, a restaurant and the Campus Co-op daycare. As described above, a vacant lot exists at Glen Morris and Huron. The houses on this block are in poor condition.

The northern portion of Huron Street beyond Sussex Avenue returns to a primarily residential character, with the exception of the St. Thomas Anglican church. The Campus Co-op Residence offices occupy the house to the north of the church. A new development proposal has been submitted for 407 Huron Street.

Spadina Avenue

The two blocks on Spadina Avenue consist of nineteenth century houses, now being used for a variety of purposes including academic space, office space, a restaurant and residences. Building conditions range from poor to good. The Chiller Plant at Sussex Avenue breaks the intact rhythm of the street at this point.

Evaluation and Analysis of Physical Infrastructure:

State of Repair

There are 83 houses in the neighbourhood which are owned by the University and used for residential housing. Houses in the neighbourhood range from good to poor condition. The majority of the houses (71) are in good or fair condition. Those in good condition tend to be houses that have been fully renovated in the last 10 years and are used for faculty housing. "Fully renovated" means repair and/or replacement of fabric (masonry, windows, roof), foundation/structural work, mechanical (heat, hot water, ventilation, plumbing), and interior elements (walls, flooring, bathroom fixtures, kitchen millwork and appliances and decorative features like stained glass windows or fireplaces). There are still small annual maintenance and periodic cosmetic/turnover upgrades required in these houses but, for the purposes of this report, they have not been assigned any capital cost. There are 42 houses of this type (included are 4 houses under renovation in the summer of 2011), plus 8 units in duplexes/triplexes.

There are a few duplex or triplex houses in which faculty housing is combined with long-term tenanted housing. In such cases, the faculty unit is typically in good condition and the capital cost assigned to the house is related primarily to the long-term unit. The numbers shown in the table on the next page for this category are per unit rather than per house.

The capital cost per house for the houses deemed to be in fair condition is based on the average cost incurred for recent renovations for houses in similar condition, where a few fabric and/or mechanical upgrades are needed as well as interior renovations. The capital cost per house for the houses deemed to be in poor condition is based on the cost incurred for recent renovations for houses in similar condition, which, in addition to requiring interior upgrades also required significant fabric/mechanical and deferred maintenance work.

There are 2 rooming houses which are identified separately because of their size.

Condition	Quantity	Average cost per house	Total
Good	42	0	0
Fair	21	302,500	6,352,500
Poor	12	380,000	4,560,000
Good (per unit)	8	0	0
Fair (per unit)	9	100,000	900,000
Rooming Houses	2	600,000	1,200,000
TOTAL			13,012,500

Note that these assessments do not correspond exactly to those represented in the section on exteriors, as mechanical systems and interiors are also taken into account here. This list also refers only to residential properties owned by the University.

Economics of Repair

Complete refurbishment would cost approximately \$13 million. This figure is a snapshot estimate that will change over time, given that maintenance work – particularly on fabric, mechanical and foundations – is done continuously, and that the estimate assumes complete refurbishment to a market rent standard (as described in the previous section) and is not simply an estimate of deferred maintenance. The University's current practice is to fully renovate houses or units when they are vacated by long-term tenants and convert them to faculty or student family housing. Faculty tenants pay market rents and student families pay discounted rents (lower than market but higher than rent control). The higher rents that come with refurbished units help fund future capital needs. Currently, the payback period for a complete house or unit refurbishment is 8 – 10 years. Over time, there is an opportunity for increased revenue stream as rents move from controlled to market.

The department responsible for this housing is an ancillary operation at the University and cannot receive operating budget funding. It is expected to be completely self-funded through revenue from operations. Annual gross income for the department is currently just under \$2 million (of which \$1.5 million is faculty and student housing and \$0.5 million is long-term tenanted housing). Net income has been negative for the last few years but has been trending upwards, and was positive at year end 2010-2011.

Many refurbishments and major repairs have been funded through borrowing in previous years. Recently – as a result of having more market rent tenants in the neighbourhood and implementing a market rent adjustment in Faculty Housing – the department is beginning to generate positive net income which is used to fund capital work.

Given the department’s limited resources, the refurbishment described in the table above cannot happen all at once. Similarly, long-term tenants are not vacating all at once either.

Practically speaking, there is a limit to the amount of refurbishment that can be done by the University to long-term units – especially interiors – before they are vacated; and for liability reasons (at least under the current ownership model), the University cannot enter into agreements with tenants to perform their own repairs/renovations. It is nevertheless the case that some current long term tenants have undertaken such work of their own volition. The Residential Tenancies Act caps the amount of recovery possible from tenants for capital repairs done by the landlord, to a maximum of 3% per year, for 3 years. The landlord must also prove that the repairs are necessary and not cosmetic.

Diversity:

Creating sustainability would include strengthening the strands of neighbourhood life, including economic, social, cultural and environmental strands.

A commitment to full diversity could lead to support for a neighbourhood consisting of:

- a resident population of tenants and homeowners of all ages and family types;
- a mixed built form;
- land-use that combines residential, public and commercial space supporting a mixed economic model; and
- a flexible and stable University population.

Little has been documented regarding the homeowners and the new faculty who live in university-owned units. The last survey of the long-term rental residents showed that 33% are over 65 and most of these are female. Close to 40% of long-term residents have annual incomes of \$30,000 or less. In addition, there has been no documentation of the cultural, ethnic and racial diversity of the people who live here.

Identifying the characteristics of the neighbourhood population could provide data to develop a definition of diversity for Huron-Sussex, to help construct a platform for strategies to support the existing community, and to recommend the changes needed to strengthen all of those diverse strands as a part of ensuring the long-term future of the community.

Opportunities:

Expansion and Replacement: The Experience of the St. Lawrence neighbourhood

There are a variety of ways to expand and enhance the existing Huron-Sussex area to create a vibrant, diverse and mixed-use community, as in the redevelopment of the St. Lawrence neighbourhood at the south end of the City, during the period of the mid- to late-1970s.

Sound planning principles developed for the St. Lawrence neighbourhood provided a framework for street related development which created housing for varied income groups within a mixed-use neighbourhood. These maintain the physical character and scale, also allowing for additional density to be added creating an economically sustainable neighbourhood.

The existing City grid of the Huron-Sussex area, with its interior laneways, provides an opportunity to increase density through infill development, while maintaining the character of the tree-lined streets with house-form buildings. Arterial streets at the edges of the area can support higher-density development.

Community Vibrancy:

Community vibrancy is essential to the sustainability of the Huron-Sussex neighbourhood. The Working Group identified five key elements to community vibrancy, in addition to the important contribution to community vibrancy from built form, heritage, community and economic diversity.

A. *A “walkable community”:*

The existing community is walkable with respect to the city roads and sidewalks, but enhancements to the laneways throughout the community with respect to safety, through passage and aesthetics (landscaping and general appearance) would enhance walkability. Changes to built form and additions of commercial space could be planned to sustain walkability.

B. *Residential Interaction:*

The existing built form of the community encourages residential interaction because residents have access to one another via connecting front and, in most cases, back yards, and because most of the houses have front porches. In addition, there are several public open spaces in the neighbourhood. The community does not currently have indoor meeting spaces, beyond a couple of small restaurants and a coffee shop on the periphery of the neighbourhood. The St. Thomas Church hall is occasionally booked for community meetings, and there could be opportunities to use the day care centre and the small theatre on Glen Morris. Any changes to built form and additions of commercial space could be planned with promotion of residential interaction in mind.

C. *Encouragement of residential/work space:*

The encouragement of joined residential/work space could address a growing and important trend in how people work, provide increased access to goods and services to neighbourhood residents, and bring in people from outside the community to acquire these goods and services – all of which could enhance community vibrancy. Any changes to built form and additions of commercial space could be planned to accommodate residential/work space opportunities.

D. *Integrated public space and amenities:*

Addition of amenities to existing public spaces (e.g. additional benches in parkettes), and connection of amenities to new public space (e.g. amenities planned into indoor community space) could greatly enhance community vibrancy.

E. *Stable yet flexible population*

The built form and geographic infrastructure that supports community vibrancy in Huron-Sussex would be aligned with a population base that provides:

- the stability needed for neighbourhood cohesion; and
- the flexibility that supports a natural rather than a forced resident turnover and a diverse population consisting of a mix of tenants and homeowners of all ages and family types.

Strategies to achieve this could include appropriate renovation of existing buildings as space becomes available, new building that supports an increased resident population and improved economic viability, a recognition that incoming university tenants could be a mix of new faculty and longer-term occupants and allowing, on request, new faculty to live in Huron-Sussex for five rather than three years to the end of the period in which they qualify for tenure.

Academic Opportunities

The Huron Sussex neighbourhood could contribute to studies in a variety of disciplines that are needed for planning in the changing energy and urban landscape, both hard science and social programs.

Students from Energy Systems Engineering Science have begun a long-term study of energy use and conservation using an actual community for their research. These fourth-year and postgraduate engineers approached Harbord Village, the University and the City, and – using baseline data generated from Harbord Village’s HERO project – set out to create a mathematical model for policy-makers and consumers to identify systems which would produce best carbon reduction in a downtown neighbourhood. This is an ongoing academic course and future research could be centred on the Huron Sussex neighbourhood.

In creating the University of Toronto Cities Centre, the University has had the foresight to realize successful solutions to the problems facing the modern city are multi-disciplinary. The ‘adoption’ of

Huron Sussex as a real-life laboratory could fuel research and foster innovation in addressing the social and environmental changes facing downtown residential neighbourhoods.

Environmental Opportunities

Academic and economic opportunities using energy efficiency and conservation could also be examined as a long term proposition to assist in offsetting annual costs and as research initiatives.

I. The University as Landlord: reducing carrying costs

On campus programs for energy conservation have generated a 10% reduction in energy use. But addressing energy waste in housing presents an opportunity for larger conservation and cost savings.

A community-wide inventory of household energy waste in Huron Sussex could be a first step in setting directions for the University in reducing costs of maintaining the community.

Harbord Village, a same-age Victorian community flanking the University on the west side of Spadina, facilitated energy audits on 118 homes during their HERO project and found that major reductions in energy bills could be achieved through caulking. More specifically:

- Draughts alone cost 10 % on home heating;
- The leaks represented a 22 ¼ inch squared hole in the exterior wall;
- Houses completely changed their air 14.1 times per hour, 365 days a year; and
- Potential energy savings averaged 35% per home;

By the end of the single-year HERO project, work on six homes in Harbord Village had realized average household average energy savings of 42%, or 51,450,000 BTU/yr.

www.harbordvillage.com/hero

Planning for energy waste reduction as well as actual energy generation could position the University to leverage co-financing or government grant opportunities. Noting the University-ownership of most houses in the Huron Sussex neighbourhood, the working group noted that opportunities may for bulk purchasing of various conservation initiatives, including furnaces, on demand hot water, solar hot water and solar power installations. Paybacks for the water and photovoltaic are about four and nine years, respectively, depending on government subsidies or incentives, and 12 years for larger solar power installations, such as the Trinity array. http://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/News_Events/News/default.htm

Community-level programs such a geothermal heating could also be considered in the neighbourhood.

In addition, solar power could present an opportunity for revenue, with a household payback in nine years and thereafter a downstream profit flow of 11 years. Harbord Village led the Downtown West Solar Energy Project and facilitated the installation of \$500,000 in solar equipment in 2007-2008 in neighbourhood houses.

On campus, Trinity College's solar array on the Larkin Building a model programme. At 50 KW (252 "modules") Trinity has by far the largest green power development on campus and one of the larger functioning systems in downtown Toronto. This project was initiated by Trinity students and supported by interest free loans. After twelve years, the profit stream will finance student bursaries.

http://live.deckmonitoring.com/?id=trinity_college

Economic Viability

The working group considered the current model of ownership, tenancy and responsibility for repairs and upkeep, and the ability to fund redevelopment. Although rent controlled rents contribute to the financial challenge of this model, even if all tenants were paying market rents, the University would still have difficulty financing residential or related expansion in this neighbourhood without a source of funding outside the neighbourhood's rental revenue stream.

The committee felt that different models should be explored further to arrive at options that might achieve the goal of economic sustainability. These should include:

- Ownership models: Who owns the land? Who owns the houses/flats? Does the land owner have to be the property owner? Can a hybrid model be developed where tenants own the homes for a period of time, perform their own upkeep and then sell the homes back to the University?
- Tenancy models: Is sale-leaseback a viable strategy? Housing Co-op? Status quo with a different mix of rents?
- Development models: In areas where development/intensification is identified as being desirable, are there development partnerships that could be explored (e.g., with private sector developer, City of Toronto, other non-profit organizations)?

These models should be tested for congruence with the goals, objectives and principles for the neighbourhood and the University to arrive at the final plan.

Summary and Next Steps

This seeks to provide context to future discussions on planning in the Huron Sussex neighbourhood.

The Huron Sussex Residents' Organization has shared this report with their membership, and the Working Group will also share this report with the University of Toronto Area Community Liaison Committee.

It is the recommendation of this Working Group that the University, in collaboration with the community (via the University of Toronto Area Community Liaison Committee), initiate a more detailed long-term planning study in the Huron Sussex neighbourhood, using this document as a basis for discussion.