



Building Places not Just Transit

How **WestonWilliamson+Partners (WW+P)** transforms commutes and communities

As transit investment expands in Canada so too do the possibilities for how stations can become intertwined within communities. Transit stations must firstly be functional for travellers, but with an expanding network, municipalities across Canada are exploring the broader potential of stations to become focal points of their communities. With core competencies linking infrastructure design to planning and place making, WestonWilliamson+Partners has brought a unique blend of expertise to the Canadian market. After opening an office in Toronto and demonstrating their expertise on high-profile local projects, the firm has positioned itself to render opportunities for growth in Canada.

Almost every major city has a large transit project in development or construction that sparks the imagination about what stations can contribute to the community. For some cities the investment in rail and light rail lines acts as a catalyst for a dramatic transformation that can create new places in a municipality. For architecture and urban planning firm WW+P, this transformation aligns with their extensive expertise in integrating infrastructure and place making.

WW+P has developed a growing international profile with an impressive portfolio of complex projects delivered around the world. In London, WW+P has helped transform iconic heritage stations such as Paddington, Kings Cross, Victoria, and Waterloo stations by enhancing the passenger experience on every level and creating new destinations for both Londoners and visitors. Their unique blend of skills has also led to the design of two of the stations on the central section of London's Elizabeth Line, along with intermediate evacuation shafts along its length, and a new pedestrian subway link between the Elizabeth Line and existing Bakerloo line at Paddington, as well as 15 stations along the Docklands Light Railway.

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Work on both the Sydney and Melbourne Metros in Australia resulted in them opening offices in both cities in 2018. WW+P are co-designing five stations on the Metro Tunnel Project, the State of Victoria's biggest ever transport project, which will transform Melbourne by improving connectivity across the city and regenerating the surrounding precincts. These are two systems being closely examined as models to emulate for Canadian cities, given the similarities around the urban environments, size, transit footprints, and future growth potential.

Expanded Transit Oriented Communities

WW+P recently opened an office in Toronto and has already worked on creating a vision for one of the most ambitious transit station projects in Canadian history at Canada's busiest airport, Toronto Pearson. With passenger numbers expected to grow from 47 to 85 million by 2037, future expansion plans risked being seriously curtailed by local traffic congestion. WW+P helped develop a concept that includes a regional transit hub and a broader vision for a major local employment zone with the potential to transform the area.

With fast-growing populations and large transit investment programs underway, the regions of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver in particular are putting much greater emphasis on transit-oriented communities. This essentially means developing a better station experience with more consideration given for retail opportunities that could for example help open additional revenue streams for transit agencies.

At a more transformational level, it involves grander masterplans, as seen at Pearson Airport, as new or expanded stations incorporate new commercial or residential uses and become a core part of local economic development plans. This experience aligns closely with the masterplan work WW+P has done in the UK with the expansion of High-Speed Rail (HS2) to the North of England as many cities look to make the most of enhanced rail connectivity.

Another complex challenge will be to address capacity concerns on Toronto's existing subway network, especially at high-traffic stations along the route. Stations designed and built decades ago need to be enhanced to expand platforms, provide greater accessibility, and tackle pedestrian bottlenecks that present major safety concerns. They will also have to integrate new lines with existing infrastructure, and in many cases will include complex underground design work, which WW+P can deliver.

WW+P completed the initial design for two new stations on the Yonge North Subway Extension at Clark and Langstaff. These stations will provide an anchor for new mixed-use medium and high-rise development. As new local centres emerge around the developing infrastructure and station hubs, this will help to develop more walkable communities, and help reduce sprawl and traffic congestion in the region. WW+P continue their involvement in the Yonge North Subway Extension and add their experience to the Scarborough Subway Extension as part of the Technical Advisory teams.

Role of the UK's Department of International Trade (DIT) and High Commission of Canada in the UK (HCC)

DIT and HCC provided an initial platform to demonstrate WW+P's unique value and experience, bringing together key decision makers from the Canadian market to exchange ideas through sector initiatives in Canada and the UK. This helped WW+P to shape some thinking as Canada's transit agencies rolled out ambitious expansion plans and actively sought to learn from other jurisdictions. DIT and HCC also helped with some more logistical challenges to make it as easy as possible to open their office and expand in Canada.

Solving Challenges

With the Federal Government and Canada's three largest provinces committing over CAD\$100 billion to upgrading transit and transportation networks over the coming decade, there will be no shortage of challenges to solve from the technical to the visionary. With major project experience in Canada already, and partnerships in place with well-established local players in the market, WW+P is already well placed to play a bigger role on the large pipeline of infrastructure projects.

As WW+P have used Australia as a springboard into the Asian market, so Canada will also act as their gateway to North America. Building partnerships with companies within Canada that operate in the United States will also unlock opportunities to provide integrated thinking to transit infrastructure for the benefit of transit users and communities across the continent. As transit networks age and grow, challenges will get more complex and WW+P brings a unique approach to help solve them.

Lessons learned: *When entering a new market, it is important to be very clear about your offering and demonstrate that you are committed. Having senior leadership involved in the new market helps to show the firm is serious, and can also strike up more reciprocal relationships with potential partners. Being able to help a local partner grow outside of Canada presents a win-win and encourages partners to make a greater effort in opening doors if they see a benefit for themselves.*

