

## Priority Downtown Parks and Public Realm Opportunities

**Date:** June 24, 2022

**To:** Executive Committee

**From:** Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning and General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

**Wards:** 11 - University-Rosedale and 10 - Spadina-Fort York (10)

### SUMMARY

---

This report responds to an October 2021 City Council direction to Parks, Forestry and Recreation, City Planning, Transportation Services, and Economic Development and Culture, to collaboratively advance the City Council-approved TOcore Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan and, in particular, a direction to identify opportunities to secure large parks in and adjacent to the Downtown.

The report presents three priority large parks and public realm opportunities in the Downtown recommended to be developed through further due diligence, planning and consultation: Bathurst Quay signature waterfront park, Rail Corridor Public Realm Master Plan and University Avenue / Queen's Park Crescent.

These three projects advance the implementation of "Transformative Ideas" in the TOcore Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan (PPRP). They will support the City's recovery and rebuild by fostering economic development and private and public investment, improving quality of life in growing high-density residential and employment districts and transforming Toronto's public spaces.

The report seeks Council direction to proceed with the recommended Priority Downtown Parks and Public Realm Work Plan outlined in Attachment 1 to this report, which includes a series of immediate next steps related to ongoing due diligence, technical studies, and stakeholder consultation; and proposed near, medium and longer-term stage-gated milestones for advancing these generational opportunities over a ten-plus year work plan.

The three Priority Downtown Parks and Public Realm Projects include the following initiatives, as described in further detail in Attachment 1:

- Bathurst Quay signature waterfront park: advancing Council directions contained in both the Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Plan and PPRP, and building on the

momentum of ongoing revitalization projects in the Bathurst Quay neighbourhood, this significant new waterfront park will transform the under-utilized City-owned Spadina Quay parking garage (539 Queens Quay West) and adjacent Portland Slip water lot properties. The consolidation of these two properties creates an opportunity to construct an approximate 1.3 hectare (3 acre) signature new park at a central and highly accessible waterfront location. The construction of a new park at this location will also serve to link together a network of existing and emerging park and community assets in the surrounding area, including the Toronto Music Garden, the revitalized Canada Malting property, Ireland Park, the Corleck arts centre, the Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre and Little Norway Park. City staff are recommending that this project advance in the near term, in support of a planned closure and decommissioning of the existing Spadina Quay parking garage, and plans to create decking over a portion of the Portland Slip water lot.

- Rail Corridor Public Realm Master Plan: this forward-looking vision and strategic document will proactively guide the City's planning and negotiation efforts in response to various possible 'decked' and/or 'overbuild' park, public realm and connection opportunities over and adjacent to the rail corridor in the downtown core - from Fort York in the west to Union Station in the east. Building on previous analysis, this planning exercise is proposed to commence in the near term, with results used to guide potential partnerships with private-sector and institutional landowners, setting the framework for the phased and coordinated construction of a connected rail corridor park and public realm network over a medium-to-longer-term build-out.
- University Avenue / Queen's Park Crescent: A reimagined University Avenue and Queen's Park Crescent will provide a continuous linear public space and green connection between Downtown's Financial and Health Science Districts, Queen's Park, and the University of Toronto. This transformative opportunity is contemplated as a longer-term and potentially incremental endeavour. This report recommends a work plan to expand upon the foundational work that is already underway in order to protect and assess this opportunity, including an engagement strategy, a capital project coordination strategy for all public and private sector projects throughout the project area, and a Cultural Heritage Evaluation. This next phase is proposed to commence in the near term, with results used to inform future planning and capital project development, leading to a phased approach towards potentially implementing the University Avenue Transformation concept envisioned in the PPRP.

A stage-gated work plan approach, with realistic and achievable milestones, set according to near-term (under 5 years), medium-term (5-10 years) and longer-term (10+ years) time periods, will ensure that City Council direction is secured at appropriate decision points and that these transformative opportunities are aligned and implementation-ready when external constraints are addressed and resources are allocated. Further strategic capital planning among City Divisions will identify alignment and interdependencies of divisional projects in order to realize project delivery efficiencies and to minimize disruption.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

---

The Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning and General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommend that:

1. City Council endorse the Priority Downtown Parks and Public Realm Work Plan as summarized in Attachment 1 to this report, and direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning and the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, in consultation with the General Manager, Transportation Services, General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management, and other Divisions and Agencies, as appropriate, to report back to City Council on individual projects at major milestones, including on finalized project costs and a financial strategy, to inform future budget submissions for relevant City divisions.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

---

There are no immediate financial impacts resulting from this report. The staffing resources and external expertise needed to advance the immediate-term due diligence, planning and specific early implementation works identified in the work plan will be supported by funded projects already approved in current divisional 10-year capital plans.

There are future financial impacts for the implementation of these Downtown parks and public realm opportunities. The three proposals, as outlined in Attachment 1, are unfunded beyond the near-term technical study, due diligence, and environmental remediation work described in the work plan. Future funding beyond these near-term project planning and enabling works stages will need to be stage-gated and prioritized against other critical City-wide capital priorities and operating impacts, both funded and unfunded, as well as the City's financial and resource capacity, subject to affordability and achievability.

The next phase of due diligence will include the development of a detailed financial strategy that explores various options for funding project implementation, including growth-related funding tools, intergovernmental funding, external partnership opportunities and alternative funding sources. The financial strategy will include projected cash flow to properly align project schedules with available funding and will be updated with progressively refined construction estimates as work advances. The financial strategy will be included as part of future reporting on these parks and public realm opportunities.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has been advised of the preliminary infrastructure requirements associated with these opportunities to be considered along with other priorities in future budget processes.

## **EQUITY IMPACT**

---

Investment in parks and public realm projects has direct and demonstrated benefits towards supporting equity goals. Access to parks and public realm spaces and the

programming that these places offer can support public health outcomes, foster local economic development, and strengthen social networks. These benefits can help to mitigate the barriers and root causes of inequities.

The provision of parks and public realm spaces is not equal across the city. The need for expanded and improved open spaces is especially great in areas experiencing high population growth, including the Downtown.

New parks and public spaces also present valuable opportunities to reflect and recognize local histories and identities through landscape design, public art, naming of streets and public spaces, and other interpretive features. Ensuring the representation and participation of Indigenous partners and equity-deserving groups in the design and decision-making of these spaces is key.

## **CLIMATE IMPACT**

---

Toronto's parks and public realm system is an important asset that contributes to climate resiliency and helps to mitigate threats presented by climate change, including more frequent and severe heatwaves, reduced air quality and flooding events. Parks and public realm spaces, including the projects outlined in this report, can provide valuable opportunities to integrate green infrastructure, manage stormwater, reduce urban heat island effects, increase urban forests and create habitat, and promote active transportation with pedestrian and cycling infrastructure.

As Toronto continues to grow, expanding, improving and maintaining the City's parks and public system will be critical to supporting the City's strategic climate objectives.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

---

On June 26, 2018, City Council approved Site and Area Specific Policy (SASP) 417 as an amendment to the Official Plan. SASP 417 establishes a Framework Plan to guide improvements identified in the Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Plan, including the creation of new parks and open spaces at the Portland Slip water lot; and the creation of new community, cultural, parks and open spaces uses at the Spadina Quay parking structure. <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.TE33.9>

On May 22, 2018, Council adopted the Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan and directed staff, among other matters, to: 1) develop and report back with a Downtown Parks and Public Realm Implementation Strategy, to be updated every five years thereafter, identifying projects to be prioritized within capital budgeting or requiring further study, and alignments with other initiatives, and 2) consider the potential to prioritize the redesign of University Avenue. Further information can be found here: <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.PG29.5>

On October 27, 2020, City Council adopted with amendments a report from the City Manager entitled Towards Recovery and Building a Renewed Toronto. The implementation of the Downtown Parks and Public Plan is positioned to contribute to two TORR recommendations: #68 on accelerating progress toward a green and less

car-dependent Toronto, which is envisioned as a network of connected complete communities with complete streets – for all uses, all ages, all abilities – and public spaces with quality materials, shade, public art and green space; and #66 on looking for opportunities to enhance future access for those least able to access greenspace. <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.EX17.1>

On July 14, 2021, City Council adopted MM35.34, Implementing the TOcore Parks and Public Realm Plan in South West Downtown. The motion directs the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, in coordination with the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to advance coordinated planning and implementation of the Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan components serving the rapidly-growing neighbourhoods of South West Downtown. Further information can be found here: <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.MM35.34>

On October 1, 2021, City Council adopted a report "TOcore Implementation Strategy: Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan", which sets out priorities for investing in parks, streets and public spaces over the near term towards achievements of the goals articulated in the Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan. Council requested staff to identify opportunities to secure large parks in and adjacent to the Downtown, undertake due diligence and report back as required to advance implementation of these initiatives. <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.IE24.7>

## COMMENTS

---

### 1. Parks, Public Spaces and Toronto's Rebuild and Recovery

Parks and public realm spaces offer important opportunities to support Toronto's rebuild and recovery efforts, address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and better position communities to respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Prior to the onset of the pandemic, the value of parks and public spaces was well established in many of the City's strategic objectives, policy frameworks and guidelines including the Official Plan, the Parks, Forestry & Recreation Facilities Master Plan, the Parkland Strategy, the Resilience Strategy, and the Green Streets program, among many others.

The need to expand and improve public spaces is acutely felt in areas experiencing rapid growth, and especially where this growth is primarily occurring in the form of high-density residential development such as the Downtown. Downtown's population is projected to double from nearly 238,000 people in 2016 to a potential population of 475,000 by 2041. Public spaces are also central to the experience of employees, students, visitors and investors and are critical to the function and prosperity of the Downtown. Employment in Downtown (together with the "shoulder" areas of South of Eastern and Liberty Village) has the potential to reach between 850,000 and 915,000 jobs by 2041, up from approximately 500,000 jobs in 2016. The Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan and its associated Implementation Strategy describe the role of parks and public spaces in delivering both physical and social infrastructure. Balancing growth with investment in infrastructure is needed to support complete and vibrant

communities, which in turn makes the city an attractive place to live, work, learn, visit and invest.

The numerous ways in which parks and public spaces support the health and prosperity of communities have become all the more apparent in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the height of the pandemic, people relied heavily on parks and public spaces to support their physical and mental wellbeing, and for many it has shifted how these spaces are viewed and valued. The adaptability and creative potential of parks and public spaces has also been highlighted through initiatives such as Wi-Fi on Wheels, CaféTO and ActiveTO and should continue to inspire innovative ways to grow, evolve and enhance public space.

Investment in transformative parks and public realm initiatives can contribute to the Recovery Themes and Priorities identified by the Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild (TORR); including city building and mobility, business and economic recovery, and climate action resilience. In particular, the projects outlined in this report can advance several of the recommendations of the COVID-19: Impacts and Opportunities Report from the TORR. This includes recommendation #66 - Look for opportunities to enhance future access for those least able to access greenspace and #68 - Build upon initiatives to accelerate progress toward a modern, green and less car dependent City, which is a network of connected complete communities, and includes a more extensive, integrated public transit system supporting complete streets – for all uses, all ages, all abilities – and public spaces with quality materials, shade, public art and green space.

## **2. The Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan and the Priority Downtown Parks and Public Realm Projects**

The Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan (the PPRP) was developed through the TOcore study, an interdivisional and comprehensive review of the Downtown to determine how future population and employment growth will be accommodated and shaped, and what physical and social infrastructure will be needed, where it will go and how it will be secured.

The PPRP is organized around five 'Transformative Ideas' that build on the assets of all areas in and adjacent to Downtown to establish a set of goals and actions to achieve the Plan's vision. The Priority Downtown Parks and Public Realm projects described in this report will directly assist to advance four of these five big ideas:

- The *Core Circle* reimagines the ravines, bluffs, waterfront and islands encircling the Downtown as an immersive landscape system that celebrates Indigenous cultures and histories and is connected by a continuous walking and cycling route. The revitalization of Bathurst Quay is part of the West Core Circle, which provides a green connection along the former Garrison Creek from Lake Ontario to the Davenport escarpment.
- The *Great Streets* are a network of 12 of Downtown's most emblematic streets. These streets connect to the Core Circle and are defined by their location, scale and historic role in the city, existing civic significance and their potential contribution to the public realm network. The transformation of University Avenue to enable a 3.6

hectare (8.9 acre) linear public space is one of the PPRP's signature Great Street opportunities.

- The *Shoreline Stitch* includes a series of interventions to improve connections from the Downtown to the waterfront by reducing barriers caused by major transportation infrastructure, including the Union Station Rail Corridor. The Stitch is intended to increase accessibility to and between waterfront parks, improve connections to community assets and create new civic places. The Rail Corridor Public Realm Master Plan recommended in this report is an important next step in guiding the long-term build-out of the Shoreline Stitch concept.
- The *Park Districts* identify a grouping of local parks, streets and other open spaces which are designed to form a cohesive and connected public realm network. The Downtown PPRP anchors each Park District around one or more community park and recommends a series of parks and public realm focused actions to contribute to distinct local identities and better support community life. Portions of University Avenue are included in the Queen's Park Precinct and the Civic Precinct. Much of the rail corridor area falls within the West Rail District and the Grange - John Street - Roundhouse Park District. Finally, The Bathurst Quay-Coronation Park-Ontario Place Park District includes the series of parks and public realm spaces nearest the waterfront from the Toronto Music Garden to Trillium Park.

The TOcore Implementation Strategy: Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan was adopted by Council in October 2021. The Implementation Strategy recommends advancing parks and public realm projects on a priority basis in the near-term (2021-2025). It acknowledges that some ideas are ambitious and complex, require a long-term strategy to sustain momentum and demand close coordination across divisions. For these types of projects, the strategy recommends a stage-gate approach, providing Council with specific decision points about advancing the project as implementation details such as technical, legal and financial matters are clarified. Council directed staff to implement the priorities outlined in the Implementation Strategy through capital projects, development review and other means. City Council also directed staff to identify opportunities to secure large parks in and adjacent to the Downtown, undertake due diligence and report back as required to advance implementation of these initiatives.

The strategy noted that securing new large parks and public spaces in the Downtown is a challenge. The primary tool the City has for delivering new parks is parkland dedication, enabled through Section 42 of the *Planning Act*. In the Downtown, parkland dedication through development approvals typically delivers smaller parks, as development typically occurs on small parcels and, through the current parkland dedication rate, delivers limited parkland regardless of the density of the project. Moreover, City-led acquisitions using cash-in-lieu of parkland payments are constrained by high prices in a competitive Downtown real estate market, and challenges associated with assembling enough land to deliver larger signature and/or destination parks.

The three recommended priority park and public realm projects in this report are strategically-located opportunities for larger, new public spaces that can deliver a variety of quality of life, economic, cultural and environmental benefits. The three opportunities

also leverage City ownership and/or partnerships, providing certainty and control for City decision-making as well as considerable cost savings. Based on typical land acquisition costs for unencumbered properties in the Downtown, if the City were to seek to purchase comparable land equivalent to the combined areas (approximately 5 ha or 12 acres) of the Bathurst Quay and University Avenue opportunities described in this report, the total parkland acquisition cost would exceed one billion dollars.

### **3. Conclusion and Next Steps**

The Implementation Strategy for the Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan sets out priorities for investing in parks and public spaces over the near term (2021-2025) in an effort to achieve of the Plan's 25-year vision. The strategy also provides evidence-based methodologies to evaluate and advance new opportunities as they arise.

The three recommended Priority Downtown Parks and Public Realm projects included in this report are directly referenced in the PPRP and associated Implementation Strategy. Each represent significant opportunities to address parkland need on large, strategically-located parcels within the downtown core that would be difficult and financially prohibitive to replicate via new land acquisitions.

The work plan summarized in Attachment 1 to this report will ensure that adequate resources are committed to refining and advancing each opportunity over the near, medium and longer-term planning horizons. Through the feasible and fiscally sound stage-gated approach described in the work plan, the preliminary planning and consultation phases will continue to lay the foundation for transformative park and public realm projects that can be implemented in phases as Council approval is secured.

### **CONTACT**

---

Bryan Bowen, Program Manager - Parks Development & Capital Projects, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, 416-338-4842, Bryan.Bowen@toronto.ca

Paul Farish, Manager - Planning, Parks Development & Capital Projects, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, 416-392- 8705, Paul.Farish@toronto.ca

Lynda Macdonald, Director - Community Planning, Toronto and East York District, City Planning, 416-392-0427, Lynda.Macdonald@toronto.ca

### **SIGNATURE**

---

**Janie Romoff**  
General Manager  
Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division



**Gregg Lintern, MCIP, RPP**  
Chief Planner and Executive Director  
City Planning Division

## **ATTACHMENTS**

---

Attachment 1: Priority Downtown Parks and Public Realm Work Plan

Attachment 2: Location map

Attachment 3: Conceptual rendering of Bathurst Quay Signature Waterfront Park

## **ATTACHMENT 1**

### **Priority Downtown Parks and Public Realm Work Plan**

This attachment provides a project overview for each of the three recommended priority projects, a summary of completed and ongoing work to date, and a high level work plan to advance each project over near-term (1-5 years), medium-term (5-10 years) and longer-term (10+ years) timelines.

Inter-divisional City staff will rely on the framework described below in order to advance each project, and to identify when it is necessary to report back to City Council on individual projects at major milestones as part of annual budget processes and/or where Council approval is required. City staff shall also refine and update this work plan as objectives are advanced and/or as conditions evolve.

#### **Bathurst Quay Signature Waterfront Park**

##### *Project Overview*

Advancing Council directions contained in both the Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Plan and PPRP, and building on the momentum of ongoing revitalization projects in the Bathurst Quay neighbourhood, this significant new waterfront park will transform the under-utilized City-owned Spadina Quay parking garage (539 Queens Quay West) and adjacent Portland Slip water lot properties via new park construction over both a portion of the water lot, and over 539 Queens Quay West's existing structural foundation.

The consolidation and re-purposing of these adjacent properties creates an opportunity to construct an approximate 1.3 hectare (3 acre) signature new park at a central and highly accessible waterfront location. Early conceptual planning for the park envisions a combination of both hard and soft scape spaces suitable for a range of both passive and programmed park uses and functions. Specific park design details will be refined through a forthcoming stakeholder consultation and design process.

The construction of a new park at this location will also serve to link together a network of existing and emerging park and community assets in the surrounding area, including the Toronto Music Garden, the revitalized Canada Malting property (inclusive of new public open spaces, restoration of the heritage-designated silo structures, and the Ontario College of Art and Design's planned programming in the north silo structure), Ireland Park, the Canada Ireland Foundation's Corleck arts centre (currently under construction), the Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre, and Little Norway Park.

This concept also envisions the installation of permanent audio-visual infrastructure within the future park space to create an innovative multi-media experience utilizing the adjacent historic Canada Malting Company silos as a year-round, outdoor canvas for possible custom projection mapping shows, waterfront film festivals hosted in the new park space, and/or displays of public art that showcase both traditional and digital artistic mediums.

This concept will advance a needed business decision for the future of the under-utilized Spadina Quay parking garage property at 539 Queen's Quay West. This City-

owned, two level, below grade structure was built in 1985 and is currently operated by Harbourfront Centre under a long-standing lease agreement. The entire P2 level of the garage is presently closed due to structural deficiencies. A recent Building Condition Assessment has determined need for a multi-million dollar state of good repair investment should the parking garage continue to operate. Subject to additional technical investigations, it is the current expectation of City of Toronto and CreateTO staff that the parking garage will be permanently closed, and that the property will undergo necessary environmental remediation and approvals (in accordance with applicable regulations of the Province of Ontario's Environmental Protection Act), in order that the existing structural foundation may be repurposed to support the planned waterfront park above.

City staff are recommending that this project advance in the near-term, with work to proceed immediately on additional technical studies and investigations, Indigenous engagement, resident and business stakeholder consultations, and environmental approvals and remediation in support of a planned closure and decommissioning of the existing Spadina Quay parking garage and partial decking over the Portland Slip water lot. Pending additional investigations, design, and project funding approvals, park construction may be able to begin within the near-term (5-year) planning horizon.

#### *Completed work to date*

Each of the actions listed below have been recently completed in support of advancing the proposed new Bathurst Quay waterfront park.

- Adoption of the 2017 Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Plan (the BQNP) and 2018 Official Plan Amendment 417: these enabling policies direct and guide the creation of new parks, open spaces, pedestrian linkages, and new cultural or community facilities, on the Portland Slip water lot and Spadina Quay parking garage properties.
- Transfer of Portland Slip water lot ownership to the City of Toronto: completed in 2018, this transaction transferred ownership of the Portland Slip water lot from the Government of Canada to the City of Toronto (for nominal consideration) in order to facilitate the City's planned capital improvements (per the BQNP) within and adjacent to the water lot property.
- 539 Queens Quay parking garage analysis: to help inform a business decision regarding the future of this 40-year old parking structure, in 2019 the City of Toronto commissioned a Building Condition Assessment to determine the necessary scope of work and related capital costs to restore the partially closed parking garage to a state of good repair. Further, City and CreateTO staff undertook an evaluation of annual parking revenues and net proceeds in comparison to the estimated costs to repair the parking garage.
- Multimedia projection feasibility study: in partnership between the City of Toronto and the Waterfront BIA (with funding provided by the Waterfront BIA), in 2021 a multimedia company completed a high level feasibility and technical study to explore the possible installation of permanent multimedia projection infrastructure on both of the City-owned Canada Malting and Spadina Quay parking garage properties.

## *Proposed Next Steps and Timelines*

### *Near-term (Within five years)*

- **Additional parking garage investigations:** Immediately advance a detailed engineering audit (structural, civil and environmental) to explore available options for utilizing the existing below-grade parking facility and perimeter dockwalls as the structural foundation for a portion of the planned waterfront park space. In light of the high cost to restore the garage to a state of good repair, and low parking revenues generated over the last 5 years, it is anticipated a business decision will be made to close the garage as early as 2024, thus realizing considerable cost savings compared to undertaking needed repairs. This decision would also afford an optimal approach for the design and placement of any needed below-grade structural reinforcement to support the future park space above; and result in an unencumbered waterfront property with maximum flexibility for park design.
- **Consultation strategy:** building on extensive consultation completed as part of the Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Plan process, and prior to developing a detailed scope of work for the park design, develop and implement a consultation 'refresh' strategy for the intended character, identity and possible programming models for the future park design. City staff will incorporate this early feedback into the terms of reference for a Request for Proposals to undertake future conceptual and detailed design.
- **Advance the multimedia projection concept:** inaugurate an inter-divisional exploratory committee to advance the multimedia concept for the malting silos. This committee shall help to establish the terms for a future governance and programming model, identify potential funding sources and partnerships, ensure alignment with the City's Digital Infrastructure Strategic Framework, and other issues that will need to be explored ahead of potential future implementation.
- **Develop and Issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for Professional Design Services:** explore best approaches and determine a RFP process for the retention of full professional and technical services needed to advance the park design through design development, construction drawings and specifications, and eventual construction contract administration.

### *Medium-term (Within five to ten years)*

- Subject to available capital funding, aim to complete award of park construction tender by end of 2026, with construction completion targeted for 2028/2029.

## **Rail Corridor Public Realm Master Plan**

### *Project Overview*

The Rail Corridor Public Realm Master Plan is rooted in the concept of the Shoreline Stitch, envisioned in the Downtown Plan as a series of public realm initiatives that reconnect the waterfront back into the fabric of the Downtown. This study will focus on

the corridor between Fort York and Union Station. The rail corridor is a key element within the Stitch, understood as both a substantial barrier and a major opportunity to deliver innovative and high-quality public space in rapidly growing neighbourhoods.

Through due diligence to date, the City has confirmed that this is a complex and costly undertaking, requiring coordinated efforts to resolve technical, legal, and financial questions; and to establish priorities and parameters for how and where the City may contribute funds to advance park and public realm opportunities in strategic locations with a high degree of public utility and benefit. The Master Plan will evaluate specific segments of the rail corridor based on their physical condition, adjacent features, ownership and proposed development as well as, importantly, their contribution to an overall public realm network vision.

Based on these directions, the Master Plan will provide a road-map for addressing opportunities for the incremental and coordinated creation of 'decked' or 'overbuild' public spaces along the corridor. The plan will also identify ground-level opportunities to improve north-south and east-west connectivity adjacent to the rail corridor, including coordination with the Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan work already underway by The Bentway and the City of Toronto. The resultant Master Plan will better position the City to proactively plan for new open spaces and effectively respond to opportunities as these arise.

#### *Completed and Ongoing Work*

Opportunities to support expanded parks and public realm spaces over the rail corridor have been explored in a number of areas to date. To date, extensive due diligence has been completed on two specific proposals. These reviews have highlighted key matters such as coordination and approvals related to the Metrolinx GO Expansion OnCorridor Program, phasing considerations with adjacent developments, cost sharing and funding assumptions, and other complex real estate considerations regarding air rights ownership, easements and leasing agreements.

#### *Proposed Next Steps*

##### *Near-term (Within five years)*

Begin immediate work on development of a Rail Corridor Public Realm Master Plan - a forward-looking and comprehensive vision and master plan document that will:

- Identify priority park and public realm opportunities and inform staff engagement with property owners, Metrolinx and other stakeholders.
- Inform staff responses to various parkland public realm opportunities identified in development applications along the rail corridor.
- Provide a framework for negotiating potential partnership contributions towards new park and open space proposals.
- Establish a Risk Management Framework for assessing constructability of proposals.

- Identify and illustrate various park and open space typologies matched to specific corridor locations and opportunities.

*Medium-term (Within five to ten years) to Longer-term (Ten + years)*

Ongoing utilization and implementation of the Master Plan working closely with private, institutional sector and Provincial partners.

## **University Avenue / Queen's Park Crescent**

### *Project Overview*

The reimagining and rebalancing of iconic University Avenue has the potential to deliver a new 3.6 hectare (8.9 acre) public space and green connection between key economic, cultural and civic destinations in the Downtown.

By adjusting the existing right-of-way to consolidate and link open spaces, University Avenue can be redesigned to better serve residents, workers and visitors in the Queen's Park Precinct, the Health Science District, the Financial District and the Civic Precinct, as described in the Downtown Plan. This transformation would take advantage of existing City-owned assets and established partnerships with key institutions.

Despite University Avenue's reputation as one of Toronto's most iconic 'designed' landscapes, it underperforms as a public space. For example, the central median, which contains public realm infrastructure such as monuments, and benches, lacks pedestrian activity. It is currently not used as active space but rather something that is glanced at by vehicle passengers and passersby. The Downtown Parks and Public Realm as well as the Public Space Public Life Study highlights the lack of people lingering on the median, with only 2% of the pedestrians counted spending time on the median.

### *Completed and Ongoing Work*

Since the approval of the Downtown Parks & Public Realm Plan, there has been growing interest in improving the quality of the public life experience on University Avenue. As a result, several initiatives have been completed or are underway.

- In 2020, Parks, Forestry and Recreation completed a report on the state of good repair of the centre median including cost estimates for general repairs and to upgrade the space to be compliant under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This report concluded that extensive work would be needed with a cost estimate \$11.5 million.
- In 2020, as part of the ActiveTO initiative, cycle tracks were installed on University Avenue. In 2021, this cycling infrastructure was approved to become permanent.
- In 2021, a local interest group (Friends of University Avenue), completed a lighting installation in the median at the north end of University, and undertook some planting improvements.

- In 2022, City Planning led the completion of a preliminary subsurface feasibility study to explore the impacts of below grade infrastructure in and around University Avenue, (such as water mains, utilities, and TTC vents) , on a range of road reconfigurations. The study concluded that a consolidated linear public realm on the east side of University Avenue would likely be the preferred configuration, offering the highest quality, best connected and largest public space. The study has informed the location of the new water main in order to maximise and protect for the potential of a future public space. The water main replacement and upgrade is scheduled for construction in 2024.

### *Proposed Next Steps*

#### *Near-term (Within five years)*

Develop and implement a scope of work to continue the foundational planning work needed to advance the project concept over a longer term, including the following tasks:

- **Visioning & Stakeholder Engagement:** to engage with key partners on a refined and expanded vision for the transformation of University Avenue.
- **Capital Project Coordination Strategy:** continued coordination with adjacent public and private capital projects in order to protect and support future opportunities for transformation. This will include coordination on the design and construction of the Ontario Line's Osgoode Station, civil infrastructure rehabilitation including roads, bridges and/or utilities, and other capital projects throughout the study area.
- **Conduct baseline studies:** Cultural Heritage Evaluation, followed by others as needed and/or when viable.
- **Opportunities at Queen's Park Crescent West -** Explore opportunities to improve public realm connections for people walking and cycling within the Queen's Park Precinct.

#### *Medium-term (Within five to ten years)*

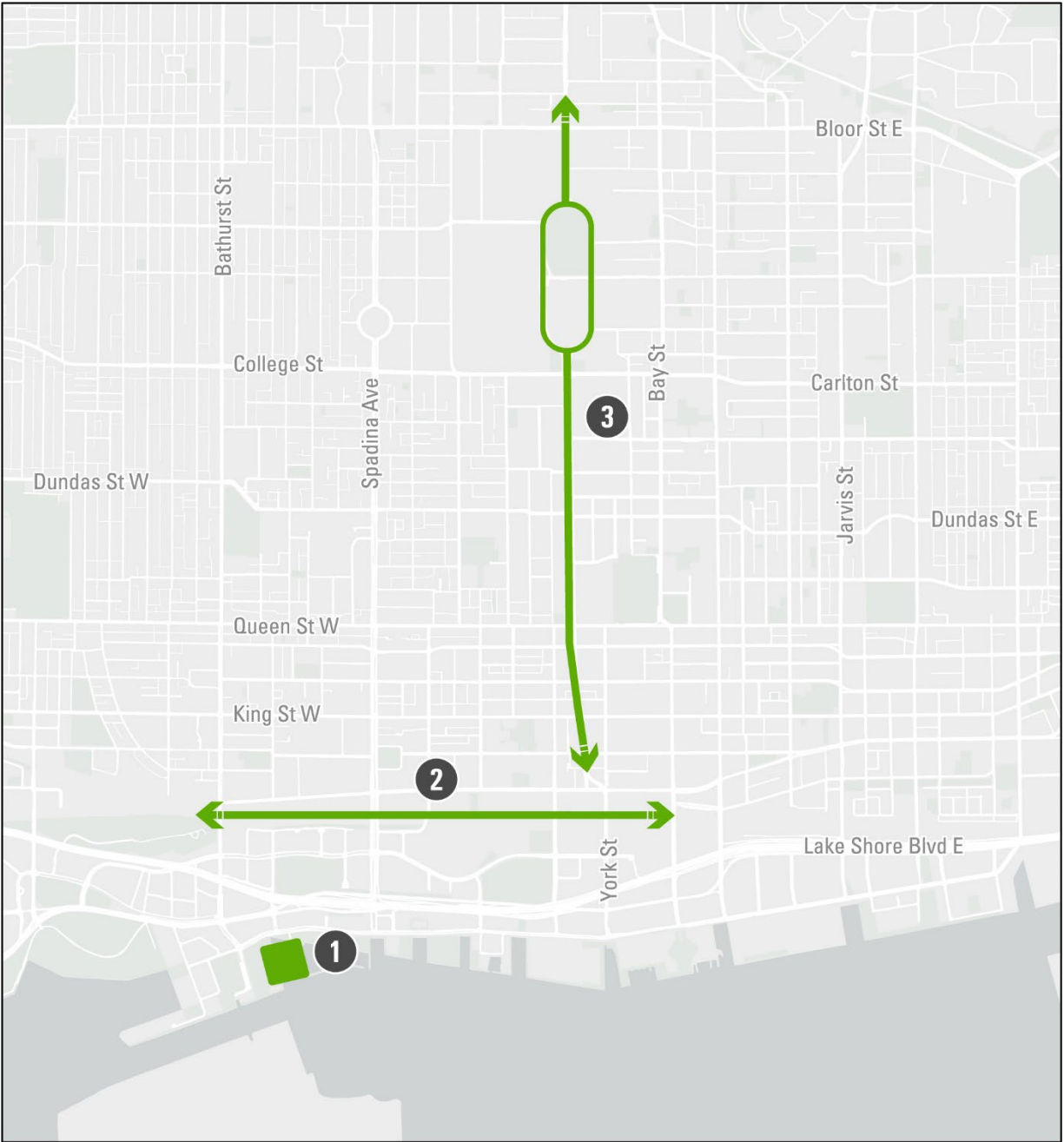
With due consideration of progress on adjacent capital projects within the study area, identify the appropriate timeframe for commencement of a possible phased Environmental Assessment Study (or similarly detailed study involving technical assessment, as warranted) for advancing detailed technical assessment, broad public engagement and alternative solutions and designs, eventually leading to a preferred design for recommendation to City Council.

#### *Longer-term (Ten + years)*

Plan to start phased construction in accordance with plans approved as part of a future Environmental Assessment (or similar) study.

# ATTACHMENT 2

## Location map



Priority Downtown Parks and Public Realm Opportunities  
Location Map

**1** Bathurst Quay Signature Waterfront Park

**2** Rail Corridor Public Realm Master Plan

**3** University Avenue / Queen's Park Crescent





## ATTACHMENT 3

### Conceptual rendering of Bathurst Quay Signature Waterfront Park

