



## REPORT FOR ACTION

# Official Plan Review: Draft Public Realm Policies

**Date:** December 20, 2017

**To:** Planning and Growth Management Committee

**From:** Acting Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division

**Wards:** All

## SUMMARY

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This report presents draft changes to Section 3.1.1, The Public Realm, of the Official Plan for the purpose of public consultation as part of the Five Year Review of the Official Plan. The draft policy changes are intended to strengthen and clarify the existing policies, provide new policies on the description and role of the Public Realm and introduce a Block Context Plan as a new application requirement for development proposals. A draft Official Plan Amendment is appended as Attachment 1 to this report. Attachment 2 shows how the draft amendments would be incorporated into Section 3.1.1 of the Official Plan. A draft terms of reference for the Block Context Plan forms Attachment 3 to this report.

The draft policies add clarity to the policy framework as it pertains to a number of urban design objectives including: promoting a walkable city; clarifying the role of the public realm; clarifying the need for new public streets; and role of public squares; and promoting and increasing privately owned publicly-accessible spaces.

The draft policies have been formulated to address issues raised as a result of feedback received through citywide consultation and background research.

The draft policies are intended to address the recently released Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2017, which includes new and revised policies and definitions for Complete Communities, Complete Streets and the Public Realm that emphasize a high-quality, attractive and vibrant public realm, compact built form, the integration of green infrastructure, social equity and quality of life, an appropriate supply of safe, publicly-accessible open spaces and parks, and a well-connected network of walkable neighbourhoods and destinations that encourage active transportation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Acting Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division recommends that the Planning and Growth Management Committee:

1. Direct that the draft Official Plan Amendment containing Public Realm policies and draft Terms of Reference for the Block Context Plan appended to this report in Attachments 1 and 3 be endorsed as the basis for public consultation.
2. Direct City Planning staff to conduct open house(s) in each community council district, and meet with key stakeholders including resident and ratepayer associations and BILD to obtain comments and feedback regarding the draft revisions to the policies for the public realm and the draft terms of reference for the Block Context Plan contained in Attachments 1 and 3.
3. Request the Acting Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division to prepare a Final Recommendation Report with a proposed Official Plan Amendment containing revised policies for the Public Realm to the Planning and Growth Management Committee in Q1, 2019 for a special meeting in fulfillment of Section 26 of the *Planning Act*.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There are no financial impacts resulting from the adoption of this report.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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At its meeting on February 6, 2012, City Council adopted the report from the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, summarizing the completed Stage 1 consultations for the Five Year Official Plan and Municipal Comprehensive Reviews, and identifying thematic areas for policy amendments to be considered as part of the work program for Stage 2 of the Official Plan Review. Council also requested the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, to prepare reports containing proposed Official Plan amendments by thematic areas and directed staff to first address matters required to be part of the Official Plan Review under S. 26 of the Planning Act, such as Growth Plan conformity, employment lands policies and heritage policies. The Decision History can be accessed at this link:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.PG10.8>

Since the inception of the Official Plan Review, a number of thematic policy amendments have been adopted by Council, including the following:

- Heritage Policies (OPA 199) – adopted April 2013 (in effect)
- Section 37 (OPA 214) – adopted July 2013 (in effect)
- Economic Health and Employment Lands (OPA 231) – adopted December 2013 (partially in-effect)
- Transportation Policies (OPA 274) – adopted August 2014 (in effect)
- Environment (OPA 262) – adopted November 2015 (in effect)
- Neighbourhoods/Apartment Neighbourhoods (OPA 320) – adopted December 2015 (under appeal)
- Greenbelt Conformity (OPA 346) – adopted May 2016 (in effect)

At its meeting on August 7, 2014, Planning and Growth Management Committee directed that City Planning consult on 11 Urban Design policy directions which were grouped into four content clusters: (1) Seeing the bigger picture; (2) Prioritizing the public realm; (3) Guiding built form; and (4) Enhancing parks and public spaces, and to report back on the consultation outcomes. The policy directions were developed through initial public consultations in 2011, internal consultation with City staff, a review of prior City Council directions and an analysis of provincial legislation, urban design initiatives and a number of Ontario Municipal Board decisions. The Decision History can be accessed at this link:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.PG35.20>

The consultation process was designed to obtain input from a diverse range of Torontonians through a variety of different events and online engagement methods. One of the goals of the urban design public consultation program was to build capacity and raise awareness of what urban design is to Torontonians. Consultation included open houses, focused stakeholder meetings, a series of pop-up events in public spaces throughout the city and an Urban Design Forum. In total, City Planning staff engaged over 1,500 Torontonians through the Urban Design Matters consultation program.

The Chief Planner presented the consultation summary to the Planning and Growth Management Committee ("PGMC") at its meeting on May 14, 2015 and provided a summary of the key work to be undertaken for each of the urban design policy directions in order to complete the review and prepare draft policies. To this end, a consultant was retained in 2016 to conduct further background research to inform the draft policies described in this report.

## **COMMENTS**

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### **Provincial Policy Statement and Provincial Plans**

#### *The Provincial Policy Statement*

The Provincial Policy Statement, 2014 ("PPS") provides policy direction province-wide on land use planning and development to promote strong communities, a strong economy and a clean and healthy environment. It includes policies on key issues that affect communities, such as:

- The efficient and wise use and management of land and infrastructure over the long term in order to minimize impacts on air, water and other resources;
- Protection of the natural and built environment;
- Building strong, sustainable and resilient communities that enhance health and social well-being by ensuring opportunities exist locally for employment;
- Residential development promoting a mix of housing; recreation, parks and open space; and transportation choices that increase the use of active transportation and transit; and
- Encouraging a sense of place in communities, by promoting well-designed built form and by conserving features that help define local character.

The PPS recognizes that healthy, active communities are important and should be promoted through the provision of public streets and spaces that meet the needs of pedestrians, foster social interaction and facilitate active transportation and community connectivity.

The PPS guides the development of official plan policies and informs decisions on other planning and development matters. All decisions of Council affecting land use planning matters "shall be consistent with" the Provincial Policy Statement.

### *The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2017 (the "Growth Plan") provides a strategic framework for managing growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe region including:

- Setting minimum density targets within settlement areas and related policies directing municipalities to make more efficient use of land, resources and infrastructure to reduce sprawl, cultivate a culture of conservation and promote compact built form and better-designed communities with high quality built form and an attractive and vibrant public realm established through site design and urban design standards;
- Directing municipalities to engage in an integrated approach to infrastructure planning and investment optimization as part of the land use planning process;
- Building complete communities with a diverse range of housing options, public service facilities, recreation and green space that better connect transit to where people live and work;
- Retaining viable employment lands and encouraging municipalities to develop employment strategies to attract and retain jobs;
- Minimizing the negative impacts of climate change by undertaking stormwater management planning that assesses the impacts of extreme weather events and incorporates green infrastructure; and
- Recognizing the importance of watershed planning for the protection of the quality and quantity of water and hydrologic features and areas.

Amendments to the Growth Plan, which came into effect on July 1, 2017, include policies pertaining to the development of a high quality public realm and compact built form that promote pedestrian-friendly, walkable neighbourhoods and the use of transit and active transportation. The Growth Plan requires municipalities to "develop and implement urban design and site design official plan policies and other supporting documents that direct the development of a high quality public realm and compact built form".

### **Draft Official Plan Amendments to Section 3.1.1 Public Realm**

Draft amendments to Section 3.1.1 of the Official Plan form Attachment 1 to this report and are described below. The order of new and existing policies is proposed to be rearranged, such that the policies first describe the public realm at a broader scale, and progress to more detailed policies pertaining to individual components and design criteria for elements within the public realm.

The Official Plan's current in-force Public Realm section encourages quality architecture, landscaping and urban design through a number of objectives including "ensuring new development enhances the quality of the public realm". There are a number of general physical requirements for the development of new city blocks and development lots within them, such as the size, scale and orientation of buildings. While these policies establish a relationship between development and the public realm, the draft amendments described and attached to this report aim to strengthen this relationship and recognize the integral role that development plays in contributing to all aspects of the public realm.

### *New Policies Introducing the Scope and Role of the Public Realm*

The Official Plan describes the importance of the public realm in the non-policy text but does not provide a detailed description of the components or role of the public realm in the policy text. A key direction adopted by PGMC was to describe the public realm in policy, including a description of the elements that make up the public realm, who it is for and what purpose it serves.

The Growth Plan, 2017 defines the Public Realm as "All spaces to which the public has unrestricted access, such as streets, parks and sidewalks." A new draft Policy 1 of Section 3.1.1 of the Official Plan uses this definition as a baseline to describe the City's public realm and further elaborates that the public realm is a network that includes but is not limited to pedestrian connections, open spaces, the public portions of civic buildings and other publicly owned and publicly accessible lands. A new draft Policy 2 states that the City, together with its partners, will seek opportunities to expand and enhance the public realm.

To describe the purpose of the public realm, revisions to the non-policy text have been drafted and a new draft Policy 3 describes that the public realm will be designed to achieve a number of objectives, such as providing the organizing framework and setting for development and the place for civic life and daily social interaction. The draft policy establishes that the public realm plays an important role in achieving complete communities and walkable neighbourhoods, and supports active transportation, public transit use and overall quality of life. The public realm defines the identity and physical character of the City and its neighbourhoods.

### *New Public and Private Streets*

Policy 17 of the Public Realm section states that new streets should be public streets. It further states that private streets, where they are appropriate, should be designed to integrate into the public realm and meet the design objectives for new streets. The intent of this policy is to ensure that new streets contribute to the development of the public street network in order to achieve the broader public realm objectives, and to permit private streets only in limited circumstances.

Public streets are a defining feature of the public realm. In addition to providing the organizing element of the City and its neighbourhoods, public streets are vitally important because they preserve access and connectivity to residents for essential

public services and ensure that these public services can be provided in an efficient, safe and secure manner over the long term. Public streets can also be managed, maintained and upgraded to respond to growth and development. The introduction of public transit, cycling or pedestrian infrastructure, the increase or reduction of vehicular traffic lanes, revised routing options, the planting of trees and installation of public art and green infrastructure are examples of changes to public streets that may be appropriate or necessary over time. The Queens Quay Revitalization, John Street Corridor Improvement Project, REimagining Yonge Street (Sheppard Avenue to Finch Avenue), Bike Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park, Park Lawn Lake Shore Transportation Master Plan, and Port Union Road works are recent examples of public streets that have changed, or are proposed to change, in form and function in order to respond to the evolving needs of the public.

Although private streets may be publicly accessible, appear as public streets and provide connections with the public realm, they lack this inherent flexibility. Instead, private streets should serve a limited function as shared driveways for servicing access to loading and parking facilities for limited developments, where deemed appropriate by the City.

Policy 17 is proposed to be deleted and replaced with two policies (Draft Policies 9 and 11 of the amended Section 3.1.1) and a new sidebar that clarifies the role of public streets. Draft Policy 9 strengthens the existing policy intent and states that all new streets will be public streets and will serve as the primary organizing element and access for new developments. Draft Policy 11 addresses private shared driveways and provides clarity that, where deemed to be appropriate by the City, they will serve a limited function as service access and should be publicly accessible and designed to integrate into the public realm. This may include the provision of sidewalks and street trees.

### *Laneways*

The City's laneways are an integral part of the public realm, particularly as they relate to the overall street network. A new policy (Draft Policy 10) addressing laneways as a specific component of the public realm is proposed to be added to the Public Realm section. The draft policy establishes the primary function of laneways as off-street access for vehicles and servicing while seeking opportunities for laneway enhancements through the development approval process. The draft policy further recognizes that where feasible and appropriate, laneways should be designed with consideration for safe, accessible and comfortable pedestrian and cyclist movement.

Throughout the Public Realm policies, appropriate references to laneways have been added to a number of draft policies.

### *Enhancing Walkability*

A key direction adopted by the PGMC was to promote a walkable city by emphasizing connectivity, safety and a high quality public realm, as well as to promote public access to the City's natural amenities.

Policy 6 of the Public Realm section addresses the design of sidewalks and boulevards to create safe, attractive, interesting and comfortable spaces for pedestrians. However, there are a number of opportunities where clarification and additional language can strengthen the importance of establishing a walkable city and the role that private development can play in achieving this objective.

A number of policies have been revised to promote the development of a walkable public realm that is designed for all users regardless of age or ability. The draft revisions address the need for appropriate widths of sidewalks, minimizing block lengths and maximizing pedestrian connections, integrating new streets and laneways with the existing street network, and providing unobstructed, direct and continuous paths of travel in all seasons to serve pedestrian flow. Additional draft policy amendments are intended to ensure that the City's valleys and ravines are publicly accessible, and that parks and open spaces are highly visible with prominent street frontage in order to establish visual and physical connections with the public realm.

#### *Promoting a Healthy, Mature Tree Canopy*

The provision, maintenance and protection of trees and their growing spaces is essential to the provision of a safe, beautiful and comfortable public realm. Healthy trees contribute to quality of life, improve air and water quality, and provide shade. A mature tree canopy enhances the identity, character and comfort of streets, parks and open spaces and contributes to the urban forest.

Trees in the urban environment are subject to some of the most challenging conditions including soil volumes, compaction of soil, planting above underground buildings, and competing interests for space within the right-of-way. In addition to being a primary component of the Block Context Plan proposed to be required as part of the attached draft amendments, a new policy (Draft Policy 16) addresses the importance of providing a healthy urban tree canopy. Draft Policy 16 requires that complete applications for development will demonstrate how the provision, maintenance and protection of trees and their growing spaces above and below ground will be achieved. The draft policy also establishes that long-term growth and increase in the amount of healthy trees will be a priority for new development.

#### *Access, Enjoyment and Protection of the City's Natural Features*

Policies 3 and 4 of Section 3.1.1 address the enjoyment of valleys and ravines through the preservation of harmonious views and vistas from the valley and the connection of natural features to the surrounding City. These policies are proposed to be combined and strengthened into a single new policy (Draft Policy 17) requiring that the access and enjoyment of the City's natural features be enhanced and protected through various criteria. This includes improving the prominence, physical and visual access from the public realm, limiting the impacts of adjacent development and providing public access along, into and through the natural areas, where appropriate.

## *New Policies on POPS and Public Squares*

Two of the policy directions established through public consultation and adopted by PGMC include (1) defining privately owned publicly-accessible spaces (POPS) in policy; and (2) the identification of public squares as a type of public space, to support the adopted POPS guidelines. Two new policies (Draft Policies 20 and 21) address these policy directions, respectively.

Draft Policy 20 pertaining to POPS provides a description of these spaces and their contribution to the public realm. The policy encourages private development to provide POPS and establishes criteria for their design to ensure that they are publicly accessible, highly visible, designed for all users and seamlessly integrated and connected with the broader public realm.

Draft Policy 21 pertaining to public squares identifies this open space typology as social and civic gathering spaces that contribute to the public realm and provide opportunities for social interaction, entertainment, cultural events and flexible programming to enhance the daily lives of residents and workers. The policy further establishes design criteria and programming options for new public squares.

## *Revised Application Requirements (including the Block Context Plan)*

Three new complete application requirements are proposed to be added to Schedule 3 of the Official Plan, including: a Soil Volume Plan to demonstrate that adequate soil volume suitable to support plant growth is being provided on site; a Tree Protection Plan prepared in conjunction with an arborist report that identifies the location, species and size of trees and illustrates details of protection measures; and, a Block Context Plan that demonstrates how the proposed development will be designed and planned to fit in the existing and/or planned public realm and built form contexts. The Block Context Plan will demonstrate how new development will contribute to, enhance and integrate with the broader public realm, both within and beyond the proposed development parcel(s).

The draft terms of reference for the required Block Context Plan forms Attachment 3 to this report. The draft terms of reference establishes specific requirements for the achievement of various objectives that contribute to an enhanced public realm, including:

- providing the organizing framework and setting for development through network planning and site design criteria;
- achieving walkable neighbourhoods through block design;
- supporting active transportation and public transit use through the creation of a fine-grained, active-transportation network and the provision of landscaped pedestrian and cycling routes;
- supporting overall quality of life by designing buildings and sites to minimize shadow and wind impacts on the public realm;
- contributing to the development of a healthy and mature urban forest and resilient green infrastructure; and
- providing high quality and an appropriate quantity of public realm amenities.



## Next Steps

### *Built Form Policy Amendments and Public Consultation*

Draft amendments to Sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 of the Official Plan, Built Form and Built Form - Tall Buildings, respectively, are anticipated to be the subject of a report to PGMC seeking direction to consult with the public and external stakeholders on the draft policy amendments in Q2, 2018. Public consultation on the draft amendments can then occur in tandem with the Public Realm amendments throughout 2018, in accordance with Recommendation 2 of this report.

Conducting public and stakeholder consultation throughout 2018 will ensure that these two substantial citywide policy matters are subject to a thorough and multi-faceted consultation approach. Following the conclusion of the consultation process, a final report including a summary of the public and stakeholder feedback and the proposed Official Plan Amendments for both the Public Realm and Built Form sections is anticipated to be brought forward to PGMC in Q1, 2019.

## CONTACT

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## SIGNATURE

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Gregg Lintern, MCIP, RPP  
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City Planning Division

## ATTACHMENTS

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Attachment 1: Draft Official Plan Amendment  
Attachment 2: Incorporated Draft Policy Revisions with the In-Force Official Plan  
Attachment 3: Draft Terms of Reference for the Block Context Plan