

## Ready, Set, Midtown: the Yonge-Eglinton Implementation Initiatives

### Midtown Zoning Review: October 2021

## Consultation Summary

*This report is not intended to provide a verbatim transcript of the meeting, but instead provides a high level summary of participant feedback. Many of the comments below were captured during a Virtual Community Consultation Event held on October 27, 2021, but also includes feedback received by email, phone, social media, and other means.*

*If you have any questions after reviewing this summary and the appendix, please contact Matt Armstrong, Senior Planner, Strategic Initiatives, City of Toronto at [matt.armstrong@toronto.ca](mailto:matt.armstrong@toronto.ca) or 416-392-3521.*

### Event Overview

On October 27, 2021, the City of Toronto hosted a Virtual Community Consultation Event for the Midtown Zoning Review ("the Review"). The Midtown Zoning Review is a component of "Ready, Set, Midtown", which is a series of three initiatives to implement the Yonge-Eglinton Secondary Plan (the other two being the Midtown Parks and Public Realm Strategy, and the Midtown Infrastructure Implementation Strategy). The meeting was held online through the WebEx Events platform, and was the first widely-advertised public event for the Review. Consultation materials are available online at [www.toronto.ca/readyssetmidtown](http://www.toronto.ca/readyssetmidtown) (click on "Midtown Zoning Review").

The purpose of the consultation was:

- To provide an update on the zoning review, including the status of the built form study, concurrent infrastructure work, and timelines;
- To inform and educate the public about a draft framework for zoning, including some of the rationale for framework elements;
- To seek input from the public on the draft framework for zoning;
- To ensure engagement and awareness of the study by small land owners, businesses, those not previously involved, and the public at large; and
- To ensure early engagement on the development of a zoning by-law in advance of the drafting of a zoning by-law.

The event was part of the second phase of the Midtown Zoning Review. City Planning staff from various areas of expertise, including Strategic Initiatives, Community Planning, Urban Design and the Zoning Section were in attendance to answer questions and have discussions with attendees about the Study.

The event was held in two sessions to offer more opportunities for engagement: between 4:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m., and between 6:30 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. According to the WebEx Events record, a total of 346 individual sign-ins to the event took place. **Thank you to all who attended!**

*Please note: While 346 sign-ins were recorded, it may not accurately represent actual attendance, given certain immeasurable factors, such as: some individual sign-ins being viewed by more than one person (e.g. a couple or an association signing in); people experiencing technical challenges who may have signed-in more than once (e.g. to get a better experience on a different device); or people attending both sessions of the consultation event. Acknowledging those caveats, the first session peaked at close to 200 attendees at once, and the session peaked at just above 130 attendees at once. The total of 346 is higher than the combination of those two totals, accounting for people signing in late and leaving early, as would occur in an in-person meeting.*

Each session consisted of an approximately 30 minute presentation, followed by an hour of discussion and feedback. Attendees provided feedback by speaking directly at the event, providing questions and comments in the digital question and answer box, and by sending in comments or questions by email or phone in advance of the meeting. The participation and involvement of attendees is always appreciated.

At an in-person consultation, it is easier to gauge the diversity of representation and participation through observation, and by asking questions such as whether attendees live in the area, rent or own property, are consultants, etc. By observing who and who is not participating in consultation, staff can understand how to pivot outreach efforts to ensure broad participation. As this is more challenging in a virtual format, staff have tried to ensure good participation in the Midtown Zoning Review through some of the promotional material described below.

## **Consultation Details and Promotion**

### ***Promotions***

The consultation was promoted through a mailed flyer, dedicated website listing, two emails from the dedicated listserv, posts through official City social media accounts, and through the local Councillor and centres of influence. To further broadcast the event, the Toronto Public Library was informed of the event and the flyer was posted to the bulletin board at the Northern District Library branch. The library was made aware for the purpose of assisting visitors in accessing digital materials. City staff have been able to direct callers without digital access to the library for assistance.

For more on the event itself, attendees, promotion and more details, please see Appendix A.

### ***Presentation and Draft Zoning Framework***

A presentation opening each session gave a brief outline of Ready, Set, Midtown, an explanation of zoning, and the reasons why a zoning review and update is underway. The primary inputs into an updated zoning by-law, including the completed background report, nearly complete built form study, and ongoing infrastructure study were described. The geographic area under study (and exceptions) were described, and the estimated timeline for the Midtown Zoning Review initiative was presented. The components of holding by-laws were presented, and it was made clear that a need for a holding by-law was not yet identified. The objectives for the Midtown Zoning Review was presented, along with an explanation for how Planners arrive at recommendations. The zoning framework was then described in detail as a series of responses to the following questions:

- What is the basis for an updated zoning by-law?
- How will recent development applications be handled?
- How will uses be determined in the updated zoning by-law?
- How will the form of buildings be regulated?
- How will building size be regulated?
- How will minimum height be regulated?
- How will the minimum height of retail ground floors in mixed-use buildings be regulated?
- How will maximum height be regulated?
- How will a minimum separation between the tower portion of tall buildings be regulated?
- How will office replacement be regulated?
- What other provisions will be included in an updated zoning by-law?

The complete presentation will be made available on the project website at [www.toronto.ca/readyssetmidtown](http://www.toronto.ca/readyssetmidtown) (click on "Midtown Zoning Review").

### **Summary of Feedback**

Feedback was received from attendees at the public event, as well as through emails and phone calls received in advance of the event. **The following is a summary of the feedback received.**

Participants were clearly eager to participate and provide questions and comments. Staff endeavoured to answer as many questions and comments as possible. However, due to the high number of questions and comments, not all were responded to during the event, but all questions and comments submitted through the questions and answer box were reviewed, and are reflected in this summary.

#### ***In General***

There were a lot of questions, comments, and concerns expressed on a variety of topics that are somewhat or indirectly related the zoning framework, but ultimately few questions directly related to zoning. Zoning is a technical exercise and (to some extent) this is not unexpected. City staff will need to interpret how comments may relate to zoning.

#### ***The geographic area to which updated zoning is being considered***

In addition to comments during the event, multiple calls and emails were received by staff asking where exactly the geographic area under study was. This was sometimes on a site specific basis. Staff responded that the Character Areas within the Yonge Eglinton Secondary Plan (Map 21-2 of the Plan) are the focus of the Midtown Zoning Review. However, staff also presented that the areas around Chaplin Crescent and Eglinton Avenue West, and Avenue Road and Eglinton Avenue West will be examined through a targeted exercise related to minimum density targets in transit station areas.

#### ***Provincial targets for people and jobs/hectare***

Questions were raised at the meeting regarding the provincial targets for people and jobs per hectare. Some wondered what that may mean for building form, and infrastructure. One comment expressed concern that minimum targets put in place by the Province were being treated by the City as maximums.

### ***Complete Communities***

There was desire at the meeting to see complete and livable communities, where people can live, work, learn and play in close proximity. However, there was also concern about the infrastructure needs in successfully achieving this.

### ***Infrastructure***

Infrastructure was perhaps the most commonly cited topic, with comments, questions and concerns raised by both participants at the meeting, and from communications received directly by staff. In summary, the concerns expressed were related to a perceived disconnect between the pace of development, and infrastructure to service that development and surrounding community. These included concerns that water would not be able to be pumped to the top of tall buildings, sidewalks would be overwhelmed, streets would be congested with vehicles, schools could not handle the capacity of students, and park space would not be sufficient for the population. In some cases – such as parks and vehicular congestion – comments were received that provision and capacity were not sufficient already. A few suggestions were received on how to better use existing infrastructure, such as requiring development to directly connect to new transit stations, and to increase the land use permissions in the base building of tall buildings to accommodate uses such as schools. There were also comments cited about securing more privately-owned publicly accessible spaces (POPS) and amenity areas.

### ***Development applications***

Clarity was sought by one attendee regarding whether updated zoning would impact existing development applications. Staff responded that the planning framework in place on the day the application was deemed complete is what is 'determinative', whereas the direction of Council regarding an updated zoning by-law would be 'informative'. Staff would try to implement the will of Council.

There were general concerns raised about the pace of development, size of proposals, and a desire for less development. Concern was specifically expressed about development being proposed west of Duplex Avenue.

A specific concern about how infill development on Apartment Neighbourhood sites are evaluated by staff, including related to sun and shadow, as well as disruption to existing residents. Staff indicated this would be done on a site specific basis, but that improvements to construction management plans could limit disruption to existing residents.

### ***Holding by-laws***

Staff explained the purpose and requirements of holding by-laws, including that they can only be used for items listed in the Official Plan (section 5.1.2). Comments were nevertheless received about using holding by-laws in relation to schools. Staff reiterated this is not being considered. A further comment was received about the possibility of using holding by-laws in relation to park provision. Staff indicated that follow up would be required to clarify this through the Midtown Infrastructure Implementation Strategy, and that further details would be provided in a future draft zoning by-law.

### ***Land uses***

Several comments were received regarding land uses, including a desire to see a variety of uses permitted near transit stations. A general comment was made that some individuals do not drive, and need to have a variety of uses, including grocery stores, in close walking distance. Comments were also received about encouraging schools, medical, clinics, grocery stores and other uses in the base of tall buildings.

A few comments were received about the type and size of retail along main streets. A desire was expressed for small scale, locally-serving, non-chain stores to ensure variety and interest in the area, while also providing more affordable opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

### ***Housing***

Comments on housing were generally related to supporting an increase to housing supply, and to increase the provision of affordable housing. There were comments made about permissions for rooming houses, and for laneway houses, which seemed to express support for those uses. There were further comments in support of inclusionary zoning, 'regular not luxury' housing, rental housing, and the protection of existing rental housing.

### ***Building form***

Quite a number of comments and questions were received regarding building form. There were some who supported setbacks and stepbacks, and others who sought to abolish them. One commenter suggested that abolishing these provisions would give the area a "European feel". Staff responded that while considering best practices from other locations is important, the Midtown Zoning Review is seeking to implement the Secondary Plan, which describes setbacks and stepbacks.

Several comments were received asking to support and asking for clarity regarding transition between taller and denser areas, and lower and less dense areas. In general, attendees expressed a desire for appropriately transitioned and scaled development. Staff explained that much of this is built into the Secondary Plan, and that the policies would be translated into zoning regulations. Staff explained this would include a transition in maximum height permissions, angular planes and a variety of other provisions. One commenter expressed a desire to eliminate angular planes, suggesting it makes construction costly and makes for strange interior layouts. Staff responded that angular planes are discussed in the Secondary Plan and will be implemented, but also that there is nothing requiring that a proposal adhere exactly to the angle, but only to fit within it (i.e. if the minimum number of stepbacks are achieved, then no more are then required).

A few specific questions regarding building form will likely need to be further resolved through a draft zoning by-law. This includes a question about the future of the 'remaining' houses in the Davisville area, what the Bayview Focus Areas are 'for', and a specific question about height versus lot depth in the C3 Character Area.

A comment was also received expressing a desire for City urban design guidelines to be 'respected'.

### ***Minimum height***

Two concerns indicated concern regarding minimum height. The first was about how someone could build something less than the minimum height. Staff expressed that an application would be required and a process followed to grant an exception, likely through both a rezoning and Official Plan Amendment. The second was concern about the minimum height in the Eglinton Way Character Areas. Staff expressed that the minimum height has been in place in this area for more than 10 years, and that it is unlikely to change in this area through the Midtown Zoning Review.

### ***Maximum Height***

General comments were received, expressing concern about the amount of development, heights, and Provincial changes to height limits. In response to staff's presentation that the draft zoning framework will express maximum heights in metres, one commenter noted that since the Secondary Plan expressed heights only in storeys, that heights in zoning should also only be in storeys.

### ***Architecture and design***

A comment was received that building form is becoming too 'boring' in the City. However, no suggestions on how to remedy this through the Midtown Zoning Review were received.

### ***Parks, green and open spaces***

This topic was raised in near equal measure to the infrastructure topic. Many attendees expressed that the area has a deficit of green space and parkland, with a few questioning how more would be built as the area intensifies. This was echoed in some emails and phone calls received by staff. In addition, there were comments about securing 'green' setbacks to buildings, as well as POPS, and to secure privately owned greenspace. Staff mentioned that a parallel process – the Midtown Parks and Public Realm Strategy – was underway and would be coordinated with the Midtown Zoning Review. Staff also acknowledged the issue, and identified that some lands have been redesignated for park space through the Secondary Plan.

### ***Streetscapes***

A few attendees expressed a desire for greater setbacks to achieve a wider, greener, more pleasant public realm along sidewalks. Concern was expressed as to whether future sidewalks would be able to accommodate the volume of pedestrians anticipated in the future.

### ***Sun/shadow and wind***

Some attendees wanted to know if sun, shadow and winds conditions were considered, and staff responded that they are: both through individual site evaluation in development review, as well as on a cumulative basis through the built form study. Concern was nevertheless raised regarding 'compensation' to low-rise home owners who may be within a shadow, and regarding the existing Yonge-Eglinton 'wind tunnel'.

### ***Transportation***

A number of comments and concerns were raised regarding transportation capacity, including street and transit capacity. The validity of transportation studies by applicants was called into question.

Further, there was concern about the area's 'ability to handle' additional height and density from a transportation perspective. Two comments expressed a desire for public parking in the area. A couple comments were also received that some people will continue to drive and that parking will still be necessary in the future.

### ***Loading/servicing and pick-up-and-drop-off***

Two questions were raised regarding how loading and servicing would be handled in new development. Staff responded that, for the most part, the City would like to see limited curb cuts along sidewalks (for safety and for the comfort of retail customers), and prefer most loading and servicing to take place along laneways – new, expanded, or existing. Similarly, deliveries are also encouraged to be serviced along laneways and/or in dedicated locations.

### ***Heritage***

One question was received regarding how future development would integrate and/or abut heritage resources. Staff responded that further work on that is required in consultation with Planning staff.

### ***Environment***

A couple of questions were received about 'what the City is doing' to ensure good environmental performance of buildings, and if electric vehicle charging stations are being built into new development. Staff responded that the Toronto Green Standards are in place and are continuing to evolve, and that electric vehicle charging stations, green roofs, and other requirements help achieve better overall environmental performance.

### ***Community Services and Facilities***

One comment was received regarding a desire to see more social services in the area. Note to the reader: schools are considered separately from community services and facilities. Since schools were discussed in relation to infrastructure during the meeting, they are also discussed in that section above.

### ***Disruption due to construction***

Several comments were received by staff through email and phone call, and a few expressed at the public meeting, regarding disruption during construction. Concerns were expressed regarding noise, dust, congestion, safety and other concerns. Staff have tried to make clear that this is a legitimate concern, but not a zoning concern. That said, staff indicated that a good construction management plan can assist in mitigating these challenges

### ***Communications and process***

There were specific questions asked regarding when an adopted zoning by-law would be in force (staff expressed that this depends on a number of factors and could be relatively quick to several years), and how to stay involved in the process (staff directed attendee to the project website ([www.toronto.ca/readyssetmidtown](http://www.toronto.ca/readyssetmidtown)) and encouraged sign-ups to the email list). This was covered in the staff presentation, and in the response to another question.

### ***Other items***

A number of other items were raised, including:

- Development over the TTC yard at Davisville, which staff mentioned was just beginning to be studied;
- Expanding a specific business, which staff directed to Community Planning;
- A request for visuals showing all development planned in the Yonge-Eglinton Area, which staff indicated they would endeavour to provide;
- Accessibility in structured parking; and
- If expropriation was anticipated through the Midtown Zoning Review, which staff clarified it is not.

### **What happens to this feedback?**

This feedback is one component of input into the Midtown Zoning Review. Other inputs include planning policy and inputs from the local community, stakeholders, City Divisions and agencies. Toronto City Planning will consider all of this feedback in developing an updated zoning by-law for the area, and will then consult on that draft zoning by-law. A recommended updated zoning by-law will be developed following input received through consultation on the draft.

### **Appendix A: Consultation Details**

**Date, time and location of consultation:** October 27, 2021 between 4:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m., and repeated between 6:30 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. Held virtually using Webex software, which allows both computer and telephone-in access.

**Format:** Virtual public consultation event, consisting of a presentation, question and answer box and facilitation discussion. Two sessions held to offer greater opportunities for participation.

**Flyer:** A single page, double sided flyer included notice of the event, a summary of the purpose and content of the event, timeline for the project, key map of impacted areas, details on where to get more information, and contact details for City Staff.

**Promotions:** Flyer: A single page, double sided flyer was distributed to all addresses in the Secondary Plan area plus a 200 metre buffer (over 59,000 copies distributed in total). Two emails sent through the dedicated listserv containing over 850 subscribers (an invite and a reminder). Social media through official City of Toronto accounts. Encouragement of centres of influence, the Toronto Public Library and community groups to spread the word. Promotion through the Councillor's offices.

**Indigenous Consultation:** Letters and emails were sent to 11 First Nations and the Metis Nation. As of the date of writing of this summary, an acknowledgement has been received by the Mississaugas of Alderville First Nation, and further follow up has been requested by the Metis Nation. In response, staff have offered to provide a project briefing at a time that is convenient to the Metis Nation. Staff will





continue to offer direct participation and provide updates to the First Nations and Metis Nation through the lifetime of the zoning review.

**Feedback opportunities:** Staff covering a variety of City Planning disciplines, including Urban Design, Community Planning, Zoning, and Strategic Initiatives were present at the public event to take questions. Comments and questions were encouraged through the question and answer box and through speaking at the event. Further, a dedicated email address ([readysetmidtown@toronto.ca](mailto:readysetmidtown@toronto.ca)) and individual staff contacts were made available to send through email, letter, and telephone comments.

**Reach:** Reach: There were 346 unique sign-ins at the event on October 27, 2021. A total of 891 unique users (all non-City staff) visited the Midtown Zoning Review landing web page and Midtown Zoning Review Get Involved web page in the two weeks leading up to the public meeting. Further, there were nearly 1,000 Twitter impressions on related tweets leading up to the event. Note that these are impressions on the City Planning account only (@CityPlanTO).

**Comments received:** Comments were received throughout the event, and the entire text from the question and answer box has been saved. Numerous emails have been received and responded to, and numerous phone calls have been taken.