

## **Liberty Village Public Realm and Community Services and Facilities Study – Update Report**

Date: January 31, 2022

To: Toronto and East York Community Council

From: Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District

Ward: 10 - Spadina-Fort York

### **SUMMARY**

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This report provides an update on the Liberty Village Public Realm and Community Services and Facilities Study including preliminary findings, community consultation feedback to date and short term implementation opportunities for public realm improvements.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. Toronto and East York Community Council receive this report for information.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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The City Planning Division confirms that there are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations included in this report in the current budget year or in future years.

### **DECISION HISTORY**

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On July 16, 2020, Toronto and East York Community Council (TEYCC) adopted motion TE 16.58 with amendments, requesting the Director of Community Planning, Toronto and East York District, in consultation with CreateTO, Parks, Forestry, and Recreation, Real Estate Services, Transportation Services and other necessary civic officials, to undertake a study of public space and other City-owned properties in Liberty Village.

The study will assess and identify the need and opportunity to leverage City assets to improve and expand the range of open space and community services and facilities to better serve the area. The motion directed staff to report back to Toronto and East York Community Council with a Terms of Reference and a Public Consultation Strategy. The

Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District was also directed to report back to Toronto and East York with recommendations resulting from the study and associated consultation.

The motion can be found here:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.TE.16.58>

On July 14, 2021, City Council received a status update report on the study including a Terms of Reference, Community Engagement Strategy and an estimated study timeline. The report was adopted with direction from City Council requesting the Director, Community Planning report back to Toronto and East York Community Council with a status report detailing preliminary findings, short-term implementation opportunities for public realm improvements, and community consultation feedback to-date.

The decision history can be found here:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.TE.26.29>

## **PLANNING STUDY UPDATE**

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### **Purpose**

The Liberty Village Public Realm and Community Services and Facilities Study (the Study) was initiated to address the need for more open space and community services and facilities resulting from significant residential and commercial growth in the area.

### **Study Area**

The Study area is generally bounded by King Street West and Douro Street to the north, the rail tracks to the south, Dufferin Street to the west and Strachan Avenue to the east.

A map of the Study Area can be found on Attachment 1.

### **Preliminary Findings**

#### **Population Change**

According to the 2016 Census, there were 7,840 residents living within the Study Area, which is a 152% increase from 2011. “Pipeline data” from 2016 to the end of 2020 indicates an estimated further growth in population of between 4,474 and 4,688 people.

The “pipeline data” includes development projects that are actively under review, have not yet been approved, as well as projects that have been approved, and which building permits have been applied for or issued and/or which are under construction.

## Demographic Profile

A demographic analysis of the study area has been undertaken and compared to the City as a whole. Key findings from the demographic profile are:

- Between 2011 and 2016, the population of Liberty Village increased by 152% compared to 4.5% for the City.
- 86.2% of the population is comprised of working adults age 25 to 64 years compared to 57.3% for the City
- 79% of families in private households were living without children compared to 34.8% for the City
- 56% in Liberty Village live alone compared to 32% for the City
- 70% of the population in Liberty Village is non-immigrant compared to 49% for the City
- 89% of the population in Liberty Village have a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree compared to 69% for the City
- Both the average household income and average family income are higher in the City of Toronto than in Liberty Village
- 32% of homeowners in Liberty Village spend more than 30% of their income on shelter compared to 27% for the City
- 45% of renters in Liberty Village spend more than 30% of their income on shelter compared to 47% for the City
- 87% of housing types in Liberty Village are 5+ storeys compared to 44% for the City
- There are no single-detached houses in Liberty Village and 24% in the City of Toronto
- The City has 53% home owners compared to 46% for Liberty Village
- 85% of the housing in Liberty Village was constructed between 2006 and 2016 compared to 13% for the City of Toronto

Further research is being undertaken by City Planning staff related to the existing and projected population and the community services and facilities (CS and F) portion of the study in order to identify any additional services needed to support the community.

## Other Initiatives

There are a number of ongoing provincial and municipal initiatives in proximity to Liberty Village. City staff will continue to monitor the various initiatives to ensure that they inform and are considered in the Study.

The following is a list of current initiatives in proximity to Liberty Village:

- LV BIA boundary expansion and Masterplan: <https://www.libertyvillagebia.com/>
- Metrolinx Transit Expansion Projects: <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2021/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-168614.pdf>

- SmartTrack King-Liberty Station:  
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.EX20.2>
- Ontario Line - Exhibition Station;  
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.EP20.7>
- Liberty New Street: Municipal Class Environmental Assessment  
<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/96cd-Liberty-New-Street-ESR-web2-part1.pdf> and  
<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/963e-Liberty-New-Street-ESR-web2-part3.pdf>
- Transit-Oriented Communities:  
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.TE29.17>
- Exhibition Place Master Plan- Next Place;  
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.TE18.42>
- Ontario Place Redevelopment:  
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2022.EX29.5>
- The Bentway: <https://www.thebentway.ca/> and  
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.EP18.4>
- Bid for FIFA World Cup 2026: <https://www.toronto.ca/news/city-of-toronto-and-bid-partners-welcome-fifa-delegation-for-fifa-world-cup-2026-host-city-site-visit/>

## City-owned Sites in Liberty Village

CreateTO is currently undertaking a thorough review of the City-owned sites within Liberty Village. The review includes assessing the current uses of the sites and opportunities to use some of these sites to address the need for community services and facilities and new parks in the study area. The following City-owned properties are included in their review: 98 Atlantic Avenue (City Archives), 9 Hanna Avenue (Toronto Police Services), 34 Hanna Avenue (Green P Parking Lot), 1116 King Street West (Transportation Services Facility), Lamport Stadium Park, Liberty Village Park and Bill Johnston Park.

## Parks

Parks, Forestry and Recreation have identified a need for new parks as well as improvements to existing parks in the study area.

### Liberty Village Park

Park improvements are planned to the Liberty Village Park which will create more play amenities including a playground expansion, splash pad, seating, as well as improvements to pathways and landscaping. Construction is scheduled to start in May 2022 with completion by Fall 2022. This timeline is subject to change and is weather permitting.

The City's project site on the improvements can be found at the following link:  
<https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/construction-new-facilities/improvements-expansion-redevelopment/liberty-village-park-improvements/>

#### Bill Johnston Park – North of 19 Western Battery Road

A vacant parcel of land abutting the south-eastern edge of Bill Johnston Park has been secured by the City as future Parkland. The land is currently under private ownership but following the conveyance to the City, the land will be improved to expand the existing Bill Johnston Park with a shared children's playground. During the day, the play area will be exclusively used by the daycare facility operating within the building at 19 Western Battery Road, and during non-operating daycare hours, the play area will be available for the general public to use.

#### Allan A. Lamport Stadium Park – 1155 King Street West

Lamport Stadium Park is approximately 37,300 square metres in area (3.73 hectares). The site contains a number of uses including a sports stadium, a Toronto Parking Authority surface parking lot, a temporary Respite Centre, open park space with a small children's playground, seating, table tennis tables, pathways and a listed heritage house. City staff are exploring opportunities in and around the stadium for optimizing and improving the design and functionality of the entire property in order to create a more useable and programmed park space.

#### Toronto Parking Authority - 34 Hanna Avenue

The Toronto Parking Authority surface parking lot (Carpark #224) at 34 Hanna Avenue, contains 184 parking spaces. The property has frontage on Liberty Street, Hanna Avenue and Atlantic Avenue, and is approximately 4,886 square metres in size.

In 2015, Toronto and East York Community Council requested staff from Parks, Forestry and Recreations, Real Estate, City Planning and the Toronto Parking Authority, and any other necessary City staff in consultation with the ward Councillors, to explore how the property could be better utilized to serve the local community.

Through the current study, City Planning and Parks, Forestry and Recreation, and the Toronto Parking Authority, in consultation with CreateTO are exploring potential opportunities to re-develop this site to serve the local community.

The link to the motion can be found at:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.TE.10.124>

### **Public Realm**

A unique feature within Liberty Village are the interconnected outdoor pathways within complexes of buildings and walkways between streets that are often referred to as midblock connections. These connections, while often on private property, allow public users and pedestrians additional opportunities to easily get around the community.

With an expected number of infrastructure projects for SmartTrack, Exhibition GO, the planned Liberty New Street, and the recently opened King Liberty pedestrian bridge, there is an increased need to improve, establish and plan for increased mobility and pedestrian connections throughout the area. It is also critical to ensure that the locations, safety and design of the connections are carefully considered.

Some of the opportunities to improve the public realm that have been identified include:

- Exploring opportunities to widen narrow sidewalk conditions throughout the study area;
- Adding sidewalks across the western portion of Liberty Village between Dufferin Street and Atlantic Avenue;
- Removal of boulevard parking throughout the western portion of Liberty Village in front of private properties;
- Adding street trees and improving boulevard landscaped areas;
- Establishing pedestrian and cycling connections along streets such as Jefferson Avenue, Atlantic Avenue and Hanna Avenue in order to link transit projects from north and south;
- Improving the boulevard condition and adding new street trees along Liberty and East Liberty Street;
- Exploring opportunities for additional pedestrian midblock connections in the following locations:
  - East-west private lane located north of the Toronto Police Services building at 9 Hanna Avenue, and the north-south lane (King West Laneway) located east of the building;
  - North-south connections to the recently constructed King Liberty pedestrian bridge to the future SmartTrack Station and Metro Grocery;
  - East-west connection to Strachan Avenue directly from Western Battery Road; and
  - North-south connection from King Street West to Rita Cox parkette (north of King Street).
- Pedestrian safety improvements and crossings, particularly along Liberty and East Liberty Streets; and
- A number of open space locations such as remnant small parcels of private land that could be opportunities for future park and open spaces.

## **Community Engagement/Consultation**

### **Online engagement**

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the study team explored various outreach methods in lieu of in-person meetings, walking tours and pop-up consultation methods that would have typically taken place before the pandemic.

Staff have gathered feedback from the community through an online community engagement tool called Social Pinpoint, advertising the study through social media

platforms such as the CityPlanTO Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts, and mailing postcards and installing posters in local City Parks to advertise the study process and Social Pinpoint web page.

## **Study Website**

In August 2021, a project website was launched for the study. The website contains information and staff reports to-date, updates on meetings and events, including copies of the community meeting presentation, video recordings of the meetings and summary sheets of the questions and answers, a direct link to the study's Social Pinpoint web page, staff and Councillor contact information and a link to sign up for the study's email list.

A Liberty Village Study website and email address were created to provide an easy and consistent method for members of the public to reach City staff and locate information about the study. Staff leading the study can be contacted directly through their work email addresses or directly through the study email at [libertyvillagestudy@toronto.ca](mailto:libertyvillagestudy@toronto.ca) and locate the most updated study information at [www.toronto.ca/libertyvillagestudy](http://www.toronto.ca/libertyvillagestudy).

## **Meetings with Local Groups**

City Planning staff have attended an initial meeting with the BIA's Animated Public Realm Subcommittee, met with the Liberty Village Residents' Association (LVRA) board, as well as attended the LVRA's 2021 Annual General Meeting to discuss the Study.

## **Social Pinpoint Online Interactive Mapping Activity**

Social Pinpoint is third party online public engagement tool being used by a number of Divisions within the City of Toronto including City Planning. The tool can be uniquely tailored for individual projects and studies.

A Social Pinpoint map was designed for this study that allows the public to identify locations for public realm and community services opportunities and improvements, identify areas of value, and suggest ideas and general comments using the mapping system. The online map was launched in August 2021.

At the time of writing this report, the mapping activity has received 4,331 visits, with 1,594 unique users and a total of 583 comments posted.

The Social Pinpoint map can be found at the following link:  
<https://toronto.ca/mysocialpinpoint.ca/libertyvillage>.

A summary of the comments received to date can be found in Attachment 2: Summary of Consultation Feedback.

## **Community Consultation Meeting**

Community Consultation meetings were held on December 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021. A postcard was designed for the community meeting notice mail out which also included a QR code and link to the Social Pinpoint mapping exercise. In order to provide more opportunities for participation, two identical presentations were held by staff, with one meeting held in the evening, and a second meeting held the following day at lunch hour. Between the two meetings, a total of 50 members of the public attended.

A summary of the main comments and questions that were expressed at the meeting can be found in Attachment 2: Summary of Consultation Feedback:

## **Upcoming Community Engagement and Additional Outreach:**

Over the next four months, City Planning staff are continuing to engage with the community by:

- Establishing a local advisory working group;
- Holding community consultation meetings;
- Meeting with the Liberty Village BIA;
- Consulting with the Indigenous community; and
- Continued use of Social Pinpoint

## **Short Term Public Realm Improvement Opportunities**

Transportation Services has identified the following public realm improvements that can take place in the short term. Additional opportunities will be addressed in the forthcoming Final Report and Implementation Strategy targeted for June, 2022.

- Crosswalk and pavement markings will be refreshed in key locations across the study area.
- Streetscaping improvements to be undertaken along the north side of the boulevard along East Liberty Street west of Liberty Village Park to Lynn Williams Street.
- The current Cycling Near-Term Implementation Program for 2022-2024 was adopted by City Council on December 15, 2021.

The 2022-2024 Near-Term Program includes a number of new bikeways, upgrades to existing routes, and studies for future implementation within and adjacent to the study area.



In the study area:

- Upgrade to bi-directional cycle track on Duoro Street between Strachan Avenue and King Street West. Expected to be installed or under construction in 2022;
- State-of-good-repair markings on Strachan Avenue between Lake Shore Blvd West and Queen Street West: Expected to be installed or under construction in 2022;
- Dedicated bikeway to be delivered through developer on King Street West between Sudbury Street and Duoro Street.

Adjacent to the study area:

- Sudbury Street between King Street West and Abell Street: Dependent on bundled or sequenced work (transit, road, and water);
- West Toronto Rail Path connection to Sudbury Street and Abell Street;
- Dedicated bikeway on Ordnance Street, expected to be installed or under construction in 2022; and
- Wellington Street West between Bathurst and Strachan: upgrade to bi-directional cycle track.

The 2021 Cycling Network Plan Update can be found here:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.IE26.9>

## **Next Steps**

The following public realm improvements are to be considered in the final implementation strategy:

- Provide missing sidewalks;
- Explore opportunities for widening pedestrian zones and improving boulevard conditions;
- Identify tree planting opportunities and where existing tree soil volume needs to be increased to support healthy trees;
- Identify opportunities for additional bike racks, seating area, planting/parkettes; art and street furniture such as garbage bins;
- Explore creating landscaped bump-outs/curb extensions to increase streetscape opportunities
- Coordinate lighting design and identify areas that need improved lighting;
- Significantly increase room for landscaping where possible. Due to existing narrow conditions, this is reliant on excess on-street parking and boulevard parking being modified and/or eliminated in order to augment public realm dimensions. This is subject to traffic and parking study and review;
- Identify public realm improvements that can be secured in future development such as midblock connections and streetscape improvements;
- Coordinate future streetscape works with planned utility works in the area; and

- Consider possible interim public realm improvements until such time as the Liberty New Street can be constructed. This could include improvements to the north-south street terminations and pedestrian connections west-east. The EA-approved alignment is being revised to address Metrolinx requirements.

## **Conclusion**

City Planning staff will continue to advance the Liberty Village Public Realm and Community Services and Facilities Study and will bring a Final Staff Report with an Implementation Strategy to the June 2022 Toronto and East York Community Council meeting.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

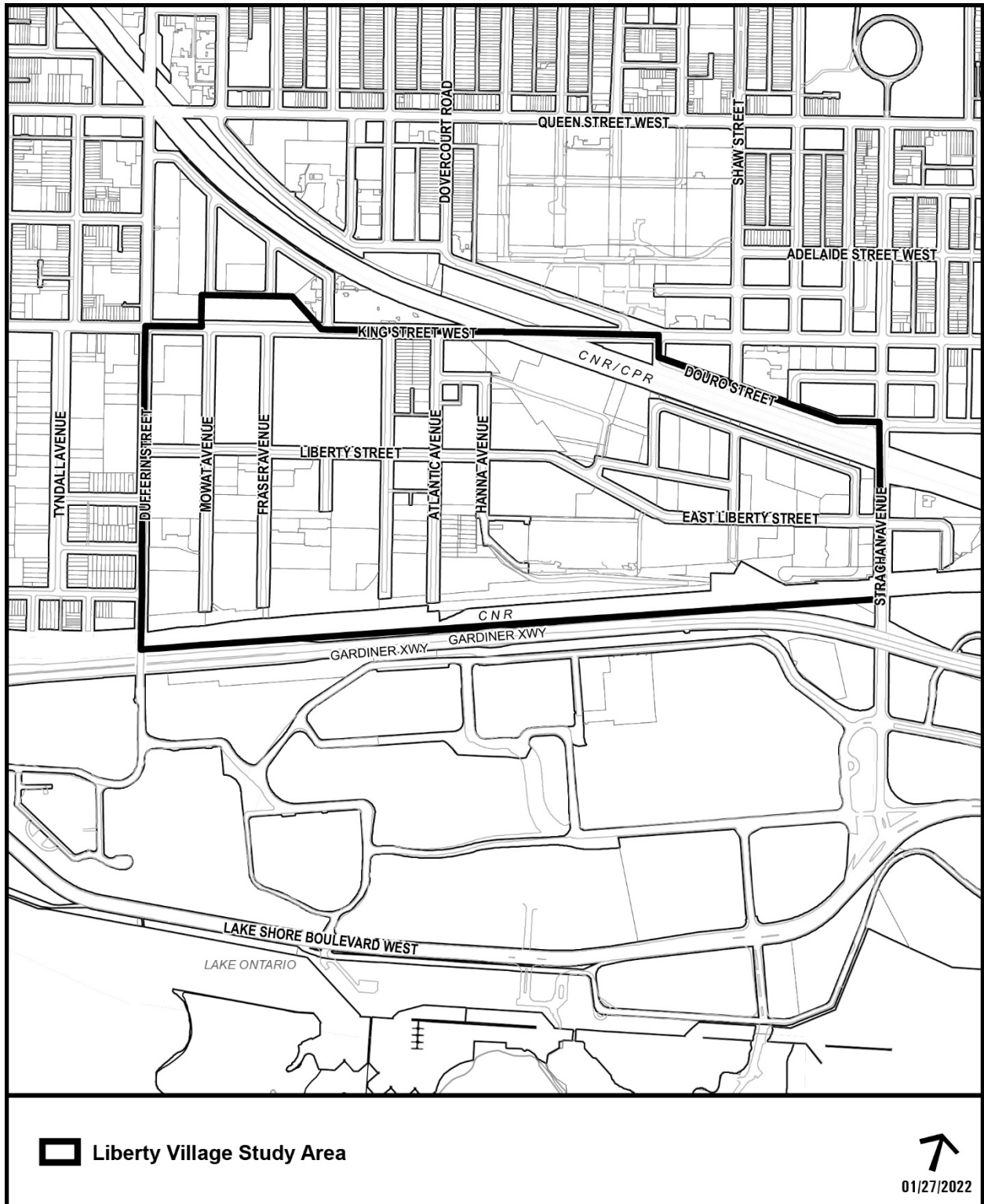
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Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Study Area  
Attachment 2: Summary of Consultation Feedback

Attachment 1: Study Area



Attachment 2: Summary of Consultation Feedback

## 1. Summary of comments received on Social Pinpoint Interactive Mapping Exercise:

### Community Services

- Lack of winter/indoor activities;
- Need for services in immediate area such as parks, library, schools, daycare, community recreation centre, museum and event space;
- Opportunity to repurpose various City-owned sites for other uses such as a park, community centre, daycare, school, cultural space, and library;
- Liberty Kids Daycare is a great partner and offers many services for the community; and
- Need for improved safety measures with Respite Centre.

### Parks and Open spaces

- Need for more green space;
- Inclusion of outdoor gyms in parks;
- Surface parking could be relocated underground to make space for parks;
- Lamport Stadium Park is underserved as a City Park, mostly private as stadium is closed off to the local community and surrounding spaces on the east and west side are underused and in need of improvement;
- Upgrades to Liberty Village Park are overdue with no areas for children over 5;
- Better maintenance and connections needed at Gateway Park;
- Need for improved dog waste containers in parks and local streets; and
- Need for better maintenance and plan to address flooding at Bill Johnston Dog Park.

### Public Realm

- Missing and narrow sidewalks with poor landscaping;
- Improved crosswalks and pavement markings needed;
- Need for more continuous connections and pedestrian crossings throughout area and to surrounding neighbourhoods including the Bentway and waterfront;
- Increased cycling infrastructure/safety within Liberty Village and along the boundaries of the study such as King Street West, Strachan Avenue and Dufferin Street;
- Need for better pedestrian access to the Exhibition GO Station to the east to better serve the residential population;
- Need for pedestrian path connecting King Liberty Bridge to Metro Grocery store;
- A number of laneways have obstructions;
- Inclusion of sidewalk or path connecting Western Battery Road to Strachan Avenue to the east, the proposed King-Liberty SmartTrack Station to the northwest, and Metro Grocery store to the west;
- Need for connections to Rita Cox Park and King Street West;
- Streets should have a more village character such as cobblestones, wide promenades and more tree plantings;

- Liberty and East Liberty Street should accommodate different modes of transportation;
- Overcrowded transit stops;
- Removal of on-street parking;
- Damage to streetscape and landscape areas due to pets;
- Western Battery Road should be a one-way street going westbound with traffic accessing East Liberty Street via Pirandello;
- Need for Liberty New Street to be built;
- Opportunity for pedestrian Sundays on main streets; and
- Need for temporary short-term on-street parking for food deliveries.

#### Valued Places and Events

- Historic value of Chimneys, Liberty Market Building and the Old Prison Chapel;
- Courtyards behind 54 Fraser Avenue;
- More opportunities for patios, cafes; and restaurants;
- Liberty Market building has more potential and can be transformed into a pedestrian destination; and
- Preservation of 35 Liberty, 65 Jefferson and 51 Jefferson buildings.

#### Ideas and Suggestions:

- King Liberty Bridge needs to be more accessible, safe and attractive, need for better lighting and mirrors in the bridge stairwell for safety;
- Need for consistent entry and patio experiences across businesses in Liberty Village;
- UP express stop at Exhibition Station;
- Removal of large billboards;
- Need for public washrooms; and
- Increased street lighting.

## **2. Summary of questions and comments received during the December 7 and 8, 2021 Community Consultation Meetings:**

#### Parks and Open Spaces

- Lamport Stadium should be maintained but updated and reimaged;
- Need park improvements for children at Liberty Village Park;
- An outdoor gym would be beneficial to the community; and
- Not enough green space in the area and support for a new park at 34 Hanna Avenue/TPA lot

#### Public Realm and Streetscaping

- Boulevards are not maintained;
- Sidewalks are too narrow to accommodate pedestrian traffic;
- Pedestrian safety issues along the intersections on East Liberty Street, specifically at the corners of Pirandello Street, Lynn Williams Street, Western Battery Road and Strachan Avenue;

- Need short-term solutions for the residents' immediate needs;
- The billboards to north of the railways tracks should be removed; and
- There are many dark spaces within the study area and a coordinated streetlighting strategy with improved lighting would increase safety and animate the area

#### Transportation

- Liberty New Street: the project webpage has been disabled; concern about ownership of the land for the proposed street, timeline of build out; need for connections between Strachan Avenue and Dufferin Street;
- Road and Cycling Infrastructure has not kept up with development in the area;
- Traffic issues within Liberty Village and around the intersection of Strachan Avenue and East Liberty Street, and between Fleet Street to King Street West;
- Liberty Village should be less car focused and more pedestrian/cyclist friendly;
- East Liberty Street should be redesigned to lower speeds;
- Western Battery Road should be one way to reduce congestion;
- Liberty Street should be closed to traffic on Sundays in the summertime; and
- Regulation on crosswalk markings should be loosened in order to incorporate artistic and creative designs.

#### Community Services and Facilities

- With Ontario Line and Transit Oriented Communities projects coming to the local area, public lands should be leveraged to deliver needed community facilities identified in the study