

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

Date: June 16, 2022

To: Toronto and East York Community Council

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

Ward: 10 - Spadina-Fort York

### **SUMMARY**

---

This report provides an update on the findings and emerging directions of the Liberty Village Public Realm and Community Services and Facilities Study, public realm objectives in a Draft Public Realm Strategy and the next steps to complete the study. The study focuses on opportunities for the city to expand and improve the parks and public realm and add more community services and facilities including leveraging city-owned properties to do so.

The report also seeks City Council's direction to use the Draft Public Realm Strategies in the review of development applications and to identify priorities for public realm improvements. The findings and emerging directions will continue to be refined as the study progresses with a final report targeted for the second quarter of 2023.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

---

The City Planning Division recommends that City Council:

1. Endorse in principle the Draft Public Realm Strategy, Attachment 3 to the report (June 16, 2022) from the Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District, and direct staff to use the Draft Public Realm Strategies in the review of development applications in the Liberty Village Study area as the study principles continue to be refined in consultation with the community;
2. City Council request the Chief Executive Officer, CreateTO, in consultation with the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management, General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation and the President, Toronto Parking Authority, to develop a business case and identify a capital project, including funding sources, in a future budget submission to repurpose the parking lot at 34 Hanna Ave for parkland and/or city building use once the results of the Liberty Village precinct parking study are known; and

3. Direct staff to report back to Toronto and East York Community Council with a final report on the Liberty Village Public Realm and Community Services and Facilities Study in Q2 2023.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

---

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**

---

On September 8, 2015, Toronto and East York Community Council (TEYCC) adopted motion TE10.124, requesting staff from Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Real Estate Services, City Planning, the Toronto Parking Authority, and any other necessary City staff in consultation with the Ward councillors, explore how the property at 34 Hanna Avenue may be best utilized to service the local community.

The motion can be found here:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.TE10.124>

On July 16, 2020, Toronto and East York Community Council 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.TE16.58>

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.TE26.29>

On February 16, 2022, Toronto and East York Community Council received an update report on the study including preliminary findings, community consultation feedback to date and short term implementation opportunities for public realm improvements. The decision history can be found here:

## **PLANNING STUDY UPDATE**

---

### **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 No.1.

### **Work Program Objectives**

Since the initial Status Update report to Toronto and East York Community Council in June 2021 and further Status Update report in February 2022, staff have completed a number of key objectives from the Study's Terms of Reference. A summary of the ongoing and completed work is included below.

### **Public Realm Strategy**

Liberty Village has become a unique live-work area in the city with distinct character, due to the retention of employment uses housed in retrofitted historical buildings to the west and the growth of the residential area to the east. This character should be strengthened and supported by improving the public realm so that it can better support the community.

Due to the history of Liberty Village as an industrial district, one of the distinct character-defining elements in the public realm is a series of finer grained routes and connections through the neighbourhood separate from the primary street network. These routes and mid-block connections are well utilized by the residents and visitors to Liberty Village and they contribute to the public realm qualities that make Liberty Village a landmark destination that attracts people to the area.

With an expected number of transit 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.

Through the study work and input from the staff have identified a number of public realm opportunities, guiding principles and short, mid, and long-term action plans that have informed a public realm strategy.

### **Public Realm Guiding Principles**

- **Increase and Improve Parks and Open Spaces:** To respond to the needs from the population growth in the area, it is imperative to increase and improve parks and open spaces to maximize their utility.
- **Increase Greening over Hardscape:** Community response overwhelmingly favored the addition of soft landscape over more hardscape throughout the area wherever possible. Due to the prevalence of hardscape in much of the area, it is imperative to increase softscape and permeable surfaces.
- **Maximize Tree Planting with conditions for mature healthy growth:** Due to the lack of tree canopy in the study area it is imperative that every development and City project increases the quantity and quality of tree planting, in particular, to meet City Council's 40% tree canopy goal.
- **Provide Pedestrian-Priority Design:** Emphasize pedestrian-priority design through widening sidewalks, provisions for missing sidewalks and safety improvements at key crossings. Consider measures such as reduced radii for vehicles at intersections and reducing crossing distances for pedestrians. Improve the routes for pedestrians to the GO station.
- **Improve and Increase Mid-block Connections:** Build upon the existing distinct character of the area by preserving existing connections, and improving and increasing mid-block connections and network.
- **Improve Liberty/East Liberty Street:** This street should be prioritized for public realm and pedestrian safety improvements. This spine also links parks in the area, including the future opportunity for new park at the City-owned 34 Hanna Avenue parking lot.
- **Improve north-south streets to create opportunities for widened sidewalks, street furniture and street trees/planting particularly south of Liberty Street** on Atlantic Avenue, Hanna Avenue, and Jefferson Avenue.

More details of the Draft Public Realm Strategy can be found in Attachment No. 2.

### **Streets as expanded Public Realm**

Staff have initiated a Liberty Village Streets Plan study to reinforce the role of streets as key elements of the public realm to serve all modes of mobility while addressing safety, site access, and accessibility. These streets also play a key role in place making, community interaction and greening of the village.

Items the study will consider include:

- how to create "sticky" spaces, a sense of identity and prioritize sustainable streets;
- resizing vehicle lanes, sidewalks, furnishing zones, planting areas, etc.;
- introduction of dedicated bikeways;
- delineation of loading zones/passenger pick-up and drop-off areas;
- changes to vehicle traffic regulations (e.g. introduction of one-way streets);
- changes to traffic controls (e.g. signals, stop signs, crossing protections);
- changes to on-street parking spaces; and
- boulevard improvements and permitted usage (e.g. parking, sidewalk cafes etc.).

Completion of the Liberty Village Streets Plan will integrate the local streets as fundamental components of the public realm, including enhanced opportunities for cycling and pedestrians, high quality streetscapes, street trees and street furniture.

In addition to the Streets Plan study, staff are initiating a precinct wide parking study to assess the demand and supply of public and private parking, including on-street parking, surface parking lots and underground parking structures to balance the need to provide parking to support local business and opportunities to expand public open space.

While the study work continues, staff have created a Draft Public Realm Strategy to be used in the review of development applications and to identify priorities for public realm improvements within the study area. The studies and fulsome analysis are required to complete the Public Realm Strategy. In order for public realm improvements to be completed, staff will bring forward a Final Public Realm Strategy document with the Final Report expected in Q2 2023.

### **Community Services and Facilities, Population and Demographic Profile**

In order to update the projections for needed Community Services and Facilities (CS and F), population and demographic analysis are being updated based on Census 2021 data. Projected need will consider existing worker and resident populations and future growth potential in the study area. Analysis of the CS and F demand includes a larger area bounded by Bloor Street to the north, Bathurst Street to the east, Lake Ontario to the south and Lansdowne Avenue/Jameson Avenue to the west.

See Attachment No.3 CS and F Study Area map.

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

The Community Services and Facilities (CS and F) Assessment to date has identified a number of preliminary findings through an evaluation of existing conditions.

- **Parks and Open Spaces**
  - The City of Toronto Parkland Strategy has identified a need for new parks as well as improvements to existing parks in the study area;

- Park improvements to Liberty Village Park are ongoing, with completion expected in Fall 2022;
  - Playground improvements at Lamport Stadium Park are planned for design in 2024 and construction in 2025;
  - Bill Johnston Park will be expanded through an outdoor play area affiliated with the future daycare at 19 Western Battery Road. The play area will be publically accessible outside of the daycare operating hours;
  - The City is assessing the feasibility of converting the existing Toronto Parking Authority surface lot at 34 Hanna Avenue to parkland; and
  - Smaller open spaces on public and private land throughout the study area could be redesigned to provide seating, soft landscaping/tree planting, and other amenities.
- **Child Care**
    - The CS and F Study has identified the need for an additional four child care centres to serve Liberty Village and the surrounding area.
- **Community Recreation, Human Services, Toronto Public Library, and Public Schools**
    - The need for an indoor pool in the Waterfront West, targeted for delivery in 2024-2028;
    - Masaryk-Cowan Community Centre located at 220 Cowan Avenue to the west of the study area, has been identified for revitalization or replacement targeted for 2024-2028, and is a designated free centre;
    - The relocation/expansion of the Parkdale Library Branch, and its potential redevelopment as part of the Parkdale Hub project located at Queen Street West and Cowan Avenue, which includes 4.24 acres of City-owned lands;
    - Monitor opportunities for community agency space that could relocate and/or co-locate to new developments to provide efficiencies in their provision of services;
    - Additional space has been identified as needed in the study area for an Ambulance Post for Toronto Paramedic Services to achieve better geographic distribution of facilities. The Ambulance Post is smaller than a typical station. The Ambulance Post requires 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> of space and can be co-located with other City uses or within a mixed use development;
    - The City is currently planning on constructing an 8,500 square feet community space at 1337 Queen Street West as part of the City of Toronto's Parkdale Hub project; and
    - The Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board have capacity at their schools in the area and continue to monitor residential development and population growth in this area to assess their future needs.

## **City-owned Assets in Liberty Village**

The City is a major landowner in Liberty Village. Staff are continuing to assess future municipal real estate needs, and develop opportunities to use City land to deliver much needed community infrastructure including expanded parks and public realm to serve the area land assets for enhanced municipal service delivery.

The City-owned Assets include:

- 34 Hanna Avenue (Toronto Parking Authority(TPA) Surface Car Park #224);
- 9 Hanna Avenue (Toronto Police Service Facility);
- 98 Atlantic Avenue (Museum Collections & Conservation Storage); and
- 1116 King Street West (King Street Transportation Services Yard);

Staff are looking at repurposing under-utilized assets, strategic acquisition or development partnerships to co-locate and collaborate to make the most efficient use of scarce resources that An early opportunity to leverage a city asset is the City-owned surface parking lot at 34 Hanna Avenue with potential to be repurposed as a park or other community use based on the parking study noted above.

## **Community Engagement/Consultation**

Since the launch of the study, through a variety of platforms. Following the initial virtual community consultation meeting held on December 7/8<sup>th</sup>, 2021, a working group was formed with 13 members of the public with representation from the Liberty Village BIA, Liberty Village Residents' Association, residential property owners and renters, commercial and business employees as well as commercial property owners and local area land developers. Staff from various divisions, CreateTO, and the local Councillor's office, are also involved in the working group.

Two virtual working group meetings have been held to date, focused on the proposed public realm improvements, profile of City Assets, and an overview of the Community Services and Facilities portion of the study.

A second Community Consultation meeting was held virtually on May 25, 2022. The consultation consisted of a presentation by staff showing the Draft Public Realm Strategy and provided an update on the Community Services and Facility component of the study. The remainder of the meeting consisted of a facilities discussion period. Approximately 50 members of the public attended the meeting.

The following questions and comments have most recently been received by the community:

- What are the future plans for community infrastructure such as public libraries, daycares or schools?;
- Safety concerns with vehicular traffic, pedestrian crossings in the area, as well as safety and maintenance concerns with regards to the King-Liberty Pedestrian Bridge;

- TTC study of bus routes in the area and concern with the parking and queuing of buses along Atlantic Avenue;
- Timing of boulevard improvements along the south side of East Liberty Street;
- Need to explore opportunities to relieve pressure on parks and open spaces from the dog population;
- Need for additional new playgrounds;
- Potential opportunity to repurpose private vacant properties for community uses;
- Timelines for the construction of the new transit lines and stations; and
- Status updates on the local development applications under review by the City.

### **Next Steps**

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 Toronto and East York Community Council meeting in Q2 2023.

### **CONTACT**

---

Aviva Pelt, Senior Planner  
Tel. No. 416-392-0877  
E-mail: [Aviva.Pelt@toronto.ca](mailto:Aviva.Pelt@toronto.ca)

### **SIGNATURE**

---

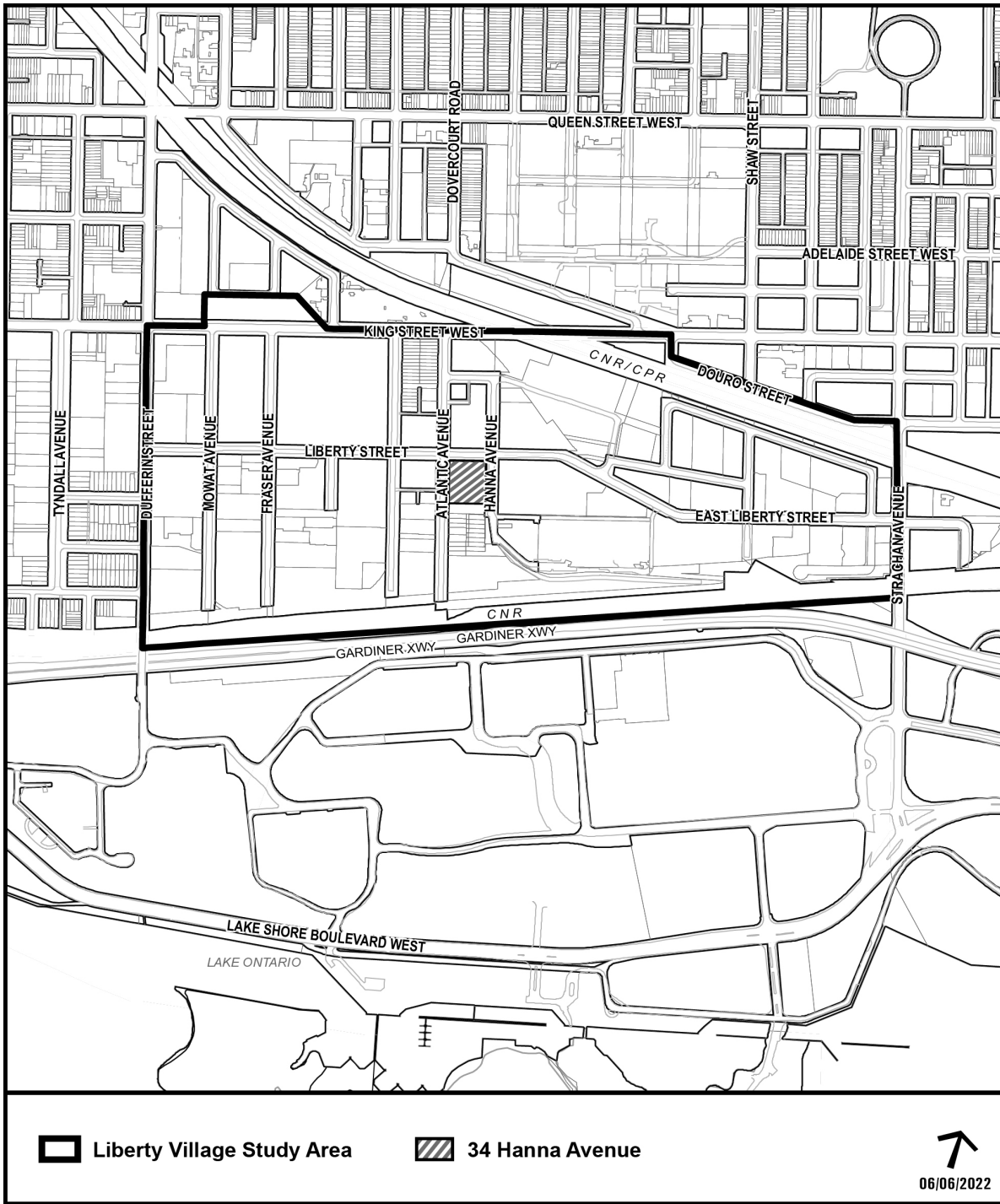
Lynda H. Macdonald, MCIP, RPP, OALA, FCSLA  
Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District

### **ATTACHMENTS**

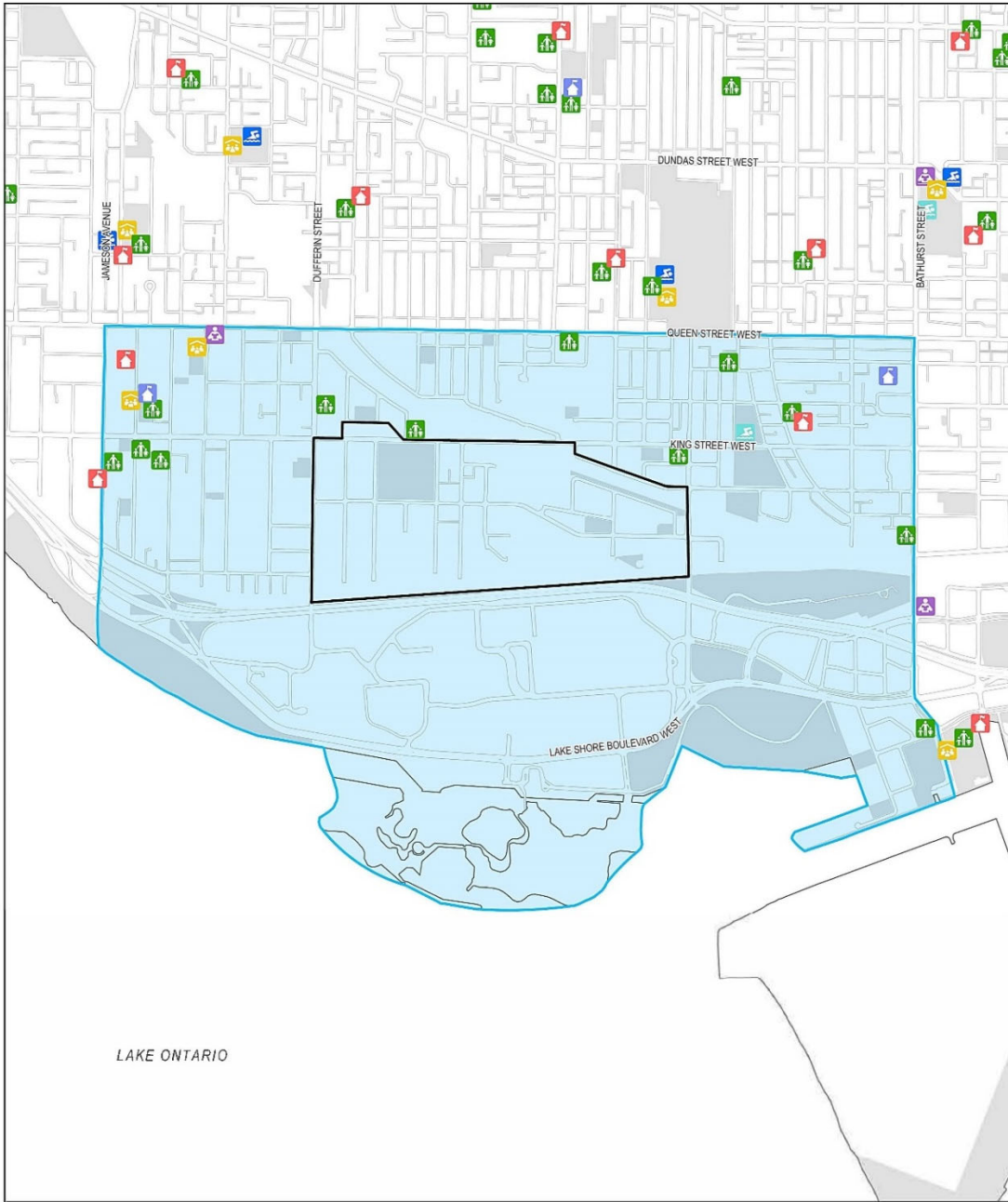
Attachment 1: Study Area Map  
Attachment 2: Community Services and Facilities Map  
Attachment 3: Draft Public Realm Strategies



Attachment 1: Study Area



Attachment 2: Community Services and Facilities Map



## Liberty Village Study Community Services & Facilities Study Area

### Legend

- Liberty Village Study Area
- CS&F Study Area
- 🏠 English Public
- 🏠 English Separate
- 👨‍👩‍👧 Childcare
- 🏠 Community Recreation Centre
- 🏊 Outdoor Pool
- 🏠 Indoor Pool
- 📖 Library

Not to Scale   
 Date Exported: 06/13/2022

### Attachment 3: Draft Public Realm Strategy

The Draft Public Realm Strategy document will be made available prior to the June 29/30<sup>th</sup> 2022 Toronto and East York Council meeting.