

City Planning

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May 20, 2025

Mr. John Elvidge, City Clerk
City Clerk's Office
100 Queen Street West
12th Floor, West Tower
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Mr. Elvidge,

**RE: Administrative Inquiry Regarding Requesting a Fair Consultation Process
Regarding the North York at the Centre Secondary Plan**

The City Clerk received an Administrative Inquiry (May 9, 2025) from Councillor Cheng regarding the consultation process for North York at the Centre Secondary Plan. This letter provides a response to this inquiry. It has been developed in collaboration with the Development Review Division.

Response**'Emerging Preferred Option'****1. Who selected the *Emerging Preferred Option* for North York at the Centre Secondary Plan presented to residents for consultation? Was the *Emerging Preferred Option* preferred by the consultant–WSP, City staff or residents?**

The Emerging Preferred Option was selected for consultation by staff from City Planning and Development Review (divisional co-leads on the project), based on analysis undertaken by the consulting team comprised of WSP and its planning sub-consultant Perkins+Will.

This analysis included the following key steps:

- A Visioning Framework was developed through engagement with the local community and analysis completed in Phase 1 of the project, which is documented in a detailed [Background Report](#) and [Engagement Summary](#).
 - The Visioning Framework includes five 'principles': Grow a Complete Centre, Reinforce the Centre as a Vibrant Hub for Work, Arts and Culture, Green the Centre, Build Connectivity, and Design Places for People.

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- Under each 'principle' there are a set of 'objectives' and associated 'measures' that together make up an 'evaluation framework'.
 - Three alternative growth scenarios were developed, including Business As Usual (status quo), Alternative 1 (moderate boundary expansion and growth) and Alternative 2 (broader boundary expansion and higher levels of growth).
 - The measures under each principle and objective were used to evaluate and score the Business As Usual, Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 options and identify which parts of each option best align with the vision and should be carried forward in an Emerging Preferred Option. The Emerging Preferred Option includes the proposed boundary from Alternative 2 but with growth levels comparable to Alternative 1.
 - The options and evaluation scoring were identified on the [public presentation panels](#) shared with the community in March 2025.
 - The public's feedback on the Emerging Preferred Option will be considered by the consulting team and staff before recommending a Preferred Option to Planning and Housing Committee / City Council in Fall 2025.

2. If the Emerging Preferred Option was identified as the preference of residents, on the basis of what data was this conclusion drawn?

The Emerging Preferred Option was not identified as the preference of residents; rather, it was presented by staff for consultation with the local community.

See also response to Q1.

3. Were residents given the opportunity to choose an Emerging Preferred Option from among multiple options?

During phase 2 community engagement, local residents, businesses and stakeholder groups were given the opportunity to comment on the Emerging Preferred Option and on the evaluation framework used to arrive at staff's recommendation. This feedback from community members will provide valuable input that is considered alongside other planning analysis and policy requirements, e.g., the City's Official Plan, provincial policies and regulations.

Specifically, it is important to note that the review of the Secondary Plan is in part mandated by the Province under the *Planning Act*. Official plans are to be consistent with provincial policies such as the Provincial Planning Statement, which requires minimum densities to be planned in proximity to transit stations.

4. What method was used to capture this option as the preference over other options?

An evaluation framework with qualitative and quantitative criteria was developed to evaluate the options and identify what elements perform well and should be carried forward in the Emerging Preferred Option. The evaluation framework included criteria flowing from each of the five principles identified in the Visioning Framework. The scoring that resulted from that evaluation was provided in the [presentation panels](#) shared with the community for comment in March 2025.

5. How was the Advisory Committee engaged in formulating the EPO? What is the current buy-in of this advisory committee?

Alongside members of the public, the Local Advisory Committee (LAC) helped to develop and refine the Visioning Framework for North York Centre, including the guiding principles that were used to develop criteria and evaluate options.

Feedback on the Emerging Preferred Option from organizations represented on the LAC is documented in the Community Engagement Toolkit responses that were submitted by LAC members in March/April 2025 (seven submissions in total). The Toolkit responses include a diversity of opinions, priorities, considerations and other feedback supporting, opposing and expanding on various aspects of the Emerging Preferred Option. The Toolkit responses will be reflected in the Phase 2 Engagement Summary, expected to be released in June 2025.

Additional Information about the LAC's role:

The Local Advisory Committee's role is to review and provide feedback on project materials before they are presented to the broader public. This helps the project team develop project materials that are clear and responsive to the community's aspirations and priorities. The Committee members also act as community liaisons to help raise awareness of the project among the various communities they represent.

Survey

1. How many survey responses were received?

1,086 responses were received to the online survey. Of those survey responses, 31 were completed in a language other than English. The online survey was posted on March 24, 2025, originally scheduled to close on April 6th, and extended to May 4th in response to a request from Councillor Cheng.

2. What is an adequate number of survey results to demonstrate a fulsome consultation with Ward 18 constituents who will experience a doubling of their population over the next 30 years?

There is no target number of survey responses. The survey is one tool used to engage and collect feedback from the community. The other engagement methods used included public meetings hosted by staff and community workshops hosted by LAC members. Feedback was also received through comment forms and emails to the project team (nycentre@toronto.ca). Staff have subsequently also attended three Councillor-organized Town Hall meetings in the study area throughout April and May 2025.

3. Users found the survey too long, overly technical, and not user-friendly, especially for the average citizen. Was the survey designed following established best practices?

Yes. An effort was made to use plain language and provide the right level of information needed for respondents to provide informed feedback. Ahead of its release, the survey questions were reviewed with the Local Advisory Committee in February 2025 (as part of the Community Engagement Toolkit) and revised in response to their feedback on clarity and completeness.

The project email nycentre@toronto.ca was provided as part of the survey for residents to provide further feedback and we received one email that the survey was not user-friendly.

4. Did the survey allow users to revise or revisit their responses while completing it?

Yes. Once the end of the survey is reached, Social Pinpoint has a feature that automatically prompts the participant to review their responses before submitting.

5. Many users felt they lacked the necessary information to provide meaningful input. Did the survey offer clear explanations and accessible resources in plain language to help users respond effectively?

Yes, that was the intent. See response to Q3. Survey respondents were also directed to the project web page for more information.

The project email nycentre@toronto.ca was provided as part of the survey for residents to provide further feedback, but we have not received any correspondence raising the concerns identified here. One email was received from a resident who found it challenging to digest the amount of information presented at the public meetings. This resident suggested that staff provide a better overview of the existing challenges and utilize 3D modeling at future community meetings to enhance community understanding of any proposed changes.

6. Many users felt insufficiently informed to provide meaningful input. Did the survey include sufficient explanations, resources in a simple language to support users to answer adequately?

Yes, that was the intent. See response to Q3. Survey respondents were also directed to the project web page for more information.

The project email nycentre@toronto.ca was provided as part of the survey for residents to provide further feedback, but we have not received any correspondence raising the concerns identified here.

7. Was there any advance notice provided about the estimated time required to complete the survey, given that it reportedly took up to two hours and may have contributed to low completion rates?

1,086 responses were received and this is considered a good response rate for City surveys. For comparison, a recent city-wide survey on Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods (EHON) Neighbourhood Retail received 1,100 responses.

The estimated time to complete the survey was 20-30 minutes and can vary from person to person. The survey was grouped by topic, and it was not mandatory for respondents to complete every section/all questions to be able to submit the survey. The estimated time to complete the survey was not communicated on Social Pinpoint as staff recognized the completion times could vary greatly.

8. Was it abundantly clear to residents how they could access multilingual versions of the survey?

The ability to translate the survey into other languages was consistent with other City of Toronto webpages. The option is clearly provided to participants in the top right-hand corner of the landing page. Staff felt this consistency would be beneficial, with all content on the page translated into the selected language, rather than just the survey itself.

A telephone number was provided to call if participants were having any difficulties completing the survey or required any type of support. That number received two phone calls. The first was to confirm when the survey closed and the second revealed an issue that was related to an unstable internet connection.

In-Person Consultation Meetings

1. Why was the NYCSP in-person consultation conducted in a drop-in format rather than a town hall format where all community members would have the opportunity to hear other community members' questions and staff answers in order to form a deeper and reasoned opinion on the desirability of the new NYCSP for their neighbourhood?

Over the course of the study, staff have used a number of different consultation methods to garner feedback from the public. The three community meetings held in March 2025 used a drop-in format with information panels at topic-based stations where project team members were available to answer questions and record input received. A minimum of ten project team members (staff and consultants) were available at each meeting to answer the public's questions in a 1:1 or small group format at the topic-based stations. The meeting also included a pre-recorded, informational video.

The format of the in-person consultation meetings was determined after consultation with the local ward councillor. The drop-in format is preferred because it allows more people to have their questions asked and answered than a traditional town hall format. The 1:1 and small group format is also more accessible for people who are not comfortable speaking in front of a large group. It can lead to more meaningful discussions with the project team and among members of the public inquiring and listening at the topic-based stations.

Over 350 people attended the three meetings and the project team received positive feedback about the meeting format from several participants during the events, as well as one complaint in-person and one complaint by phone requesting a Q&A format. At Councillor Cheng's request, staff have subsequently attended three Councillor-organized Town Hall meetings in the study area throughout April and May 2025 to answer questions about the project and receive further input.

2. What communication strategies were implemented between Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the consultations to keep residents informed, increase their understanding of the plan, and prepare them for Phase 2?

Throughout Phase 1 and 2, the project team hosted or attended 10 pop-up events in the community to share information about the project and raise awareness of engagement opportunities. 1,250 postcards have been distributed at community pop-ups, encouraging people to sign-up for e-updates, visit the website to learn of engagement opportunities and get further involved in the project. Since the project web page (toronto.ca/nycentre) was published in July 2023 there have been 5,743 users who have visited the page and 17,557 views. There was a notable increase from approximately 750 views in February 2025 up to a peak of 3,000 in March 2025 during the public meeting series and release of project materials.

Project updates, such as meeting notices and the release of reports, are shared on the project web page and through City Planning's social media accounts and e-updates to the project listserv which currently has 387 registrants. Three e-updates were distributed to provide notice and reminders of the public meetings and online survey. Social media included two hard posts and three stories on Instagram, with 1,987 views of the public meeting post, 845 views of the online survey post, and 236 to 469 views for three related stories.

Printed meeting notices were also mailed to 41,397 households and businesses in Phase 1 and 48,094 households and businesses in Phase 2. The increase in notices from Phase 1 to Phase 2 reflects the refined study area boundary for the Emerging Preferred Option. Meeting notices were also physically posted in community gathering spaces like the North York Central Library.

**3. What is the policy and process for receiving feedback at in-person meetings?
How are the insights and learnings from conversations with constituents captured beyond sticky notes to inform part of the analysis?**

Feedback received in-person at public meetings is documented through the sticky notes posted by project team members and public participants. Project team members are instructed to record public feedback on sticky notes if the member of the public does not choose to do so themselves. In addition to sticky notes, comment forms were made available for members of the public to complete and submit to the project team. Following the public meetings, all comment forms are scanned and sticky notes are photographed and transcribed, then reviewed, analysed and documented in an Engagement Summary. The Phase 2 Engagement Summary is expected to be published in June 2025.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "J. Thorne".

Jason Thorne, MCIP, RPP
Chief Planner and Executive Director
City Planning