

Geary Avenue Mobility and Public Realm Strategy Update

Date: May 16, 2025

To: Toronto and East York Community Council

From: Director, Planning, Design and Management, Transportation Services

Wards: Ward 9, Davenport

SUMMARY

This staff report is about a matter that Community Council has delegated authority from City Council to make a final decision.

The Geary Works Planning Study, concluded in 2021, was a comprehensive interdivisional study and community vision for Geary Avenue, and included a Mobility and Public Realm Strategy and provided ten (10) strategic directions for the right-of-way and streetscape on Geary Avenue.

This report contains a status update and outline of the pathway for implementation of all ten strategic directions, in response to a request from Toronto and East York Community Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Director, Planning, Design and Management, Transportation Services recommends that:

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

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications for this budget year resulting from the recommendations included in this report.

DECISION HISTORY

On December 4, 2024 Toronto and East York Community Council directed staff to develop a comprehensive implementation plan of the Geary Avenue Mobility and Public Realm Strategy as outlined in the Geary Avenue Works Planning Study; including updates on the ten strategic directions in the Geary Avenue Mobility and Public Realm Strategy as part of the implementation plan; and to report back on an implementation plan of the Geary Avenue Mobility and Public Realm Strategy by April 3, 2025.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.TE18.43>

On October 18, 2023 Toronto and East York Community Council requested a progress report on the Geary Avenue Mobility and Public Realm Strategy.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.TE8.37>

On February 16, 2022 Toronto and East York Community Council authorize an all-way compulsory stop control to take effect following the completion of construction of the Geary Avenue extension of the Green Line at the following locations: the intersection of Geary Avenue and Salem Avenue North; intersection of Geary Avenue and Westmoreland Avenue North; intersection of Geary Avenue and Delaware Avenue North; and intersection of Geary Avenue and Somerset Avenue

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2022.TE31.58>

On July 14, 2021 City Council adopted the Geary Works Planning Study and City-Initiated Official Plan Amendment and Zoning Amendment - Final Report, directing several next steps towards its implementation.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.PH24.1>

On June 29, 2020, City Council approved a work plan for the Growth Plan Conformity and Municipal Comprehensive Review of the Toronto Official Plan, with respect to designated Employment Areas, including most of the properties on Geary Avenue.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2020.PH14.4>

On April 30, 2019, Planning and Housing Committee directed staff to initiate a comprehensive study of the Geary Avenue corridor.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2019.PH5.8>

COMMENTS

The Geary Works Planning Study identified ten strategic directions in the Mobility and Public Realm Strategy:

1. Develop parking management plan
2. Consider pay-and-display parking
3. Introduce traffic calming measures
4. Improve sidewalk conditions
5. Improve intersection conditions
6. Facilitate sidewalk cafes

7. Provide bicycle-supportive infrastructure
8. Facilitate new and improved street art, planting and surface treatments
9. Improve underpass experience
10. Expand boulevard open spaces

This report contains a status update on all ten strategic directions.

Street Characteristics in Study Area

Geary Avenue is a 1.2-kilometre-long street that runs east-west between Ossington Avenue and a dead-end west of Lightbourn Avenue. Geary Avenue between Dufferin Street and Dovercourt Road is characterized by commercial activity and is classified as a collector road. The remaining sections to the east and west include a higher concentration of residential activity and are classified as local roads.

Sidewalks are available on both sides of Geary Avenue between Ossington Avenue and Dufferin Avenue, and on the north side of the road from Dufferin Street to where Geary Avenue ends west of Lightbourn Avenue. Sidewalks range in width from 1.0 to 2.1 metres. Sidewalks that fall below the current minimum width of 1.5 metres set by the Provincial Access for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) will be remediated when opportunities arise through road reconstruction or property redevelopment, expanding to the City's target minimum sidewalk width of 2.1 metres, wherever feasible.

People cycling on Geary Avenue ride in mixed traffic, commonly accessing Geary Avenue using the Bartlett Avenue cycling connection. Bike parking is available on curbside post-and-rings and in a bike corral located adjacent to car parking along the Geary Avenue frontage of Bartlett Parkette. A Bike Share Toronto station is also located in the Bartlett Parkette.

Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) service is not routed along Geary Avenue; there are bus routes on both intersecting arterial streets: Dufferin Street and Ossington Avenue.

The pavement width ranges from 9.0 to 10.0 metres. Two-way traffic and dedicated curbside parking can be accommodated, according to the City's most recent lane width guidelines. Permit parking is available for overnight parking; daytime parking is free for one hour.

Community Context

The Geary Works Planning Study was initiated primarily to reconsider land use regulation along the corridor in light of the changing nature of retail "from a previous industrial and warehouse space, to one that is now a burgeoning hub for artist workshops, cultural organizations, and light industrial and small commercial businesses". The goal of the study was to mitigate the impacts on small businesses of changes to "land price, development and growth pressures", as stated in the original direction for staff the study ([2019.PH5.8](#)).

Throughout the study, and at the time of its conclusion in 2021, City staff were working with small businesses in the area and the local Councillor at the time to thoroughly

consider the option of forming a [Business Improvement Area \(BIA\)](#). It was anticipated that the BIA could serve a leadership role in advancing some of the strategic directions in the Mobility and Public Realm Strategy. At this time, the businesses of Geary Avenue remain informally networked without adopting the governance model of a BIA.

Strategic Directions 1 and 2: Develop Parking Management Plan and Consider Pay-and-Display Parking

Free, one-hour, daytime parking and permitted overnight parking are offered on Geary Avenue. Parking is located on the south side of the roadway from Ossington Avenue to east of Salem Avenue North, on the north side of the roadway from west of Salem Avenue North to Dufferin Street, and on the south side of the roadway from Dufferin Street to where Geary Avenue ends west of Lightbourn Avenue. Local road users report that it is very common to see short-term parking in places where parking is not permitted.

Geary Avenue has a high concentration of boulevard parking permits along the frontages of buildings where the right-of-way extends 3.0 to 6.0 metres from the back of the sidewalk. The sidewalk on the south side of Geary Avenue between Bartlett Avenue and Dufferin Street is built with a rolled curb to accommodate the high concentration of boulevard parking. The most common uses of these boulevard spaces are commercial boulevard parking and/or shipping and receiving activities. Some businesses have converted these spaces to patios or seating areas.

An interest group survey was conducted in Spring 2022 to better understand existing curbside and boulevard uses and clarify the unmet needs. The response rate of the survey was not sufficient to form a decisive plan for change to parking regulation along the route. Staff from Transportation Services participated in the preliminary meetings between the local businesses and the City's BIA Office, in anticipation that the BIA would work with staff to develop a Parking and Curbside Management Plan to address competing demands for curbside space, including evaluating the suitability of pay-and-display parking along Geary Avenue. A consensus has not yet been reached in favour of creating a BIA nor in favour of making significant changes to parking regulation.

Strategic Direction 3 and 5: Introduce Traffic Calming Interventions and Improve Intersection Conditions

In summer/fall of 2025, the [Geary Avenue Park Expansion project](#) will add a new neighbourhood public space and community destination to the Geary Avenue corridor, growing the existing park and linking it to the Bartlett Parkette at Salem Avenue.

The park construction will include park access improvements as follows:

- *At the intersection of Salem Avenue North and Geary Avenue* - connection between Bartlett Parkette and the new Geary Avenue Park Expansion will be enhanced by adding a new all-way compulsory stop control, modifying curbs to slow traffic and reduce crossing distance, and adding a raised crosswalk to improve visibility of pedestrians to drivers.

- *At the intersection of Westmoreland Avenue North and Geary Avenue* - access to the park will be enhanced by adding a new all-way compulsory stop control, and modifying curbs to slow traffic and reduce crossing distance.
- *At the intersection of Delaware Avenue North and Geary Avenue* - access to the park will be enhanced by adding a new all-way compulsory stop control, and modifying curbs to slow traffic and reduce crossing distance.
- *At the intersection of Somerset Avenue North and Geary Avenue* - access to the park will be enhanced by adding a new all-way compulsory stop control, and modifying curbs to slow traffic and reduce crossing distance.

In all cases, curbs will be updated with curb cuts and tactile walking surface indicators where not already present, in compliance with the AODA.

It is anticipated that the enhanced crossings and increased frequency of traffic controls will encourage more attentive driving and compliance with the speed limit of 40 km/hr.

Since the time of the Geary Works Planning Study, full (4-way) signal control has been installed at the intersection of Dufferin Avenue and Geary Avenue, making vehicular turning movements more predictable and enhancing the safety of pedestrians crossing between the segments of Geary Avenue on either side of Dufferin Street.

It should be noted that traffic calming in the form of speed humps were considered as a speed management tool during the Geary Works Study and are not recommended due to high truck volumes. Even at slow speeds, trucks typically cause excessively loud noise when mounting a speed hump, and the weight off the vehicles can accelerate wear-and-tear of the speed hump, posing maintenance challenges.

Strategic Direction 4: Improve Sidewalk Conditions

Geary Avenue is not programmed for major state-of-good-repair work within the City's foreseeable capital planning horizon. However, sidewalk widening is being pursued through property redevelopment, whenever opportunity arises.

For example, in summer/fall 2025, the [Geary Avenue Park Expansion project](#) will widen the sidewalk along the park frontage to the City target of 2.1 metres wherever possible without requiring a mature tree to be cut down. The project team is also working to clear obstructions to the pedestrian clearway along the park frontage, such as relocating utility guywires.

The possibility of revoking boulevard parking permits to enable the rolled curb on the south side of Geary Avenue between Bartlett Avenue and Dufferin Street to be reconstructed as a consistently level sidewalk was raised during preliminary discussions with the businesses contemplating formation of a BIA. Feedback indicated that boulevard permits are essential to several businesses; there was no clear consensus that the block could be rebuilt without impacts to those businesses.

Strategic Direction 6: Facilitate Sidewalk Cafes

Since the time of the Geary Works Planning Study, the [CaféTO - Outdoor Dining Program](#) is now a permanent program in Toronto, facilitating sidewalk cafés and curb lane cafés. Businesses are encouraged to review eligibility criteria and consider applying if it meets their needs.

Strategic Direction 7: Provide Bicycle-Supportive Infrastructure

Since the time of the Geary Works Planning Study, the [Bartlett-Havelock-Gladstone Cycling Connection](#) project has concluded, making Bartlett Avenue a popular access point to Geary Avenue for those travelling by bicycle.

A high-capacity bike corral has been installed at the corner of Bartlett Avenue and Geary Avenue to accommodate bicycle parking, in addition to post-and-ring parking installed at various locations along the street.

A Bike Share Toronto station has been located in Bartlett Parkette since 2020.

Strategic Direction 8, 9 and 10: Facilitate New and Improved Street Art, Planting and Surface Treatments and Improve Underpass Experience and Expand Boulevard Open Spaces

The City is investing in the public realm of Geary Avenue through the [Geary Avenue Park Expansion project](#); construction will begin in summer 2025. The new park will offer new and improved features such as: accessible pathways; seating; lighting; picnic tables; open lawn areas for flexible use; meadow planting; off-leash area; and a bottle filler & pet drinking fountain. In addition, the project is delivering park access improvements outlined above (see: Strategic Direction 3 and 5) and sidewalk widening wherever possible without requiring a mature tree to be cut down.

The Geary Avenue Mobility and Public Realm Strategy outlined some of the public realm enhancements that are typically achieved in partnership between the City and a BIA, should the local businesses formally organize as a BIA. Some of the possibilities discussed were:

- Work with the City's [Streetscape Improvement Program](#) to make minor improvements (e.g. banners, benches, decorative bike racks, decorative street signs, hanging baskets, planters, poles sleeves) or major improvements (e.g. art installations, banner poles, electrical projects such as pedestrian lighting, gateway markers or signage, median enhancements, sidewalk improvements, tree pits and tree grates).
- Work with the City's [Outside the Box program](#), [Underpass program](#), and/or [Outdoor Mural & Street Art program](#) to enhance electrical boxes, gateway underpasses and/or blank building faces with public art.

- Coordinate with one another to make collective use of the [CaféTO - Outdoor Dining program](#).
- Continue to coordinate with one another to make collective use of the [Street Event permit program](#) to continue or enhance the Geary Art Crawl or like-minded events.
- Work together to come to a mutual understanding about what curbside use changes are acceptable (i.e. changes to parking permissions including introduction of paid parking).
- Engage in site plan process for any redevelopment projects in the area to advocate for street interfaces that harmonize with the tone of the commercial area (i.e. at the time of the Study, the site located at the southwest corner of Dufferin Street and Geary Avenue was anticipated to be subject to redevelopment within two to five years).

Conclusion

Geary Avenue is renowned for the innovative and independent character of the businesses that operate along its western segment. In summer/fall 2025, the City will enhance the public realm along its eastern segment including new and improved park spaces and pedestrian crossing enhancements at four intersections including new all-way stop controls.

This year's improvements are complemented by the street improvements that have been made since the Geary Works Planning Study was completed in 2021, most notably the installation of full signal control at the intersection of Dufferin Avenue and Geary Avenue and the completion of the Bartlett-Havelock-Gladstone cycling connection.

Transportation Services is prepared to continue working with the commercial community, residential community and the local Councillor to make changes to parking permissions, if desired.

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SIGNATURE

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