



April 13, 2026

Chair Ausma Malik  
Exhibition Place Board of Governors  
100 Princes' Boulevard  
Toronto, Ontario M6K 3C3

Re: EP22.10 - Exhibition Place Vision Plan and Concept Scenario

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Exhibition Place Vision Plan and Concept Scenario. The effort to bring coherence to a site long experienced as *fragmented* is both timely and welcome.

From a community perspective, there is much to support in the overall direction. The emphasis on improved connectivity, particularly the proposed north–south pedestrian corridor and east–west multi-use linkages, has the potential to reconnect surrounding neighbourhoods to the waterfront and to each other. These moves begin to address what has historically been a barrier condition for nearby communities.

At the same time, we would offer a few considerations to help ensure that this vision translates into a place that serves both the city and its local communities.

### **1. From destination to everyday place**

The plan positions Exhibition Place as a festival destination and gathering place, with capacity for large-scale events.

While this role is important, care should be taken to ensure that the site does not become overly oriented toward major events at the expense of everyday use.

For nearby residents, the success of this plan will be measured less by peak events and more by how the site functions on an ordinary day:

- Is it comfortable, accessible, and welcoming?
- Does it support informal use, local activity, and community presence?
- Are there spaces that feel genuinely public, not simply event-ready?

A balance between festival use and neighbourhood presence will be critical.

### **2. Community access and affordability**

The proposed Festival Plaza is framed as expanding access to high-quality event space.

It would be helpful to more clearly articulate how community groups, particularly local, grassroots, and equity-deserving organizations, will be able to access and use these spaces.

Without clear policies around affordability, booking, and prioritization, there is a risk that these spaces primarily serve large institutional or commercial events rather than a broad public.

### **3. Phasing and early implementation**

City Planning staff have recommended advancing the pedestrian connections as a priority and treating the work as phased projects.

This approach makes sense.

From a community standpoint, early implementation of the north–south and east–west connections could deliver immediate public benefit and begin to build trust in the process. These first moves can demonstrate that the plan is not only visionary, but also responsive.

### **4. Maintaining the balance of the three zones**

The earlier Master Plan established a clear organizing framework for the site through three distinct zones: Relax, Entertain, and Exhibit, each with its own role and character.

As the Vision Plan advances, it will be important to maintain that clarity. There is a risk that the current emphasis on the central Festival Plaza and related programming could begin to blur these distinctions, with the Entertain function expanding into areas intended for more passive or heritage-focused use.

Particular care should be taken with the Relax Zone at the west end of the site. This area carries a distinct responsibility. It is where parkland, heritage landscapes, and the surrounding neighbourhoods meet, and it remains the most sensitive portion of the 192-acre grounds.

Changes in this area, including new connections such as the Dufferin Gates bridge over the rail corridor and the Gardiner, will have a direct impact on landscape, access, and the experience of nearby residents. These interventions should be approached with care to ensure that the qualities that define this zone are not diminished over time.

Maintaining a clear identity for each zone will be important to preserving both the spatial balance of the site and its relationship to nearby communities.

### **5. Heritage and memory**

The adaptive reuse of the Better Living Centre, including retention of portions of the structure, is a positive step.

Beyond physical retention, there is an opportunity to deepen how the site's layered histories are interpreted and made visible.

Exhibition Place carries not only architectural heritage, but also social and cultural memory. Community involvement in how these stories are told would strengthen continuity and belonging.

## **6. Ongoing engagement**

The report commits to future consultation and engagement.

The success of this plan will depend on how early, how often, and how meaningfully communities are involved.

Engagement should not be limited to feedback on near-final designs, but should be embedded at formative stages, with clear pathways for input to influence outcomes.

## **7. Public investment and shared stewardship**

Exhibition Place is a public asset, sustained in large part through City investment and State of Good Repair funding.

Residents, through their taxes, are therefore significant stakeholders in the long-term stewardship of the site. As planning and financing options are advanced, it will be important to ensure that public value remains central to decision-making.

This includes protecting open space, ensuring equitable access, and reinforcing the role of Exhibition Place as a civic asset that serves the broader public.

Overall, the Vision Plan sets out an ambitious and promising framework. With careful attention to everyday use, equitable access, and genuine community partnership, Exhibition Place can evolve not only as a major destination, but as a lived, shared civic space.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. We would welcome the opportunity to stay engaged as this work moves forward.

Sincerely,

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Members of the WSCC include: the Grange Community Association, the Harbord Village Residents' Association, the Garment District Neighbourhood Association, the Trinity Bellwoods Community Association, the Ossington Community Association, the Lakeview Avenue Neighbourhood Association, Niagara Neighbourhood Now, the Liberty Village Residents' Association, Beaconsfield Village Residents' Association, Active 18, the Parkdale Residents Association, the Roncesvalles–Macdonell Residents Association, and the Bloordale Community Improvement Association.