

## **John Street Corridor Improvements - Status Update**

Date: December 18, 2025

To: Toronto and East York Community Council

From: Acting Deputy General Manager, Transportation Services

Wards: Ward 10 - Spadina-Fort York

### **SUMMARY**

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As directed by Toronto and East York Community Council at their meeting on November 27, 2025, this report summarizes the background, current status, key challenges, planned communications approach, anticipated construction timelines, phasing, and next steps for the John Street Corridor Improvements project.

A key "Cultural Corridor" in the downtown, John Street runs between Stephanie Street (north of Queen Street West) and Front Street West and is an important route of civic and cultural importance for the City of Toronto. Following a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (EA) study which developed and evaluated several different design options, City Council endorsed a Preferred Design for the John Street corridor in 2012.

The EA Preferred Design recommended several significant street improvements, including: wider sidewalks; a narrower roadway; new street tree plantings; new custom street furniture integrated with public art elements; a distinctive paving treatment from building face to building face; combined roadway, pedestrian, and accent streetlighting; and a "flexible boulevard" along the east side of the street to accommodate loading and deliveries, while maintaining an expanded sidewalk.

Enabling infrastructure work to facilitate the John Street Corridor Improvements project has begun - from 2018 to 2024, significant utility construction work was undertaken to bury the overhead hydro infrastructure, relocate a major gas main, and construct a shared utility trench.

The full reconstruction of John Street is anticipated to start in 2028 and be completed in 2031. Current construction cost estimates are significantly higher than previous construction cost estimates and exceed the City's capital budget currently allocated to the project by approximately \$16 million. City staff are exploring opportunities to reduce construction costs as well as opportunities to identify additional funding sources to bridge the gap in order to ensure the project can advance to construction in coordination with other area construction projects.

In Spring 2026, Transportation Services will be implementing targeted interim repair improvements at the King Street West and John Street intersection, due to the condition of the roadway and boulevard. This intersection is a key location with expected high pedestrian and vehicle traffic volumes during FIFA World Cup 26™ and Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) events planned to occur later in 2026.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Acting Deputy General Manager, Transportation Services, recommends that:

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

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There are no financial implications for this budget year resulting from the recommendations included in this report. Based on the latest construction cost estimate from early 2025, it's estimated to cost approximately \$92.6 million to construct the remainder of the project. The incremental needs required for the project, above and beyond what has already budgeted in previous budget submissions, will be submitted as part of the 2026-2035 Capital Budget Submission subject to Council approval. This includes funding contributions from several City Divisions, including Transportation Services, Toronto Water, Parks & Recreation, Economic Development & Culture, and City Planning, and includes approximately \$20 million from Section 37 funds collected from area developments over the past several years.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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On November 27, 2025, Toronto and East York Community Council directed the General Manager, Transportation Services, in consultation with the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, Toronto Downtown West BIA, Toronto Hydro, and any other relevant divisions and agencies, to report back to the January 2026 meeting of Toronto and East York Community Council on a status update on the John Street Corridor Improvements project, including a plan detailing communications updates, commitments to community engagement, construction phasing, and a project timeline.  
<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.TE27.77>

On June 5, 2019, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing issued a Notice of Decision, approving Official Plan Amendment No. 406 (the Downtown Plan). John Street is identified as a Cultural Corridor on Map 41.14. [41 - Downtown Secondary Plan](https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2019.CC9.8)  
<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2019.CC9.8>

On March 5, 6 and 7, 2012, City Council authorized the General Manager, Transportation Services, to issue a Notice of Completion and file the Environmental Study Report (ESR) for the Preferred Design of the John Street Corridor Improvements Environmental Assessment (EA) Study in the public record, in accordance with the requirements of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) process.

## COMMENTS

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### Background and Context

Over the past two decades, various City studies have identified John Street between Stephanie Street and Front Street West as a "Cultural Corridor", an "Avenue of the Arts", and a "Pedestrian Priority Route" - an important route of civic and cultural importance in the City of Toronto with major cultural institutions along it, including: the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) Broadcast Centre, the Princess of Wales and Royal Alexandra Theatres, the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) Bell Lightbox, the Metro Toronto Convention Centre (MTCC), the Rogers Centre, and the CN Tower.

In 2009, City Council directed Transportation Services to undertake an Environmental Assessment for the John Street Cultural Corridor.

In 2019, City Council endorsed the Downtown Plan (Official Plan Amendment No. 406), which identified John Street as one of the "Cultural Corridors", which is defined as a historically and culturally significant street that anchors important arts, entertainment and new media cultural resources in the Downtown. The Downtown Plan further explains that "Cultural Corridors" contain a variety of cultural and heritage destinations in a variety of scales, that welcome residents and tourists to gather and interact.

The John Street Corridor Improvements project limits are shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1 - John Street Corridor Improvements: Project Limits**

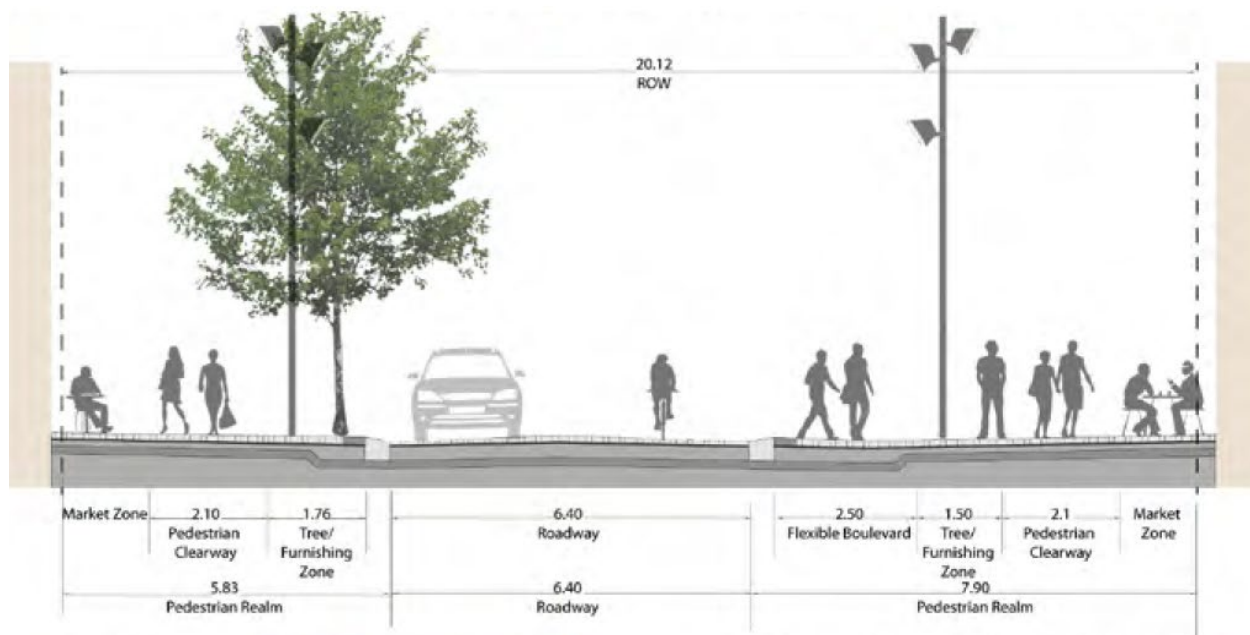


## John Street Environmental Assessment (EA) Study (2009 - 2012)

Between 2009 and 2012, the City undertook an Environmental Assessment (EA) Study for John Street, which developed and evaluated several different design options for the corridor. A Preferred Design, shown in Figure 2, was identified for the corridor, that recommended several significant improvements, including:

- Wider sidewalks;
- A narrower roadway with reduced number of traffic lanes;
- New street tree plantings;
- New custom street furniture with integrated public art elements;
- A distinctive paving treatment from building face to building face;
- Combined roadway, pedestrian, and accent streetlighting; and,
- A "flexible boulevard" along the east side of the street to accommodate loading and deliveries, while maintaining an expanded sidewalk.

**Figure 2 - John Street EA Preferred Design**



The EA Study involved engagement with businesses and residents along the corridor and satisfied the requirements of the Province's Municipal Class Environmental Assessment process for Schedule C projects. The EA Study and Preferred Design was endorsed by City Council in March 2012.

## Detailed Design (2014 - 2016)

From 2014 to 2016, a detailed design for the full reconstruction of John Street was developed by City staff with support from engineering design consultants. During the detailed design process, elements from the EA Preferred Design were refined such as allocation of boulevard space on each block, tree planting and soil cell details, designs

of signalized intersections, curb bump outs, street furniture, roadway and pedestrian streetlighting, as well as sidewalk, roadway, and curb materials. The detailed design process involved engagement activities with the Toronto Downtown West BIA (formerly the Toronto Entertainment District BIA), key businesses and other interested parties along the corridor, and the general public. Further details on engagement activities are outlined on pages 6 and 7 of this report.

### **Enabling Utility Construction Work (2018 - 2024)**

From 2018 to 2024, a significant amount of enabling utility construction work was undertaken, which involved burying overhead hydro infrastructure, relocating below-grade gas main infrastructure, and constructing a shared underground utility trench. This utility construction work was critical to enabling the recommended street infrastructure improvements, including planned upgrades to municipal underground servicing infrastructure, and more space for tree plantings and underground soil cells.

To date, the City has spent approximately \$5.3 million on the enabling utility construction work, which accounts for the City's portion of cost-sharing with private utility companies for utility construction and relocation costs.

### **Design Refresh (2023 - 2025)**

Between 2023 and 2025, City staff have worked with the engineering design consultant team to undertake a "design refresh" of the 2016 detailed design to bring it up-to-date and reflect current existing conditions, as well as City standards and design guidelines. The design refresh exercise has involved:

- Updating topographical and subsurface conditions that had changed because of new developments constructed along the corridor;
- Undertaking additional sewer design work for integrated delivery with the street construction work;
- Updating roadway and pedestrian streetlighting designs to incorporate Toronto Downtown West BIA event lighting designs;
- Advancing discussions on required operations and maintenance agreements with Toronto Hydro and the Toronto Downtown West BIA for streetlighting and event lighting infrastructure;
- Updating the street design based on infrastructure changes in the area made since 2016 from new developments along the corridor, City projects (e.g., King Street Transit Priority Corridor), and based on targeted engagement with key businesses and property owners along the corridor; and,
- Updating detailed construction cost estimates for the project.

City staff worked with the Toronto Downtown West BIA during the design refresh exercise and held meetings with key businesses and property owners along the corridor, including Mirvish Theatres, CBC Broadcast Centre, Metro Toronto Convention Centre (MTCC), and individual condominium properties and businesses between Queen Street West and Stephanie Street.

## Construction Cost Estimates

As part of the design refresh, City staff received an updated construction cost estimate from the City's consultant team in early 2025. The previous cost estimate from 2019 identified the City's portion of construction costs to be approximately \$60 million. Based on the latest construction cost estimate from early 2025, it's estimated to cost approximately \$92.6 million to complete the remainder of the project, which exceeds the \$76.9 million capital budget currently allocated to the project by approximately \$15.7 million.

The capital budget for the project includes funding contributions from several City Divisions, including Transportation Services, Toronto Water, Parks & Recreation, Economic Development & Culture, and City Planning, and also includes \$20 million of Section 37 funds collected from area developments over the past several years.

City staff are exploring opportunities to reduce construction costs as well as opportunities to identify additional funding sources to bridge the gap in order to ensure the project can advance to construction in coordination with other area construction projects.

## Communications and Engagement

Throughout the different stages of the John Street project, there has been considerable engagement with interested parties and the public to communicate the project vision and gather feedback on its design to ensure an open, transparent, and collaborative design process.

*During the EA Study*, between 2009 and 2012, the following engagement activities were undertaken by City staff and the project consultant team:

- Two public meetings;
- Meetings with the businesses and property owners that comprise the Toronto Downtown West BIA (formerly the Toronto Entertainment District BIA);
- Engagement with Indigenous communities;
- Engagement with private utility companies;
- Advertisements placed in local newspapers;
- 22,000 public meeting notice flyers delivered by mail;
- Notification of government agencies by mail;
- Additional feedback and comments received by email; and
- Regular updates to the City's project website.

*During the detailed design* work between 2014 and 2016, the following engagement activities were undertaken:

- One public meeting with notification mailed through Canada Post to all addresses in the immediate study area, emailed to the project email list, and through advertisement in a local newspaper;
- One meeting with interested parties (which included property owners/tenants, the Toronto Downtown West BIA, the Queen Street West BIA, Toronto Entertainment District Residents' Association, Wellington Place Neighbourhood Association, real estate developers with properties in the area, and utility companies);

- Participation of Toronto Downtown West BIA representatives in regular City project progress meetings;
- Presentation to the City's Design Review Panel in 2014, a process open to the general public; and
- Engagement with property owners and developers through the planning application process for new developments proposed along the corridor.

*During the design refresh between 2023 and 2025, the following engagement activities were undertaken:*

- Meetings with the Toronto Downtown West BIA to provide general project status updates, to coordinate streetlighting design work and discuss required operations and maintenance agreements, and to discuss potential street furniture and paving material options;
- Meeting with Queen Street West BIA to provide project status updates;
- Targeted meetings with key property owners and businesses along the corridor (CBC Broadcast Centre building, Metro Toronto Convention Centre, and Mirvish Theatres) to discuss specific design elements and how to accommodate their loading and delivery activity using larger trucks;
- Letters were sent, meetings were held, and site visits organized for specific properties between Queen Street West and Stephanie Street, to discuss loading and delivery activities, on-street parking, and the removal of existing elements in the City right-of-way (parking, street trees, and planters) to facilitate the proposed project design;
- Several meetings were held with Toronto Hydro throughout the design refresh to review and coordinate the proposed roadway, pedestrian, and BIA event streetlighting designs, and to advance discussions on the required operations and maintenance agreements;
- Several meetings were held with developers with active development applications along the corridor to coordinate streetscaping designs at development frontages with the John Street and construction traffic management plans;
- The City's project website was updated with high-level project status updates; and
- City staff responded to specific project inquiries from the public, received via the project's email address.

### *Commitment to Engagement and Communications Going Forward*

As a result of the challenges associated with construction cost escalations, identification of construction conflicts and the need for improved capital coordination with other projects in the downtown area, City staff acknowledge the recent communication and updates on the project have not been as timely and proactive as would be expected.

As the project advances toward construction, City staff will communicate and engage with the Toronto Downtown West BIA, other key interested parties, and the general public to ensure updates are provided in a reliable, timely, and proactive manner, to inform plans to minimize disruption during construction and ensure continued transparency throughout the project. The following outlines the approach and frequency of communications and engagements that can be expected:

- Quarterly progress updates on the City's project website;
- Quarterly progress meetings with the Toronto Downtown West BIA leadership;
- Four Community Interest Group meetings --- anticipated in Spring 2026, Fall 2026, Spring 2027, and Fall 2027 --- comprised of area property owners, tenants, businesses, resident groups, and other key interested parties to discuss project progress updates, design elements, and expected construction timelines; and
- One public event in advance of construction, likely in Fall 2027.

During construction (2028-2031), a Construction Liaison Committee (CLC) will be established comprised of local interest groups and property owners that will meet quarterly with City staff throughout construction to discuss construction timelines, phasing, and construction-related issues.

## **Next Steps**

During Q4 2025 to Q1 2026, City staff will complete the "design refresh" scope and close out the remaining contract with the current City consultant. City staff will also finalize required operations and maintenance agreements with Toronto Hydro and the Toronto Downtown West BIA for roadway, pedestrian, and event streetlighting infrastructure.

In Q2 2026, Engineering and Construction Services staff on the project team will prepare and issue a request for proposal (RFP) for professional engineering services that will include the following key tasks:

- Prepare tender-ready design drawings, including final design refinements;
- Undertake additional geotechnical investigations and a constructability assessment to reduce risks during construction and plan for appropriate construction phasing and sequencing with other area construction projects;
- Provide contract administration and project management services;
- Undertake traffic signal and streetlighting inspections;
- Provide material testing and inspection services; and
- Provide post-construction services.

In early Spring 2026, Transportation Services will implement targeted interim pavement resurfacing repairs at the King Street West and John Street intersection, in preparation for FIFA World Cup 26™ and TIFF events scheduled in 2026. The targeted repairs include:

- Roadway pavement resurfacing;
- Base repairs and resurfacing at utility cuts;
- Some sidewalk reconstruction;
- Installation of tactile walking surface indicators; and
- Installation of a paver-like material on pedestrian crosswalks.

Between Q2 2026 and Q3 2027, City staff will work with the successful RFP consultant team to:

- Undertake design refinements to reduce construction costs and improve the City's ability to perform long-term life-cycle maintenance of infrastructure;



- Explore potential additional sources of funding for construction and ongoing long-term maintenance activities;
- Prepare construction tender documents; and
- Continue construction coordination with other area projects, including the Ontario Line transit project and planned streetcar and underground servicing work on King Street West.

The reconstruction of John Street is anticipated to start in 2028 and be completed in 2031.

## CONTACT

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## SIGNATURE

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