



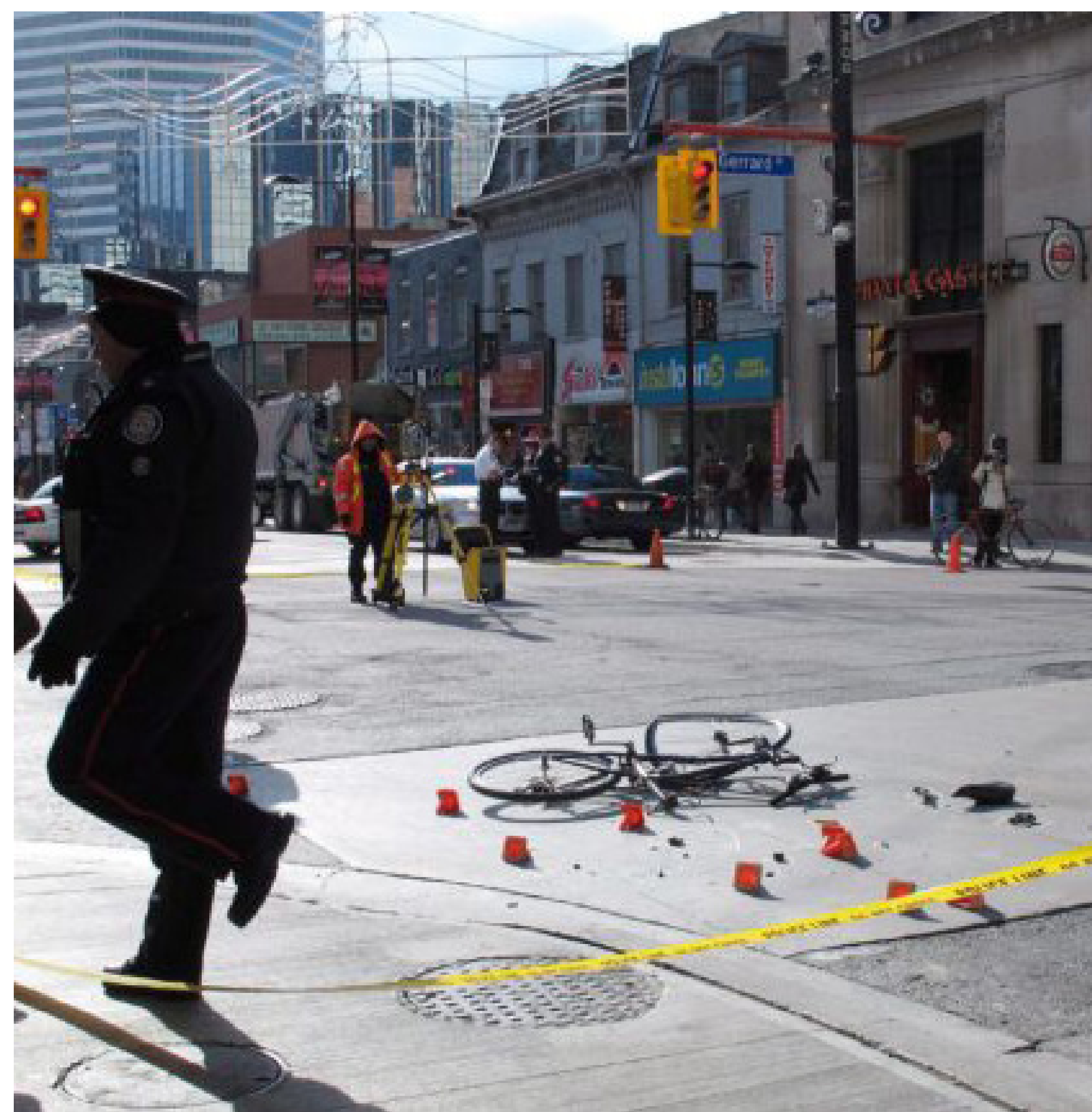
What are your commuter stories?

WHAT WE DID

We ran a #commuterselfie campaign that used a Tumblr site to gather pictures and feedback from participants. We also spent an afternoon in Yonge-Dundas Square engaging with people in person.

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID

- Most people we engaged use downtown for work, followed by entertainment/fun activities.
- The majority of challenges described related to mobility and transportation. Safety was one of the biggest concerns.
- Ideas to make downtown great for all included making downtown: more playful and fun; more green; more connected; a home for all, and; safe.
- Participants expressed a future vision for downtown that is: a diverse community, safe for all, sustainable, healthy, accessible, artistic and creative, flexible, affordable, and unique.



“This is a photo of my bike after I was run over by a garbage truck. Painted bike lanes are not safe. Cyclists need their own infrastructure.”

– Photo submission



“My vision for the downtown is one that is vibrant and lively with access to music, arts, recreation and can be easily accessed through innovative transit solutions.”

– Photo submission



Podcasting TOcore



Photo by Jimmy Wu



Photo by City of Toronto

WHAT I DID

I recorded hour-long interviews with youth aged 18 to 29 who live within the boundaries of TOcore and who represent a variety of Downtown neighbourhoods, living situations, and perspectives. Edited versions of the interview recordings will be released weekly as a podcast later this summer.

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID

The overarching theme was that a liveable downtown is one that has community, where people feel connected, welcomed, and valued. To help foster community, there are several intertwined priorities that the City must consider: inclusivity, diversity, and affordability. These priorities are linked to issues from transportation to built form to programming and policymaking.

SOME SAMPLE SUGGESTIONS

- Keep downtown walkable with “human scale” street and building design.
- Invest in a downtown LRT and more cycling infrastructure to better connect the core to the rest of the city.
- Require condo areas to have common areas on each floor and increase support for co-ops and shared homes.
- Ensure that people in positions of authority represent the diversity of the people they serve and are trained to respond to a diversity of needs and experiences.

Thinking about Downtown with Photovoice

WHAT I DID

I conducted a photovoice research project. Photovoice is a process through which people can use photos to identify, represent, and enhance issues in the community. I used it to capture in photos and short blurbs how people perceive and interact with downtown.

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID

- Travelling to and from downtown was overwhelmingly seen as the biggest hindrance to enjoying downtown. People want to see a Toronto with more accessible and cheap transportation (TTC, biking), eliminating the need for a car for many people.
- Participants appreciated the green space that allowed them to relax and get away from their busy lives. Participants want better organized and decorated places for recreation, photos, and activities.
- Toronto needs more art (murals, exhibits, and status) to help give it a distinct style and look. It will also help attract more artists and tourists to Toronto, making culture flourish.



“This is an outdoor gym in my neighbourhood in downtown Toronto and I see many adults, especially seniors, using it.”

– Master’s student, age 23



“Toronto is a city full of life, multiculturalism, phenomenal views, and festivities.”

– Hospital researcher, age 25

Photo Essays about Downtown

WHAT I DID

I engaged residents that are not included in the bounded area defined by TOcore – specifically people in the suburbs. I combined photos of the participants with the feedback they shared to develop a series of photo essays based on their experience.



Photo by Masooma Ali (Instagram: @em_ali)

Participants that engaged in Core Stories

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID

- Participants most commonly defined downtown as a “hub,” “cultural centre,” “social collective space,” and “heart.”
- The biggest concern for many is transportation. Affordability was another big concern. Some felt that some spaces in the city were not welcoming to minorities.
- Downtown could be great for all if the City: focused on transportation, better advertised the many events happening in the core, invested in local businesses, and invested in social welfare programs.
- Participants’ vision for downtown focused on: connectivity, diversity, less concrete, and a global city.



Photo by Masooma Ali (Instagram: @em_ali)

Perspectives on Downtown from Lawrence Heights



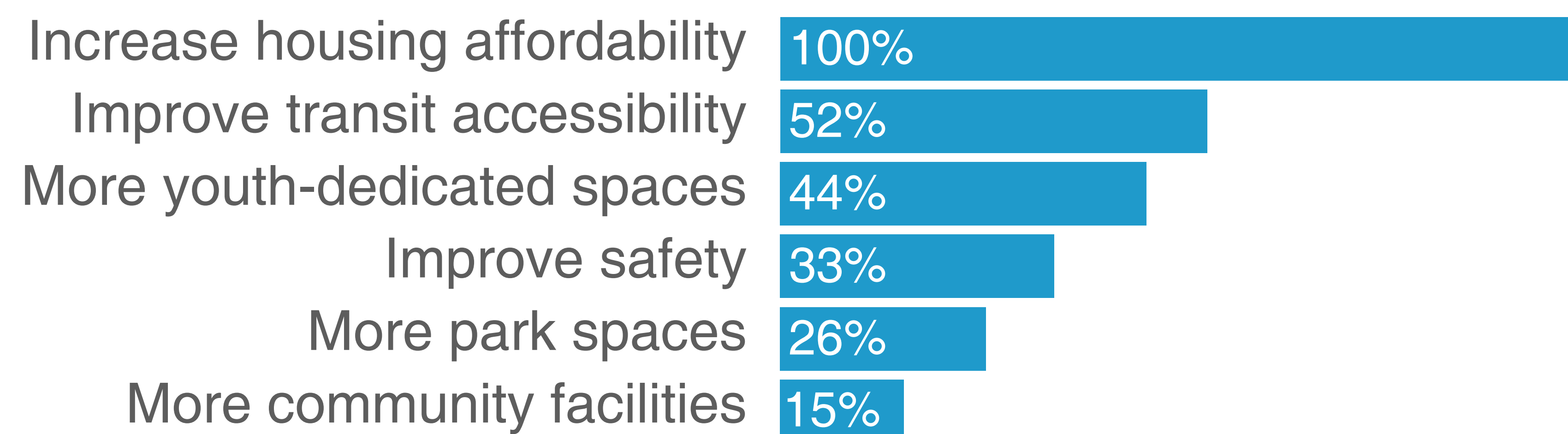
WHAT I DID

I engaged people through a combination of online surveys and face-to-face conversations with people in the Lawrence Heights neighbourhood of North York.

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID

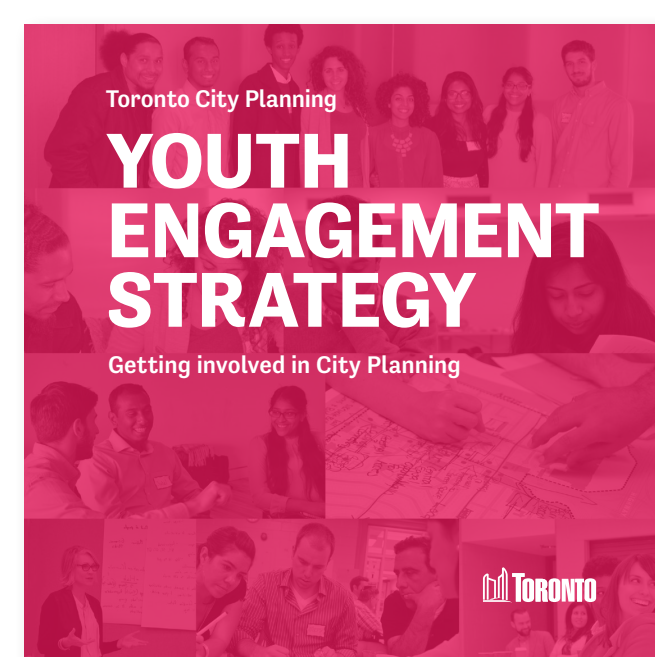
- Downtown is congested and needs a better mix of places to relax, to avoid traffic, and enjoy green spaces.
- Downtown needs to become more accessible and affordable. Affordable housing should be a priority to better facilitate access for people of different ages, backgrounds, and classes.
- There needs to be more communication between the core and the rest of the city. Some feel that the core only caters to wealthy people that can afford downtown.

TOP SIX RESPONSES ON MAKING DOWNTOWN GREAT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



66 SURVEY RESPONDENTS

For Youth, by Youth



As part of implementing its *Youth Engagement Strategy*, City Planning is working with a Youth Engagement Team to design, run, and document engagement activities that provide TOcore with a youth perspective.

MEET THE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT TEAM



Hiba is an Urban Planning student at the University of Toronto. Hiba got involved in the Youth Engagement Team because it allows her to raise awareness about city-building.



Jo is a passionate city builder with an interest in finding innovative ways to engage people in urban affairs. She is a Senior Project Manager at Evergreen Cityworks and the founder of The Civic Salon.



Mojan is a planner, facilitator, and art director. She designs innovative public engagement methods and is interested in the intersection between psychology and built form. She is a Cultural Planner with the City of Mississauga.



Siva has worked as a teacher and facilitator for over ten years. As a former refugee raised in a Neighbourhood Improvement Area, she understands the engagement barriers certain populations face.



Suhail is a graduate from the University of Toronto. As co-founder of the award-winning initiative Lead2Peace, Suhail has developed in-school and after-school programs to help youth become more engaged in their community.



Zakariya comes from an at-risk neighbourhood and has a passion for social justice and youth advocacy. He is hoping to leverage his experiences to better the lives of the disenfranchised.

A YOUTH PERSPECTIVE

The Youth Engagement Team ran online campaigns, surveys, and face-to-face interviews, asking almost 200 participants:

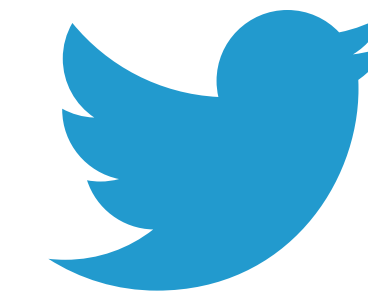
- How do you use downtown?
- What prevents you from enjoying downtown?
- What is your vision for downtown?

We asked for #DTadvice, and we heard a lot.



27,668

YouTube views



3,191

tweets with #DTadvice
or #TOcore



1,208

unique Twitter users

We launched our latest TOcore campaign with a video in early April. Within hours, #DTadvice was trending!

Here are some of the highlights of what we heard:

- Think about pedestrian safety, easing traffic congestion, improving transit, and adding protected bike lanes.
- Add more parks, be more flexible with what can happen in parks and what is considered a park, add more places to sit, and make better use of underused spaces (like schoolyards). Improve access to the ravines.

- Make sure that downtown doesn't exclude our most vulnerable and marginalized people. Maintain downtown's diversity.
- Condos need to be designed for families (and pets) and should include schools and daycares. Affordable housing should be a priority.
- Get rid of overhead wires and find low-carbon energy sources.
- Support a great nightlife and make sure DT has lots of great cultural activities, access to food, and festivals.
- Prioritize affordable daycare, schools, and community.

@KovacsSasha 🐦 Fresh air and better (faster, reliable, accessible) transit: my #DTadvice is to make it easier for all of us to get around.

@nczorny 🐦 Let's use #Toronto's vast ravine system to help move people through the city. #DTadvice #bikeTO #walkTO

@GeekClericMike 🐦 "Flex" parks, where people can rearrange fixtures/feature their own art creations, thereby creating a new space constantly. #DTadvice

@thePaulV 🐦 Would like to see how #TOcore "neighbourhoods" could gently intensify & allow mixed uses. Otherwise ½ DT is a missed opportunity.

@Nurse_Holly 🐦 My advice: don't forget about your vulnerable populations. DT is for us all! Love u DT! #DTadvice #CityofToronto

@MariAnneRamson 🐦 Condos designed for families. More condos with schools in them. Affordable, available daycare & rec program spaces. #DTadvice #TOcore