

Building a Liveable Downtown:
TOcore Phase II Stakeholder Workshop
The Toronto Reference Library
Bram and Bluma Appel Salon
789 Yonge Street
Tuesday, June 21, 2016
6:00 – 9:00 pm

I. MEETING OVERVIEW – FOR PARTICIPANT REVIEW

On Tuesday, June 21st, 2016 the City of Toronto Planning Division held *Building a Liveable Downtown: TOcore Phase II Stakeholder Workshop*. Over 75 representatives from 61 organizations, 9 City staff, and 6 members of the consultant team participated in the workshop. Invitees included 534 representatives of approximately 500 organizations working in the areas of community services and facilities, mobility, parks and public spaces, buildings and neighbourhoods, economy, energy, and water.

The purpose of the meeting was to present and discuss emerging directions for an updated Downtown vision and a new Downtown planning framework. In addition to the discussion held during the meeting, participants had an option to submit their individual or group feedback in writing by July 5, 2016.



Following welcoming remarks from Andrew Farncombe, TOcore Project Manager at the City of Toronto, the City staff on the project team gave two presentations:

- An Updated Downtown Vision for 2041 – Daniel Fusca, Coordinator, Stakeholder Engagement & Special Projects
- A New Downtown Planning Framework – Sarah Phipps, Senior Planner

Each presentation was followed by a 40-minute small table discussion. After the first presentation, participants discussed key characteristics they would like to see in the Downtown of 2041. After the second presentation, participants worked with a set of maps and proposed definitions and discussed what they liked, what was missing, and what they would like to see changed in terms of proposed mixed use areas and potential retail streets. The small table discussions were wrapped up with a report back to the rest of the room summarizing key points of discussion.

This draft summary report is structured to reflect the key themes of feedback received during and after the meeting. It is organized into five main parts:

I. Meeting Overview

II. Towards a Renewed Vision for Downtown to 2041:

- a. Draft Key Themes
- b. Detailed Feedback

III. A New Planning Framework for Downtown:

- a. Draft Key Themes
- b. Detailed Feedback

IV. Next Steps

V. Attachments:

Attachments are available upon request at tocore@toronto.ca

1. Meeting Agenda
2. Meeting Material
3. Organized Transcript of Worksheets Submitted at the Meeting
4. Organized Transcript of Feedback Submitted after the Meeting
5. Raw Live Projected Notes
6. Meeting Evaluation
7. List of Invited and Participating Organizations

This draft summary is subject to participant review. If you have any suggested edits, please share them with Yulia Pak at ypak@swerhun.com or 416-572-4365.

The draft summary report was written by Yulia Pak of Swerhun Inc., an independent facilitation firm retained to work on this project as part of the consulting team. It is not intended to promote any particular point of view or serve as a verbatim transcript. Rather, the report summarizes key themes and advice from the verbal feedback shared during the meeting, written feedback from the worksheets submitted at the end of the meeting, and written feedback submitted after the meeting via e-mail.

II. TOWARDS A RENEWED VISION FOR DOWNTOWN TO 2041

Participants provided extensive feedback on the updated Downtown Vision for 2041. A draft summary of feedback received at the meeting is captured below, including draft key themes and detailed feedback. Please note that the organized transcribed comments from worksheets and emails are appended to this report Attachments 3 and 4, respectively.

DRAFT KEY THEMES

The following points summarize key themes that emerged during the report back period and from the written feedback. These points are intended to be read together with the more detailed feedback that follows in the remainder of this report.

Affordable housing. Emphasis on the need for rethinking and planning for affordable housing for all – in particular, for families, workers, and people with mental health issues and addictions.

Heritage preservation. The importance of preserving heritage in creative adaptive ways so as to retain the sense of place in the fast-growing, fast-changing environment of Downtown.

Transit, walking, and cycling. The need to prioritize transit, walking, and cycling downtown and move away from car-focused planning by providing a good range of shared mobility options and safe infrastructure and improving connections.

Public spaces and connections to natural areas. Many participants highlighted the need for more well-maintained public spaces Downtown. While some participants asked for more parks and green spaces, others noted that not all of the public spaces need to be green.

Sustainability, resilience, and climate change. The need to think about climate change and plan for the resilient, sustainable future of Downtown through investment in innovative green technologies and policies that reduce environmental pollution.

Cradle-to-grave services. Many participants talked about the need to have a full range of community services and facilities that support people of all ages and circumstance. Several people emphasized the need for new developments to come with childcare and other essential community services.

Employment lands. The importance of protecting land for employment was emphasized, as even today the amount of commercial spaces available Downtown does not meet current demand.

Culture, arts, and sports. Downtown should be a place for all, not just residents and workers. It is important to promote Toronto's cultural institutions, and think about Downtown as Toronto's centre for culture, arts and sports.

Relationship with the rest of the city. A few participants emphasized the need to think about Downtown within the broader context of the city.

DRAFT DETAILED FEEDBACK

The sections contains a summary of the vision statements as well as advice on how to achieve a vision organized by general advice and 6 building blocks.

Vision

Many participants shared a vision of inclusive, sustainable, resilient, affordable, safe and vibrant Downtown for all:

- the Downtown that looks into the future and preserves its heritage;
- the Downtown that moves and attracts people;
- the Downtown that supports and welcomes people of all ages, abilities, and gender identities;
- the Downtown that works as an engine for a thriving economy and the centre for education, arts and culture;
- the Downtown that is environmentally responsible, sustainable and resilient.

Participants also shared the following comments regarding the vision:

- **Provide clearer definitions around the vision, including plans on how to clearly make the vision happen and what infrastructure funding model is being considered.** The vision will be achievable once the other layers are considered.
- **The vision should result in clear commitments.** The vision should be achievable and should be translated into explicit goals. Measurability and accountability should be built into the vision.

General Advice

- **Ensure that downtown is liveable for all.** Provide affordable housing, housing for families, and fully accessible programming and services for people of all ages, interests, and abilities. Provide services that will allow young professionals who live in the core now to “age in place”.
- **Emphasize choice.** Diversify city centres outside of the core. Prioritize neighbourhoods across the entire city.
- **It is important to eat healthy.** Consider rooftop gardens or maybe a food plant for flash freezing, so that Torontonians can have fresh vegetables all year round. Plan for more strategically located grocery stores.
- **Adapt the feminine lens in planning for the future of Downtown.** Recognize and support the importance of care-giving and nurturing for a full spectrum of sexuality.
- **Ensure that policy changes reflect plans for the future, and not just the current use.** Explain cost implications of the proposed policy changes.

Buildings and Neighbourhood

- **Ensure Downtown is liveable and autonomous on a neighbourhood scale.** Plan for fine-grain neighbourhoods and complete communities with well-connected well-designed public realm and green spaces, supported by community services and facilities. For example, instead of going grocery shopping once a week, you can pick up fresh food from a local store when you need it.
- **Preserve heritage, character and historic assets of Downtown neighbourhoods.** Keep historical buildings, protect and fast track the Heritage Preservation District designations, provide clear guidelines on how to protect the neighbourhoods against negative development impacts, and consider adaptive reuse of heritage properties.
- **Ensure a range of housing options both in terms of tenure and affordability.** To keep Downtown liveable, there needs to be housing that accommodates workers, families, youth, and seniors. Ensure that “affordable” means more than just the 30% of the household income benchmark. To provide adequate housing for families, consider tying infrastructure requirements to densification.
- **Consider a cradle-to-cradle approach that focuses on reusable materials.** The approach will help ensure climate resilience in built infrastructure, reduce pollution from demolition and construction, and promote healthy environment.
- **Ensure that the term “mixed use” is not just a residential and commercial mixture.** Toronto should promote places of culture, sports, attractions, libraries, and other services and facilities that make the city so vibrant.
- **Plan for internal and external, public and private spaces.** Incentivize developers to build spaces for community services and facilities in condominiums and consider requiring condominium common spaces be open to the public. Space efficiencies in Downtown neighbourhoods can be achieved by planning and designing sustainable, flexible outdoor spaces. Planning for internal spaces in private buildings is as important as planning for external public spaces for a comprehensive public realm.
- **Consider laneways for developing some of the necessary infrastructure and buildings,** including infill housing and accessibility infrastructure.
- **Ensure better construction management in the Downtown.** Construction really impacts the quality of life. It is important to remember that closing lanes affect all users.
- **Ensure there is a balance in community ownership** between the existing voices and the new voices that are coming in.
- **Re-consider the role of the Ontario Municipal Board.** It has too much influence when it comes to developments, which makes the development processes problematic.

Parks and Public Spaces

- **Provide more parks and public spaces at a granular neighbourhood scale.** Public realm in the core needs to be outstanding. It is important to remember that in the context of Downtown, public spaces are not necessarily green spaces only; they are also plazas and city squares. The key is to have increased green and public spaces at a granular neighbourhood scale. Consider opening up school yards for public use.
- **Ensure all public spaces are well-maintained and the garbage is picked up.**
- **Provide public spaces that foster community gatherings.** It is important to strive for public realm that is focused on people. Create public spaces that are easily accessible by transit and biking. Introduce pedestrian zones in high traffic areas. Plan for wider sidewalks and more parks in the core to accommodate growing population and reduce congestion and reliance on cars.
- **Foster community gatherings in public spaces.** Provide more transit and biking. Get people out of towers into public spaces where they can connect. Public realm should be focused on people – less focus on cars. Ensure pedestrian areas that are connected to high traffic areas. Prioritize people by reducing reliance on cars and concrete.
- **Ensure public spaces are flexible and can be used any time of the day and during all seasons.** Plan for hard and soft infrastructure that supports spaces, activities and programming for all seasons. It is important to remember that we are a winter country.
- **Revitalize and ensure access and connections to Downtown's natural heritage features,** such as the Don River and the Waterfront.
- **Plan for dogs in Downtown.** Many people Downtown have dogs and dogs need dog areas. As available space in the core decreases, spaces for dog use become an issue. Planning for the Downtown dog population needs to be captured in the vision and the Official Plan. If it's not in the vision, it's an afterthought.
- **Provide more interactive public art and street art.** Ensure that public art is a part of the Downtown public realm. Encourage wall murals and art forms that engage and interact with people.

Community Services and Facilities

- **Ensure Downtown provides cradle-to-grave living and supports for people of all ages.** Ensure community services and facilities for all demographics, and not just young people living on the waterfront, including adequate daycare, programs for teens and seniors, as well as more assisted living facilities within the Downtown boundaries.
- **Consider innovative policies** that would require new developments bring in childcare, clinics, schools, libraries, fire stations, and other services in every neighbourhood.
- **Ensure that homeless people, people with mental health issues and addictions have a safe place to go to.**

- **Plan for kids.** Every condo in the planning stage should have a gym and a daycare. It is important to remember that the predominant young demographic that lives in the Downtown today will settle down and have kids by 2041.
- **Respect and celebrate diversity of the city.**
- **Ensure Downtown has affordable rental housing.** A good range for housing options is critical for keeping Downtown great for all. Consider a legislation that requires a certain percentage of all housing to be affordable.

Mobility

- **Ensure that Downtown is walkable and accessible.** Prioritize pedestrian comfort by providing a comprehensive definition to the term “walkability”. Ensure that street corners, sidewalks are fully accessible. Consider pedestrian zones and districts.
- **Provide fast and reliable public transit.** Investments in the public transit system needs to be a priority in the Downtown core. Consider giving all streetcars in the core a dedicated Right-of-Way. Consider making King Street a transit way, allowing public transit vehicles only.
- **Improve and expand cycling infrastructure.** Ensure that bike lanes are continuous, separated and safe. Provide more bike racks just off the sidewalks. Ensure that bike lanes are separated from the sidewalks.
- **Ensure easy access to a range of shared mobility options,** including bikes, cars & streetcars with their own rights-of-way. Consider requiring new condos Downtown provide Bike Share.
- **Ensure Downtown is well-connected to other employment hubs via regional transit.** Establish links for regional transit to connect to other employment and regionally significant hubs, including Pearson Airport and Markham
- **Ensure inter-modal connectivity.** It is important to make sure that it is convenient to change from one mode of transportation to another when travelling in or to the core.
- **Ensure a balance between the movement of goods and people.** It is important to remember that mixed use neighbourhoods require goods, so mixed use areas cannot be pedestrian-only spaces.
- **To reduce pollution consider measures to reduce and phase out personal car use.** Consider tolls for coming into the city by car.
- **Plan for adaptability to new technology.** It is important to ensure that chosen mobility solutions stay relevant and can be adapted to new technologies in the future.

Energy and Water

- **Ensure that downtown is resilient.** Encourage green infrastructure, innovative storm water management and low impact development in both public and private spaces. Meet the many living city objectives.

- **Be mindful of light pollution.** Consider a mandatory turn off at night. It is good for mental health and bird migration.
- **Ensure sustainable use of services.** All the projected growth in people will need to use sustainable water and energy. Consider community-owned neighbourhood-scale power generation as a sustainable option. Encourage sustainable behaviour. Promote alternative energy sources.
- **Address global warming.** Invest in proper infrastructure and develop a climate change framework that is adaptable to conserve resources and greening the city by reintroducing natural cycles. Global warming and climate change should be the starting point for this discussion. Discussions about transit, retrofitting, and adaptable technology – all of them should be based on the climate change framework.
- **Achieve zero carbon emissions.** Set a target of zero carbon emissions in planning for Toronto's Downtown and work towards achieving this target.

Economy

- **Support local entrepreneurs.** Discourage big box retail and franchise.
- **Create policies that protect food vendors,** so people in the downtown core have access to healthy food.
- **Consider changing zoning by-laws to allow commercial spaces on top of residential spaces in low-rise mixed use neighbourhoods.** Mixed use neighbourhoods shouldn't be either residential or commercial. The city should be able to do both in the allowable zones.
- **Consider policies to preserve land for employment uses in the Downtown core.** The city is not achieving a good balance of commercial and residential spaces. Employers have no space, we cannot just build housing.

III. A NEW PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR DOWNTOWN

A draft summary of feedback on a new Planning Framework received at and after the meeting is captured below, including draft key themes and draft detailed feedback. For organized, transcribed comments collected from the worksheets and email submissions, please see Attachments 3 and 4, respectively.

DRAFT KEY THEMES

The following points summarize key themes that emerged during the report back period and from the written feedback. These points are intended to be read together with the more detailed feedback that follows in the remainder of this section, as well as Attachments 3 and 4.

Support for the proposed approach of three mixed use areas. In general, participants supported the idea of having 3 mixed use areas with context appropriate policies with several suggestions and modifications.

Heritage Conservation Districts on the Mixed Use and Priority Retail maps. Several participants asked for the meeting materials to reflect Heritage Conservation Districts (HCDs) and make it clear that the HCDs still stand and protect historic districts.

Beyond existing conditions and boundaries. Many participants emphasized the importance of thinking about upcoming major developments and transit infrastructure when thinking about proposed densities and retail streets. Several participants urged the City to think outside of the study boundaries, identified priority retail streets and mixed use areas – for example, planning for the Unilever site, making some of the residential areas into mixed use, and promoting retail in St. James Town.

More fluid expanded definition of “mixed use areas”. Several participants suggested making the definition more fluid to better accommodate the local context and changes that occur with the time. Some participants suggested clarifying what’s required and what’s encouraged; and others suggested adding additional small institutional and industrial uses to the “mixed use area”.

The effect of technology on retail. One participant highlighted that more and more of retail business is being conducted online, and so the priority retail streets will need destination places that connect to the waterfront and other places of interest to get people into the stores.

Smaller-scale complete ground floor retail spaces fit for the mixed use environment. Many participants discussed the need for smaller, more affordable retail spaces with room for storage, staff space, garbage outposts, and delivery decks that are compatible with residential spaces above and around them.

Publicly accessible podiums and terraces. Many participants discussed and supported the idea of opening up high-rise podiums and terraces to the public, and require developers provide small retail spaces, spaces for childcare, medical offices, and other needed community services as an amenity of the building.

More time to complete this exercise. Some participants expressed the need for additional time to think over the proposed new mixed use areas and priority retail streets and supported an opportunity to provide any additional feedback within the two weeks from the day of the meeting.

DRAFT DETAILED FEEDBACK

This section is organized into two main categories: proposed new mixed use areas and proposed retail priority streets.

1. Proposed New Mixed Use Areas

General Advice

- **Support for the proposed approach of three mixed use areas.** In general, participants supported the idea of having 3 mixed use areas with context appropriate policies with several suggestions and modifications.
- **Ensure there is a clear understanding of what's required and what's encouraged in terms of mixed use and retail policies.** Policies should encourage certain types of developments but not require them. For example, retail on Bloor is very different from retail on Queens Quay. If the market cannot respond to what is required, it can result in vacant stores.
- **Consider a more fluid definition of "Mixed Use".** Mixed use areas should be switchable between commercial and residential uses, and/or have both. In addition, consider including small scale industrial and institutional uses in the definition. Avoid a deadly rigidity of zoning.
- **Indicate the relationship between transit, development, and density.** Transit, development and density are closely interconnected and should be clearly denoted on the provided maps.
- **Consider expanding boundaries of this study to include the Unilever site.** The Unilever site has a big impact on the East Bayfront. Show what the development would look like outside of the TOcore Boundaries.
- **Keep open areas and public spaces sunny.** An area of great interest behind Church Street Public School should be noted as an area for concern. Planned condo developments will shadow the open schoolyard. This is an open area used by kids and the community during the day – it is important not to lose the sun that the community won't be able to get back once the developments are up.
- **Ensure it is the City that plans the city and not developers.** It seems there is no overarching plan because developers own it. Community sort of has input, and then it goes to the OMB and one person decides. Such process does not seem forward looking.

Process Advice

- **Provide more time for an exercise of this kind.** This exercise is overwhelming. It requires more than half an hour. It would be more helpful to take the maps for discussion to the constituencies and provide specific geographic knowledge from them.

- **Show major planned developments.** It is hard to provide feedback for the future by looking at the maps of the past.
- **Show Heritage Conservation Districts on the same map as the proposed mixed use areas.** There is a fear that a developer will take the maps from this meeting that show proposed mixed use areas and propose developments in historic districts Downtown. Sarah Phipps, Senior Planner at the City of Toronto, answered that the policies associated with an HCD would take precedence over any new mixed use area policies. She further explained that it was a downtown-wide land use map and specific local area studies, including HCDs, will override this general plan. For example, on Queen West, the HCD guides the built form, so the City will match the mixed use with the HCD.

Area Specific Advice

- **Encourage high-rise buildings within walking distance of Union Station to capitalize on the investments in it.** Designate the area as Mixed Use Area 3 and consider imposing minimum density for new developments by Union Station.
- **It is important to consider the future of public transit in the Downtown when thinking about mixed use and retail policies.** Given that the Relief Line proposes a station in the King-Parliament / Corktown area south of Regent Park, the area is likely to experience more development pressure than a Mixed Use Area 1. King East, Richmond, Adelaide, and Queen East might need to be planned for as a Mixed Use Area 3.
- **Ensure that the part of Bloor between Bathurst and Avenue stays as Mixed Use Area 1** to limit vertical development and maintain the street's character and heritage.
- **Consider designating the part of Spadina between Queen and College as Mixed Use Area 1, and not 2.**
- **The following areas should be reconsidered as more dense mixed-use areas** due to the existing or upcoming transportation infrastructure:
 - Bloor from Bathurst to Yonge;
 - Queen from Yonge to River;
 - Parliament Street from Queen to King; and
 - King from Parliament to River Street.
- **Consider designating the area west of Bathurst between Queen and College as Mixed Use Area 2 and improve public transit.**
- **More of the south-east part of the TOcore study area should be designated Mixed Use Area 2.**
- **The Church-Dundas corridor should be designated as Mixed Use Area 3, not 2,** given all of the current development applications currently in the pipeline for Church Street.
- **Ensure that the Mixed Use Area 3 designation in the Yonge-Dundas area does not place greater burden on the Yonge / University subway lines.** If it does, consider designating the area as Mixed Use Area 2.

- It is important that Yonge Heritage Conservation District is protected and respected by potential developers.
- Consider limiting vertical development along Harbourfront. It is important to keep the area enjoyable for everyone.

2. Retail Priority Streets

General Comments

- **Plan retail spaces that work in the mixed use environments.** Currently, main floor retail spaces are expensive and come into conflict with residential spaces above due to smells, high lights, noise, etc. Retail spaces in the core should be compact and complete -- with room for retail at the front, storage space at the back, space for staff, and outlets for garbage and deliveries.
- **Encourage smaller-scale and finer-grain stores that are appropriate to their neighbourhoods.** There is a need for smaller, more active, more interesting retail spaces to avoid out of scale, generic, uninteresting facades, similar to Royal Bank on Queens Quay. Consider a policy that requires developers to provide retail space for mom and pop shops as an amenity, available not just for the condo residents, but for a whole neighbourhood.
- **Make podiums publicly accessible retail spaces** and use terraces to develop space for child care services, medical offices, and other community needs.
- **Look into the Artscape model for leasing ground floor retail space to bakers, grocers, and other smaller shops.** There is a need for a model that would allow smaller independent retailers, who do not have a financial clout to commit to retail space in advance of the completion of a building, get into the empty spaces that we see today.
- **Encourage using laneways and alleys for retail services to reflect the projected increase in Downtown population.** They could produce more affordable spaces and attract a new generation of business.
- **Consider expanding retail priority streets in the areas that do not have a sufficient mix of uses.** For example, St. James Town would benefit from a boost in retail.
- **Look into the concept of the “third place” to plan the retail priority streets.** The “third place” principles encourage to connect and bring communities together, which will help animate some of the less attractive retail streets. For example, plan for wider sidewalks and spaces to sit and rest, for people to congregate, etc.
- **For the future of retail, identify public places of major investments and think about how to animate these places with retail.** Technology is changing everything with respect to retail. The Queen Street BIA reports that 70% of their business went online. There is a need for other attractions – cultural and destination places -- to pull people into the stores. Also provide connections to the waterfront.

Area-specific Advice

- Make Queens Quay a mixed use retail street as it extends east.
- Include Nassau Street as part of Kensington's retail landscape.
- Bay between Adelaide and Front should be a pedestrian priority street and not retail Priority Street.
- Consider making Carlton between Parliament and Berkeley and Gerrard between Sherbourne and Parliament retail priority streets. Both of the stretches are connected to businesses on Parliament and some Business Improvement Areas.
- Consider the impact the new Regent Park development will have on the retail priority streets in the area.
- Consider the following for retail priority:
 - Bremner: to reflect and accommodate the increase in density;
 - Peter/Duncan: to reflect and accommodate the increase in density;
 - West Lakeshore: lots of diversity currently, with few stores;
 - Davenport from Yonge to Dupont: currently art galleries, small retailers, hair salons, few restaurants, outside spaces, and coffee houses;
 - Scollard: similar to Davenport, with lots of small businesses;
 - Bloor Street: with more places to linger, more benches for people who are walking;
 - York: enhance with retail opportunities to promote north-south connections from the core to the Waterfront, ACC, etc.

IV. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT UPDATE

Ian Malczewski, member of the facilitation team, gave an overview of the Community Engagement Toolkit and told attendees that the soft copy of toolkits would be sent to all stakeholders via email and is also available online at toronto.ca/tocore under the "Have Your Say" tab. He also added that hard copies would be available shortly for pick up. He asked participants to distribute the toolkits to their constituencies and encourage them to submit their feedback by July 31, 2016. (Note: Toolkits will continue to be accepted).

V. NEXT STEPS

Andrew Farncombe, Project Manager of the TOcore Study at the City of Toronto Planning Division, thanked the room on behalf of the City and the consultant team for their participation and feedback. Nicole Swerhun, an independent facilitator, reminded participants that they had two weeks from the day of the meeting to submit their additional thoughts and comments via e-mail to Yulia Pak at ypak@swerhun.com. She also committed to sharing the summary with participants in draft and added that meeting materials would be shared with participants via email the next day and also would be posted on the City's website at www.toronto.ca/tocore.

VI. ATTACHMENTS

The remainder of this report is comprised of the following attachments:

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