

# Yonge-Eglinton Centre Planners in Public Spaces (PiPS) Summary

Yonge-Eglinton Growth, Built Form, and Infrastructure Review

December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015

12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Centre Court, Yonge-Eglinton Centre

## Overview

On Sunday, December 13, 2015, the City of Toronto hosted a Planners in Public Spaces (PiPS) event in the Centre Court of the Yonge-Eglinton Centre. The purpose of the PiPS event was to: raise awareness about the Yonge-Eglinton Growth, Built Form, and Infrastructure Review; share some of the early work done by the City and its technical consultants, and; seek input related to built form, cultural heritage, community services & facilities, and transportation.

The PiPS station consisted of five display boards arranged in the Centre Court of the shopping centre, each focusing on a different component of the Review. Participants shared feedback by annotating the boards with dots and sticky notes and by speaking with members of the study team. Over the course of two hours, over 200 people stopped to participate in the PiPS event. Paul Farish of the City Planning Division attended from the City of Toronto along with Ian Malczewski and Matthew Wheatley of Swerhun Facilitation. Several people left email addresses with the study team and asked to be kept up-to-date about the project's progress.

Ian Malczewski drafted this PiPS Summary and City Planning staff reviewed it before it was finalized.

## Key Messages

The following points reflect the key feedback received from participants; readers should review them in concert with the more detailed summary of feedback below.

**Pedestrian safety is very important.** Many participants identified pedestrian safety as a transportation priority and suggested adding crosswalks, traffic lights, and widening sidewalks.

**Yonge-Eglinton needs cultural facilities.** People said the area needs more cultural facilities, potentially by adding a space for performances, art galleries, and more diverse restaurants.

**A public space at Yonge-Eglinton.** A common suggestion was that the former TTC Bus Barns at Yonge and Eglinton should be turned into a big public space for the community.

**Diverse housing options.** Many people expressed concern that the development in the area is making Yonge-Eglinton less affordable and less diverse. Several people felt the area was losing too much rental housing to redevelopment.

**Cycling.** Yonge-Eglinton needs to add new bicycle infrastructure (and improve existing infrastructure). Several people said it was important to focus on improving / adding north-south connections, both within the study area and between the study area and downtown.

**More focus on aboriginal history.** Many people felt the Cultural Heritage work should include more of a focus on aboriginal history.

## Detailed summary of feedback

The feedback below is organized into the topics that the City Planning Division invited participants to discuss. These topics include: landmarks, open spaces, and views (built form); cultural heritage; community services & facilities, and; transportation. Participants also shared other feedback and feedback about process.

## Feedback about landmarks, open spaces, and views

Participants identified landmarks, open spaces, and views that they would like to see considered through the built form analysis.

### Landmarks

Buildings that participants identified as landmarks included: Postal Station K (at Yonge Street and Montgomery Avenue), the Capitol theatre (at Yonge Street and Castlefield Avenue), the TTC Headquarters and rail yards at Yonge Street and Davisville Avenue, the RioCan Centre at Yonge and Eglinton, and the Eglinton Grand on Eglinton Avenue west of Avenue Road.

### Open Spaces

**A public square at Yonge and Eglinton.** Many people felt that the form TTC Bus Barns at the southwest corner of Yonge and Eglinton should be turned into a big open space for the community. People suggested a new public space on that corner could include a giant chess board, a basketball court, or a large Yonge-Eglinton sign (similar to the Toronto sign at City hall). One person suggested putting a public square on the southeast corner, too.

**Existing open spaces are great—there should be more.** Several people noted open spaces that they like in the area, including the Glebe Manor Road Parkettes, Eglinton Park, Sherwood Park, Blythwood Parkette, and the grounds between the Minto buildings on Yonge south of Eglinton Avenue. Some said the area needs more parks and open spaces. One person felt that all new condos should be mandated to include green space around the building.

**Suggestions about existing parks.** One person said the parkette on Hillside (just east of Yonge) was underused and could use more attention, and another said safety should be a focus in parks. One person suggested removing the surface parking lot in Eglinton Park, while another suggested adding a fenced-in play area in the neighbourhood (similar to Allan Gardens).

## Views

**Important views.** Two people noted views that were important to them: one person said they liked the view south to Upper Canada College through Eglinton Park; another said they like the view of the Yonge-Eglinton skyline facing east from the hill in Eglinton Park.

## Other Built Form feedback

Participants shared other comments on built form in the area, including:

- Space out towers more;
- New development should have retail on the first two floors;
- Eglinton should have mid-rise with offices in them (like St Clair);
- New buildings should have green roofs, “sky gardens,” and conform to higher aesthetics. One person suggested creating a rooftop park along Yonge Street; and
- More wind protection for pedestrians

## Feedback about cultural heritage

Participants identified events, institutions, and places they felt were important to the area’s cultural identity:

**Aboriginal history.** Several people wanted to see more of a focus on aboriginal history. A few mentioned the aboriginal encampment on the hill in Eglinton Park.

**Historic events, institutions, and places.** Participants identified some important dates and institutions in Midtown, including the date the Beltline became a park (1993) and the cultural contribution made by the farmer’s market. Participants also suggested a handful of specific places, including: the Davisville General Store at Yonge & Davisville (currently a Starbucks); the J. Davis House at Yonge Street and Milwood Road (currently a CIBC); and Postal Station K at Yonge Street and Montgomery Avenue. Several people identified Mount Pleasant Cemetery as an important cultural area, and a few said the residential streets from the 1920s and 1930s were important to the area’s character, too.

**The identity of Midtown.** A few people were confused about where the name “Midtown” came from, saying they preferred North York or North Toronto. Others felt that area did not have much of a cultural identity.

## Feedback about community services & facilities

Participants identified community services and facilities in the area that they use as well as services that they felt are missing in the Yonge-Eglinton study area.

**More cultural facilities.** Many people said that the area needs more cultural facilities. Specific suggestions included a theatre for cultural events (ex. dance, plays, local productions), more

diverse cultural offerings for restaurants, and a broader range of shopping options. One person liked the new VIP theatre in the RioCan Yonge-Eglinton Centre.

**More services for seniors.** Some people felt that the area needs more services for seniors (like a Second Mile Club).

**The library and community centre are great.** Many said they love the North Toronto Memorial Community Centre (using it for aquafit, yoga, tai chi, art classes, and more) and the Northern District Library. Several people said they would like more health and recreation options in the neighbourhood. One person said there should be more facilities that operate after 7 p.m. and on weekends. Sometimes existing centres are crowded or poorly lit (such as the track at the community centre or in Sherwood Park).

**Small business.** Many people said they would like to see more varied businesses in the area, such as furniture stores, kitchen stores, hardware stores, and craft goods stores. Many said they prized small, independent stores.

**Schools.** Several participants said they were concerned that the area does not appear to have enough schools. One person said the redevelopment of North Toronto Collegiate was a good example of putting a building above a school and thought there should be more urban format or joint-use schools.

**Dogs.** Some people said there should be more spaces for dogs in the area.

## Feedback about transportation

Participants identified priority transportation issues that they would like to see considered in the area, including general improvements, pedestrian and safety improvements, transit and cycling improvements.

**Traffic flow and connections.** Generally, people felt the area is congested and needs better connections (ex. to Sunnybrook Hospital, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Centre, and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind on Bayview Avenue). Some people felt it was important to widen existing streets to improve traffic flow, while others said the City should not widen existing streets, citing that wider streets are less safe for pedestrians.

**Pedestrian safety and improvements.** A number of general and specific pedestrian safety priorities and improvements were suggested. Generally, many people said the area should have wider sidewalks since pedestrians (including people in wheelchairs and scooters) have too little space. One person said that garbage contractors often leave garbage bins in the middle of the sidewalk, which create obstacles and safety issues for people in wheelchairs. Another person was happy to see new traffic lights being installed on Yonge Street, and another was happy about lighting of sidewalks on Roehampton and Broadway. Specific suggestions included:

- Add a stop sign at Orchard View Blvd. directly east of the North Toronto Memorial Arena—a running trail goes through this intersection and it's very unsafe. Several people agreed with this suggestion.
- In Eglinton Park, continue the paved trail past the playground all the way to Roselawn Avenue
- Add a crosswalk at Duplex Avenue and Orchard View Blvd.
- Put wider sidewalks on Redpath Avenue.
- Find a way to manage cars turning north on Duplex Avenue at Eglinton Avenue; many drive too fast through the intersection.
- Put more traffic lights on Duplex Avenue—cars speed through there now.

**Cycling improvements.** Several people felt the area has far too little cycling infrastructure and asked for a comprehensive approach to adding bike infrastructure in the area, including on-street lanes and bicycle parking. One person said the biggest challenge in the area was with north-south connections, both within the study area and between the study area and downtown. Specific suggestions included:

- **Improve cycling on the Beltline.** There's currently a barrier at Oriole Parkway that makes it hard for cyclists on the beltline to cross the street. The Avenue Road crossing is much better and should be a model for new cycling crossings.
- **Add bicycle lanes to Yonge Street.** Yonge is more accessible than Duplex Avenue.

**Improvements to transit.** Many people said Eglinton Subway Station is too crowded and that several trains often pass before people can board. Other suggested transit improvements included:

- **Add streetcar service to Mount Pleasant and more bus service to Yonge Street.**
- **11 Bayview bus** has difficulty travelling northbound to Sunnybrook Hospital because the un-signalized intersection at Davisville Avenue and Bayview Avenue slows traffic down.
- **97B Yonge Bus** to Queens Quay should run every 15 minutes during rush hour.
- **Add a concourse** between the LRT platform and the subway platform.
- **Extend subway hours.**

**Parking.** Some people felt the area does not have enough public parking. Others said street parking creates traffic back-ups, especially at Roehampton Avenue and Yonge Street and at Broadway Avenue and Yonge Street.

## Other feedback

Participants gave other feedback, including feedback about housing, development and process.

**Rental housing and affordable housing.** Many people said they were concerned that the area was losing rental housing to condos and that there should be more affordable housing (such as

rent-geared-to-income units, co-op housing, and affordable housing in high density developments). Some felt that rising housing costs are a threat to diversity in the area.

**Development.** Several people were concerned about the amount of development in the area, indicating that it is making the area crowded and unlivable. People were also concerned that this new development was changing the area's character, potentially blocking views, and straining the area's existing infrastructure (school capacity, space at Eglinton Park, availability of programs at the Community Centre). Some felt that it made sense the area to accommodate more density and felt that it was more important to make sure that developers pay for needed improvements to infrastructure.

**Process.** Many people were very happy to see City Planning working to engage the community through a weekend PiPS event. Some said it would be good to see the local area Councillors at the PiPS event or for the City to advertise about future PiPS events in the North Toronto Post. A few people said the maps on the display boards were hard to read and should include street names.

## Next Steps

City Planning and Swerhun Facilitation thanked people for taking the time to participate and told them this summary of feedback would be posted on the City's website in the coming weeks. The team handed out pieces of paper with the website and encouraged people to learn more and stay involved.