

Northern Secondary School Planners in Public Spaces (PiPS) Summary

Yonge-Eglinton Growth, Built Form, and Infrastructure Review

December 15, 2015

11:30 am – 12:30 pm

Northern Secondary School

Overview

On Tuesday, December 15, 2015, the City of Toronto hosted a Planners in Public Spaces (PiPS) event for students at Northern Secondary School. The PiPS event was held during the student's lunch hour in an effort to provide youth with an opportunity to become aware of, and get involved with, the Yonge-Eglinton Growth, Built Form, and Infrastructure Review. 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 six display boards arranged in the main foyer of the school, each board providing information on a different component of the Review. Participating students shared feedback by annotating the boards with dots and sticky notes and by speaking with members of the study team. Over the course of an hour, approximately 60 students stopped to participate in the PiPS event. Diane Ho and David Brutto of the City Planning Division attended from the City of Toronto, along with Ian Malczewski and Laura Pianta of Swerhun Facilitation.

Ian Malczewski prepared a draft this PiPS Summary and City Planning staff reviewed it before it was finalized.

Summary of feedback

The feedback below is organized into topics that the City Planning Division had 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 the study process.

Feedback about landmarks, open spaces, and views

Students identified a number of buildings, landmarks and open spaces that they use and think are important to the area.

Landmarks and buildings

Students identified a few landmarks and buildings that they considered important to Midtown, including: the recently renovated Yonge-Eglinton centre (the “centrepiece” of the area), Northern S.S., North Toronto Collegiate Institute, St. Peter's Lutheran Church on Mount

Pleasant Road north of Eglinton Avenue (which is good for orientation due to its distinctive blue roof), the Northern S.S. sports field, the back of Northern S.S. (a quiet area where students can hang out—the other side is “city busy”), and the farmer’s market at Davisville.

Open Spaces

Students said they like Sherwood Park and said they would like to see more parks and open space in the area. One student said they would like see more gardens and benches in the community.

Feedback about cultural heritage

Students identified the area’s movie theatres and Northern S.S itself as culturally important places. One student said the area’s cultural identity was mostly characterized by its large population of high-income earners, or “wealthy people.”

Feedback about community services & facilities

Students identified different community services and facilities that they use in the area:

Schools. Beyond Northern S.S., many students said they use the sports field at North Toronto Collegiate Institute.

Recreation. Students identified several recreational and health facilities that they use, including: Centre Ring Gym on Balliol Street, St Clements School (for volleyball), and the pool at Northern S.S. Many students said they really like and use the North Toronto Memorial Community Centre on Eglinton, especially for swimming. They said the area needs more recreational facilities, including: basketball courts, hockey rinks, baseball diamonds, and generally more public sports fields. Places outside the study area that students use include the park at Avenue Road and Lawrence Avenue and Leaside Memorial Gardens (for hockey).

Cultural facilities. Students identified a variety of facilities and activities in the area, including: Indigo, the Yonge-Eglinton Centre (especially the food court) the area’s movie theatres (especially at the Yonge-Eglinton Centre), and the area’s many diverse shops and restaurants. Some felt the area needed more cultural facilities and suggested that there could be more art exhibits/galleries, a movie museum, abstract public art, graffiti walls, murals (like on Sporting Life on Mount Pleasant at Blythwood Road), and more diverse, affordable restaurants for students.

Feedback about transportation

Students gave feedback about transportation priorities in terms of bicycling, transit, and pedestrian issues.

Bicycling. Several students felt there should be more bicycle routes. One student suggested a priority improvement should be focusing on cycling infrastructure on Avenue Road (near Upper Canada College). Other students said the City should put bike lanes anywhere and everywhere it can, while another mentioned that they liked cycling on Lascelles Blvd.

Transit. Many students said transit was the primary way they travelled to and through the area, and identified a number of priority improvements, including:

- **Bus routes.** The 32 Eglinton bus and 56 Leaside bus are often overcrowded and really slow because of the ongoing construction on Eglinton Avenue. Sometimes it can take 20-30 minutes to get from Yonge Street to Mount Pleasant Road, and a few students said they have been late for school because of delays. More consistent bus service on these routes was common suggestion, as was adding more buses and more frequent service. Several students noted that the Eglinton LRT would make transit better on this route and said they were looking forward to using it.
- **Transit hours.** Some students said they would like to see longer hours of operation on transit. One person said the subway closes too early.

Pedestrian. Many students said walking was their favourite way of moving around the area: it usually feels safe and is often faster than the bus because of all the construction. Students suggested specific pedestrian improvements to improve safety:

- **Eglinton Avenue and Hanna Road.** There should be a pedestrian crossing here.
- **Eglinton Avenue and Forman Avenue.** Increase the crossing time; it is currently too short and students have to run across pedestrian crossing at the intersection.

Next Steps

City Planning and Swerhun Facilitation thanked students and staff 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.