# TOcore Avatar Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Why create avatars?

We created the avatars for two reasons: to serve as a reminder to both City staff and the public about the diversity that exists in Toronto and the need to plan in a way that accommodates the many types of relationships people have with Downtown; and to help Torontonians reflect on their own experiences of, and relationships with Downtown.

### 2. Don't the Avatars just perpetuate stereotypes?

We hope not! We do think it's important to highlight the fact that race, gender and income are important factors in how a person experiences the city. The way these factors intersect matter to Torontonians' identities, priorities and service needs, and we didn't want to gloss over that. While some of our stories might seem to perpetuate stereotypes, we think they are accurate reflections of how different groups of people experience life in the city. For example, because over a third of people identifying as Aboriginal in Toronto also experience poverty, we thought it was important to incorporate that experience into Cindy's story. The intent is not to stereotype people in our communities but to address Torontonians' complex realities and draw attention to the ways that people experience our city today, as well as how they experience vulnerability.

### 3. Where did the data come from that you based the avatars off of?

We worked with a market research firm, Environics Analytics, to develop most of our avatars using data that groups people into 'segments'. Each segment consists of people who share a variety of common characteristics, including where they live, what kind of work they do, what kind of home they live in, how much money they make, and so on. This data comes mostly from the census, with some additional market research added to the mix as well. Similar data does not exist for the vulnerable populations that we chose to highlight, so we used data and information from a variety of studies and reports to create their stories.

### 4. Are the avatars representative of the demographics of Toronto?

They are and they aren't. The avatars are based on an amalgamation of various segments (see above) of the population. There are definitely people in Toronto who share the same demographic characteristics but there are also people who will find that no avatar properly represents their situation. This is inevitable given the number and

diversity of people in Toronto, but we did our best to capture some of the more common segments of the population.

### 5. Why invent stories for the avatars? Why not let the data speak for itself?

Data can be a powerful tool, but people generally don't relate to data because it's impersonal. People do relate to stories, however, and that's why we wrote them. We hope you'll find them interesting and fun to read and that you'll find something in at least one of them that you can relate to.

### 6. Could you tell a different story for each avatar?

Of course! These are fictional stories that attempt to get at some of the different relationships people have with our Downtown, but there are as many possible stories as there are people in Toronto, so of course, if your story is different, we'd love to hear it!

### 7. How will the avatars influence decision-making?

The avatars will influence decision-making by reminding both Planning staff and the public to think about how decisions or planning directions might impact Torontonians differently. The City will be holding community consultations over the next year, including specific engagement with Torontonians with lived experience of vulnerability such as poverty, housing precarity and homelessness. The TOcore Avatars will be a critical tool in these consultations and throughout the project to help us think beyond our individual biases to make better collective decisions for the future of downtown.