

Davisville Subway Station Planners in Public Spaces (PiPS) Summary

Yonge-Eglinton Growth, Built Form, and Infrastructure Review

January 27, 2015

3:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Davisville Subway Station

Overview

On Wednesday, January 27, 2016, the City of Toronto hosted a Planners in Public Spaces (PiPS) event in the entrance to the Davisville Subway Station. 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 two display boards arranged in the Davisville Subway Station entrance. One board identified neighbourhood features and the study scope, and the other showed feedback categories alongside a study area map. Participants shared feedback by annotating the map board with sticky notes and by speaking with members of the study team. Over the course of two hours, over 100 people stopped to participate in the PiPS event. Andrew Au of the City Planning Division attended from the City of Toronto along with Ian Malczewski, Matthew Wheatley, and Casey Craig of Swerhun Facilitation.

Casey Craig and Ian Malczewski prepared this PiPS Summary and shared it with City Planning for review before finalizing it.

Detailed summary of feedback

Many participants had great things to say about the neighbourhood, with one referring to the area as a “hidden jewel”. Several participants highlighted the area’s parks and green spaces, while others said that they feel a sense of safety and community with the area’s many young people, families, and seniors. Some said that the area is very walkable (one mentioned an underground PATH-like system connecting to the subway), close to many great shops, transit options (bus and subway), and community services; others said they liked and supported their local Councillors. Some participants acknowledged that the neighbourhood is densifying, and commented that, while it sometimes feels congested, the area is also more lively and vibrant. One participant liked that the area feels like downtown, but away from the “chaos.”

The feedback below is organized into the topics that City Planning Division was inviting attendees to discuss: 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 work.

Landmarks

One person identified the Church of the Transfiguration (at Redpath Avenue and Manor Road East) as an important landmark. Others said the Mount Pleasant Cemetery is a landmark with history that should be identified and promoted. One participant suggested that the Chaplain Estates neighbourhood should be maintained as a single dwelling enclave.

Open Spaces

The Don Valley Path. One participant identified the Don Valley cycling path as an important outdoor space beyond the study area that people seem unaware of, and suggested improving wayfinding and mapping within the study area to increase awareness.

Existing park spaces are great—there should be more. Participants identified the Kay Gardner Beltline and Trail, Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Davisville Park, and Eglinton Park as highly valued neighbourhood spaces. Many participants noted that more parks, off-leash dog parks, and public spaces should be provided to accommodate the increased population, especially in the Yonge and Eglinton area. One person suggested the City form a partnership with the cemetery to explore ways to enhance public access and use of the grounds. Many participants expressed concerns about the area's lack of park space in light of all its growth. Participants also suggested adding more street trees and creative landscaping throughout the study area. One person suggested adding a parkette amidst intense development areas with a waterfall or water feature to help dull the noise of construction

Building heights and wind. One person noted that the demolition of older buildings for condos is negatively impacting livability and character of the area, and that the building heights around Yonge and Eglinton have created a wind tunnel effect that negatively affects walkability and enjoyment of the area.

Views

Important views. Participants commented that certain views enhance feelings of connectedness to the City, including views towards the CN Tower, water, and green spaces. It was suggested that views to the Kay Gardner Trail be protected. One person commented that they appreciated the view of the Upper Canada College clock tower (Lonsdale Road and Foresthill Road) when looking South from Eglinton Park. One participant mentioned that they enjoyed the character and view at Bayview, and a large number of participants noted that the building heights on Yonge Street and on Davisville Avenue are impeding views Downtown.

Site specific feedback

Participants shared other feedback about built form in the area, including:

- Many participants suggested implementing an interim use at the vacant former LCBO building at Yonge and Millwood. Participants called the building an eyesore, noting it gives a negative first impression of the area from Davisville Station.
- Some participants commented on the TTC's bus barns site at the south west corner of Yonge and Eglinton being eyesore, inquiring about its future use.
- Several participants suggested that Davisville Junior Public School become a community hub, and some stressed that it should not become a condo development.
- TTC should redevelop its property from increased profits
- One participant noted that they liked the plaza outside Aroma at the Yonge Eglinton Centre.

Other built form feedback

Some participants felt development of certain areas was important and encouraged it. However, some noted they would like to see more colour and public art on and around buildings and the implementation of green features and standards in new development. Participants shared other feedback about built form in the area, including:

- A large number of participants commented that new condo buildings are too many, too high, and coming too fast for the area; stagger the growth.
- New development should consider sunlight and shadow effects and appropriate transitions and set-backs for a better pedestrian realm.
- New buildings on Bayview should be limited to one to five storeys; 30 storeys is out of context.
- Emergency service access to tall buildings should be considered.
- Include more mid-rise, not just high-rise.

Feedback about cultural heritage

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

Heritage and neighbourhood character. Generally, people felt that buildings with heritage and historical value should be preserved; where possible, preserve the façade and renovate the interiors to maintain some of the existing character of the neighbourhood. The churches, banks, and trains were all identified as being important heritage features of the neighbourhood.

Commemoration and preservation: Some said there should be more direct commemorations of the historical transformations of the area. One participants suggested that the Sunnybrook Plaza be recognized as a historical site as one of Toronto's first strip plazas. Other specific places

identified as having historical value to preserve include: Postal Station K; Regent and Mount Pleasant movie theatres (including their neon lighting); and the Castlefield art-deco style heritage block.

Feedback about community services & facilities

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

More arts, cultural and recreational facilities. The new hockey rink and the tennis courts near Davisville were highlighted by one participant as a benefit to the area. Some noted that the neighbourhood could use more space for the creation and enjoyment of the arts, such as a comedy club and a performing arts centre.

More activities for seniors. Many participants noted the area serves seniors very well, while some felt that the area could benefit from more seniors' activity programming and appropriate residential options.

Libraries and community centres. A few participants noted that they were really happy with the Northern District library, though some felt a larger, more modern and attractive facility is needed. Those who indicated they used the facilities regularly noted that they would like to see more youth programming and after hours/weekend activities, and more convenient hours and diversity of classes.

Schools. Some participants said schools are beyond capacity (Hodgson and Oriole Park), and that many are in need of major renovations. Some felt that the school yards should be preserved and made accessible to the residents after hours and in the summer to increase access to outdoor public play space. There was a strong desire among participants to see the Davisville Junior Public School turned into a community hub.

Leaside needs more community facilities. Several participants commented that the Leaside area is not well served in terms of libraries, community centres, parks, and recreational opportunities or adequate transit to access these facilities elsewhere.

Diverse businesses, restaurants and food – missing affordable options. Some participants expressed that while the area has diverse shopping options, it needs more mom and pop stores, small businesses, diverse food options, and hip bars that would support a more vibrant night life. Many people noted a wide variety of restaurants and small shops in the neighbourhood, though a few people commented that the area needs a larger, more affordable grocery store nearby, particularly in the Davisville area. Some felt that the area is lacking a major drug store (Shoppers, Pharma Plus) which is important for seniors. Others felt the Davisville area needs a new liquor store.

Small businesses. One participant mentioned that there has been a loss of small retailers on Yonge Street and Mount Pleasant Road and expressed concern that more will be lost with the

increase in high rise buildings with no space for small businesses. One person encouraged BIAs to protect these shopping nodes.

Feedback about transportation

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

Traffic flow and connections. In general, people were very concerned with the level of traffic congestion in the area (subway, buses, and vehicles). Many felt that congestion is a result of construction in the area and will be worsened by the increase in people from new development.

Pedestrian safety and improvements. Pedestrian safety, particularly around schools, was brought up by several participants. Many reported that pedestrian visibility is poor at intersections; cars cannot see children coming to cross. In particular:

- The Merton crosswalk is an area where children are not able to safely cross.
- Traffic calming is required on Oxtan Avenue and on Lascelles Boulevard (on the south side of Oriole Park); cars come through both streets at high speeds
- Improve street lighting at Millwood Road (north side)
- Improve uneven sidewalks; keep sidewalks unobstructed by poles, garbage bins
- Improve walkability on Bayview; on-going redevelopment and turnover of small businesses on Bayview has made the experience of walking on Bayview less pleasant.

Cycling improvements. Some people felt the area has good bicycle infrastructure. Others noted the following:

- More bike lanes are needed on Yonge Street and South of Davisville Subway Station
- Serena Gundy Park path needs improved maintenance for cycling
- Add more connections to the Kay Gardner Trail

Improvements to transit. Many people said Davisville and Eglinton Subway Stations are too crowded and that the Yonge line is always busy. Some noted it is difficult to get on the trains. Other suggested transit priorities included:

- Have Presto available everywhere
- 11 Bayview bus should run more frequently (its now busier with the loss of route #28)
- Upgrade Davisville Station; two people mentioned the Station is especially cold
- Add more bus shelters along the routes, with heat

Accessibility: A number of participants mentioned that all transit stations should be accessible. It was noted that any new transit station development should be accessible for users in wheelchairs and upgrades were recommended, especially for busy stations.

Parking. Some participants felt the area doesn't have enough parking.

Other feedback

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

Affordable housing. Some people said they were concerned that the area was becoming less affordable with the introductions of so many condo buildings, and recommended that affordable housing strategies be adopted for the area.

Development. Several people were concerned about the amount of development in the area, saying it's making the area crowded and unlivable. People were also concerned that this new development was changing the area's character and potentially blocking views. Some said they welcomed new density, but also felt that the infrastructure needs to be developed and upgraded in conjunction with growth to ensure the area is able to meet all users' needs. One participant recommended that the City leverage surplus lands to create great public spaces instead of giving them up.

Some had suggestions for the TTC, including leveraging funding from the province, improved alternate delivery services in cases of events or unexpected transit delays, and recuperating costs of subway development by redeveloping its own property.

Many participants had suggestions about the OMB, ranging from reforming it, abolishing it, and strengthening policies to avoid having the City appear at the board.

Process. Many people were very happy to see City Planning working to engage the community through a PiPS event. Many people asked if they could follow the project online, and took the website slips to provide further feedback. Further specific process feedback included:

- Suggestion that the City use local websites and free daily papers like Metro to communicate project information.
- Identify Mount Pleasant Cemetery should be green space on all maps

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.