

North Toronto Memorial Community Centre Planners in Public Spaces (PiPS)

Summary

Yonge-Eglinton Growth, Built Form, and Infrastructure Review

January 24, 2016

11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Second Floor Kiosk, North Toronto Memorial Community Centre

Overview

On Sunday, January 24, 2016, the City of Toronto hosted a Planners in Public Spaces (Planners in Public Spaces (PiPS) event at the North Toronto Memorial Community Centre. The purpose of the PiPS event was to: raise awareness about the Yonge-Eglinton Growth, Built Form, and Infrastructure Review; share some 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 on the second floor of the North Toronto Memorial Community 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, approximately 30 people stopped to participate in the PiPS event. David Brutto and Rong Yu of the City Planning Division attended from the City of Toronto along with Matthew Wheatley and Laura Pianta of Swerhun Facilitation. Some people provided their email addresses and several others said they planned to visit the project website to provide further feedback and stay up-to-date on the project's progress.

Matthew Wheatley prepared this PiPS Summary and shared it with City Planning staff before finalizing it.

Summary of Feedback

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

Feedback on Buildings, Landmarks and Open Spaces

Participants identified a number of open spaces, buildings and views they think are important and should be considered and preserved as part of this process. Participants also identified some issues with built form and strategies to help improve the area.

Built Form

Building design and use should be more diverse. Some participants said they would like to see a greater variety of building heights, architecture and uses in the area. One participant said they would like to see more Art Deco inspired buildings; another participant said that older buildings should be repurposed where possible.

Building heights. Some participants said there are too many high-rise buildings in the area already and that more will make things worse. Specific concerns about high-rises included:

- Increased shadows and creation of wind tunnels; and
- Making the area feel crowded and too much like areas in the downtown, e.g. King Street West and John Street.

Open Spaces

Valued open spaces and parks. The open spaces and parks participants identified as important included: Eglinton Park, June Rowland's Park, the Belt Line, Sherwood Park, and Mount Pleasant Cemetery.

Open spaces and parks support health and wellness. Several participants agreed that parks and open spaces enhance the area's livability; one participant said they can help improve and maintain good mental health.

Greenways are a great idea. One participant said that planned greenways (which are identified in the Midtown in Focus Parks, Open Space and Streetscape Plan) will significantly enhance the area. They were especially happy to hear about green ways that will run east-west in the area.

Views

Important Views. One person said that the view looking up and down the Yonge subway line from the bridges that go over the tracks is very important and should be maintained.

Feedback on Heritage

Participants identified buildings and locations they feel are important to the area's cultural identity:

Identified buildings and locations. Participants identified current places, including: Mount Pleasant Theatre, Regent Theatre, and Mount Pleasant Cemetery. One participant identified the Dominion Coal Silos at Mount Pleasant Road and Merton Street, noting that they are no longer present and that it would have been nice to repurpose them in some way.

Feedback on Community Infrastructure

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

Develop and maintain strong relationships with local community groups. Participants said the City should connect with with different community groups and organizations in the area to better understand what services and facilities are needed.

Create a focal point that helps to define the area. One participant said it would be nice to have a large library in a central location that is the focal point of the area. Another participant said there is potential to create a space similar to Yonge-Dundas Square.

Increasing and improving hard infrastructure is crucial. Several participants said that development and intensification cannot occur without also increasing and improving the hard infrastructure in the area, including: water and sewer; roads; transit; and electricity. One participant said the area is not equipped to be a growth centre and that the Places to Grow Act is negatively impacting the area.

Enhance employment and retail services and facilities. Some participants said that small independent businesses and increased office space could help to increase opportunities for employment in the area. One participant said that the Yonge-Eglinton area could become the City's second financial district.

The area needs a wide variety of services and facilities. Some participants said that the services and facilities in the area need to respond to and accommodate the demographic and cultural diversity of the area. One participant said they would like the Toronto Street Festival, which was cancelled in 2007, brought back.

Look for opportunities to reuse older buildings to provide space for more cultural services and facilities. Some participants said the area needs more creative facilities for artists. One participant said that older buildings could be used to create art studios and galleries.

Increase recreational facilities. Some participants said there is a need for additional recreational programs and activities. One participant said the area needs another indoor pool like the one at the North Toronto Memorial Community Centre; another participant said they use the Leaside Community Centre for hockey and curling.

The area is going to need more schools. A number of participants said that the existing schools, especially North Toronto Collegiate Institute and Northern Secondary School, are either full or nearly full and that the area is going to need more space for students in the near future. One participant said the improvements made at North Toronto Collegiate Institute, especially the field, are good and were a direct result of active involvement from members of the community.

Feedback on Transportation

People identified priority transportation improvements that they would like to see considered in the area, including: traffic flow; transit improvements; cycling improvements; pedestrian safety improvements; and parking improvements.

Traffic flow. Participants identified Duplex Avenue and Chaplin Crescent as streets that currently have issues and need improvements. Specific issues and improvements identified include:

- There are too many large trucks using Duplex Avenue; there should be more restrictions, which prevent large trucks from using Duplex Avenue as a through route to the 401.
- Traffic calming strategies for Duplex Avenue should be investigated.
- Chaplin Crescent is far too busy; traffic studies should be reviewed to understand how many cars are using this street versus what its capacity is.

Transit improvements. Several participants said that the subway and buses in the area are overcrowded. They also said they are concerned that the Eglinton Crosstown will also be overcrowded, once it comes online. A few people said that the integration of the Eglinton Crosstown needs to be done in such a way that it is not disruptive to other modes of transportation.

One participant said the City should clearly define what they are responsible for versus what Metrolinx is responsible for regarding the design, construction, and implementation of the Eglinton Crosstown. They suggested that the City could use their website to clearly define these roles and responsibilities and provide links to the Metrolinx website.

Cycling improvements. A few participants shared their experiences of cycling in the area and suggested some specific improvements, including:

- **The area needs more north-south bike lanes.**
- **Eglinton Avenue is not a good environment for cyclists.** One participant said that when cycling from Glencairn to Leaside they always avoid Eglinton Avenue and use smaller streets such as Erskine Avenue, Broadway Avenue, Roehampton Avenue and Bayview Avenue.
- **The Beltline is a nice place to bike.**
- **The area needs to be more cycling friendly for families.** One participant said that they were unable to teach their son to ride a bike in the area because the sidewalks are too narrow.

Pedestrian and safety improvements. Generally, participants felt that the pedestrian environment could be improved by increasing the size of the pedestrian environment, e.g. widening sidewalks and expanding setbacks. One participant said that people often walk in groups, especially high school students, and narrow sidewalks make it difficult for these groups and others to get around.

Parking improvements. A few participants said that the area needs more parking for retailers and restaurants located on Yonge Street to reduce the number of cars being parked on side streets, especially Duplex Avenue. One participant said that parking should not be allowed on Duplex Avenue on the weekends.

Other Feedback

Process. Several participants said they were happy to see City Planning working to engage the community at a local facility on the weekend. Participants also shared some ideas to help increase the number of people reached and help improve the overall process, including:

- Put a visible sign outside the building on the sidewalk to attract people that are walking by.
- Have a handout with information about the process and the studies being completed that people can take with them and share with others.

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.