



## TOcore Public Open House on the Proposed Downtown Plan and Associated Infrastructure Strategies – Summary Report

On December 2, 2017, the City of Toronto hosted a public Open House on the proposed Downtown Plan and related Infrastructure Strategies. The Open House was held at the YWCA at 87 Elm St. from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Approximately 70 members of the public participated in the Open House, including Downtown residents and workers.

### Purpose

The Open House provided the public with an opportunity to review and give feedback on the proposed Downtown Plan and its five related Infrastructure Strategies (Parks and Public Realm; Community Services and Facilities; Mobility; Energy and Water).

Specifically, the Open House:

- Was the final "large format" public meeting prior to a statutory meeting on the Downtown Plan in spring 2018;
- Provided an opportunity to gather public feedback on the policy language as written in the proposed Downtown Plan; and
- Gave an overview of the Infrastructure Strategies and identified the challenges, "transformative ideas," and strategic actions for each.

### Format

The Open House was structured as a drop-in with approximately [60 display boards](#) set up across four rooms. A rotating [introductory presentation](#) was provided three times during the Open House, at 10:15 a.m., 11:45 a.m., and 1:00 p.m.

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The presentation was approximately 25 minutes long and provided some context on the proposed Downtown Plan and Infrastructure Strategies. The presentation:

- provided an overview of the TOcore planning process, including previous engagement events and current timeline;
- highlighted some of the key policy moves included in the proposed Downtown Plan;
- provided a brief summary of each of the five Infrastructure Strategies;
- gave instructions on how to provide feedback at the display board stations; and
- directed the public to the [TOcore website](#) for further information and feedback tools (including an [online survey](#) and [Social Pinpoint](#) mapping tool), following the Open House.

Display boards were grouped into stations throughout the YWCA, with expert staff and consultants available at each station to answer questions and facilitate discussion. Display boards shown at the Open House are available on the [TOcore website](#). The display boards addressed:

1. *Proposed Downtown Plan policies:* Approximately 40 boards were dedicated to the proposed policies. Boards were organized by theme area, with an overview board for each theme. Policies were displayed chart-style on the boards with space provided for specific feedback on each policy statement. Maps were used to support understanding of the policy statements.
2. *Infrastructure Strategies:* A series of display boards were dedicated to summarizing draft Infrastructure Strategy content, including:
  - a. The **challenges** associated with growth and providing a rationale for undertaking the Strategy.
  - b. **Transformative ideas** or other opportunities to address challenges.
  - c. Strategic **actions** that will be taken to address challenges.
3. *Other Display Boards and Media:* In addition to the boards detailed above, boards illustrating the transformative ideas included in the Parks and Public Realm Plan were on display. A presentation summarizing the Community Services and Facilities Strategy was also shown on rotation on a TV screen in one of the meeting rooms.

## **Collecting Feedback**

Meeting participants were encouraged to provide feedback on proposed policies and draft Infrastructure Strategy content in the following ways:

1. *In conversation with Staff and consultants at the Open House:* Staff and consultants were available to discuss the proposed policies and Infrastructure Strategies with meeting participants.
2. *On display boards:* Comments were collected directly on the boards using sticker dots to indicate support (i.e. dotmocracy), and by posting sticky notes with comments on policy language.
3. *Through online tools:* Tablet computers were available at the meeting to provide access to the TOcore online survey and Social Pinpoint mapping tool. Both online tools are available on the [TOcore website](#) until January 19, 2018. Survey questions include:
  - Which policies will most improve quality of life in Downtown? Why?
  - Which policies do you think could be refined? How?
  - Is there anything missing from the Proposed Downtown Plan policies?

## **Summary of Feedback**

The summary of feedback below is based on conversations with Staff and consultants and input provided on display boards at the Open House. The online tools – including the survey and Social Pinpoint mapping tool – will remain open until January 19, 2018. As such, input collected to date through online tools is not included here. Feedback is organized by theme.

### **Built Form ([link to boards](#))**

Built form policies in the proposed Downtown plan aim to ensure liveability as the Downtown continues to grow. Policies respond to the related principles of comfort, vibrancy, diversity, safety and beauty. Comments in this section focus on policies related to shaping built form, transition between built form, improving the public realm around buildings, and creating a comfortable microclimate.

#### *Feedback on Proposed Policies:*

- Clearly designate public spaces on the interior of new buildings in order to support liveability.
- Include policies on active store fronts, transition from sidewalk to building and availability of building entrances.
- Reducing wind impacts on sidewalks is very important. Stronger policy language is also needed to protect sunlight on streets and sidewalks.

*Points of Clarification:*

Q: What is meant by "tall" buildings?

A: The City of Toronto's Official Plan (Section 3.1.3) describes tall buildings as "...typically buildings whose height is greater than the width of the adjacent road allowance." Additionally, the City has [Council-adopted guidelines](#) for mid-rise and tall buildings.

Q: Why does the net-new shadow policy only measure from March 21<sup>st</sup> to September 21<sup>st</sup> and not the whole year?

A: We are addressing thermal comfort in part by ensuring solar access. The times identified (10:18 a.m. – 4:18 p.m. between the in spring and fall equinoxes) in the proposed Downtown Plan is when sun is most effective at supporting thermal comfort of pedestrians and can encourage use of the public realm. The policies for sun access are based on a Toronto-specific study called *Sun, Wind, and Pedestrian Comfort: A Study of Toronto's Central Area* (Bosselmann, et al), which recommended that the City focus on the spring and fall as these are the times of year when direct access to sunlight has the potential to extend comfort for Torontonians in public spaces. In winter, people dress for the weather regardless of sunlight, and there is not much sunlight available due to the low angle of the sun. This study considered balancing sunlight and development. With the low angle of the sun above the horizon at noon on December 21<sup>st</sup> there would not be much potential for development if we were protecting sun for that time of year.

**Land Use & Economy ([link to boards](#))**

The land use framework in the proposed Downtown Plan promotes a balanced approach to growth, recognizing the importance of Downtown as an economic driver for the city and region. Policies define the appropriate built form scale and mix of uses to reflect the character of the diverse neighbourhoods and districts, while promoting *complete communities* and a prosperous economy.

Comments in this section focus on policies related to directing growth, *Mixed Use Areas*, balancing non-residential and residential growth, and Priority Retail Streets.

*Feedback on Proposed Policies:*

- The *Mixed Use Areas* designation should be extended to all arterial streets.
- In light of plans for the Downtown Relief Line, growth should also be directed to the Queen Street East area.

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- The areas identified to absorb most of the growth are largely built out (e.g. City Place). The Downtown Plan should consider what incremental growth could look like in existing *Neighbourhoods* as well.
- If *Neighbourhoods* remain protected, more high-rise development will be needed elsewhere in order to ease Toronto's housing shortage and low rental vacancy rate.
- Plan policies should make specific reference to protecting house-form development in *Neighbourhoods*.
- There should be a development freeze in *Mixed Use Areas 3* until transit infrastructure is able to support additional growth.
- The *Mixed Use Areas 2* designation shown at Spadina Avenue and Harbord Street is not in keeping with the low-rise residential and mixed "Main Street" character of the area. This area should be designated *Mixed Use Areas 3*.
- Protect fine-grain commercial streets like Yonge Street in other neighbourhoods. Prevent displacement of small businesses in areas where development is pushing land prices higher.
- All of Bay Street should be designated a Priority Retail Street.
- Consider allowing residential development in the Health Sciences District. This would enable people to live closer to work, make the area more vibrant in the evening, accommodate workers who have flexible schedules or work off-hours, and support transit demand.
- The campus character of the University of Toronto should be protected.

### **Parks and Public Realm ([link to boards](#))**

Toronto's streets, parks and accessible open spaces are among the city's greatest assets and are essential to the quality of life that Torontonians enjoy. The provision of parkland is an essential element of *complete communities*. New parkland will be provided in the Downtown to support growth. An expanded and improved public realm system will be accessible, inclusive and welcoming to all people who live, work and visit Downtown.

Comments in this section focus on connecting the Downtown to the natural environment and on the transformative ideas included in the draft Parks and Public Realm Plan.

#### *Feedback on Proposed Policies:*

- Continuous natural paths are the best policy for both human and habitat health.
- Community "ownership" and engagement in parks should be encouraged to keep them safe and accessible for women and vulnerable populations.
- Acknowledge Indigenous traditional territory in the Downtown. For example, a plaque at Canoe Landing Park in City Place.

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- Increasing "green" spaces in the core doesn't always require a park. Planting more trees on streets can help achieve "greening."
- Please use tree trenches and Silva Cells to ensure adequate water and soil volumes for city trees so they grow as large as shown in the renderings of the future Downtown.

### *Feedback on Transformative Ideas:*

- All of Bay Street should be included as a Great Street.
- York Street between Front Street and Queens Quay should be included as a Great Street.
- Buildings that line Great Streets should be set back from the street, have an active ground floor use, and good interface with the street.
- Ground floor uses should be included along University Avenue to add vitality
- The University Avenue streetscape deserves to be improved. It should be safer and more welcoming for pedestrians and cyclists.
- University Avenue should be preserved as an historical "grand avenue." The median is a great walkway, allows for public art in a central location, and provides a good angle for viewing buildings. Unique elements of the street (e.g. the cow gates surrounding Osgoode Hall) should be preserved.
- Bi-directional bike lanes can be unsafe due to conflicts while entering and exiting the lane. This type of bike lane is no longer being used in many "smart" biking cities (e.g. Denmark, and now, Montreal). Single-direction, separated bike lanes are preferable.
- "Rethinking" University Avenue means a potential loss of driving lanes. This would make it more difficult to commute by car. We should invest in transit first, before reducing the number of driving lanes.
- Consider removing the fifth lane on Jarvis Street.
- Add local bus service to Jarvis Street. A bike lane could also be incorporated into the sidewalk area.
- Remember that there are many men's shelters in the Garden District area. Any revitalization of this area should ensure that shelters aren't displaced.
- Yorkville Avenue east of Yonge Street (north of Bloor Street and west of Park Road) should be included in the Ramsden Park-Yorkville Park District.
- The Davenport Road trail is a good opportunity to improve one of the only "safe" bike paths north of Bloor Street. As residential intensification west of Dufferin Street and Davenport Road continues, this bike path is needed. The elevated sidewalk is also a great feature.
- Rail Deck park is one of the most important and needed projects in the history of Toronto!
- The southern edge of Rail Deck Park should be protected, first and foremost, for robust transit as per the plan for the Downtown Relief Line. This will enable better connections to the west.

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- Look at short-term, interim uses to enliven waterfront parks and walkways. Look at Berlin and Warsaw river-fronts for examples. Don't be afraid to allow small-scale commerce.
- With good public transit connections to improve access, Rochester ferry terminal could be another ferry dock serving the Toronto Island.

### **Community Services and Facilities ([link to boards](#))**

Community Services and Facilities (CS&F) support a diverse range of programs and services to support communities, contribute to quality of life and act as neighbourhood focal points where people gather, learn, socialize and access services. CS&F are essential to fostering *complete communities* and need to be planned for and provided in a timely manner to support residential and non-residential growth.

Comments in this section focus primarily on the timeliness of CS&F provision in Downtown communities and the importance of CS&F in creating *complete communities*.

#### *Feedback on Proposed Policies:*

- Ensure that the phasing and timing of providing CS&F in new residential developments matches the timeline for residential occupancy so that services and facilities are available when people move in.
- Ensure that CS&F are able to keep up with the pace of growth Downtown. For example, the newly built Fort York Library is already at capacity for children's programs.
- It is critical that CS&F are provided on-site in new residential developments, not provided outside of the community.
- There is a need for innovative projects and funding models to ensure that new CS&F are prioritized and built without delays.
- There aren't enough schools to serve increasing demand for schools in the Waterfront communities. Currently, many children are being bused to the Island School, which already has portables on-site to deal with capacity issues.
- Support the idea of promoting community economic development by encouraging Community Benefit Agreements for large development projects.
- There is a need for specialized recreation facilities for non-profit sports organizations (e.g. water polo clubs that need access to deep water pools).

### **Mobility ([link to boards](#))**

The Downtown transportation system consists of networks for pedestrians, cyclists, transit users and drivers. The system benefits from these overlapping, well-connected and integrated networks that collectively provide a range of safe and sustainable travel choices to ensure

mobility and accessibility for all people, contributing to social equity and the creation of *complete communities*.

Comments in this section are reflective of all modes of transportation in the Downtown.

*Feedback on Proposed Policies:*

- Demand better bike parking in condos (not just storage lockers).
- Plan for future advances in technology (e.g. robotic delivery vehicles).
- There should be a consistent wayfinding system across the Downtown, including the PATH network.
- The PATH network should be accessible 24/7.
- Wider sidewalks are needed on Great Streets, Priority Retail Streets and in High Intensity Pedestrian Areas.
- There should be clear separations of space for cyclists, pedestrians and cars to ensure safety of all road users.
- Extend Bloor Street bike lanes to the west. Bike lanes should also be implemented on Bloor Street between Church and Sherbourne Streets, as per the 10-Year Cycling Network Plan.
- Address intersection design for cyclists.
- A new north-south bike lane is needed between St. George Street and Sherbourne. Yonge Street would be the best option.
- As a major east-west corridor, Dundas Street should be shown as a priority cycling route.
- A better east-west connection from the Downtown to Parkdale is needed.
- Harbour Street should be added as a priority cycling route as per the 1 Yonge Street Environmental Assessment. The north side of Lake Shore Boulevard between Bay and Parliament Streets should also be added.
- Ensure that priority cycling routes lead to major tourist destinations in the Downtown.
- To ensure more efficient movement of motor vehicles, the City should consider converting more streets to one-way streets in the Downtown. The use of advanced greens for right turns will help reduce conflict between cars, cyclists and pedestrians.
- Some people abuse accessible parking permits to park in no-parking areas. This causes congestion.
- We need a long-term plan for GO Trains at Summerhill. There is currently too much focus on Union Station.
- The potential alignment of the Downtown Relief Line shows a subway station at Moss Park. This provides an opportunity to revitalize this neighbourhood.
- The City needs a multi-modal hub strategy to account for all modes of transportation (transit, cycling, rideshare, etc.)



## **Housing ([link to boards](#))**

The City's liveability and prosperity is intrinsically connected to the provision of housing that meets the requirements of a diverse population with varying housing needs. Downtown's neighbourhoods offer various built form housing options including grade-related, mid-rise and tall buildings with a variety of ownership and tenancy models. Downtown is home to vertical communities, and new multi-unit residential buildings must accommodate a wide range of households including those with children, youth and seniors.

### *Feedback on Proposed Policies:*

- Ensure that a "bedroom" has a window and not just "access to natural light."
- The rental vacancy rate for 1-bedroom units is 50 basis points lower than for 3-bedroom units. Ensure that the new quotas for 3-bedroom units doesn't exacerbate the shortage of 1-bedroom units.
- Support the maintenance and creation of more mixed-income co-ops. Avoid "poor doors" and "poor floors" in mixed-income developments.

## **Culture ([link to boards](#))**

The *culture sector* includes creative artistic activity and the goods and services produced by it, along with the preservation of heritage. Downtown has the highest concentration of cultural spaces and cultural industry in the city, and the highest total number of cultural facilities owned privately or by other levels of government.

### *Feedback on Proposed Policies:*

- Ensure that new culture sector developments are accessible to youth and students by keeping venue prices affordable.
- Live music venues that may not have appropriate noise attenuation measures in place should still be allowed to exist. Austin, Texas has a grant program for venue upgrades that should be looked at.
- Built in infrastructure to support the film industry should also be open to use by food trucks. Their generators can be a major nuisance Downtown.
- In addition to the Cultural Corridors shown on Map 16, there is potential for the area around McCaul and Dundas Streets to become an "Arts District," anchored by the Art Gallery of Ontario and OCAD University.

## **Resiliency ([link to boards](#))**

Our climate is changing and Toronto must adapt. Planning for a liveable, competitive Downtown requires us to minimize emissions, reduce electricity demand, and build a resilient core that can withstand extreme weather and area-wide power outages.

### *Feedback on Proposed Policies:*

- Policies to incorporate biodiversity in development will be good for bees.
- Too many people think Toronto's beaches are unsafe, but this is untrue. The City needs to communicate to the public that beaches are safe.
- Ensure that GHG counts related to development are accurate by counting all CO<sub>2</sub> and related emissions to build buildings and roads, not just those associated with operations.

## **Next Steps**

This is the final round of consultation on the proposed Downtown Plan. There are many ways to provide feedback on the Plan by mid-January 2018, including:

- By visiting the [TOcore website](#)
- By emailing the TOcore team: [tocore@toronto.ca](mailto:tocore@toronto.ca)
- Following TOcore on Twitter: @CityPlanTO #TOcore
- By taking our [survey](#)
- By using our [Social Pinpoint mapping tool](#)

A statutory meeting for the Downtown Plan will be held in Spring 2018, when the plan is presented to Planning & Growth Management Committee. Details of the statutory meeting will be posted to our website when they become available, so check back regularly!

## **Contact Information**

This summary report is a review of all the comments received at the Open House. Questions about this summary can be directed to Michelle Drylie, Senior Planner, Strategic Initiatives, City of Toronto, by email ([michelle.drylie@toronto.ca](mailto:michelle.drylie@toronto.ca)) or by phone (416-392-3436).