

# Toronto Planning Review Panel

## Summary of Results from the Toronto Planning Review Panel Meeting, held May 5, 2018

### Executive Summary

The Planning Review Panel is made up of 32 randomly selected Torontonians. The Panel was created so that a representative group of Torontonians could help the City Planning Division guide growth and change in Toronto. They have been asked by the Chief Planner to work together over the course of two years to provide City Planning with informed public input on major planning initiatives. Members are tasked, in particular, with helping to ensure that these initiatives are aligned with the values and priorities of all Torontonians. On May 5, 2018, the Panel met to discuss the Pet Friendly Design Guidelines for High-Density Communities.

### Pet Friendly Design Guidelines for High-Density Communities: The Panel's Suggestions

- Panelists concluded that it is important to accommodate pets in high-density communities and develop pet-friendly guidelines, because pets provide many emotional and psychological benefits to owners. There are already high numbers of pets living in these communities, which if managed poorly, could pose challenges to the wellbeing of both pets and people.
- The Pet Friendly Design Guidelines will need to address challenges such as the management of animal waste; provision of adequate recreation space; management of noise and odour levels; cleanliness of shared spaces; and strategies to ensure the comfort and safety of people who do not like or feel safe around animals.
- The proposed Pet Friendly Design Guidelines should avoid incurring unreasonable costs to residents and developers, discourage irresponsible pet ownership, and ensure that residents who don't like or feel comfortable around animals still feel safe in their communities.
- Panelists proposed a variety of possible design ideas for units, buildings, and neighbourhoods. A few of the most suggested ideas were:
  - New areas for pets to relieve themselves on patios or green roofs;
  - Providing more pet exercise and recreation facilities and parks; and
  - Designating specific units or floors for pets, and including design elements like improved soundproofing and ventilation in buildings.

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## About the May 5, 2018, Meeting of the Planning Review Panel

On May 5th, 2018, the Panel met to provide input concerning the Pet Friendly Design Guidelines being developed by the City Planning Division. Materials shared with the Panel can be accessed at [www.toronto.ca/planning/tprp](http://www.toronto.ca/planning/tprp) by clicking on "Learn with the Panel."

Daniel Fusca, Stakeholder Engagement Lead with the City Planning Division, opened the day with a learning session on TOCore, an initiative that has prepared a new plan for Toronto's Downtown.

Next, Panelists heard a presentation from James Parakh, Manager of Urban Design for Toronto and East York District, about the City Planning Division's initiative to develop Pet Friendly Design Guidelines for new developments.

The purpose of the study is to develop a series of guidelines to inform the design and planning of pet amenities in multi-unit, high-density communities. There are already a high number of cats and dogs living in high-rise buildings in Toronto, and this population is expected to increase. The City Planning Division is looking to develop design guidelines at the unit, building, and neighbourhood levels to better plan for and support pets and pet owners.

The study is currently in the early research and consultation phases. The City Planning Division will study and draft recommendations over the next year and a half before delivering final guidelines in Winter 2019. City Planning staff committed to return to the Planning Review Panel so that Panelists can provide additional feedback on the guidelines as they evolve.

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## Detailed Summary of Results

*The results of the Panel's discussion are summarized below. Following the meeting, this summary was drafted by the Panel's support staff based on documentation from the meeting and circulated to Panelists for edits and to approve that this summary reflects the broad consensus achieved during their meeting. Panelists were also welcome to submit additional, individual commentary for inclusion in this summary, which is included under the names of individual Panelists in the subsequent section.*

### Discussion

Three questions were posed to the Panelists:

1. How important is it for Toronto to foster pet friendly communities? Why?
2. What design challenges (or opportunities) are most important for the guidelines to address? Choose 5; classify as either unit, building, or neighbourhood.
3. Are there any unintended consequences that you think the pet-friendly guidelines should try to avoid?

### How important is it for Toronto to foster pet friendly communities? Why?

Most of the Panelists came to quick agreement that it is important to foster pet friendly communities. Panelists cited the emotional and psychological benefits of pet ownership, noting that pets are an integral part of many families. Some Panelists noted that pet ownership gets people outdoors more often, which they felt could help create more safe and vibrant streets.

Panelists also felt that developing pet friendly design guidelines is important because there are already high numbers of pets in multi-story, high density communities. That means the City and developers need to work to better integrate pets into these communities, both for current and future developments, in order to ensure the safety and comfort of everyone who lives there.

A few Panelists did not feel that it should be a big priority for the City Planning Division to develop pet friendly design guidelines. These panelists thought the City Planning Division should put more emphasis on managing the impact of pets rather than creating spaces that are explicitly pet friendly.

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## **What design challenges (or opportunities) are most important for the guidelines to address?**

Panelists agreed that pet ownership in multi-unit, high-density communities presented some challenges. The most important of these challenges included:

- Managing waste (Unit, building and neighbourhood scales);
- Providing sufficient communal spaces for pets to exercise and relieve themselves (Building and neighbourhood scales);
- Managing noise (Building scale);
- Ensuring residents who don't like dogs and cats or who have allergies feel safe and comfortable (Building and neighbourhood scales);
- Enforcing responsible pet owner behaviours (Building and neighbourhood scales); and
- Ensuring cleanliness of shared spaces and odour management (Unit, building and neighbourhood scales).

## **Are there any unintended consequences that you think the pet friendly guidelines should try to avoid?**

The Panelists noted that many of the potential design solutions to the challenges identified could result in higher costs for developers, which could be passed on to residents and taxpayers. Panelists also noted that not everyone may agree these initiatives are worth the expense.

A few Panelists suggested that increasing the pet friendliness of high-density communities may increase the number pets in multi-unit, high-density spaces as well as shared neighbourhood spaces like parks and walkways. This could lead to resistance from people who don't like or feel comfortable around pets and produce conflict between residents and neighbours. It could also lead some people to feel excluded from spaces with high numbers of animals.

## **Design Ideas**

In discussing the challenges and opportunities presented by pets, Panelists also suggested that City Planning Division staff explore the following design ideas:

- At the unit scale:
  - Designing improved ventilation for odours from cat and dog waste;
  - Removing carpets from dog and cat-friendly units;
  - Building pet friendly patios with areas for animals to relieve themselves; and
  - Improving soundproofing.

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- At the building scale:
  - Allocating specific floors or building areas where pets are welcome;
  - Providing access to green space on roofs or just outside of buildings;
  - Providing exercise areas such as a 'running line';
  - Providing dog-washing stations;
  - Installing composting stations for dog and cat waste;
  - Promoting responsible pet ownership by developing educational signage and materials;
  - Providing designated spaces for dog waste to avoid dogs using the space around building entrances; and
  - Ensuring that pet friendly areas around buildings are kept clean so pet owners will make use of them.
  
- At the neighbourhood scale:
  - Providing more grassy dog parks, and avoiding the use of asphalt and road salt in these areas;
  - Increasing the diversity of outdoor pet areas. For example, some dog parks could include trails for walking or running, or agility courses;
  - Providing more shaded areas and seating in dog parks;
  - Installing double-gates for off-leash areas to improve dog safety;
  - Installing more waste receptacles, and free baggies and scoopers;
  - Employing waste collectors for animal waste; and
  - Installing larger, clearer signage about pet rules and regulations.

Following their discussions, the Panelists participated in a *Jane's Walk* led by James Parakh and Ran Chen, Senior Urban Designer, Toronto East York District, and the Manager of the Pet Friendly Guidelines project. Consultants from the design firm DIALOG, who are working with the City to develop the guidelines, also joined the walk to engage with the Panelists and provide additional context on the project.

During the *Jane's Walk*, Panelists visited several parks. Some of these parks are designated dog parks, while others are intended for general use but are widely used by dog owners. Panelists discussed the elements that make dog parks successful and observed the current design principles being applied in dog parks. Panelists also visited a condominium building in the City Place development to look at a new dog washing station that has been installed for residents.

Panelists will use the information and insights from their walk to inform future discussions with the City Planning Division on the Pet Friendly Design Guidelines.