



## Accessibility Focused Meeting Summary

**Date & Time:** February 24, 2022 – 6:30-8:00 pm – 25 Participants

**Location:** Zoom Virtual Event

### Project Team Attendees:

**City of Toronto** – Jeff Cantos, Cole Solish, Rafael Meija Ortiz

**Dillon Consulting** – Merrilees Willemse, Nicole Beuglet, Ish Chowdhury

Dillon Consulting, the independent facilitation team retained by the City of Toronto, facilitated the meeting and prepared this summary. Participants were encouraged to provide additional feedback to the project team by emailing [opreview@toronto.ca](mailto:opreview@toronto.ca). This summary is intended to reflect the key discussion points from the meeting and is not intended to be a verbatim transcript.

## Meeting Overview

The City of Toronto Official Plan (OP) Team and Dillon Consulting Engagement Team hosted a virtual meeting for Our Plan Toronto with accessibility focused organizations. To allow the opportunity for a diverse discussion, various organizations were sought out that represent those with a range of physical, mental and intellectual disabilities. While considerations were made for those that face physical disabilities, it was also necessary to include those from neuro diverse communities in the process. The meeting was designed to gain feedback from accessibility focused organizations with regards to what Toronto needs to focus on to achieve an accessible city by 2051 and what areas of the city require the most attention.

The team took the following steps to make the meeting as accessible as possible:

- Provided the presentation material in an AODA format before the meeting;
- Introduced speakers and announced who was speaking to provide clarity;
- Provided a variety of ways to engage in the discussion including:
  - Using the chat and raised hand function, and
  - Encouraged participants to speak when others were not speaking, if those functions were not available to them
- Monitored the chat which was read aloud by facilitators;
- Asked participants to turn off their mic when not speaking to avoid background noises;



- Offered a 10 minute break half way through the meeting; and
- Recorded the presentation which was distributed to participants.

## Meeting Format and Agenda

The event was held via Zoom as a virtual meeting with closed captioning. The format included an AODA formatted presentation, a facilitated Q&A with a 10-minute break, and the active use of the Chat and raised hand function.

The agenda for the meeting included:

1. What is Our Plan Toronto
2. Overview of the Process
3. Key Issues Raised Related to Accessibility
4. Discussion with a 10-minute break

## Summary of Facilitated Q&A Discussion

The following summary documents the input, issues and ideas raised during the facilitated group discussion. Consideration was placed to accessibility questions and comments surrounding housing, employment, environment and complete communities. Through these themes, a discussion was led on how Toronto can become more accessible by 2051 and what areas of the city require the most attention. Contributions were provided by participants through a mix of verbal and written questions and commentary pertaining to the issues and ideas discussed. This summary is intended to reflect the key discussion points and is not intended to be a verbatim transcript.

### Summary of input/issues/ideas raised:

- People felt disability issues aren't considered and that they aren't represented in the planning process; the disability community needs to be more involved. Participants were asking for more systemic changes within the City, and allowing those with disabilities more employment opportunities in areas to provide better accessibility perspectives in decision making and planning.
- Participants expressed there is a chronic need for accessible, affordable, and supportive housing, and the City is not holding developers accountable. There needs to be affordable housing with adequate space given to units for those with accessibility needs.
- It was expressed that people with intellectual disabilities are often left out of disability/inclusivity conversations when it comes to accessible housing.
- Participant voiced concerns that funding that is provided to developers, end up providing accessible housing on remote streets where autistic and intellectually



disabled people are grouped and segregated from regular community life. They want a change from this institutionalized style living of the unregulated group homes, and for autistic and others with disabilities to have a choice on where to live, who they live with and access to support they need to help with their disabilities.

- People felt that while accessible spaces and features are built, they don't remain accessible if there is no long-term maintenance to follow it. While curb cuts to sidewalks help mobility, it makes it challenging if there is not adequate plowing when it snows. Snow removal has posed a mobility challenge for many, not just to paths but parks and recreational spaces as well.
- Inquiries were made to if complete communities will place consideration to the complexities surrounding those with accessibility needs. This being primarily to mobility, access to transportation to get to necessities such as food stores and other retail, while also nourishing independence, spontaneity and safety.
- People inquired to if ODSP would be considered towards accessible and affordable housing.
- There was a comment to care occupancy, and how this has often been limited to hospitals and senior care centres. With more starting to live in condominiums, consideration should be placed on how to provide this service to those in wheelchairs or from a fire safety perspective.
- People expressed emphasis on how Toronto needs to be a pedestrian city first. Many with disabilities can't drive, and walking becomes challenging when sidewalks aren't connected or easily accessible. This would be beneficial to the elderly and children as well; there needs to be stronger pedestrian infrastructure all throughout the year.
- People inquired about providing exemptions to accessibility projects to help streamline the process. Things such as converting regular parking into accessible parking, or assisting development applications to not get caught up in the zoning process when it comes to accessibility.
- They expressed that accessible information is essential. Ensuring that all official documents are accessible for assistive technologies (e.g. screen readers); and ensure that accessibility is always a consideration when adopting new technologies.
- There was curiosity to how often apartments are upgraded to accommodate those with accessibilities; things such as kitchen appliances and cupboards. It is often that units are only upgraded when vacated.



- People expressed that while policy documents account for disabilities, it often leaves out those with developmental disabilities. This can also be paired with policies aligned with aging and those who grow into disabilities over time. The definitions of seniors needs to be looked into a bit more as it aligns with developmental disabilities as well as consideration to invisible disabilities.

## Meeting Close

Closing remarks were made by the City and Dillon project team to thank participants for their involvement. Participants were encouraged to provide additional feedback to the project team by emailing [opreview@toronto.ca](mailto:opreview@toronto.ca).