

# Next Stop: Davisville

## Phase 1 Engagement Summary #1

*This report is not intended to provide a verbatim transcript of meetings and comments, but instead provides a high-level summary of participant feedback. This report captures feedback that was received at three stakeholder meetings, an online discussion forum, an online survey and emails sent to the project team.*

*If you have any questions after reviewing this summary, please contact Anson Ma, Assistant Planner, Strategic Initiatives, City of Toronto at [Anson.Ma@toronto.ca](mailto:Anson.Ma@toronto.ca) or 416-392-4392.*

### Background:

The City Planning Division, in partnership with CreateTO and in consultation with the Toronto Transit Commission, is undertaking a Special Study on the feasibility of redeveloping the McBrien Building (1900 Yonge Street) and decking the Davisville Yard with a signature public park and a mix of new land uses. This follows City Council direction to [conduct a review of the Davisville Yard](#), and to [leverage the potential of the McBrien Building](#) as part of the ModernTO initiative. More information is available on the [project website](#).

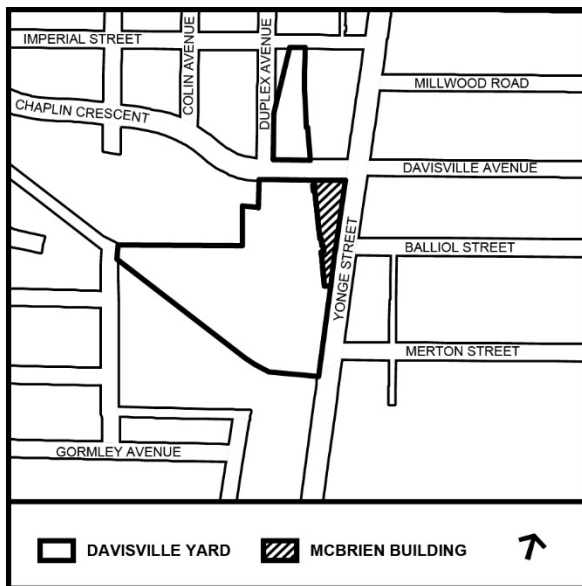


Figure 1: The study area is generally bounded by Imperial Street, Yonge Street, the Beltline Trail and Frobisher Avenue.

Public engagement, along with other key inputs, plays an important role in informing the outcome of the study. Discussions, questions and comments provide staff with context on what local stakeholders think, topics that should be clarified and key considerations. Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to participate in this process! Staff engaged with stakeholders through a range of methods:

- **April 26 and June 28: Area Planning Group (Meeting #1 and #2)**
  - Q&A session with local resident and stakeholder groups.
- **May 26: Virtual Community Visioning Workshop**
  - Public workshop with breakout groups.
- **May 26 to July 5: Asynchronous Engagement Platforms**
  - Survey
  - Social Pinpoint (Public commenting and discussion forum)
- **Ongoing: E-updates and Emailed Feedback**

This engagement summary provides a high-level overview of how each method was used and the public feedback received.

## Communication and Promotional Tactics:

City staff sent a promotional postcard to all addresses within a 300 metre radius from the project site. The postcard provided details for the Virtual Community Visioning Workshop and directed people to visit the project website for more information.

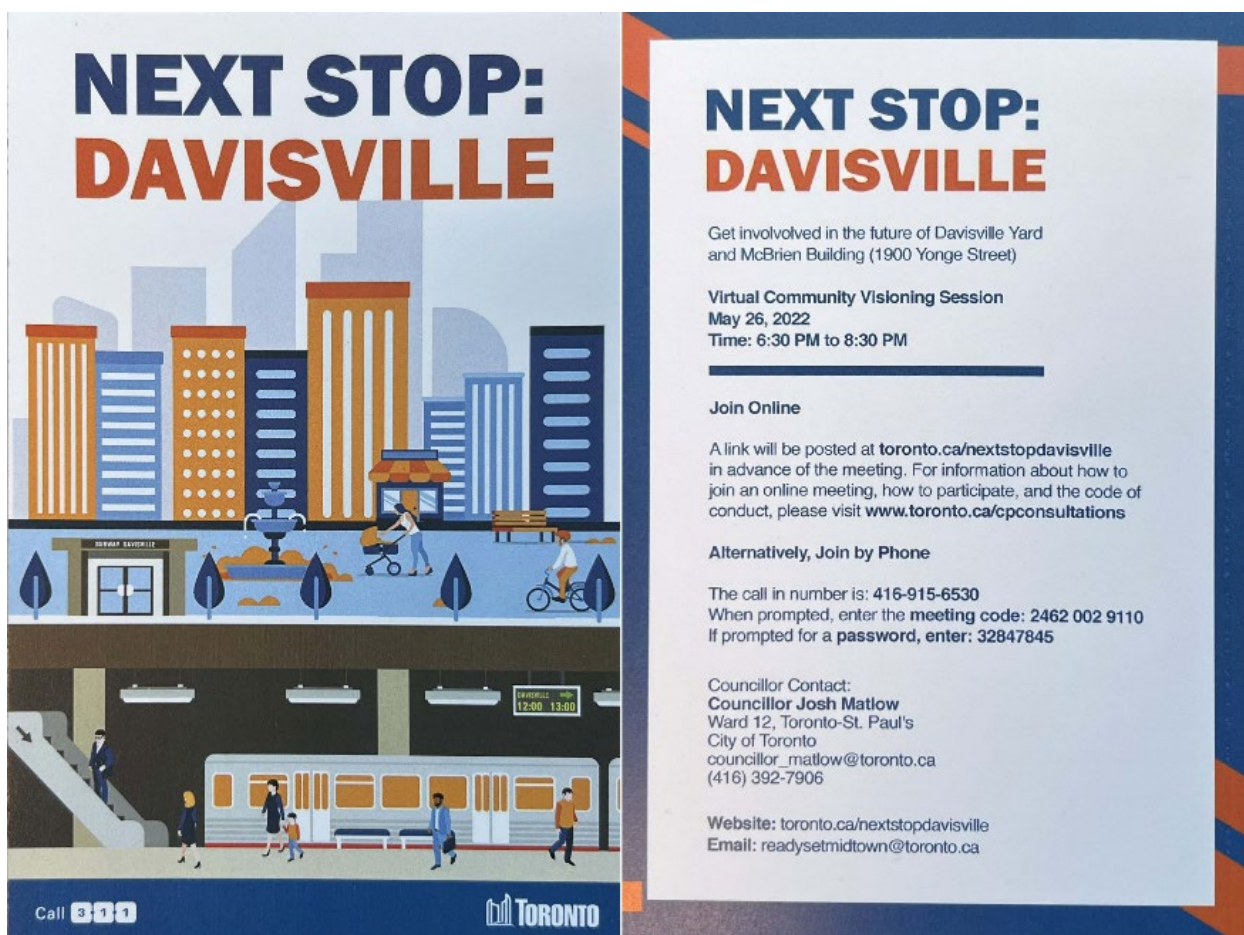


Figure 2: The front and back of the promotional postcard that was sent out, with details on how to join the Virtual Community Visioning Workshop.

City Planning promoted the project launch through an illustrative short video on its Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts, with two posts on May 12 and May 25.

From May 12 to May 26, there was a total of 5,059 social media impressions and 642 website visits. Due to limitations with Instagram's Story feature, not all social media impressions were captured and the actual number is likely higher.

Staff promoted the survey and Social Pinpoint page through multiple channels, including on the project website, and via demonstration of how to use these platforms at the Virtual Community Visioning Workshop. City Planning sent an e-update to over 1,000 subscribers on June 16, 2022, inviting readers to participate.

## **Meetings:**

### **Virtual Community Visioning Workshop:**

The Virtual Community Visioning Workshop was held on May 26, 2022, led by staff from City Planning, in partnership with CreateTO and with support from the consultant team. There were a total of **53** individual sign-ins to the event.

The purpose of the meeting was:

- to provide information and answer questions about the project, including background, existing site conditions, opportunities and constraints, and timelines;
- to seek input from the public on the draft Vision and Guiding Principles for the Davisville Yard and the McBrien Building, the preferred park scenario, and community priorities; and
- to engage with and promote the study to local residents, land owners, businesses, and those who have not been previously involved, as well as the broader community.

Staff started the meeting with a presentation on the project background, site conditions, opportunities and constraints, and the draft Vision and Guiding Principles. This was followed with a Q&A and discussion. Attendees were then asked to join one of three breakout rooms to give feedback on each of the proposed park scenarios, or to stay in the main room and continue asking questions. Each breakout room had at least two staff, with one facilitator and one sharing a virtual whiteboard of the site and making changes based on the conversation.

Everyone then returned to the main room where the staff facilitator from each group shared their virtual whiteboard and an overview of their proposal. Finally, staff concluded with a demonstration on how to provide further feedback through the Social Pinpoint and short survey.

A summary of questions, answers and comments from the Q&A and the proposals from the workshop is provided below.

## Project Vision – Questions, Answers and Comments:

Question / Comment	Staff Response
One resident asked about the impact on Yonge Street and the amount of new development.	Staff noted that the focus is on the Vision at this point with development details being determined later in the study. Staff will consider the impact on Yonge Street more closely.
Concern about shadow impacts from tall buildings, and preference to see low-rise affordable apartments.	Staff acknowledged this comment and will take this into consideration.
Question on whether the TTC maintenance yards will remain on the site.	Staff mentioned that the study includes ensuring that the TTC is able to continue their operations, and if their activities can be consolidated. The Yard and maintenance facility is still planned to remain on the site.
One person asked to clarify the amount of park space relative to the site area.	Staff confirmed that the park space is approximately 20% of the site area.
A participant noted the various recreational amenities in Oriole Park and asked what staff were considering for uses in the new park.	The focus is on securing the park space first, then parks staff will discuss with the community to see what uses people would want.
A participant asked for clarification of what and where the Davisville Square is.	This refers to all the corners of the Yonge & Davisville intersection, and making improvements to this public space.
One participant raised various concerns that some of the Guiding Principles may constrain the project, that there should be additional park space, and suggested expanding the park proposal to continue south of the Beltline Trail.	Staff acknowledged these comments and suggestions.
A suggestion was given to consider adding a school.	Staff mentioned that school space is part of the needs assessment and are discussing with the school boards.
A participant noted that the Midtown Parks and Public Realm Plan refers to an expanded Oriole Park towards Chaplin Crescent and asked if the City might expropriate homes to achieve this.	Staff said that this a long-term vision to identify opportunities for parkland to improve access to Oriole Park, but would only be pursued if landowners were open to selling the lands to expand the park.

## Workshop Feedback:



**DISTINCT PARKS**

**ORIOLE PARK COMPLEMENTED**

**BELTLINE TRAIL EXPANDED**

Figure 3: Three maps illustrate the general location of the signature park as proposed under each park scenario.

### Distinct Parks:

- Desire to provide the dense area east of Yonge Street with a park
- Connecting with Mount Pleasant Cemetery, for access to recreational trails
- Some concerns about increased density and potential increased traffic
- Interest in more detail on the number of new residents and the design of new buildings

### Oriole Park Complemented:

- Focus on creating a large park, through expanding Oriole Park towards Yonge Street and neighbourhoods to the east
- Interest in providing institutional uses with programming, such as a cultural / community / arts centre
- Opportunities to connect with an entrance to Davisville Station along Chaplin Crescent and with the Beltline Trail
- Vehicular traffic could be routed along an extension of Frobisher Avenue towards Yonge Street

### Beltline Trail Expanded:

- Attracted the greatest number of attendees to the breakout room
- Preferred due to its location connecting Oriole Park with the Beltline Trail and towards Davisville Station, and being in a quieter area away from Yonge Street
- Potential for providing shade through large trees due to not being located above the TTC tracks
- Suggestions for some specific park uses, including:
  - Playing fields
  - Community stage or bandstand
  - Outdoor pool
  - A dog off-leash area (sited to not impede pedestrian flow)
- Interest in a grocery store as a potential land use

## **Area Planning Groups (1 and 2):**

Two Area Planning Group meetings were held on April 26 and June 28. Both meetings were led by staff from City Planning, in partnership with CreateTO and with support from the consultant team, as well as staff from other City Divisions. Attendees included representatives of various local key stakeholders and community groups, the ward Councillor's office, residents' associations and school boards. There were a total of **36** individual sign-ins to the first meeting and **21** individual sign-ins to the second meeting.

The purpose of these meetings was:

- To inform key stakeholders and local community organizations of the project details;
- To gather feedback from representatives of a diverse range of stakeholder groups and community organizations;
- To identify initial concerns, questions and topics that need clarification at an early stage; and
- To provide additional opportunities for questions and answers after the Virtual Community Visioning Session.

Both meetings were organized to have opening remarks by the ward Councillor, then a staff presentation, followed by a Q&A session and concluding with closing remarks.

### **Area Planning Group Meeting 1: April 26, 2022**

There was generally positive sentiment about the project. Stakeholders cited the park deficit in the area and an interest in seeing a large public park at the center of this project. There was some discussion on considering other models of similar parks, such as the High Line in New York City, the Emerald Necklace in Boston and some of the work already completed for the Rail Deck Park proposal in Toronto.

Several participants shared that they preferred to not see a through road, due to concerns about the impact of through traffic on other neighbourhoods.

There were some comments and questions about the land uses on the site, such as on the potential institutional uses that could be considered for the site, supporting the existing small businesses in the area, parking requirements for the TTC and potential to work with nearby landowners.

### **Area Planning Group Meeting 2: June 28, 2022**

There was interest in learning more about the potential impact of development. Questions were generally around the placement and location of buildings, number of new buildings, height guidance and view and shadowing impacts.

Several participants noted that they had concerns about a through road as part of the project. This was due to potential through traffic into residential areas and a desire to maximize pedestrian space and safety for park users.

Some participants asked for more details on potential land uses and highlighted suggestions, such as a new Toronto Public Library branch as part of the development.

Other questions, comments and suggestions included adding open flexible green space and spaces for seniors and young adults, improving pedestrian connections with Davisville Station, securing project funding and TTC parking requirements.

## **Asynchronous Engagement:**

The study included two asynchronous engagement platforms, which were featured on the project website and promoted through the Virtual Community Visioning Session and e-updates. These platforms were open to comments from May 26 to July 5.

## **Survey:**

The survey consisted of six questions focused on the proposed project Vision and Guiding Principles for the Davisville Yard and the McBrien Building. Following the questions, respondents were asked to rank their preferences for the three park scenarios and provide their main reason for selecting their most preferred scenario. Finally, respondents ranked a list of priorities for the redevelopment of the site.

104 respondents participated in the survey, with 96 respondents fully completing the survey.

## **Vision and Guiding Principles:**

Many respondents raised concerns on the impact of development on the area, particularly on the potential built form and height of new buildings. There was some interest in seeing mid-rise and “missing middle”-sized buildings be developed, rather than tall buildings. Some respondents commented that development should be located along Yonge Street to minimize its impact on the parkland, include some heritage elements and have a frontage that is designed for the human scale.

There was strong support for the majority of new units to be priced for affordable rental or ownership and to be designed as family-friendly housing. Respondents also preferred a mixed-use building that included retail at ground level, with office or employment uses also included in the building. Some respondents indicated a preference to provide opportunities for local or underrepresented small business owners to use the retail space.

Some respondents suggested that the Vision should add more detail on the nature of the parkland. There was interest in specifically noting a large park space or that the project is focused on delivering public space. A few comments also recommended tying in the Vision with the planned decking of the subway trench from Berwick Avenue to Chaplin Crescent, north of the site. Overall, many respondents agreed that the primary focus of the project should be to provide parkland and green space.

There were some suggestions on the design principles of the public realm, including elements of Indigenous design, accessibility for all people, emphasis on active transportation and seasonal flexibility so that the space is desirable to use year-round. Some specific design features mentioned were to provide gathering spaces and

seating, garden spaces, dog spaces, skateboarding parks, trees and shading, washrooms and drinking fountains. A respondent also suggested focusing on public realm improvements along Yonge Street to improve the existing pedestrian environment.

Suggestions for community amenities included education, social services, cultural activity and a recreation centre.

There was some interest in highlighting pedestrian connections through the site and with Davisville Station.

### **Preferred Scenario:**

Of the three scenarios presented, Beltline Trail Expanded was ranked as the most preferred scenario with 41% support, based on weighted scoring. This was followed by Oriole Park Complemented at 37%, and Distinct Parks at 22%.

### **Distinct Parks:**

The Distinct Parks scenario was ranked by 17 respondents as the most preferred scenario, with a weighted percentage of 22% support. The leading reason respondents gave was that this scenario provides a park that is easily accessible from Yonge Street and the surrounding neighbourhoods and improves the existing streetscape. Some comments noted that the park should be distinct to serve different needs from those already provided by Oriole Park.

There were also references to the planned linear park from Berwick Avenue to Chaplin Crescent, and the opportunity for the Distinct Park option to see it continue south of Chaplin Crescent and through the Davisville Yard.

### **Oriole Park Complemented:**

The Oriole Park Complemented scenario was ranked by 33 respondents as the most preferred scenario, with a weighted percentage of 37% support. Respondents generally supported this scenario for its potential to connect Oriole Park with Yonge Street, providing park access to Yonge Street and improving connectivity in the neighbourhood. There was also strong interest in seeing this park create a large single park space and maximize continuous green space by including Oriole Park.

### **Beltline Trail Expanded:**

The Beltline Trail Expanded scenario was the most popular scenario in the survey results, selected by 47 respondents, with a weighted percentage of 41% support. Most respondents supported this scenario as a way to connect the Beltline Trail with nearby park access. Many responses mentioned the potential of expanding Oriole Park and providing a more flexible single park space through a larger park.



Some respondents stated that they preferred Beltline Trail Expanded as they felt that Oriole Park Complemented would create a bottleneck that limits uses or be negatively affected by surrounding development.

### **Priorities:**

Of the top three priorities based on a weighted percentage ranking, the leading priority for respondents was an expansion of the proposed park scenario, to include additional park space beyond one hectare. This received a total weighted percentage of 19% support. Connectivity was also a key factor, with improved pedestrian connections and access (15%) and integrated and improved access to transit (11%) making up the top three priorities.

In addition, there was strong support for expanding the public realm (11%), focusing on resilience, sustainability and green infrastructure (10%) and consideration of cultural uses (8%).

Support for the other priorities queried was as follows:

- Residential uses (5%)
- Institutional / educational uses (5%)
- Placemaking through heritage (5%)
- Retail uses (5%)
- Other (freeform) priorities (3%)
- Office uses (2%)
- Through vehicular connections (1%)

### **Other Suggested Priorities:**

Respondents had the option of adding their own priorities through a freeform prompt. Several respondents encouraged the addition of a dog park or a dog-friendly space. There were also suggestions to install public art, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, water features and washrooms, a skateboarding park and a viewpoint for visitors to watch the subway trains. Some respondents also reiterated their interest to see affordable or missing middle development on the site.

### **Social Pinpoint:**

The Social Pinpoint engagement platform provides an online forum for public discourse. The project page showed a map of the study area. Users were able to select from three comment types (“Something I Like”, “Ideas and Suggestions”, “Make a Comment”) and drag it to any location on the map. After moderator review, the feedback was publicly viewable and other users could read, vote and start a discussion as part of the comment. All interaction was anonymous and no personal information was collected.

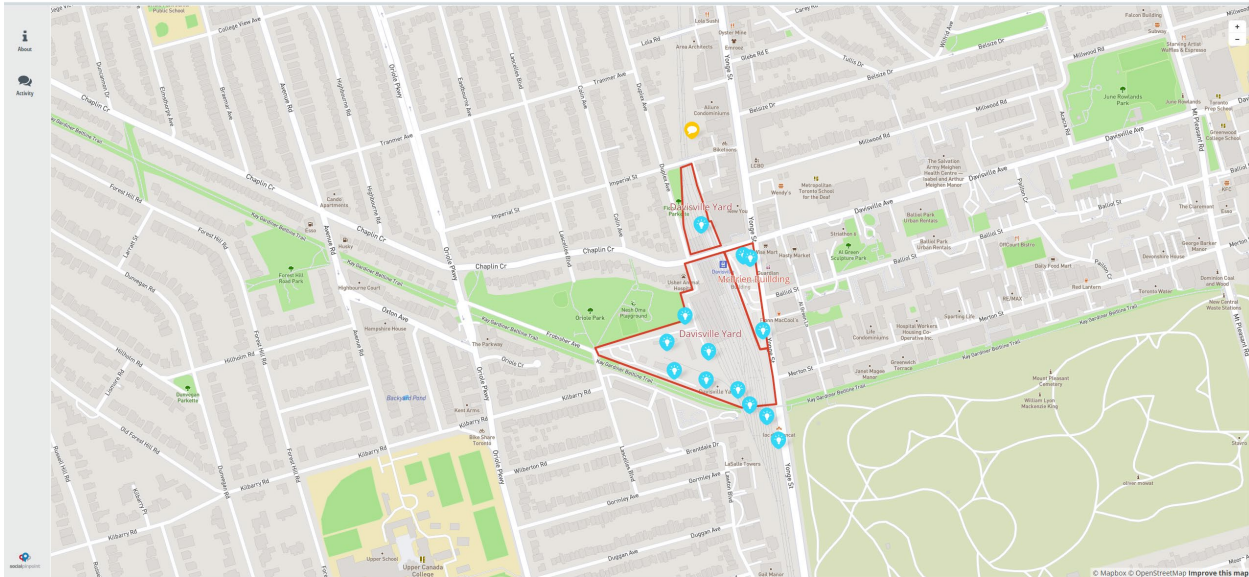


Figure 4: A screenshot of the project Social Pinpoint page, shortly after closing for comments on July 5, 2022.

There were a total of 98 unique visitors, with eight participants providing 16 comments.

There was strong interest in expanding the project scope. The top comments with the most positive votes suggested the southward extension of the park towards the south or referenced the future plans to deck the subway trench with a linear park up to Berwick Avenue.

Another high priority was to improve pedestrian and cycling connectivity, especially with the Beltline Trail. Some proposals included connecting the Beltline Trail with access to Yonge Street or a direct link to Davisville Station.

There was moderate support for various ideas. There was interest in creating spaces and land uses that would attract people to a social hub, such as a café, or designing amenities around the needs of single-person households. Some comments suggested various locations to locate development or public realm improvements.

There were some comments to extend Frobisher Avenue through the project site and to add buildings with residential units along the Beltline Trail, although these generally received negative votes from other respondents.

### **Emailed Feedback:**

In addition to the two engagement platforms, local stakeholders were encouraged to email the project team with any additional comments or feedback. The project team received four emails with feedback on the project, which touched on various topics. The comments and suggestions received include:

- Support for a new public park in the area.
- Interest in a new dog park and suggestions on where it could be located.

- A reference to the planned decking of the subway trench from Berwick Avenue to Chaplin Crescent.
- Concerns about additional residential development.
- Concerns about the impact of vehicular traffic.
- Potential for the project to improve traffic at the Yonge-Chaplin-Davisville intersection, and a suggestion to close the Imperial Street bridge.
- A request that Davisville Station remain operational and accessible during construction.
- Interest in the City developing buildings that are lower in height, relative to the rest of the neighbourhood.

## **What happens to this feedback:**

Thank you for getting involved and providing your questions and suggestions to our team. Public feedback plays an important role in providing direction to the project and will be considered with several other inputs, such as planning policy and legislative requirements, and comments from other City Divisions and Agencies and stakeholders.

The study team is continuing to develop the preferred concept for the project site. The study team will return with more information as the feasibility study is underway and engage with the public and local stakeholders in Q4 2022. Updates on project milestones and further opportunities to get involved with the project will be made available on the [project website](#).