

**City of Toronto's**

**Coordinated Street Furniture Program**

**External Interest Group Engagement Summary**

*Fall 2025/Winter 2026*



## Street Furniture Engagement- What We Heard

### Summary

The City of Toronto's Coordinated Street Furniture (CSF) Program is responsible for the installation, operation, and maintenance of approximately 25,000 pieces of street furniture (e.g., transit shelters, litter bins, benches, newspaper corrals) over a 20-year period with an external vendor. As the City approaches the expiry of this agreement in August 2027, program staff engaged with **seven external interest groups** to better understand the ways in which street furniture can be reflective of and responsive to the needs of Toronto's diverse communities. Examples of the engaged organizations include:

- Public space advocacy organizations
- Disability advocacy organizations
- Equity-deserving groups
- Landscape architects and public realm designers
- Business Improvement Areas

Program staff presented a brief presentation on the history of the CSF program, early program objectives, and future program considerations. Staff provided participants with facilitated discussion questions covering the following topics:

- **Accessibility**- Minimizing barriers in the right of way, and ensuring inclusive designs and access for all
- **Road Safety**- Designing and positioning street furniture to avoid obstructing sightlines for road users and considering safety features, such as lighting
- **Urban Design Excellence**- Focuses on the visual aesthetics of street furniture elements, aligning design with the character of Toronto
- **Innovation**- Considers the integration of digital and data-enabled technologies into street furniture to enhance functionality and user experience
- **Sustainability**- Ensures that the design, materials, and lifecycle of street furniture minimize environmental impacts and TransformTO climate action goals
- **Equity**- Refers to how the City allocates street furniture assets across Toronto communities to ensure fair and inclusive access for all residents
- **Placemaking**- Supports the creation of vibrant public spaces that foster community gathering and reflect Toronto's diverse cultural identities
- **Economic Viability**- Continue to position the CSF Program to advance the City's economic objectives

Feedback that was shared by external interest groups through consultation sessions are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1: Summary of Feedback**

Topic	Comment Summary
Placemaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street furniture should foster outdoor public life, encourage gathering and socializing</li> <li>• Street furniture is an opportunity for the City to show its residents that they are cared for</li> <li>• Explore making street furniture elements customizable to celebrate neighbourhood diversity</li> <li>• Provide signage/neighbourhood recognition in different languages</li> <li>• When appropriate, use imagery instead of language to promote more accessible orientation for people with diverse needs</li> <li>• Desire to improve bench design by enhancing comfort, ensuring inclusivity, and placing benches intentionally to provide designated rest stops or gathering spaces</li> <li>• Incorporate art from local artists into street furniture to promote sense of place</li> </ul>
Road Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that digital advertisements adhere to sign bylaw and safety standards for brightness and static-ad requirements</li> <li>• Ensure that street furniture does not obstruct sightlines for road users</li> <li>• Ensure that new street furniture amenities are not visually distracting for cyclists, motorists and other road users</li> <li>• Street furniture can and should be used as a buffer between road users to enhance safety for pedestrians and cyclists</li> <li>• Desire to maintain transparent (e.g. glass) transit shelters to increase safety for vulnerable transit users</li> </ul>
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgraded street furniture amenities should be prioritized for installation in equity-deserving communities</li> <li>• Rigorous prioritization and evaluation framework would support equity-informed decision making for placement of new and/or enhanced street furniture</li> <li>• Transit shelters with heating/cooling should be placed in communities that are most impacted by climate change and adverse weather patterns (e.g. neighbourhoods more susceptible to flood risk and extreme heat)</li> <li>• Need for more accessible, available and inclusive public washrooms across Toronto</li> <li>• Street furniture amenities should continue to be distributed evenly across Toronto</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While the current program has achieved “equality” in distribution of street furniture, the program can increase equity by designing street furniture to better align with the needs of communities. Example: the same size transit shelter with the same amenities should not be used in all locations</li> </ul>
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore incorporation of digital and data-enabled features in transit shelters for example, Wi-Fi, real time arrival information, bus/streetcar occupancy level, communications for public alerts, smart lighting technology, air quality monitoring and weather display</li> <li>• Opportunity for furniture to gather and share data (e.g. climate and weather-related data, transit ridership, vehicle counts)</li> <li>• Opportunity to leverage digital infrastructure to promote digital art from local artists</li> <li>• Prioritize reliability and durability when using digital infrastructure</li> </ul>
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to adhere to Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines (TADG) and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)</li> <li>• Armrests in the centre of benches are a barrier for some users and represent an element of hostile design</li> <li>• Armrests on sides of benches may assist people with accessibility requirements</li> <li>• Program should avoid defensive architecture in street furniture design</li> <li>• Program should provide varying options of street furniture to support people with diverse needs (e.g. benches with/without back rests, with/without arm rests)</li> <li>• Street furniture should be designed for inclusivity, not exclusivity</li> <li>• Street furniture elements should have features that increase navigation and ease of use for people who are blind or have low vision (audio cues, tactile cues)</li> <li>• Design consistency, where feasible, should be prioritized to promote wayfinding for people with diverse needs and abilities</li> <li>• New design changes should be made in consultation with people with diverse abilities, best practice would be having people “test” new elements for usability</li> <li>• Digital integration into wayfinding can help promote accessibility for people who are blind or partially sighted</li> </ul>

	<p>(digital mapping of assets so people can locate SF elements more easily, tactile buttons on shelters/information posts that can trigger an audible message)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital tools should complement, not replace, physical accessibility. People with disabilities should not be required to use an app to locate or interact with street furniture</li> <li>• Snow removal should be considered when designing and maintaining street furniture to ensure that elements remain accessible during winter months</li> </ul>
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program should increase the number of transit shelters with solar panels, reduce reliance on the grid</li> <li>• Investigate the integration of green roofs to cool urban spaces in the summer and capture storm water. Green roofs can help to combat heat islands, boost urban biodiversity, provide new pollinator gardens and improve air quality</li> <li>• Local production of street furniture should be prioritized, where possible</li> <li>• Street furniture program should have carbon neutral operations</li> <li>• Program should continue to minimize environmental impacts by considering the use of more sustainable materials (e.g. wood)</li> <li>• Street furniture elements should be co-located with street trees to provide shade and comfort</li> <li>• Benefits and positive impact of sustainability features of street furniture should be communicated to the public</li> </ul>
Urban Design Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street furniture elements should be more colourful</li> <li>• Should have an overarching design language to ensure consistent quality and cohesive/recognizable brand that also reflects City values</li> <li>• Materiality contributes to aesthetics. Explore the use of non-plastic materials, including high-quality and durable wood</li> <li>• Street furniture elements that aren't needed should be "retired" to create more space in the right-of-way</li> <li>• Street furniture is a core part of the City's branding and the design should reflect and represent Toronto's vibrant communities</li> <li>• Street furniture design needs to balance function, aesthetics, and feasibility</li> <li>• Program should prioritize modular design options that can expand and adapt to changing community needs</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important to find a balance between celebrating unique neighbourhood identities and still promoting a cohesive and recognizable program</li> </ul>
<p>Economic Viability/Agreement terms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic benefits and contributions to public realm and transportation programming from current agreement considered a point of pride</li> <li>• Advertising revenue should not be the primary focus of a new agreement (focus should be on delivering quality pedestrian amenities)</li> <li>• City should consider alternate methods of funding for the program that do not rely on third-party advertising</li> <li>• Advertising revenues provide integral funding to City budget</li> <li>• Future program should have metrics for success and evaluation criteria for the program. How do we know when street furniture is “done right?”</li> <li>• Future agreement should continue to have a mid-way evaluation checkpoint, including public opinion survey and contractual mechanisms to “get out” of an agreement if metrics for success are not being met</li> <li>• Future agreement should have enhanced maintenance obligations clearly outlined for vendors</li> <li>• Evaluation criteria for CSF Program procurement should capture senses of belonging, health, environment, and community connectivity</li> <li>• Agreement should be flexible to support the evolution of street furniture design over time</li> <li>• Flexible contracting built into the RFP to ensure the program can adapt to evolving community needs and changing street furniture designs over time</li> </ul>

**Next Steps**

The key discussion themes will be considered in the renewal of the CSF Program and guide efforts for ongoing community consultation for street furniture in Toronto.