

# January 2014 Midtown Planning Group Meeting

Meeting Summary

Tuesday, January 21, 2014

6:00 - 9:00pm, Anne Johnston Health Station

## Overview

On Tuesday January 21, the City of Toronto hosted a meeting with the Midtown Planning Group. The purpose of the meeting was to learn about and discuss the *Midtown in Focus* Study Team's Draft Concepts and Implementation Strategies. Public Work, the lead consultants on Study, gave a presentation about the Concepts and Implementation Strategies, and the North Toronto Soccer Club gave a presentation about how the recreation fields in Eglinton Park are used by the local and wider communities.

Questions of Clarification followed these presentations that drew in the expertise of city staff in attendance. Following the Questions of Clarification, participants discussed the presentations in small groups and in a plenary report back. Participants were also encouraged to submit their responses in writing.

Approximately 50 people attended the meeting including members of residents' associations, the Business Improvement Area, City Staff, and the project team. Councillor Josh Matlow also attended the meeting.

Jane Farrow and Ian Malczewski from Swerhun Facilitation prepared this Meeting Summary and shared it with participants for review before finalizing it.

## Key Messages

**The future Master Plan for Eglinton Park must find a way to balance active sports and other uses.** Many participants were happy that the study was recommending a Master Plan for Eglinton Park and felt that it was important this master plan accommodate the area's many different audiences.

**The plan is beautiful, innovative, and exciting.**

**The plan must be pragmatic and implementable.** Several participants expressed a concern that the plan might not be pragmatic and asked the study team to explain how the plan will be implemented.

**Finding ways to share the roadways is important.** Participants made a number of suggestions related to sharing the roads, including finding ways to maintain / improve traffic flow, adding more pedestrian crossing and a scramble intersection, and creating more space for cyclists.

**Working together with a unified voice is the best way to advocate for the plan.** Several participants felt the Midtown Planning Group had an important role in advocating for the plan and working with City staff as future development comes to Midtown.

## Questions of Clarification

### Questions of Clarification for the North Toronto Soccer Club

- 1. Elaborate on how the Soccer Association's ability to use TDSB fields has changed recently.** *Some Section 37 agreements related to new development have reduced sport associations, access to TDSB sports fields. Sports associations have to pay a permit to use those fields.*
- 2. Does NTSC's suggestion to improve lighting in Eglinton Park refer to lighting the sports fields?** *No, NTSC's suggestion refers to improving pathway lighting in the park.*

### Questions of Clarification for the Midtown in Focus Study Team

- 1. Has the hockey association been involved in this process?** *Yes, members of the study team attended a meeting with the Hockey Arena Board of Management and heard concerns about proposed changes to the hockey arena and its parking lot. The study team has invited representatives from North Toronto Hockey Association to join the Midtown Planning Group and attend Midtown in Focus public engagement meetings.*
- 2. Are the streets in Green Loop intended to be one-way?** *No, the plan envisions the streets maintaining their current two-way flows.*
- 3. How pragmatic is this plan?** *The study team has worked with City Planning as well as other City departments to make it pragmatic. City Planning staff indicated that "Haussman style" imposition of plans are past, so plans must be implemented incrementally, through a variety of tools. Staff indicated that they are currently used the emerging plan to guide discussions with developers about public realm issues such as parkland dedication in the neighbourhood. The plan is an important advocacy tool to help guide discussions with developers. The plan itself will provide more detail about implementation strategies.*
- 4. Are there any incentives for property owners to give up land for green space and more public realm?** *The Study Team is still refining the implementation strategies needed to achieve the plan objectives for increased and improved open space.*
- 5. Could the directions for improving the public realm emerging from the plan and applied to individual development applications be overruled by the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB)?** *Yes, when a development plan is appealed to the OMB, it is possible they might not support public realm improvements. Councillor Matlow reiterated his position that the jurisdiction of the OMB must be removed from Toronto so that local planners and communities have a stronger say in how their communities grow and develop.*

## Detailed Summary of Feedback

Following the Questions of Clarification, participants shared what they liked about the Draft Concepts and Implementation Strategies and what they felt could be improved. *Comments and responses from the Councilor, Study Team, and City staff are italicized.*

### What Participants Liked

Participants were very happy that there was now a proposed public realm plan and stated that they were grateful for the work the Study Team and City Staff had put into the plan, specifically:

- The suggestion to undertake a Master Plan for Eglinton Park;
- The emphasis on greening of streets, including lighting, seating, and trees;
- The goal to increase the public space from 7-14%;
- The innovative approach to north-south mid-block connections;
- The emphasis on flexibility in public sport facilities;
- The creation of a Park Loop route that is attractive, innovative and connected;
- The effort to think of and make Yonge Street as an open, public space;
- The realignment of sidestreets at Yonge that create new public squares;
- The attention to improving walkability and connectivity;
- The effort to rebalance transportation modes and share the roads; and,
- The promotion of innovative ways for buildings and businesses to engage with street life.

### Suggestions for Further Refinements

#### TTC Bus Yards at Yonge & Eglinton

Some participants felt strongly that the plan should propose a larger park on the TTC bus yards on the southwest corner of Yonge Eglinton. *The Study Team explained that the Midtown in Focus drawings in the presentation reflect the work of a Focused Review, which included extensive community consultation, but that the Team would add a note in the Study to ensure that this plan did not preclude a larger park on that block in the future.*

#### Sharing the Road – Cars/Pedestrians/Cyclists

Some participants felt it was important for the roads to better balance transit vehicles, vehicle parking, pedestrians, and cyclists. Participants advised the Study Team to continue seeking out walkable routes that are not aligned to the existing street grid, to create shortcuts that cut diagonally across the blocks, and link up privately-owned public spaces within blocks as well as connect to sidewalks along streets in order to enhance pedestrian movement.

Participants suggested that a pedestrian scramble at Yonge and Eglinton would be appropriate given the high pedestrian volumes and potential improvements to pedestrian safety. *City Staff said that the Eglinton Connects Environmental Assessment had investigated a pedestrian scramble at this intersection as part of the proposed reconfiguration of Eglinton Avenue. The EA concluded that a pedestrian scramble was not recommended due to the green time required to maintain acceptable traffic operations with a 3-lane cross-section. However, the City could still study a scramble intersection at Yonge and Eglinton in the future, once future traffic patterns are better established*

Some participants felt that the plan should include dedicated bike lanes running north and south, potentially on Yonge St and/or Mount Pleasant Ave. Several participants also advocated for an extension of the Bixi system to encourage cycling in the area.

#### Seating & Gathering Spaces

Several participants suggested that the plan should promote and encourage informal seating, benches, tables, and gathering spaces in all of the proposed public spaces. A few people noted the success of moveable outdoor furniture in the Yonge-Dundas Square that gave the area a social and flexible feel. *The Study Team suggested that the City pursue 'quick wins' like adding temporary seating and furniture in small pockets of public space wherever possible.*

### Yonge Street

Some participants were concerned that the recommendations for Yonge Street were problematic because traffic is heavy and moves quickly. Some participants suggested adding stoplights at Roehampton, Orchard View, and Sherwood to help pedestrians who are sometimes left stranded or waiting because of the current signal timing. Traffic signals will be installed at Roehampton and Orchard View intersections. *Councillor Josh Matlow said he is advocating for a new Business Improvement Area on Yonge Street, south to Merton, to help with business concerns on Yonge Street.*

### Laneways

Participants suggested that the plan emphasize the responsibility of developers to create and encourage innovative active laneway uses, such as entrepreneurial micro-enterprises (like food and craft markets).

### Park Loop

One participant suggested the Study Team consider making Broadway and Roehampton one-way streets to narrow the street and create more space for greening. Another suggested collaboration with land owners as a way to implement the Park Loop on an incremental basis.

### Eglinton Green Line

Participants were concerned that the plans for the Eglinton Green Line might not be realistic or only possible in the very long term. *The design team and city planners responded that the Eglinton streetscape will be completely transformed by the Eglinton Crosstown LRT and opportunities could present itself – so it's good to have a plan. They acknowledged that short and long term wins have to be considered, and that developers will have an important and active role in creating and maintaining inviting, safe, active and green streetscapes.*

### The Underground Public Realm

Some participants said the plan should go further in proposing and planning a public realm that is below grade, including walkways and open spaces similar to the PATH in the downtown core.

### Burying Utilities

One participant felt it was important to bury hydro lines and eliminate the utility poles.

### Parking

Some participants thought that the plan had not paid sufficient attention to creating or accommodating car parking, including underground lots and the addition of Green P lots. One participant said that the pressure for car parking might be alleviated in the future if transit were to improve. *City staff pointed out that this is not a transportation study and that traffic impact studies will be conducted as part of the review of future developments.*

### Eglinton Park

One participant commented that they would like to see the community garden expanded in the future Eglinton Park Master Plan. One participant said planners and designers should be sure to consider who is moving into the area in the future, whether they are young, old, children or child-less, so as to incorporate these demographic projections into their park designs. Another suggested “taming” the glare from the lights beside the hockey arena to reduce their glare on the night sky.

### WiFi

One participant suggested the plan should encourage public WiFi in public places more actively.

### A Consolidated Community Voice

One participant suggested that a Midtown Community Council be created to consolidate and guide the neighbourhood perspective on development and planning.

## Next Steps

Nicole Swerhun committed to uploading both the North Toronto Soccer Club and Study Team's presentations to the project website, and to sharing a draft of the Meeting Summary with participants for review. She also urged the Midtown Planning Group to promote the February 4 Public Meeting to their networks.

## List of Attendees

**Avenue Road Eglinton Community Association:** Frank Peters  
**City of Toronto:** Alex Shevchuk (Parks Recreation and Forestry)  
**City of Toronto:** Andrew Au (City Planning)  
**City of Toronto:** Daryl Starkman (Parks Recreation and Forestry)  
**City of Toronto:** Diane Ho (City Planning)  
**City of Toronto:** Hans Reikko (Eglinton Connects)  
**City of Toronto:** Helene Iardas (City Planning)  
**City of Toronto:** Leo deSocry (City Planning)  
**City of Toronto:** Jamie McEwan (City Planning)  
**City of Toronto:** Michelle Corcoran (City Planning)  
**City of Toronto:** Rong Yu (City Planning)  
**City of Toronto:** Tim Burkholder (City Planning)  
**City of Toronto:** Susan McAlpine (City Planning)  
**Cycle Toronto:** Chris Jacobs  
**Councillor Karen Stintz Office:** J.P. Boutros  
**Eglinton Park Residents' Association:** Christine Langlois  
**Eglinton Park Residents' Association:** Lancelyn Rayman-Watters  
**Eglinton Park Residents' Association:** Lydia Levin  
**Eglinton Park Residents' Association:** Matthew Pope  
**Eglinton Park Residents' Association:** Tom Cohen  
**FoNTRA:** Terry Mills  
**North Toronto Baseball Association:** Jeremy Weisz  
**North Toronto Baseball Association:** Stuart Lunan  
**North Toronto Soccer Association:** Doug Blair  
**North Toronto Soccer Club:** Andrew Kidd  
**Resident:** Dane Gragas  
**Resident:** Chris Hoyle  
**Resident:** Sean Boulton  
**Ryerson University:** Jon Hunt  
**Ryerson University:** Zachary Henderson  
**Stanley Knowles Housing Co-Op:** Ann King  
**Sherwood Park Residents' Association:** Ben Daube  
**Toronto Green Community Foundation:** Abe Dyck  
**Toronto Sports Council:** Heather Mitchell  
**Walk Toronto:** Michael Black  
**Uptown Yonge BIA:** Jonathan Skelcher