

EGLINTON PARK RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION Recommendations to the Midtown in Focus Study

October 19, 2013

The Eglinton Park Residents' Association is comprised of engaged residents in the area bounded by Yonge on the East, Eglinton Park on the West, Eglinton Avenue to the South and Roselawn to the North. We live in a stable neighbourhood with a strong sense of community and interaction between neighbours—whether they be out in the park, walking in the street, going shopping or enjoying the farmer's market. We care deeply about the neighbourhood and the quality of the public realm, parks, open spaces, and opportunities they provide for enjoying outdoor spaces and nature, either individually or together. Our aim is for the planning of parks and public realm continue to promote these positive aspects of our neighbourhood.

The following are priority items of concern to the EPRA:

1. Densification

- The nature of parks, walkways and open spaces are of utmost concern to us. It is important, however, to see the public realm in the context of the intensification of height and density in this area. There are many applications and plans for high rise buildings in mid-town, on properties that have, up till now, housed low rise buildings; this will lead to rapid densification. While we recognize that density is outside the scope of the Midtown study, it is important to note that if midtown densities continue to rise without limits, primarily dictated by developers' desires rather than good urban planning, even the best efforts and plans to enhance the public realm will be undermined. We would also like to see a broader attempt to engage developers in finding ways to benefit citizens, leaving a legacy that befits this generation and the next.

2. A green environment is very important

- Environmental sustainability and effective management of the natural elements, trees and plants are important to our community. In our dense, urban environment, with global warming a growing concern, we value every public pocket and park that can effectively be created.
- Opportunities for greening include:
 - Ample shade and ample plant life, along the streets, around the buildings, and, where appropriate, on terraces and roofs. So the city should take proactive steps to sustain our tree cover, in the streets, on public land, and also in front yards where many mature trees are reaching the end of the natural lives.
 - A move away from black to more reflective roofs, and perhaps to brighter paving, in place of asphalt.
 - Respect for the water-table, so the more porous the paving the better, so as to protect present and future trees.
 - Green plantings that are partly composed of species that don't lose their foliage in the winter.
 - A link to Eglinton Park, as many who live in Midtown outside the immediate area are not aware of the Park. To increase awareness and usage, provide a new "green path" along the north side of Eglinton from Yonge Street to the Park, with appropriate signage and rest areas.
 - Bicycle-friendly infrastructure: places to park, store and ride a bike, all safely and conveniently.

3. Eglinton Park

- The boundaries and entrances should be more clearly marked and paths improved.
- Access to the park needs improving from all directions.
- The garden on the sound side of the park could be better utilized with new design that encourages it to be used, with more seating provided.
- A detailed “you are here” map at the entrance showing the various components of the park, similar to what is seen in provincial parks.
- Habitat for wildlife: Eglinton Park and other green places are a habitat and food-source for wildlife. The great stand of cup-flowers up the hill provide birdseed in the fall, for migratory finches.

4. Creating and enhancing community life

- The public realm should be conducive to creating and enhancing community life. People should be able to sit individually, in groups, take care of their children playing etc.
- Increase the number of available benches, low walls and other seating arrangements.
- Public chess boards.
- Tranquil spaces are also valued and we want oases, where citizens can duck out of the urban clamour and have shade and hear the breeze in the foliage and the tinkle of moving water.

5. People of all ages live here

- Midtown is home to people of all ages, and their range of interests and needs should be considered i.e. young children, teens, the elderly, and all those in-between.
- Accessibility is important for people with strollers, mobility devices, wheel chairs and walking difficulties.
- Many sidewalks in the neighbourhood are notoriously uneven and this needs to be addressed.
- The area needs a lot more seating and rest stops throughout.
- We would like a built form to provide children with things to do with their eyes and hands and bodies along the sidewalks, in the parks, on the plazas: structures and art to scramble on and slither through.

6. Public Art

- Public art enhances our public spaces, is culturally important and gives identity to locations. We recommend highlighting and marking spaces with the use of public art.

7. Pedestrian safety

- Members of our community generally walk to neighbourhood destinations, frequently at their peril, due to lack of effective traffic control or pedestrian-friendly programs.
- Many children and older citizens, including Stanley Knowles Cooperative members, cross Duplex heading to the park.
- Some of the pedestrian danger spots in our neighbourhood include the intersection at Orchard View and Duplex, and Yonge Street at Orchard View where there is a lot of jay-walking due to the length of the block. Another is the Duplex-Eglinton intersection, where motorists often speed southward from Orchard View to beat the light.

8. Traffic management

- Traffic management needs to be improved for efficiency and to reduce congestion, but moreover for pedestrian safety—this is a neighbourhood where people walk, rather than drive, to their destinations.

Areas of particular concern are:

- Duplex Avenue between Orchard View and Eglinton, where trucks delivering to the RioCan Centre create havoc and confusion for other drivers and danger for pedestrians.

- Orchard View Blvd east of Duplex, where there are many vehicular entrances and exits onto Orchard View causing congestion and chaos.
- It will be important to rationalize utility entrances and to work with developers to help deal with traffic congestion caused by servicing their buildings.

9. Signage and Markers of Place

- Signage will enhance the sense of place and community. Markers will tell residents and visitors about the history and cultural legacy of our spaces and places and point to its natural and artificial features.
- Architecture that distinguishes the intersection and names the Yonge-Eglinton crossing.
- Street signs should be apparent and the buildings numbered.
- North, south east and west should be indicated at major intersections.
- Clear signage for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers.

10. Inspiration:

We recommend courage to try radical, new ideas and to learn from projects in other cities and countries.

- Learning from New York's public realm experiments in recent years, under Commissioner of New York City Department of Transportation Janette Sadik-Kahn - particularly taking the approach of doing temporary, less expensive pilot projects (this was done in this neighbourhood in 2012, when Orchard View was successfully closed off and seating was provided over the summer.)
- Following examples set in other cities like London, Philadelphia, etc, we should build a temporary high "green wall" around the TTC bus bays, to hide the site for the several years yet to come before it is permanently redeveloped. It could be constructed of recycled/recyclable materials with a living plants-component, and include pedestrian-friendly seating and lighting.
- As Jane Jacobs and many others know, cities work best when they are interesting and we should look to details that catch the eye and mind, e.g.: the Barrio de Letras in Madrid, where a pedestrian street has passages by Madrileño writers underfoot; a crazy sidewalk in downtown Helsinki, where you puzzle out astronomical signs, in bronze, beneath your feet.