

Final Meeting Summary

Midtown Planning Group

Thursday, July 11, 2013

12 – 2 pm, Northern District Library

Overview

On Thursday, July 11, the City of Toronto hosted a meeting with the Midtown Planning Group (MPG). The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the *Yonge-Eglinton Parks, Open Space, and Streetscape Master Plan* and to connect the MPG with the team responsible for producing the Master Plan.

Approximately 30 people attended the meeting, which included a presentation from the project team and a facilitated discussion. Councillors Josh Matlow, Jaye Robinson, and Karen Stintz also attended the meeting. Following the meeting, participants shared their contact information so the team could keep in touch over the course of the project.

Nicole Swerhun, Jane Farrow, and Ian Malczewski from Swerhun Facilitation wrote this Meeting Summary, which was shared with participants for their review prior to being finalized.

Key Messages

This project is very important for Yonge-Eglinton. Participants felt there was a lot of development activity in the area, creating a real need to think about the area's parks and open spaces.

The Master Plan should consider transportation. Many participants felt that transportation was a key concern in the area, including road congestion, lack of street parking, lack of cycling infrastructure, and pedestrian circulation.

There are many complex, interrelated public realm issues and opportunities. Issues like the number of dogs in the neighbourhood, the recent loss of some publicly-accessible open space, and the many ways residents use (and want to use) the public realm should inform the study.

It's important that the Master Plan inform in-progress and impending development. Because of the volume of development activity in the area, participants wanted to make sure this Master Plan was able to inform new development as soon as possible.

Detailed Feedback

We have organized participants' feedback into five areas: development, transportation, public realm, implementation, and process.

Development:

- Development activity: Many participants expressed concern about the number of development applications in the area. One participant wanted to know when the City identified Yonge and Eglinton as a Centre in the Official Plan and asked if / when the community was given input into that decision.
- Connecting development to transit: There should be coordination between transit stops and how people move between transit and residences.
- Impacts of high-density living: One participant suggested the project team share any research or insight into the sociological implications of high density living.
- Places for people to work: In order for people to be able to walk to work, there needs to be new office space added to the community, too.

Transportation:

- Road congestion: Many participants felt the current transportation system lacks the capacity to accommodate the traffic that will be generated by new development.
- Parking: As new development replaces parking lots, there is less and less parking in the area. One participant suggested putting parking beneath new parks or public spaces, similar to Dundas Square.
- Cycling: One participant said that cycling in the area has nearly doubled in recent years, but that existing cycling infrastructure is fragmented and needs to be improved.

Public Realm:

- History/context – Participants felt it was important the project team be aware of the recent history in the area, such as the recently removed publicly-accessible space at the northwest corner of Yonge and Eglinton. Participants also felt it was important to acknowledge the role of the area in the 1837 rebellion and the history of North Toronto).
- All public property: Participants said it will be important to look at public spaces beyond that owned by the study (such as TDSB land)
- Dogs: With new development come more dogs, and some areas – such as a patch of grass at Roehampton and Redpath – are heavily used. The increased dog presence means there are increased issues with dog waste and its disposal.
- Above and below grade public realm: It's important that this project look at underground options and above-grade options (such as elevated walkways), since both present opportunities to increase the amount of the public realm.
- Tower in the Park: One participant suggested the project team consider revisiting the Tower in the Park model as a legitimate approach to creating successful open spaces. Some choose to live in this area because of the success of this approach. There was concern that existing green spaces surrounding towers in the park might be redeveloped, and some participants asked the team to look into strategies to keep these spaces green and accessible.
- Broad idea of public space: The project team should think about patios, cafes and outdoor areas of bars as public space too.

Implementation:

- The sooner, the better: Many participants felt this project should begin to inform new development as soon as possible. The City explained that it is already testing new ideas with new developments (such as widening sidewalks, encouraging new mid-block connections, and creating new open space).
- A Sidewalks Plan is urgently needed: There is real urgency around the need for a Sidewalks Plan that provides direction to developers. This plan should include things like: how wide sidewalks should be, where the pedestrian (and bicycle) links are, and how people will move between areas.
- Study results should have teeth: Some participants expressed concern about implementation, saying that if the report proposes guidelines, they will not be strong enough to effect real change. There was also a concern that the development community could ignore the guidelines and / or circumnavigate them. The City explained that this study could influence the Secondary Plan, the zoning bylaw, or trigger other mechanisms such as a Community Improvement Plan.
- Request for Moratorium on development: Some participants asked if it would be possible to request a moratorium on new development while the City undertakes this study? Councillor Matlow explained that he is currently researching the potential to implement an Interim Control Bylaw.

Process:

- Congratulations on the process: Many participants were happy that the city was undertaking this process felt it had potential to make a positive, lasting contribution to the area.
- Create a multi-layer map: One participant felt that mapping the many layers of the community on a map will be important in understanding the existing conditions at Yonge and Eglinton. Suggested layers included: public lands, development applications, where people smell garbage, noise, where kids walk to school, where nannies sit with strollers, comfortable places for sitting, where people smoke, where people throw snowballs, and where it is peaceful. In particular, teenagers' maps of the community would likely provide valuable information to the study team.
- Support for Walk with Jane: The Walk with Jane is a good idea and will be a good way to talk about the community. One participant suggested a night walk would also be a good way to identify safety and aesthetic issues in the community.
- Additional Stakeholders: Participants felt that it was important to add a few more stakeholders to the group, including Walk Toronto, Local BIA(s), and Friends of the Beltline.

Next Steps

The study team committed to summarizing the notes of the meeting and sharing it with participants who had left their contact information on sign-in sheet. The team also committed to meeting with the group again in the fall.

List of Participants

Arris Strategy Studio, Terry Mills
Avenue Road and Eglinton Community Association (ARECA), Frank Peter
City of Toronto, Alka Lukatela
City of Toronto, Alex Shevchuk
City of Toronto, Andrew Au
City of Toronto, Corinne Fox
City of Toronto, Diane Ho
City of Toronto, Gary Papas
City of Toronto, Helene Iardas
City of Toronto, James Parakh
City of Toronto, Kristina Reinders
City of Toronto, Leo DeSoucy
City of Toronto, Mark Ventresca
City of Toronto, Michele Sardy
City of Toronto, Tim Burkholder
Parsons Brinckerhoff, Harold Sich
Public Work, Adam Nicklin
Public Work, Marc Ryan
Public Work, Gerardo Paez
Resident, Barbara Bruser
Resident, Carol Sevitt
Resident, Claudia Ciraldo
Resident, Geoff Kettal
Resident, Helen Riley
Resident, Jacques Katz
Resident, Kathleen Hummelen
Resident, Lancelyn Rayman-Watters
Resident, Leah Zach
Resident, M. Christina Cuervo
Resident, Matthew Pope
Resident, Mojgan Rasouli
Resident, Naomi St. John
Resident, Nick Sion
Resident, Rosanna Della Valle
Resident, Tom Cohen
Sherwood Park Residents' Association (SPRA), Malcolm Martini
Sherwood Park Residents' Association (SPRA), Paula Greco
Swerhun Facilitation, Ian Malczewski
Swerhun Facilitation, Jane Farrow
Swerhun Facilitation, Nicole Swerhun
Toronto Public Library, Maggie Gosselin
Uptown BIA, Jonathan Skelcher
Ward 16 Councillor, Karen Stintz
Ward 22 Councillor, Josh Matlow
Ward 24 Councillor, Jaye Robinson

Parks, Open Space and Streetscape Master Plan for Yonge-Eglinton Area

Midtown Planning Group Meeting #1
July 11, 2013, 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm
Northern District Library – Room 224 (2nd Floor)
40 Orchard View Boulevard

Proposed Agenda

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| 12:00 pm | Welcome
Karen Stintz – City Councillor Ward 16
Jaye Robinson – City Councillor Ward 25
Josh Matlow - City Councillor Ward 22 |
| 12:20 | Introductions: City Staff Team |
| 12:45 | Introductions: Consultant Team - Public Work |
| 1:00 | Overview Presentation: What is a Parks, Open Space and Streetscape
Master Plan?
Community Consultation Opportunities
Preliminary Project Schedule |
| 1:20 | Question Period |
| 1:50 | Wrap-up |
| 2:00 | Adjourn |