

TEN PART PLAN

1

PRINCIPLES

- **Guide Growth and Change**
on an ongoing incremental basis
- **Consolidate**
individual developments into over-arching comprehensive outcomes
- **Leverage Intensification**
to fulfill identified local goals
- **Unlock Added-Value**
through partnerships on a public-private, project-to-project basis
- **Advance the Public Realm**
expanding its scope, identifying its significant components, describing its characteristics
- **Improve Open Space Offering**
broadening its definition and extending its continuums
- **Define Transitions**
in measurable yardsticks:
setbacks, stepbacks, angular planes
- **Embrace Public Transit**

INTRODUCTION

This Discussion Paper has been prepared to inform the Official Plan Review and in particular the Yonge Eglinton Secondary Plan's review.

On the left is a **TEN PART PLAN** for an improved Yonge Eglinton Secondary Plan. Following directly below is an overview of the local planning experience and the thinking behind this Midtown Secondary Plan Discussion Paper.

IN BRIEF



...it's about establishing a comprehensive local planning framework for Midtown that is **legible and can beneficially inform** the rapid growth and change that is Midtown's future.

The existing Secondary Plan contains good planning statements:

- encouraging community-based planning
- promoting the expansion of the open space continuum
- recognizing public-private partnerships as a means to deliver urban solutions that over-arch the traditional town planning distinctions of streets, parks, and individual private properties
- integrating appropriately the Yonge Eglinton *Town Centre* core area with its surrounding frame area context
- directing attention to Midtown's urban form and public realm, referring to –
 - a high-quality of life and residential amenity
 - enhanced public realm, open space and pedestrian realm
 - architectural excellence, environmental sustainability and innovative design
 - ensure growth compatible with surrounding Neighbourhoods.

Although, these policies are often found lacking in the assessment of development proposals.

- **Articulate Retail Structures**
- **Parking, Loading and Servicing** outline potentials for organized and effective facilities

2

Midtown Secondary Plan

name change to reflect the full Plan Area

3

MANAGING THE PLAN

to facilitate effective planning

- a unified Community Council decision-making process
- a single, singular City Planning administration
- a locally situated planning presence
- a structured, ongoing community consultation practice.

Nevertheless, the Yonge Eglinton Secondary Plan remains a patchwork of statements that fall short of expressing a coherent planning strategy. This is readily demonstrated in the ongoing development process that continues to outstrip and outflank the planning in place, and leads directly into an un-planned circumstance.

It remains to structure a comprehensive Secondary Plan benefiting Midtown's future –

- providing for an effective planning practice – in procedures and instruments
- described as a legible plan – comprehensible to the community, industry and agencies alike
- serving the entire planning area – recognizing and addressing its diversity of urban structures
- consisting of locally-truthed solutions – rather than relying upon imported external conventions
- that can orchestrate and inform Midtown development – rather than following its thrusts, and
- is robust and resilient in its handling trends, change and demographic shifts.

MIDTOWN'S ORIGINS

Midtown has its own unique urban form, or morphology, distinct from Toronto's historic origins that underlays the Downtown today, and distinct again from the later-developed urban structure of North York.

Midtown's development came about with the advent of mechanized transportation in the late 1800's, when trams revolutionized urban mobility enabling Toronto to expand northwards and established at Yonge Eglinton its principal transit hub; and so Midtown took on its characteristic form before the automobile became the primary urban determinant as it did in the formation of North York.

This window in time created tight-knit Neighbourhoods primarily comprised of detached houses with street networks suited to their immediate localities, resulting in the frequent mismatch of intersections along Midtown main streets, and generally dispensing with the lane structures commonly found in the older city.

The main streets evolved upon the rural concession road matrix of east-west thoroughfares namely: St. Clair, Eglinton and Lawrence; and north-south thoroughfares namely: Bathurst, Yonge and Bayview – which were subsequently augmented by upgrading Avenue Rd. and Mt. Pleasant to increase transportation capacities.

The properties fronting along these main streets were generally of shallow depth and were laid out without backstreets, resulting in their close-fit relationships with the adjacent residential surroundings, whose local streets were in turn tasked with accommodating main street traffic maneuvers: parking, loading, standing and *circling the block*.

Yonge St. was established as Toronto's cardinal north-south concession – the city's spine; Eglinton in turn held a special status amongst east-west concessions offering an easy traverse across the Don Valley.

4

SECONDARY PLAN INSTRUMENTS

- **The Statutory Instrument**, and
- **Non-Statutory Brief**
 - inform rather than regulate: maps, character statements etc.
 - building basis to inform future statutory change

5

PLANNING REVIEW

assess contemporary planning

- the existing Yonge Eglinton Secondary Plan and Amendments
- desktop review of planning tools: other Secondary Plans, Mid-rise and Tall Building Guidelines etc.

The significant stature of the Yonge and Eglinton thoroughfares continues through to today, investing a magnetism, whose unique dynamics attract developers and residents alike to their crossroads.

In brief, the Yonge Eglinton Secondary Plan area consists of a compact Town Centre with main street corridors of marginal property depth that are tightly encased within stable Midtown Neighbourhoods.

EXTENT OF THE PLANNING AREA

The Yonge Eglinton Secondary Plan covers an area of three square kilometers that extends far beyond Yonge Eglinton itself – stretching from as far west as the intersection of Chaplin and Eglinton to its eastern border along Bayview and from as far north as Blythwood to as far south as Davisville and Mt. Pleasant Cemetery.

The Plan area includes diverse Midtown environments ranging from the most tranquil to the most dynamic –

1. stable environments

- the four quadrants of Residential Neighbourhoods
- three significant parks Eglinton Park, Davisville Park and Oriole Park
- a portion of the Belt Line Park
- Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, and
- smaller local neighbourhood park places, along with
- local street allowances offering landscaped park characteristics.

2. areas where intensification is targeted and/or anticipated

- the Mixed Use *Town Centre* at the Yonge Eglinton crossroads
- the Growth Centre north and south of Eglinton, and in addition
- four Mixed Use Avenues along: Yonge, Eglinton, Mt. Pleasant and Bayview
- Apartment Neighbourhoods, and of particular note
- the Davisville locality.

3. AND substantial transportation facilities

- the soon to be built Eglinton LRT corridor which is of city-wide significance, with
- four stations environs to be built at: Chaplin, Avenue Rd, Mt. Pleasant and Bayview, and
- a new major transit junction station at the Yonge Eglinton crossroads, and

6

RECOGNIZE MIDTOWN'S STRUCTURE

define and characterize its urban elements

Intensification Areas

- Yonge Eglinton *Town Centre*
- Yonge Eglinton Growth Centre
- the four main streets:
Yonge St, Eglinton Ave,
Mt. Pleasant and Bayview Ave.
- the Davisville corridor:
from Davisville Station
through to Mt. Pleasant

Stable Areas

- Neighbourhoods
- Apartment Neighbourhoods
- Parks
- Open Spaces

- the Davisville station and its rail-yards.

GROWTH AND CHANGE

Over the past decade Midtown has experienced rapid growth accelerated by the distinctions of its locality, Toronto's adoption of its re-urbanization strategy, and more generally, the global trends in urbanization.

Development in Midtown has gathered momentum, and of particular note, its characteristics have changed direction involving greater development magnitudes beyond the current planning rationale.

In particularly this is true for –

- the *Town Centre* at the Yonge Eglinton crossroads
- the Growth Centre in its entirety
- the four principal Avenues, and
- the Davisville area.

Furthermore, the construction of the Eglinton LRT corridor will be a significant game-changer affecting the entirety of Eglinton – **AND particular attention is required to ensure the appropriate development of the LRT stations facilities.**

PLANNING TODAY

The exercise of planning in Midtown has been less extensive and less vigorous than in Downtown and North York, both of whom take part in administering Midtown's planning from their localities, far removed.

The Yonge Eglinton Secondary Plan planning area is split into two separate jurisdictions, Downtown and North York – and the extent of this division runs right through to the centre of the Yonge Eglinton crossroads.

As a result of this division, the local Councillors find themselves divided into two different and remote Community Councils, thwarting decision-making encompassing the Yonge Eglinton Secondary Plan area.

Midtown's planning strategies for the most part are imported from the two external urban environments of Downtown and North York, neither of which reflects the character of Midtown.

Transit-Significant Elements

- the emerging Eglinton cross-town LRT corridor
- four new LRT station localities: Chaplin, Avenue Rd., Mt. Pleasant and Bayview
- redevelopment of Yonge Eglinton Station gateway
- development of Davisville Station and rail-yard

7

BOUNDARIES REVIEW

incorporate significant adjacent elements

- Bayview LRT station environ
- Bayview Ave. – Avenue structure
- Chaplin LRT station environ
- consider further extensions east-west along the Eglinton LRT corridor
- Belt Line Park consolidation

The difficulties in importing external planning approaches can be seen in applying Toronto's Tall Building Guidelines. The 2006 version, in force today, was devised for North York with its extensive areas available for master planning; and the more recent Downtown Tall Building Guidelines which are being tailored to the compressed Downtown environment – **NEITHER of these Guidelines suits the conditions found within Midtown and their application produces questionable results.**

Midtown today is experiencing development at a rate that is outpacing planning, a condition best described as planning-by-precedents; and whether Planning acknowledges precedent-setting as being appropriate or not; the breaching of development milestones is not lost on the development industry – exceptions quickly become the rules.

Development approvals are proceeding along the four Avenues without the benefit of any preceding Avenue Studies that might inform their design – instead being reliant upon presumptive cursory reviews in lieu of formal Avenue planning.

This is particularly critical along the Eglinton LRT corridor, where the planning of comprehensive ground-level station facilities is not part of transit's master plan, the expectation being that local planning will address these stations.

Meanwhile, developments surrounding these key areas are crystallizing, securing the rewards of proximity to transit at the expense of obstructing the potential for appropriate development essential for these ground-level station facilities.

In order to ensure that the viability of these essential ground-level station it may require the application of **temporary holding by-laws within a 100m radius of these station localities**, to be maintained until such time as appropriate station facilities are satisfied.

On the other hand, it is hoped that through the application of intensification inducements it may be possible to leverage these results in a positive fashion without resorting to such constraints.

The issue of **Transition** between areas of intensification and stability is of critical importance in Midtown, as Neighbourhoods are situated in close proximity to the shallow Avenue corridors, which in many instances lack backstreets and lane-ways that otherwise might afford beneficial buffer-space.

Again, the issue of **Transition** prevails throughout the surroundings of the Growth Centre wherever it adjoins stable Neighbourhoods.

Market demand within the Growth Centre is such that every land parcel, even with a frontage as small as 30m, is recognized as a potential intensification opportunity.

The prior notion of **towers in the park** has been set aside; now the open space challenge is reliant upon

8

PUBLIC TRANSIT

The Eglinton LRT Corridor

a city-wide significant structure

- extensive intensification is to be anticipated
- integrate Midtown transit corridor planning with the broader transit-planning exercise
- utilize the 2,500m below grade construction void at each station for retail or parking
- consider off-hours commercial use of the LRT trackage for goods and garbage shipping

Ground-Level Stations

- Chaplin
- Avenue Rd.
- Mt. Pleasant, and
- Bayview

Provide comprehensive station facilities

- comfortable and secure pedestrian waiting areas
- provide for:

improving the shoulders of street allowances considering them as **street parks**, and looking upon stable Neighbourhoods as **houses-in-the-park** delivering additional open space value.

In general the minimal and inconsistent degree of planning exercised in Midtown has contributed to a fractious relationship between the principal urban interests: the community, and the public and private sectors.

The resulting situation has distracted attention and effort away from the primary objective of achieving a good quality environment solution.

Midtown has borne the repercussions of all the above-mentioned with a litany of lost opportunities:

- reductions to, and intrusions upon, the public realm and open space continuum
- fragmentation of retail structures along the Avenues
- marginalized and uncoordinated transit facilities
- piecemeal assemblies of standalone developments, and
- redundancies of loading and parking ramps at the expense of the public realm

...to name a few.

In simplest terms... there has been a failure to clearly inform all the interests of Midtown's emerging future, and this void of information has left each sector of interest pursuing its own independent silo of urban considerations.

In the broad perspective, all sectors of interest share a common outcome – a good future for Midtown.

For planning to be effective it must be appropriate and in place in time to shape development considerations while they exist in the preliminary state of flux – prior to proposals becoming crystalline, and hence rendered *planning-resistant*.

PLANNING AHEAD... *what we want to achieve*

Urban planning involves balancing advantages and striving to harness opportunities.

The most significant aspect of urban planning is **Consolidation** which is of greater importance than **Intensification**...

It's about how things fit together, rather than simply increasing magnitudes.

- bus standing and stabling areas
- turn-around loops for current and future bus routes
- taxi stands
- integrate convenient retail and services into station environs
- leverage intensification to fund improvements

Yonge Eglinton Station

- develop the station environment as a significant gateway connecting into Yonge Eglinton
- establish a below grade flush-level pedestrian concourse connecting with all four corners

9

RETAIL STRUCTURES

- provide significant resources sustaining a pedestrian-oriented population

Urban design involves the negative-space surrounding architecture, the provision, organization and configuration of –

- **circulations:** footpaths, sidewalks, lane-ways and thoroughfares
- **landscaping:** spaces, places, edges, parks and green
- **views:** spaces, vistas, tree lines, sky-views and sunlight

it's about crafting the over-arching urban setting, within which individual buildings are its component building-blocks.

The primary focus of a Midtown's Local Planning Framework should be – to achieve a comprehensive public realm open space continuum.

OBSERVATIONS FROM FURTHER AFIELD

MANHATTAN

Manhattan is often considered to be the natural extension of Toronto's urban evolution, nonetheless, it should be kept in mind that these two cities have significantly different DNA.

- Manhattan would fit between the Chaplin-Eglinton intersection and Bayview being not much wider than the Yonge Eglinton Secondary Plan area, which in turn is more than twice the area as Central Park.
- In 1811 Manhattan established its gridiron street pattern and in so doing secured fully 33% of its landmass to reside within its street allowances to provide for roadways, sidewalks and landscaping; whereas in the Growth Centre the ratio is a meager 20% of its landmass.

The shortfall that results occurs at the expense of the public realm open space continuum.

- provide ongoing retail market assessments to inform development and so improve retail offerings

Main Streets

- recognize that retail amalgams are reliant upon a comprehensive urban framework
- Avenue Studies to be undertaken in order to inform development initiatives
- retail facilities to be provided that serve their pedestrian-accessible catchments
- parking to be provided to sustain retail operations by broadening market opportunities
- storefront continuums not to be interrupted by voids, parking lots, ramps and big-box stores
- sleeve big-box stores behind fine-grained retail storefront continuums

Yonge Eglinton Town Centre

- recognize transit ridership, including commuter through-put, as the primary retail market

SYDNEY AUSTRALIA

Sydney is comprised of 37 Local Governmental Areas, compared to Toronto's 44 Wards, and each GLA is responsible for its own urban planning and has nine elected decision-makers.

Sydney exercises an open planning process, whereby Sydneysiders are well informed about planning, and to this end development applications are clearly published for public review. As a result, the planning context is better understood – and from such an informed position the stakeholders then proceed to exercise their interests.

Besides their Official Plans (Strategic Environmental Plans) and their Zoning By-laws (Local Environmental Plans), there is a third instrument in the Sydney planning process...

**A non-statutory planning layer that informs development...
'what we want to achieve'.**

ABU DHABI and DUBAI

Cities in the United Arab Emirates, when initially setting out their urban growth plans, took a different approach to the public realm open space continuum.

They kept in the public domain their urban floor plates, intact as a singular entity – containing streets, parks, landscaping, separating spaces, parking lots and loading areas; and then released development sites in the form of only the footprint area of each building.

**It's a useful all-in-one vision...
a consolidated perspective of the public realm and open space continuum.**

- configure the transit gateway to optimize retail engagement with transit ridership
- consolidate the retail offerings of the NW and SW corners of the Yonge Eglinton crossroads by providing seamless retail linkages above street level and at the transit concourse level
- retail to be incorporated into the transit concourse level(s)

10

CONSTRUCTION STAGES & PHASING

Significant and protracted construction will occur along Eglinton with the construction of the LRT specific requiring planning attention; AND a more critical condition will arise at the Yonge Eglinton crossroads where there are potentially five concurrent construction projects within a 100m radius of the crossroads with a further four projects within a 300m Radius.

- **An orchestrating strategy to reduce construction impacts**

IN CONCLUSION

A comprehensive Midtown Secondary Plan will serve interests of all sectors in their endeavours as they move forward into Midtown's good future.

If on the other hand...

the planning continues to be exercised in its present fashion, the consequences upon Midtown's future are clear –

In broad-strokes –

- Midtown's emerging future will remain obscured rather than being tangibly understood
- development will proceed in an ad hoc fashion driven by individual silos of consideration
- the solutions and outcomes will provide an urban environment far less than what is possible
- a patchwork of standalone developments will prevail, thwarting consolidated results
- Midtown's existing good character will be diminished
- off-stage planning decisions and deals without fulsome consultations will continue
- contentious debacles will continue to distract away from positive efforts

In more detail –

- the public realm will remain much as it is today, a disparate and secondary concern
- the proportioning of open space to population will continue to drop away
- the Town Centre will develop without a legible, coherent organizational structure
- the street allowance deficiency, mentioned earlier, will further constrain the public realm
- the Eglinton LRT will be a transit tributary rather than a significant city-wide urban structure
- LRT stations will fail to fully materialize reducing its purposeful amenity to its ridership
- automotive imperatives will remain the significant shaper of Midtown's urban form
- Avenues will be patchworks of un-orchestrated building-blocks without rhyme
- retail continuums, vital to shop keepers' viability, will be fragmented further
- Neighbourhood edges will be negatively impacted and destabilize