

Corktown Transit-Oriented Community Public Engagement Summary Report



**Virtual Event (September 27,
2021) & Online Engagement**



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Introduction

Transit-oriented communities (TOC) are part of the government's plan to build new, sustainable transit. TOC will enhance Ontario's "[New Subway Transit Plan for the GTA](#)" by placing more housing and jobs near or at transit stations along the routes of the Province of Ontario's (the Province) four priority subway projects, including the [Ontario Line](#), the [Yonge North Subway Extension](#), the [Scarborough Subway Extension](#), and the [Eglinton Crosstown West Extension](#).

The TOC proposal for Corktown Station offers a dynamic community with housing, jobs, commercial uses (including office and retail spaces), and community spaces, such as a library, connected to the Ontario Line subway and TTC bus and streetcar services. In recognition of the historical significance of the land, the Province will work closely with the City of Toronto (the City), stakeholders, the community, and indigenous partners to collaborate on a meaningful plan to commemorate the rich heritage of Canada's First Parliament site.

Outreach Materials

- Postcards distributed to area residents and businesses within a 500 m radius to proposed station site.
- Three (3) social media posts from the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) supported (i.e., shared) by Infrastructure Ontario (IO).
- Community input received through the EngageIO website at engageio.ca/en/corktown.

Presentation

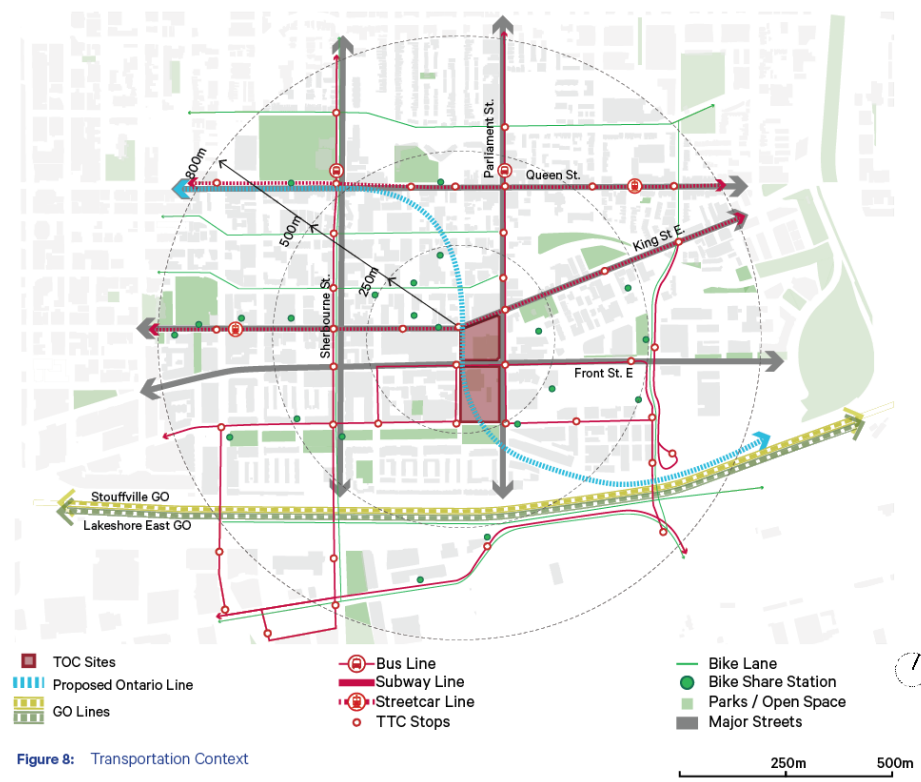
As part of the public engagement process, on Monday, September 27, 2021, IO held a virtual public meeting for the Corktown area TOC with an attendance of 197 unique viewers and a third-party moderator serving to facilitate the presentation and questions. The meeting began with a land acknowledgement, introductions, and opening remarks from Associate Minister of Transportation Stan Cho and City Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, followed by a presentation on the Corktown TOC by IO and the Ontario Line Technical Advisory team.

The presentation started with a declaration of the provincial objectives for the TOC program: increasing transit ridership, increasing housing supply, and catalyzing a complete community. Next, there was a discussion about engaging early and often with multiple stakeholders to make sure the TOC program is a success. Three distinct forums were mentioned to gather feedback and consultation: First Parliament working group (broad perspective from the community about what matters), Local Advisory

Committees (members of BIAs, neighbourhood associations, and community leaders), and the City (multiple forums to receive feedback and help mold the process).

The timeline for the Corktown TOC was provided—following the 2019 announcement by the Province of the Ontario Line project, the draft TOC proposal and planning document was submitted to the City in March 2021. In April 2021, the Province identified the Corktown TOC sites. Since then, there have been local stakeholder engagements (LAC meetings), leading up to the first virtual open house in September 2021, with a final open house set to occur in the coming months. Next, the project team presented the draft TOC concept for the Corktown Station area. In addition to the TOC program objectives and principles, there are three important criteria for TOC including: 1) being technically feasible, 2) meeting market and community requirements to ultimately ensure that what is built is feasible, and 3) being beautiful and reflecting innovative solutions for the urban form, fulfilling both public and private needs. A key driver for the Ontario Line and TOC is the tremendous and ongoing growth of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

The Downtown and Central Waterfront form a major Urban Growth Centre, to be served with existing and new investment in transportation and infrastructure. The Ontario Line is a proposed 15.5 km subway line that will travel from the proposed Exhibition Station in the west, through the downtown core in an underground configuration to Corktown Station, continuing beyond to Science Centre Station. The line will be a catalyst that sparks growth in transit, housing, and communities. Details can be found in the presentation and related materials at <https://engageio.ca/en/engagement-initiatives/corktown>.



Question and Answer

Following the presentation, a question-and-answer period was conducted. Responders submitted questions over Zoom and on the phone. Those interested were also able to continue to submit their feedback via the EngageIO site following the meeting. A summary of the live discussion and the comments received online is presented below by theme. Questions and comments were categorized into the following themes: Stakeholder Consultation and Project Governance; Built Form; Mix of Uses; Parks and Open Space; Heritage; and Public Realm.

Stakeholder Consultation and Project Governance

Responders asked about the delineation of responsibilities between the City, the Province (IO), and Metrolinx. Responders were informed that IO was tasked with implementing the TOC program for subways, while Metrolinx is responsible for the delivery of the Ontario Line. The City is working closely with both IO and Metrolinx on the implementation of the subway and TOC sites.

Responders expressed their desire to be consulted throughout the entirety of the process. The project team agreed with responders and noted that this was the first community engagement meeting thus far and that feedback was important to inform the proposal moving forward. Responders were also directed to EngageIO's online feedback platform to offer detailed comments about different aspects of the proposal.

Responders were interested to know about the proposed timeline for the Ontario Line and subsequent TOC. The project team explained that TOC construction would follow the opening of the subway in 2027.

In addition to questions about the proposed concept, responders had many questions about public consultation and studies conducted and completed prior to the community engagement meeting. Open house and in person responders were interested in the composition and purpose of the Local Advisory Committee (LAC). The project team noted that the LAC was formed to solicit early feedback about the TOC concept and is composed of representatives from the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, St. Lawrence Market BIA, Gooderham-Worts Neighbourhood Association, Canadian Stage, City of Toronto-Councillor's Office, and City of Toronto-Transportation Planning.

Questions were raised about the funding of the TOC sites and investment/revenue sources, and their relation to the cost of the Ontario Line. An open house responder asked when a developer would be brought on board, and it was explained that the process for selecting the developer is anticipated to occur in the summer of 2022.

Responders asked about the timing of subway and TOC construction and impacts during and post-construction. The project team stated that the TOC work cannot begin until transit infrastructure construction is complete. The project team suggested that Metrolinx would be able to best answer questions about interim construction impacts.

Built Form

The proposed heights in the TOC concept generated some discussion, with many responders questioning the appropriateness and contextual relation of the proposed height to the existing neighbourhood. The project team acknowledged the community concerns about height and density, noting there is some flexibility but ultimately a need to balance competing objectives to deliver the TOC. Concerns about the proposed heights were echoed by feedback received by online responders following the open house.

Open house responders asked about negotiating height and expressed frustration that the proposed heights were non-conforming with those approved in the King-Parliament Secondary Plan adopted by City Council in 2021 (2021.TE24.11). The project team responded to questions about height by stating that although some flexibility is possible, proposed height on the TOC sites is appropriate given their proximity to higher-order transit and the station now planned for this location. The project team also explained that the proposal aligns with the existing and future context of the area when compared to other surrounding development projects. Maximum heights in the TOC concept at Corktown were informed by an assessment of the provincial and municipal policy direction, urban design and planning principles, existing and emerging built form context, and public realm impacts such as sky view, shadows, and views and vistas. The Growth Plan provides density targets for Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs); MTSAs around subway stations are subject to the greatest density targets. Good planning and design principles suggest that the greatest heights should be located at nodes, along corridors, and edges providing a downward transition toward lower-scale areas. The TOC establishes a new height peak at the MTSA and within the broader neighbourhood. The North site features two 46-storey towers and the South site features a 46-storey tower, a 25-storey tower, and a 24-storey tower. The tallest building is located on top of the transit station, with a downward transition in height moving south towards the park.

Related to height, responders were concerned about the impact of shadowing on the neighbourhood, particularly pedestrian corridors and parks and open space. In response to questions about sun and shadowing, the project team noted that shadow studies were conducted on the proposed development. Smaller floorplates for the towers were chosen so that where shadow impacts exist, they are quick moving and not imposing shadows for longer durations. The proposed development does not impose significant net-new shadows on sensitive uses like residential neighbourhoods or parks, according to shadow studies conducted during the design phases. The project team explained that the built form was intentionally developed so that the taller forms would be setback to allow pedestrians to experience more sunlight during the day.

A question about tower separation distance was also raised. At-grade separation and upper-floor setbacks are being designed with consideration for these separation

requirements. To maintain privacy between uses and buildings, minimum separation distances were established. Across both sites, a minimum separation distance of 25 m is maintained between residential towers, a 20 m separation is provided between primary windows and office uses, and a minimum separation distance of 15 m is provided where primary residential windows face secondary residential windows.

In addition to height, the proposed density was also of concern to some responders, though others expressed their support for increased housing and density in the neighbourhood. Responders suggested a further redistribution of density between the sites to align with the existing mid-rise form. Concern about overcrowding in the neighbourhood, parks, and open space, and impacts on existing infrastructure like sewage, water supply, and electrical were raised by. The project team informed the responders that servicing and infrastructure studies were conducted to evaluate the proposal and development in the area. It was concluded that there is sufficient capacity from a servicing perspective. Emergency access to the site was also raised as a concern.

Online responders provided feedback about the TOC's integration with the planned subway and the relationship between the built form and the streetscape. The development on the North site is structurally integrated with the planned subway station with access provided off both the King Street East and Berkeley Street frontages. An active streetscape, supported by at-grade retail, institutional, and publicly accessible space, respond to the established neighbourhood context and will contribute to an interesting and engaging streetscape. There is a high degree of variation in setbacks within the area due to its unique built form history. Across all frontages, the proposed development generally maintains a 3 m front yard setback, with the exception of King Street East, which has a 2.3 m setback. The setbacks allow for a minimum of 5.3 m from curb to building face on all four sides. The proposed street wall corresponds with the specific surrounding and adjacent buildings, as there is a varied street wall condition between two and six storeys in the broader area.

Mix of Uses

Responders asked about the inclusion of affordable housing and the degree of affordability provided. Responders asked about social housing, rent-geared-to income, and inclusionary zoning, in addition to questions about affordability, which also raised concerns about potential gentrification threatening existing housing co-ops on the Esplanade. The project team noted that concerns about gentrification are not exclusive to this project and agreed with responders that housing affordability is an important topic, especially in Toronto. Part of the goal of the TOC project is to address housing supply and there is an ongoing discussion between the Province and the City regarding the provision of affordable housing. The project team also noted that with limited space on-site, a balance between housing supply and public space will need to be made.

Responders were interested in understanding the tenure of housing options, the mix of units, and finalized housing statistics. The project team confirmed that while at this

stage of design, there are proposed gross floor area statistics for residential and non-residential uses, decisions about tenure, housing mix, and affordability have not been finalized. It is acknowledged that through these questions, responders would like to ensure a high quality of life for future residents, especially for family units with two or more bedrooms. Responders inquired about the mix of retail and other uses. The TOC provides a vibrant mix of uses across both sites contributing to a complete community where people can work, live, and play. Both sites include residential, office and retail space, while the North site hosts the transit station, and the South site includes the public institutional uses. The proposed mix of uses by gross floor area is broken down as follows:

- Residential: 125,387 sq. m
- Retail: 4,179 sq. m
- Office: 69,277 sq. m
- Institutional: 2,367 sq. m
- Transit: 1,351 sq. m
- TOTAL: 201,210 sq. m

In addition to discussions about the introduction of new families to the neighbourhood, many responders were interested in ensuring facilities for existing and new senior residents in the Corktown neighbourhood were considered. Responders asked about the potential for senior spaces, including a senior's centre or long-term care facility.

Many comments and questions were received about the introduction of a new library within the TOC and into the community, something the Province has already agreed to advance. While many responders were supportive and interested in the inclusion within the TOC, some stressed the urgency of the library prior to the completion of the TOC. Generally, responders were curious about the size of the library.

Community Services and Facilities

Responders were also curious about the introduction of new families to the neighbourhood and the potential increase in need for schools and childcare. Online responders asked for more community services and facilities like recreation centres. There was general concern about the provision of community services and facilities and a desire for a greater dedication of community space. The First Parliament Master Plan, approved by the City, identifies a range of community uses for the site, including the need for a new district branch library. The TOC design incorporates approximately 2,300 sq. m of institutional space for a proposed on-site public library, which would serve existing and future residents as a community anchor for the Corktown neighbourhood. Opportunities for other public and community uses are being explored through ongoing discussions between the Province, the City, LAC, and other stakeholder groups.

Parks and Open Space

Responders expressed concern about development pipeline projects in the area and the density proposed within the TOC site without an appropriate increase in parks and open space. The project team responded to concerns about increased development pressure to the neighbourhood, agreeing that there is a significant amount of residential development planned and approved, emphasizing the importance of contributing large amounts of publicly accessible spaces on and within the proposed TOC site.

Responders asked about increases to the area of Parliament Square Park and the project team noted that the proposed concept includes approximately 800 sq. m of contiguous public space (a mix of soft and hardscape surfaces), which could be dedicated as a public park. The project team told responders that they are partnering with the City to ensure and provide for community facilities (such as playgrounds), parks, and open spaces. At this time, the proposed park would be flexible in terms of programming, subject to future engagement and consultation. Opportunities to expand the proposed park, integrating the park more closely into the future community and including a new bike path, are currently being explored through discussions with the City, with input from City Planning and Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff.

Suggestions for parks and open space included enhanced playground space, expansion of winter programming (outdoor ice rink), consideration for an increase in pet dogs as a result of the TOC, and an above-grade publicly accessible space on the South site with views of the waterfront and downtown.

Heritage

Responders were passionate about the commemoration of the neighbourhood with particular interest in the First Parliament site. Open house responders asked about the status of archaeological and heritage assessments and indigenous consultation and asked where they could access the results of this work and engagement.

Though located outside of the defined Heritage Conservation District boundaries, the TOC has been designed in consideration of the goals and objectives of both the St. Lawrence Heritage District Plan and the Distillery District Heritage Conservation District Plan (currently in progress). The proposed massing refers to the established street wall height and composition of adjacent properties, including designated heritage buildings. Opportunities for heritage interpretation and commemoration will also be informed by the results of ongoing archaeological investigations on the First Parliament site, as well as consultation with local stakeholder and Indigenous partners. A forthcoming Interpretation and Commemoration Plan will provide more details regarding archaeological, heritage, and commemoration issues.

A number of opportunities for heritage interpretation and commemoration are identified in the proposed TOC concept. On the First Parliament site, a distinctive paving pattern that highlights the location and alignment of the old railway tracks to reflect the area's industrial past is proposed. The historic shoreline is proposed to be commemorated

through a meandering water feature along the southern edge of the site. The proposed concept recognizes the 'Zone of Archaeological Potential', identified through the First Parliament Master Plan study, located at the intersection of north-south and east-west midblock pedestrian connections. This zone may feature plaques, sculptures or statues, ghost structures, viewing apertures, and/or public art to acknowledge and celebrate Indigenous pre- and post-colonial history. A similar opportunity for heritage interpretation exists at the intersection of the north-south and east-west midblock connections on the North site, to be determined through the final site design. Additionally, red-brick paving is proposed for the interior walkways across both sites to reflect the historical designs found in the adjacent Distillery District, provide material continuity, and reinforce a unique sense of place.

Public Realm

Responders expressed a desire to improve conditions in their neighbourhood for pedestrians, many noting that sidewalks were too narrow and often overcrowded, anticipating worse conditions with the planned subway station and TOC. Safety was also an issue raised, particularly at mid-block connections, with regard to lighting and pedestrian conditions as well as jaywalking and protection from vehicles. Open house responders pointed to covered walkways like those adjacent to the Shoppers Drug Mart and Loblaws on Lower Jarvis as potential solutions for pedestrian comfort, especially in inclement weather like rain or snow. Responders asked about the risk of wind tunneling and shadowing as they relate to pedestrian infrastructure and corridors.

The project team responded to questions and concerns about narrow sidewalks and overcrowding by referencing the wider sidewalks proposed on-site, with widths between 5.5-6 m, and acknowledged the importance of free and clear pedestrian infrastructure, especially around the station headhouse. The project team responded to questions about mid-block connections, explaining that the goal of these connections was to encourage free movement for pedestrians and users across all parts of the site. In response to concerns about wind tunneling and shadowing, the project team had referenced designs that mitigated wind downdraft and ensured that light penetrated areas in the public realm and open space that would be used frequently, designing the site so that shadows would not linger for long periods of time.

Open house responders were interested in how the site would impact cycling infrastructure and cyclists within the neighbourhood. Open house responders asked how planned cycling infrastructure between Mill Street and the Esplanade would impact the site, as well as the potential for cycling infrastructure on Berkeley. Open house responders were keen to note that it was important to them to have cycling infrastructure separate from pedestrian infrastructure on-site and within the neighbourhood, generally. Traffic lights for cyclists were suggested as a potential cyclist traffic calming measure. Responders were somewhat curious about parking in the area; they commented specifically about street parking on Berkeley, noting that it was becoming increasingly difficult to find parking in the neighbourhood.

The project team responded to questions about cycling infrastructure by deferring to existing City plans. Plans to include cycling infrastructure across Berkeley Street have been incorporated into the design of the site. The connection of the south site from Mill Street in the east to the Esplanade in the west is planned as well. Regarding the separation of pedestrians and cyclists, the project team suggested that cycling infrastructure would be designed to be clear for the free movement of cyclists, mitigating conflict between pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles. The project team also mentioned that functional cycling paths are being considered across the park space, though at this time the design has yet to be refined and could include landscaping.

Generally, open house responders were curious to know how the site would conform to the recently approved King-Parliament Secondary Plan and the approved context and character. Online responders raised concerns about non-activated street frontages, in particular glass streetscapes. The project team agreed that a goal of this project is to adhere to the streetscape context of the area by providing small-scale retail opportunities to encourage active frontages and contribute to a lively streetscape through the TOC project.