

What We Heard

Lawrence East Transit-Oriented Community (TOC)

Community Engagement Summary Report

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1.0 PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

This report provides a record of the first round of community engagement for the future Lawrence East Transit-Oriented Community (TOC), located at the future Lawrence and McCowan Station along the Scarborough Subway Extension (SSE).

The first round of community engagement was conducted from March to April 2024. Community feedback gathered through this engagement effort will help inform the TOC draft concept. The second round of community engagement is planned for fall of 2024.

1.2 TOC Program

TOCs are part of the government's plan to build new, sustainable transit. The province's Transit-Oriented Communities program will create vibrant, mixed-use communities that will bring more housing (including affordable housing options), jobs, retail, community amenities and entertainment at or within a short distance of transit stations.

The TOC program will:

- Increase transit ridership and reduce traffic congestion;
- Increase housing supply (including affordable housing);
- Stimulate the economy through major projects and create jobs;
- Bring retail and community amenities (for example, community centres) within a short distance of public transit stations; and,
- Offset the cost of station construction which would save taxpayers' money.

2.0 LAWRENCE EAST – DRAFT TOC CONCEPT

2.1 Economic Activity

The Lawrence East TOC concept features over 7,800 square metres of new office, retail, and general commercial space. This TOC will accommodate approximately 357 jobs, aiming to reduce automobile dependency for residents and allow them to leverage public transit services.

2.2 Environmental Impacts

The proposed TOC supports sustainability objectives by:

- Adding housing and jobs directly adjacent to transit;
- Providing on-site bicycle parking spaces in excess of by-law requirements; and,
- Taking into consideration and aiming to meet the requirements of the City of Toronto Green Roof By-law and the Toronto Green Standards.

2.3 Housing

The proposed draft concept is anticipated to deliver approximately 774 residential units, providing a range of housing options, including affordable housing. These would be complemented by high-quality communal indoor and outdoor amenity spaces to act as an extension of personal living space, contributing to the well-being of residents and the overall livability of the area. Approximately 40 per cent of the proposed residential units within the Lawrence East TOC are currently planned as two or three-bedroom units suitable for families or larger households.

2.4 Connectivity

The future Lawrence and McCowan Station will provide integrated access and efficient interchanges between multiple transit modes, including bus and subway service along the Scarborough Subway Extension. The introduction of new transit infrastructure will contribute to increased connectivity on a neighbourhood, city wide and regional scale.

Transit-oriented and pedestrian-friendly streetscape improvements will also contribute to the walkability of the area.

The proposed TOC supports the uptake of active transportation through the provision of 603 bicycle parking spots with dedicated spaces reserved for transit users.

3.0 ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

In October 2023, the province announced plans to build more homes near transit in Toronto, and proposed the Lawrence East TOC, along with four other TOCs on the Ontario Line. The EngageIO website project page was launched in the new year and used to capture feedback from the public via an online survey. The first round of community engagement used a variety of communication channels and tools to inform community members about the TOC program and to gather feedback. The following section summarizes the engagement objectives and tools applied in the first round of engagement.

3.1 Community Engagement Objectives

Infrastructure Ontario, on behalf of the province, led a process to identify the community's priorities for the future Lawrence East TOC site, guided by the following objectives:

- Make information about the project available to the public;
- Build relationships with neighbourhood residents, commercial tenants, community organizations, and key stakeholders;
- Understand the aspirations, concerns and priorities of various stakeholder groups and audiences;
- Refine the draft concept to integrate and respond to feedback, where feasible;
- Maintain a two-way dialogue with engagement partners; and,
- Positively contribute to the growth and evolution of the city.

3.2 Engagement Activities and Tools

3.2.1 Notifications and Resources

To kick off the community engagement, Infrastructure Ontario notified community members and stakeholders of the TOC program and upcoming engagement opportunities using:

- Postcard – An invitation to the virtual and in-person community engagement meetings was mailed to residents and businesses within a 1.25 kilometre radius of the proposed TOC site.
- Social media posts – The Ministry of Infrastructure and Infrastructure Ontario shared social media posts to expand outreach of the upcoming virtual and in-person community engagement meetings.
- The EngageIO website project page – A dedicated Lawrence East TOC project page, and the launch of an online survey at the start of the first round of engagement. The project webpage allows community members to find information about the TOC program, information about engagement to date, and the draft concept. The website domain is <https://engageio.ca/en/LawrenceEast> and will be updated throughout the engagement process.

3.2.2 Local Advisory Committee Meeting

On Tuesday, March 19, 2024, the province hosted the first Local Advisory Committee (LAC) meeting about the future of the Lawrence East TOC, using Microsoft Teams. The LAC meeting was attended by the eight members of the LAC (see *Appendix A*). The discussion covered the purpose and engagement timeline of the LAC, preliminary TOC concepts, and engagement discussions. Key concerns raised included the usage and impact of parking, the type of housing (condos or purpose-built apartments), and the need for affordable housing. Timelines aim for construction to start in 2032, allowing ample time for school planning. Budget considerations for community benefits and school provisions were discussed, emphasizing the role of public input. Traffic concerns and the reliance on public transit were addressed, with further details on the project timeline available on Metrolinx's website.

3.2.3 Virtual Public Engagement Meeting

On Thursday, March 26, 2024, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., the province hosted the first virtual public engagement session about the future of Lawrence East TOC as a proposed mixed-use transit-oriented community anchored by the future Lawrence and McCowan Station on the Scarborough Subway Line, using Zoom Webinar. The virtual engagement session was attended by 47 participants. This session included an overview of the TOC program, as well as detailed presentations on the TOC concept, seeking feedback about the future Lawrence East site and answering questions. Materials and a recording of the meeting can be accessed at <https://engageio.ca/en/LawrenceEast>.

3.2.4 Engagement Survey

On March 26, 2024, the online survey portal was made available on the EngageIO site, to further foster engagement and collect feedback from the community about the Lawrence East TOC. The survey was open for 30 days and focused on feedback on the TOC's proposed built form, sustainability, community services, economic activity, housing, mix of uses, and public realm among others. Overall, three online surveys were submitted.

4.0 WHAT WE HEARD

Participants asked questions and provided comments on the following themes during the virtual engagement and through online survey feedback:

- Housing
- Transportation including traffic, parking, pedestrian movements and station services
- Economic activity
- Amenities
- Development and design including other developments in the area and physical infrastructure
- Parks and public realm improvements

The following is a summary of participant feedback gathered through the community meeting. This feedback is aggregated and organized thematically.

4.1 Housing

Respondents inquired about the integration of housing and residential spaces in the Lawrence East TOC. Specifically, questions were raised about the lack of residential units directly above the station entrance at the south-west corner of Lawrence Avenue and McCowan Road. IO responded by explaining that each TOC site is unique, and the form and function is informed by site constraints, configuration, and transit requirements. The project team added that there was no overbuild on top of the station station because there is insufficient area to build a TOC and the enabling infrastructure required to support it on the land once the transit infrastructure is constructed; hence why the TOC is being proposed across the street from the site.

Respondents also inquired about the tenure of the residential units, confirming if they will be rental properties, condos, or mixed-use. The project team clarified that the TOC sites are still in the preliminary design phase and part of a broader initiative to create more housing and jobs near transit stations across the Greater Toronto Area. The specifics regarding the configuration, type, and tenure of these units are still under determination, with affordable housing options being actively explored in collaboration with the Province of Ontario and the City of Toronto.

Further, there was a discussion about the necessity of designing three towers with varying heights instead of a uniform height, which could potentially increase the number of units. In response, the project team explained that the proposed design aligns with the city's building standards, which

dictate the maximum size and spacing of towers. Despite these constraints, there is a concerted effort to maximize residential space at the site.

Concerns were also voiced about the potential increased density as a result of the TOC, which would stress local public services, including education, healthcare, and emergency services. Inquiries about the possibility of scaling down the towers were addressed by the city, noting that TOC plans are shared with school boards for future planning. The 10-year planning horizon is intended to provide sufficient time for service providers to prepare for the new residents.

4.2 Transportation

4.2.1 Traffic and Parking

Respondents inquired about traffic and parking pressures in the area. For example, they asked about increased traffic flow on Barrymore Road, noting that drivers already surpass the posted speed limit (40 km/hour). They asked if turn restrictions at Danforth/Barrymore and Lawrence/Barrymore can be implemented. They further inquired about the implementation of speed calming measures (e.g., speed bumps) and safe walking spaces (i.e., sidewalks, stop signs) for pedestrians. The local councillor explained that the city's Transportation Services department addresses requests for traffic calming measures like speed bumps on neighbourhood streets, noting that his office can also advise on where inquiries about this can be made.

Respondents asked about plans to mitigate traffic and parking pressures on Perivale and Dignam, especially given that there are only 228 parking spaces in the plan. The project team explained that TOCs are intended to promote the use of public transportation and reduce car dependency. The parking spaces provided will be for all users within the building, including residential, commercial, and retail. The objective is for the majority of people using this space to travel by transit.

4.2.2 Station Services

Respondents inquired about station services. Respondents should refer to Metrolinx's website for more information about station services.

Respondents expressed concerns about station servicing capacity especially in relation to bus traffic, and requested to see predictive modelling. In response, the city explained that predictive models for operations have been considered and modifications include the bus loop at the main station entrance (formerly the Shell site). The data can be requested from Metrolinx.

4.3 Economic Activity

Respondents attending the virtual engagement session inquired about commercial space and amenities. Specifically, questions were raised about the potential for a bank to be relocated at the corner of the site. The project team emphasized that the TOC sites are still in the early stages of design, and the planning process aims to accommodate similar uses post-construction. However,

they noted that construction is projected to begin in eight-10 years, and the specifics regarding particular businesses or amenities have yet to be finalized.

Respondents expressed concerns about the limited retail currently in the area, and questioned whether there would be enough retail to support the additional density at Lawrence East TOC. Respondents also expressed interest in seeing local businesses encouraged in this area.

4.4 Amenities

Respondents also raised several questions about community spaces and public infrastructure enhancements. They suggested that building partners or land purchasers be mandated to include one-to-two floors of community space in their projects to accommodate facilities such as: public gyms for basketball, pickleball, dance, and yoga; daycare centres; youth centres; community hubs for charities; and food banks. Interest was also shown in a community centre that caters to various age groups.

Respondents noted that the existing community centres at Birkdale, McGregor, Centennial, Mid-Scarborough/Don Montgomery are all over 20 minutes away by transit. They noted that while Bendale Library is closer, it is relatively small and has not undergone any updates since 1999.

IO agreed that it is important to consider community priorities and areas of support for the local community as part of the TOC. The city added that the needs of new residents of this TOC and the wider community will be assessed in the future as part of the city's review process.

IO further expressed that considerations for open space, parks, physical infrastructure, servicing capacity, and other factors would be contemplated as part of the municipal infrastructure delivery between the building partner and the city.

4.5 Development and Design

Respondents also raised questions regarding the two existing plazas south of the subject site. The city responded that while an enquiry for 615 McCowan Road has been received, there has been no query regarding the mid-block site, and no applications have been submitted for either location.

Respondents also raised concerns about the availability of social infrastructure, explaining that they do not need more parks, but rather more infrastructure, such as housing. They also pointed out that the existing infrastructure, such as sewer systems, which are 60 to 70 years old, may not be capable of supporting the high-density that is proposed. In response, the project team explained that both hard and soft infrastructure are required. The project team further clarified that considerations for open space, parks, physical infrastructure, servicing capacity, and other factors, would be contemplated as part of the municipal infrastructure delivery between the building partner and the city.

4.6 Public Spaces and Parks

Respondents voiced their appreciation for the pedestrian-focused nature of the design. There were specific inquiries about the development of pedestrian pathways, particularly about whether a new walkway to the park located at the north-east corner of Lawrence and McCowan could be established to facilitate a pedestrian link to Dignam Court and Perivale Crescent. The project team clarified that there is an existing pedestrian laneway to Dignam Court, and the intent is that the proposed park will strengthen this connection.

Additionally, some respondents expressed a desire to have additional space for athletic facilities within the parkland dedication. Conversely, others felt that the existing parklands and open spaces in the neighbourhood are already of high quality and adequate for community needs.

5.0 NEXT STEPS

Throughout this first round of public engagement, the project team collected feedback and comments from various stakeholders and members of the public through various engagement activities, as mentioned above. Next, the team will review the feedback summarized above -- alongside formal city comments and those from organizations or offices responsible for enforcing standards and codes -- and will explore options for refinement of the draft concept. The project team will engage the city to confirm alignment on features of the TOC, including the scale of retail units, public realm improvements, parks, etc. Finally, during future planned engagement activities, the project team will report back on its progress, sharing the refined TOC draft concept and providing a response to the feedback heard from the public.

Upcoming planned engagement activities include:

- A second LAC meeting to be scheduled in the fall of 2024, as an interim check in the team's progress with local stakeholders;
- A third LAC meeting to be scheduled in the fall of 2024 to share the final refined TOC concepts with local stakeholders; and
- A second engagement session scheduled for the fall of 2024, at which time the team will present its responses to public feedback and the refined TOC concept plans;

Throughout all stages of public engagement, the team will continue to track and make available all project-related materials and available recordings from public engagement activities. These materials are available on the EngageIO webpage at <https://engageio.ca/en/LawrenceEast>.

For any inquiries, the public can contact the project team through the EngageIO contact webpage <https://engageio.ca/en/contact>.

APPENDIX A

Lawrence East TOC: Local Advisory Committee

Membership List

For the Local Advisory Committee (LAC), Infrastructure Ontario reached out to 20+ community stakeholder organizations within two kilometres of the Lawrence East TOC site. The current LAC membership includes the following stakeholder groups:

- Jack Goodlad Senior Citizens
- Rosalie Hall
- Scarborough General Hospital
- St. Rose of Lima Catholic School Parent Council
- Toronto District School Board
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saint Matthew

Note: *The City of Toronto facilities are not included in the LAC membership list, as the coordinates consultation with its recreational facilities including libraries, arenas and community centres.*