

Gerrard-Carlaw South Transit-Oriented Community Engagement Summary Report



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Contents

1	Project Background.....	1
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	The TOC Program Background	1
1.3	Gerrard-Carlaw South Draft TOC Concept.....	1
2	Engagement Overview.....	3
2.1	Community Engagement Objectives	3
2.2	Engagement Activities and Tools	4
3	What We Heard.....	5
3.1	Housing	5
3.2	Transportation	6
3.3	Density and Design Compatibility	7
3.4	Heritage.....	7
3.5	Transit Integration	8
3.6	Community Services and Facilities	8
3.7	Local Businesses and Economic Activity.....	8
3.8	Public Spaces and Parks	9
3.9	Other	10
4	Next Steps.....	10

Figures

Figure 1-1.	Gerrard-Carlaw South TOC Site Map	2
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Appendices

Appendix A.	Gerrard-Carlaw South TOC: Local Advisory Committee	A-1
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1 Project Background

1.1 Introduction

This report provides a record of the first round of community engagement for the future Gerrard-Carlaw South Transit-Oriented Community (TOC), located near the future Gerrard Station along the Ontario Line (OL).

The first round of community engagement was conducted from January 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 The TOC Program Background

TOCs are part of the government's plan to build new, sustainable transit. The province's TOC 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.

1.3 Gerrard-Carlaw South Draft TOC Concept

The project team, in consultation with the City of Toronto, is working on a draft concept for the future Gerrard-Carlaw South TOC. This draft concept will add housing, commercial, and office space adjacent to the future Gerrard transit station and will serve the surrounding neighbourhood with connections to streetcar, bus, and subway service along the Ontario Line.

The following map shows the location of the Gerrard-Carlaw South TOC site as well as major infrastructure within the community.



Figure 1-1. Gerrard-Carlaw South TOC Site Map

1.3.1 Economic Activity

The Gerrard-Carlaw South TOC site will include over 13,000 square metres (m²) of new office, retail, and general commercial space, accommodating approximately 460 jobs that would recognize and complement the industrial character of the area.

1.3.2 Environmental

The proposed draft concept 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,
- Meeting requirements of green roofs and the Toronto Green Standard.

1.3.3 Housing

The proposed draft concept is anticipated to deliver approximately 1,300 residential units, and to provide a range of housing options. 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 overall livability of the area. Approximately 32 per cent of the proposed residential units within the Gerrard-Carlaw South TOC are currently planned as two or three-bedroom units suitable for families or larger households.

1.3.4 Connectivity

The adjacent Gerrard Station will provide integrated access and an efficient interchange between multiple transit modes, including streetcar, bus, and subway service along the Ontario Line. 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 TOC supports the uptake of active transportation through the provision of over 1,488 bicycle parking spots with dedicated short- and long-term spaces available for transit users and future residents.

2 Engagement Overview

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

2.1 Community Engagement Objectives

Infrastructure Ontario, on behalf of the province, led a process to identify the community's priorities for the future Gerrard-Carlaw South 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 of Toronto.

2.2 Engagement Activities and Tools

2.2.1 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 distributed to residents and businesses within a 500-metre radius of the proposed TOC site.
- **Social media posts** – The Ontario 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 Gerrard-Carlaw South TOC project page and online survey were launched at the start of the first round of engagement. The project page 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/GerrardCarlawSouth> and website content will be updated throughout the engagement process.

2.2.2 Local Advisory Committee (LAC) Meeting

A LAC was convened to gain insights from local community stakeholders to help inform the province's TOC draft concept for each site. The LAC's mandate is to provide collaborative discussions, feedback, guidance, and advice to the project team at key points during the public engagement process for the TOC draft concept.

A joint Eastern Avenue and Gerrard-Carlaw South LAC was established for this process. The LAC is composed of 11 community representatives from several organizations or community groups, representing a range of community members, organized groups, and interests in the vicinity (one-km approx.) of the proposed TOC site. Infrastructure Ontario reached out to the Ontario Line technical advisors, the City of Toronto, and the local councillor's office for their input on community stakeholders who represent a range of voices.

On February 1, 2024, the project team and the City of Toronto met with the LAC representatives. The meeting format included an overview of the TOC program and high-level presentations of the TOC draft concepts, followed by questions and a discussion to gather feedback. All 11 members and the local councillor attended the first LAC meeting virtually for a two-hour period from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

See **Appendix A** for LAC membership list.

2.2.3 Virtual Public Engagement Meeting

On February 13, 2024, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., the project team held a public meeting for the Gerrard-Carlaw South TOC with members of the public to share information about the proposed TOC site and identify community needs and priorities related to the draft concept. The virtual session, which was attended by 89 people via Zoom, included an overview of the TOC

program, a detailed presentation of the draft concept for the Gerrard-Carlaw South TOC site, and a question-and-answer session.

2.2.4 Engagement Survey

On February 13, 2024, the online survey portal was made available on the EngageIO site, to further foster engagement and collect feedback from the community about the Gerrard-Carlaw South 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, 22 surveys were submitted.

2.2.5 In-Person Open House

On February 21, 2024, the project team hosted an in-person open house for the community to gather feedback, identify priorities, ideas, and concerns about the proposed future Gerrard-Carlaw South and Eastern Avenue TOC sites. The open house was hosted at the Ralph Thornton Community Centre between 6:30 p.m. and 8 p.m. and was attended by 45 people. The open house format included 15 project information boards that displayed the proposed neighbourhood context, draft concept overview, and design objectives of both TOC projects. Members of the project team and city staff were present to respond to questions and record comments from attendees, as well as inform the public of the online survey portal. No formal presentation was made.

3 What We Heard

The following is a summary of participants' feedback gathered from the first round of community engagement events outlined above. Community members provided feedback and asked questions, many of which were addressed at the meetings. However, there were some inquiries that the project team is still assessing that will be addressed during the second round of public engagement in the fall of 2024.

3.1 Housing

There were many responses from the public emphasizing the importance of affordable housing and inquiring about the number, tenure, type, accessibility, and distribution of affordable housing units.

The project team asserted that this project is still in the very early stages of concept design and review and the main priority of the project team is to understand and balance the community's needs, including targets for affordable housing. The city explained that maximizing opportunities for affordable housing is a high priority and, along with the province and the building partner, the city will use various tools to incentivize affordable housing development. Ongoing conversations are being held with the city to help ensure that the proposed benefits, especially in terms of affordable housing, align with planning goals and are financially feasible.

Respondents in the virtual meeting inquired about the level of flexibility the building partner would have when following the draft concept and the project team clarified that as part of the approval process, a zoning envelope defining the built form of the TOC is being established.

This envelope outlines guidelines for existing and future streets, setbacks, and height restrictions. Any specific conversations about potential changes would occur at the site plan stage.

Respondents in the open house asked that the proposed housing units be tailored to the industrial and artisan jobs in the area. The project team recognized the uniqueness of these jobs and expressed a desire to accommodate similar uses in the TOC.

During the open house, the project team highlighted that at least 30 per cent of units being offered on the site will have two or more bedrooms. Respondents asked that more of these unit types be provided, emphasizing the need for homes that can accommodate multi-generational families, support a work force that is working from home more often, and foster intergenerational interactions and friendships.

Respondents in the online survey questioned why government has not intentionally designed TOCs to be favorable for developers interested in affordable housing, such as non-profits and housing cooperatives, to get in on the market sale of these sites. These respondents also suggest maximizing the amount of leasable square footage on an individual floor and implementing clear zoning guidelines that mandate a minimum percentage of affordable and deeply affordable units in TOCs, especially for private developers. The province acknowledges the current housing crisis happening across the country, including in Ontario, and is considering different and innovative approaches to provide affordable housing through the TOC program. Affordable housing will be explored through negotiations between the province, municipality and building partner.

3.2 Transportation

Respondents in the virtual meeting asked about the progress in designing the internal network of streets within the new neighbourhood, emphasizing the importance of street design and safety, particularly in allocating space for pedestrians and cyclists as well as motor vehicles. The project team explained how the modal split of the site was assessed by considering factors such as what is appropriate for similar developments in other parts of the city, residential density, the number of people driving, and the commercial uses. While some respondents expressed skepticism around prioritizing cycling infrastructure given how much residents depend on their cars, the project team highlighted elements of the designs which slow down traffic and prioritize pedestrians, by physical separation of the different modes of transportation.

Respondents raised concerns about the ability of the streets to handle increased traffic flow due to the TOC, potential parking disruptions during construction, and the congestion that may result from closing traffic on Dickens Street. The city notes that the Dickens Street and Carlaw Avenue intersection becomes challenging as density increases and that there may be need for other site access points, possibly through an extension of Badgerow Avenue.

From the city's perspective, the self-contained space between Logan Avenue, Carlaw Avenue, Dundas Street, and the rail corridor, has access issues which are being addressed in the draft concept. Dickens Street and Thackeray Street present opportunities to create accessible pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly spaces and, to a lesser extent, provide functional access for vehicle use rather than serving as shortcuts. The intention is to create a dense and active

community near the transit station, with considerations for cycling infrastructure along Carlaw Avenue.

3.3 Density and Design Compatibility

Respondents in the open house expressed concern about the proposed height of the design compared to the adjacent lower density neighbourhood and expressed a desire for sensitive development, to preserve the historically working-class character of the neighborhood.

The project team reassured respondents that concern about the building height and change in the type of development does inform the planning for the site. The density for the area considers the transit investment in the community, which is in a major transit station area (MTSA), and while most land around the TOC sites are low density, these sites can reasonably accommodate this scale of design.

The project team explained how the impact on the community is being mitigated; the towers are massed towards the south and west so that the look and feel of buildings along Carlaw Avenue is like that of buildings just south of Dundas Street.

When respondents sought clarity on the visibility and shadows from the towers, the project team described how the orientation of the towers towards the south and west also ensures that the shadows fall within the site and along the rail corridor.

3.4 Heritage

Some respondents from the virtual meeting expressed appreciation for the preservation of the Carlaw Avenue heritage façade and historical chimneys; these respondents appreciated the balance between preserving the chimney stacks and using the midrise buildings to create different views of them. Others did not understand the value of preserving the smokestacks and questioned the decision to retain them.

The project team explained that there is an intention to maintain the key attributes of the building which meet heritage conservation criteria; this means that the building will be altered but its heritage features such as the warehousing façade, gable roof trusses, and historic chimney stacks may be retained, per appropriate regulations.

These respondents also emphasized the importance of incorporating signs and art/sculptures into the site, while ensuring that they do not compromise the availability of usable community space. The city explained that an existing plaque details the former factory's role in making glass for streetlights in the city and expressed an interest in conveying more of the industrial and indigenous history of the site. This could be through additional installations in the plaza proposed around the chimney stacks and on a portion of Dickens Street between Thackery Street and Carlaw Avenue.

The project team described how heritage conservation requirements will be discussed and passed on to the building partner through documents that will be prepared as part of a future market offering. Concerns were also raised about the presence of birds (chimney swifts), leading to discussions about capping the chimney stacks.

Respondents in the open house expressed a desire for more of the site's heritage and design to be retained such that the look and feel of the original building is incorporated into the design.

Respondents namely highlighted that the building's red bricks should be well-preserved for the base of the buildings along with durable building materials to maintain a timeless appearance.

3.5 Transit Integration

Respondents in the virtual meeting asked about the status of the Ontario Line construction and the projected completion date of the Gerrard-Carlaw Station. They also sought clarification regarding the agencies responsible for implementing the Ontario Line and TOC program.

The project team clarified that early work has commenced on the site. Infrastructure Ontario is the provincial authority tasked with managing the execution of the TOC program. Metrolinx is designated as the provincial entity responsible for overseeing the development of the Ontario Line Subways project.

When asked why the 388 Carlaw Avenue site won't be developed concurrently with the Ontario Line construction, the project team made it clear that the 388 Carlaw Avenue site and adjacent parking lot are required to support subway construction and will become available for development upon completion of the subway.

When discussing the total revenue that the TOC is expected to bring in to fund transit construction, the project team stated that the province will be selecting a building partner through an open competitive market process. The specific financial outcomes are subject to this competitive selection process, market conditions, and the subsequent obligations imposed on the chosen building partner.

3.6 Community Services and Facilities

Respondents highlighted existing community services and facilities that need to be assessed to accommodate the proposed density. Respondents' comments described childcare facilities, senior care services, medical services, capacity issues at the Matty Eckler Community Centre, a new library or recreation centre, and enhancements for the Crow's Theatre area as a cultural hub.

Respondents asked where new residents will be able to join schools and the project team explained that in collaboration with the city, Toronto District School Board (TDSB), and Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB), the capacity of surrounding schools, including the seven schools within a one-kilometre radius of the site, will be studied. The project team further noted that when it comes time to build these sites in the future, the building partner will account for the projected capacity in the school system.

3.7 Local Businesses and Economic Activity

Respondents inquired about the future of all the businesses that the community currently enjoys and about possible rent increases for these businesses, including the children's programs, existing cafes, Gerrard Square, the local Beer Store, the local No Frills, and other affordable grocers/retailers. Respondents also advocated for retaining the spaces for industrial businesses, light commercial businesses, and creative work as local economic hubs, and asked that retailers catering to the diverse economic needs of the community be prioritized.

The project team explained that there is a desire to retain those uses in the future and reinforce them on this site as part of the heritage fabric. TOC construction will follow the completion of the subway, and during that time, Metrolinx will honour all existing leases and will not require any tenant to vacate the building at 388 Carlaw Avenue.

The project team highlighted that the current number of jobs will increase; the TOC will provide a net gain in employment opportunities while delivering a more compact built form that will allow for a variety of uses. The character of the jobs and businesses is important and they are being protected by allocating over 5,000 square metres (m²) of the floor area of these buildings to the mix of uses that exist now, which are referred to as general commercial space.

Respondents questioned the necessity of office space, expressing concerns about the vacancy rate of the space currently used and were unenthusiastic by the prospect of conventional retail spaces, with the exception of essential services such as food and drink, because of the increase in online shopping.

3.8 Public Spaces and Parks

Feedback from respondents included various concerns and suggestions related to the impact of the TOC on parks and green spaces, the design of public realm areas, and pedestrian friendliness. The comment that there was insufficient parkland in the neighbourhood to accommodate the new TOC was among the most frequently captured through the engagement activities and tools.

Respondents from the virtual meeting expressed concerns about the site's accessibility and connectivity to pedestrians, with residents citing a need for a greater emphasis on green spaces in community development. Respondents also shared their preference for prioritizing walkability, bike use, and car sharing in public spaces.

Respondents called for more community spaces comparable to Greenwood Park, expressing both a desire for more green space and concern about its potential overshadowing by high-rises. Survey respondents suggested that a reasonable amount of shadow in public spaces could be beneficial, particularly during hot periods.

Respondents expressed concerns about parkland and shared communal spaces, emphasizing the importance of creating a community square that serves as a focal point for public life. Survey respondents expressed a desire for more publicly accessible green spaces, including an elevated green roof, trees to provide shaded areas, open space along the tracks near the Dickens site, and ample space for recreation, with picnic tables, that is not overwhelmed by hardscaping (materials placed by human design, such as concrete, asphalt or stone).

Respondents from the virtual meeting proposed moving public spaces to the southeast portion of the site to create a parkette or plaza at the wedge of Carlaw Avenue and Dundas Avenue so that community events could be hosted in the open space. Respondents also questioned the site's accessibility for pedestrians and whether there are enough weather-protected public spaces, especially given the wind tunnel effect from tall buildings.

The design, access, distribution, and use of public spaces and parks was an important theme brought up by respondents. The project team has made several design choices in the proposed concept to improve and expand the public realm at the site. A new linear open space is planned

along the rail corridor. Although it is expected to be privately owned it would be publicly accessible and expand the recreational opportunities in this area and facilitate connections between Logan Avenue and Carlaw Avenue. A new publicly accessible courtyard space and mid-block connection is planned within one of the buildings fronting onto Carlaw Avenue. And it is proposed that the city consider closing a portion of Dickens Street to vehicle traffic and create an expanded parkette space there instead. Lastly, through the proposal the street design along Thackeray, Dickens, and Carlaw will be improved and brought up to current standard with wide sidewalks, street trees, and furnishings like light standards and benches.

3.9 Other

During the virtual meeting, the project team explained that the built form parameters are currently being defined in a zoning envelope and are not anticipated to change significantly because of the building partner. The chosen building partner will make assumptions based on the market situation at that time, taking into account zoning regulations to achieve desired outcomes, despite the unpredictable future market conditions.

Respondents from the virtual meeting discussed the prospective use of a community benefits agreement for the concept and proposed that the area be planned as a district made up of both Gerrard-Carlaw North and Gerrard-Carlaw South through coordinated construction and management of demands on the neighbourhood.

Respondents were also curious about the use of mass timber for shorter buildings and whether alternative building methods would be considered to address height limitations and accommodate feedback for increased density.

4 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 project 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 with the city to confirm alignment on features of the TOC including the scale of retail units, public realm improvements, heritage conservation, etc. Finally, the project team will report back on its progress, sharing the refined TOC concept and providing a response to the feedback heard from the public during future planned engagement activities.

Upcoming planned engagement activities include:

- A second LAC touchpoint to be scheduled for summer of 2024, as an interim check in the team's progress with local stakeholders;
- A second virtual open house in the fall of 2024, where the team will present its responses to public feedback and the refined TOC concept plans; and
- A third LAC meeting in the fall of 2024 to share the final refined TOC concepts with local stakeholders.

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/GerrardCarlawSouth>.

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

Appendix A. Gerrard-Carlaw South TOC: Local Advisory Committee

Membership List

For the Local Advisory Committee (LAC), Infrastructure Ontario reached out to 20+ community stakeholder organizations within 1-km of the Gerrard-Carlaw South and Eastern TOC sites. The current LAC membership includes the following stakeholder groups:

- Crow's Theatre
- Gerrard Square Shopping Mall
- Lakeshore East Community Advisory Committee
- Leslieville BIA
- Leslieville Historical Society
- Leslieville Resident Association
- Nellie's Shelter for Women and Children
- Pocket Community Association
- Ralph Thornton Community Centre
- Riverside BIA
- The Opera House
- Toronto District School Board
- Woodgreen Foundation

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