

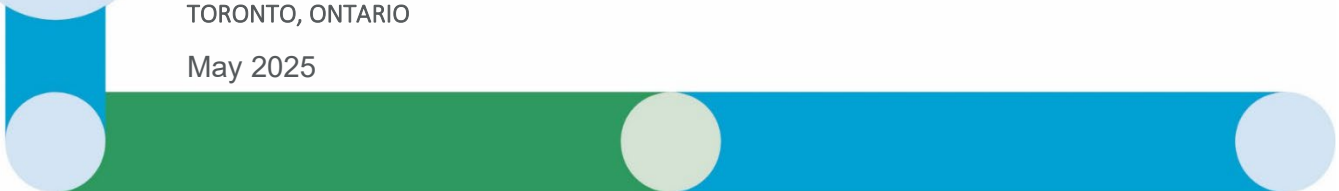
# Eastern Avenue Transit-Oriented Community Final Engagement Summary Report



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## Contents

1	Project Background .....	1
1.1	Introduction .....	1
1.2	Revised TOC Concept .....	1
2	Round One Engagement.....	2
2.1	Engagement Activities and Tools .....	2
2.2	What We Heard in Round One .....	3
2.3	Addressing Feedback from Round One.....	5
2.3.1	Revisions to the Fall 2023 Concept .....	5
2.3.2	In-Progress/Future Updates .....	8
2.3.3	No Change/Additional Information Provided .....	9
3	Round Two Engagement.....	9
3.1	Engagement Activities and Tools .....	9
3.2	What We Heard in Round Two .....	10
3.2.1	Unit Sizes and Affordability in the Building Partners Terms of Reference (ToR) .....	10
3.2.2	Maximizing Density .....	10
3.2.3	Proposed Built Form, Density, and Types of Housing .....	11
3.2.4	Shadow impacts and analysis .....	11
3.2.5	Pedestrian connections between Eastern Ave. and East Harbour Station.....	11
3.2.6	Competitive market process for Eastern Avenue.....	12
4	Next Steps & More Information .....	13

## Appendices

Appendix A. Eastern Avenue TOC: Local Advisory Committee .....	A-1
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# 1 Project Background

## 1.1 Introduction

This report provides a record of the first and second rounds of community engagement activities that were conducted for the future Eastern Avenue Transit-Oriented Community (TOC). 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.

In chronological order, the TOC development process involves:

- Development of an initial design concept, which was shared with the City of Toronto (the city) in fall 2023.

- Delivery of a public engagement program (conducted between January and October 2024) to share information and gather stakeholder and community input to help inform future plans and revise designs.

- Finalizing the TOC rezoning process with the city, based on results of the previous two steps in the process.

- Construction of the Ontario Line East Harbour station that is overseen by Metrolinx.

- Selection of a building partner for the TOC using an open, fair, and competitive bidding process.

- Securing all necessary approvals for construction of the TOC to begin.

The Eastern Avenue TOC site consisted of a single building (since demolished) that was identified as a TOC opportunity and will be developed in line with the following objectives of the province's TOC program:

- 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.

## 1.2 Revised TOC Concept

Infrastructure Ontario (IO) and the Ontario Line Technical Advisor (collectively called the project team), in consultation with the City of Toronto, is working on a revised concept for the future Eastern Avenue TOC site. The revised TOC concept builds on the first draft TOC concept which was previously shared with community members during the first round of community engagement. IO and the project team shared the revised TOC concept with the community during the second round of community engagement activities. The revised TOC concept considered community feedback from the first round of engagement and includes

around 1,150 square metres (m<sup>2</sup>) of commercial space, potentially housing small retail businesses that enhance the pedestrian-friendly character of the area while supporting local jobs and economic growth. The plan prioritizes sustainability by situating housing and jobs near transit and exceeding bicycle parking requirements. It will include approximately 160 residential units, with more than 25 per cent designed for 2-plus bedroom units, alongside communal amenities to boost livability. Adjacent to the East Harbour Transit Hub, the site will offer excellent transit access and improved walkability, supported by streetscape enhancements and 180 bicycle parking spots.

## 2 Round One Engagement

There were three components of community engagement for the Eastern Avenue TOC site, including an online and written survey, a Local Advisory Committee, and virtual and in-person public open houses.

Infrastructure Ontario (IO), on behalf of the province, led a process to identify the community's priorities for the future Eastern Avenue 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.

### 2.1 Engagement Activities and Tools

The first round of community engagement was conducted from January to March 2024 and the engagement tools are summarized below.

**The EngageIO website project page:** An Eastern Avenue 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/EasternAvenue> and website content has been updated throughout the engagement process.

**Postcard:** IO notified residents and stakeholders of upcoming meetings through various channels, including the distribution of a postcard inviting residents and businesses within a 500-metre radius of the proposed TOC site to the upcoming virtual and in-person community engagement meetings.

**Social media posts:** The Ministry of Infrastructure and IO published social media posts to expand outreach of the virtual and in-person community engagement meetings.

**Local Advisory Committee Meeting #1:** A joint Eastern Avenue and Gerrard-Carlaw South Local Advisory Committee (LAC) was formed to gather community stakeholder input for the TOC draft concepts, facilitating collaborative discussions and feedback. It was composed of 11 community representatives from within a one-kilometre vicinity of the future East Harbour and Gerrard stations and representing a range of community members, organized groups, local organizations, and interests. The project team and City of Toronto held a virtual two-hour meeting on February 1, 2024, with all LAC members and the local councillor to present TOC concepts, answer questions, and collect feedback.

**Virtual Public Engagement Meeting #1:** On February 15, 2024, 59 people attended the Eastern Avenue TOC virtual public meeting. The event was hosted on Zoom by IO, who partnered with the Ontario Line Technical Advisor (OLTA) and the City of Toronto. The project team presented information about the planning and design of the TOC site. The presentation was followed by a session allowing the community to ask questions and provide comments on the draft concept.

**Engagement Survey:** For a 30-day period, starting on February 15, 2024, IO offered an online survey on the EngageIO website to gather community feedback on various aspects of the Eastern Avenue TOC, including its design, sustainability, services, economic impact, housing, and public spaces. The survey link was shared with attendees at the virtual and in-person open houses and promoted on the postcard delivered to residences within a 500-metre radius of the TOC sites. A total of 26 responses were received.

**In-Person Open House #1:** On February 21, 2024, an in-person open house was held at the Ralph Thornton Community Centre from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. This was a drop-in event where facilitators responded to attendees' questions about the TOC program. Attended by 45 people, the event featured 15 project information boards showcasing the neighbourhood context, draft concepts, and design objectives. Project team members and city staff were available to answer questions and record feedback, while also promoting the online survey or offering participants the option to complete a paper copy of the survey.

## 2.2 What We Heard in Round One

In the first round of community engagement, the project team gathered participants' feedback and questions on a wide range of topics including housing, transportation, density, transit integration, open spaces, and much more. These topics are captured in detail in the first [Eastern Avenue Transit-Oriented Community Engagement Summary Report](#).

### Housing

Concerns were raised because no affordable housing unit targets had been identified. Additionally, a community advocate highlighted the need for accessible units within affordable housing, noting that many individuals with accessibility needs face financial challenges. The project team acknowledged the importance of affordable housing and

shared that parameters for affordable units will be determined in future as there are ongoing discussions with the city to balance planning objectives and financial feasibility.

### **Density and Design Compatibility**

Participants strongly supported increased density on the site, with many suggesting taller buildings to allow greater access to East Harbour Station. Participants appreciated the project's moderate density, adherence to good planning principles, road connections, and respect for neighborhood character. Some participants questioned if the proposed height and density were adequate for a major transit station area (MTSA) and raised concerns about the building heights compared to nearby developments. The project team explained that the proposed building design is a balanced approach, aligning with planning policies, transit needs, and neighborhood context. The design also provides a gradual transition in scale toward the low-rise neighbourhood to the north, minimizing shadow impact and fitting the established context.

### **Transportation**

Participants expressed concerns about pedestrian safety on Eastern Avenue, advocating for a pedestrian-prioritized design and improved security measures for bicycle parking. The project team draft concept includes accessible pedestrian and bicycle-friendly access between Saulter Street, Lewis Street, and Eastern Avenue to enhance safety for non-motorized users. Concerns also emerged regarding the high level of residential parking proposed, especially given the site's strong transit connectivity and the city's reduced minimum parking requirements. The project team indicated that parking provisions would align with nearby developments and could be adjusted further based on community feedback and City of Toronto guidelines.

### **Transit Integration**

Participants largely supported transit integration, noting that the TOC site's proximity to a major transit hub would offer attractive transit options for residents. They also sought clarification on the roles of public agencies involved in the development. The project team explained that IO is responsible for managing the TOC program's execution, while Metrolinx oversees the development of the Ontario Line Subway project.

### **Public Spaces and Parks**

Participants highlighted the importance of enhancing connections to local streets, creating more parks and open spaces, and improving the pedestrian experience while expressing concerns about the landscaping and tree protection, especially for mature trees on-site. Requests for more common spaces were accompanied by concerns over insufficient community centres, services, and the TOC's impact on local schools. The project team explained that adding a park directly on the TOC site is impractical given its size and proximity to Saulter Street Park and a planned park in East Harbour. Instead, the focus is on improving connections across the site for access to these nearby green spaces. IO will

collaborate with the city's planning department to address anticipated impacts on schools, health services, traffic, and other community infrastructure.

## 2.3 Addressing Feedback from Round One

Feedback from the first round of engagement for the Eastern Avenue TOC site was organized into a set of key themes. Those themes were further divided into three groups by the project team to update the community on:

1. Changes to revise the concept;
2. Changes that are still being assessed or will be resolved in the future by a building partner; and,
3. Details that will not change because they were already accounted for in the initial concept designs.

All three groups of themes were presented to the community during the second round of engagement activities.

### 2.3.1 Revisions to the Fall 2023 Concept

#### **Density**

The project team plans to add residential storeys to the development to increase the unit count from 142 to 160. Originally, the design featured a staggered height, with a 10-storey section on the southern portion of the building; but a change in design to include an additional two residential storeys on that portion of the building will increase housing availability as shown in Figure 1 below. In response to inquiries about why a tall building is not feasible here, the project team explained that the required 25-metre setback from the GO rail corridor restricts the already narrow site and makes it unfeasible to construct a financially viable tower while maintaining reasonable setbacks from adjacent areas.

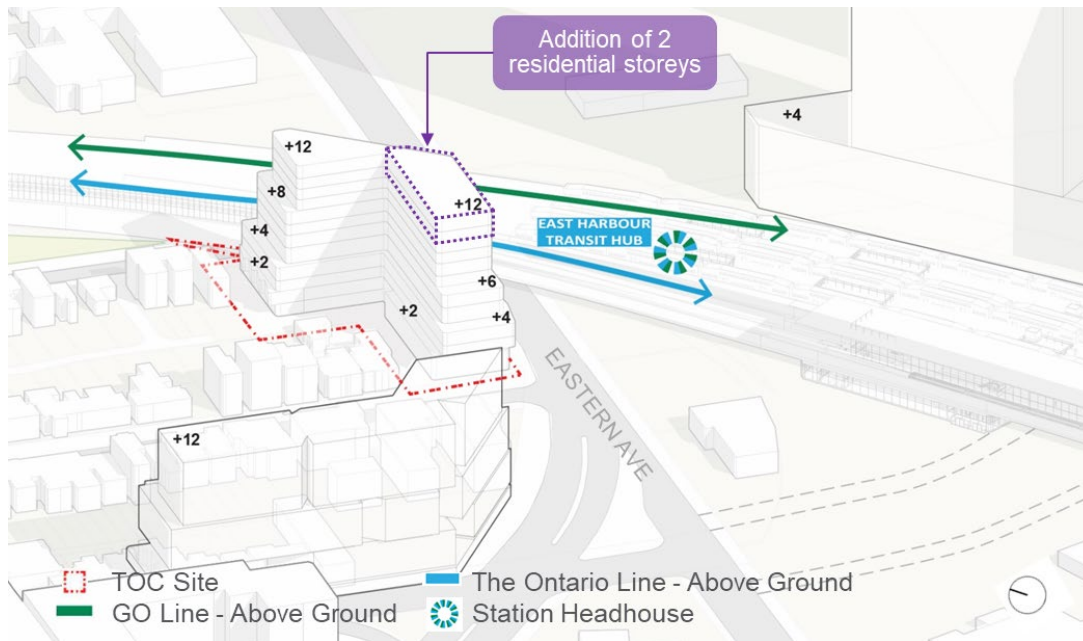


Figure 1 – Proposed Built Form

## Circulation

The project team has made technical refinements to improve the public realm and public spaces around the development. Changes were made to the northern laneway to create clear pedestrian pathways with added greenery and planting. For example, at the terminus of Saulter Street, the team collaborated with the city to design a vehicular turnaround, enhancing pedestrian safety, and providing more functional vehicular circulation. Additionally, the proposal provides two new connections, where none exists today, from Saulter Street to Eastern Avenue. The first connection is located north of the proposed TOC along a woonerf, which is a shared street that prioritizes pedestrian and cyclist safety along with traffic-calming elements to encourage slow vehicle speeds. The second is located along the rail corridor and it enhances connectivity to the wider neighbourhood.



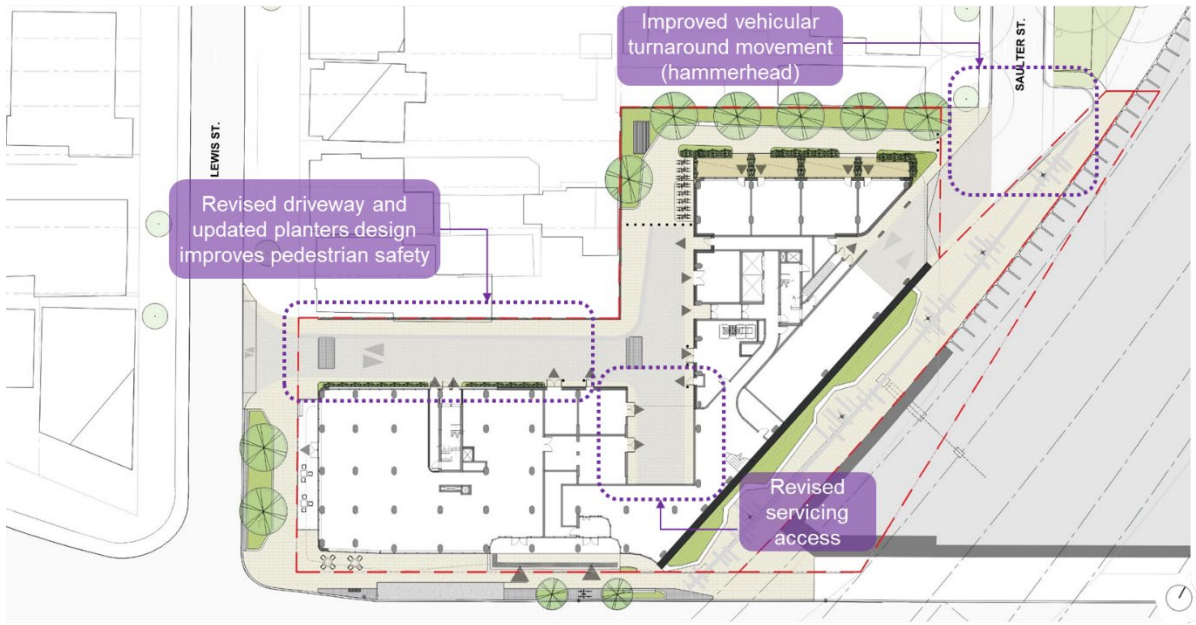


Figure 2 – Proposed Circulation Enhancements

### Public spaces

The pedestrian connection along the rail corridor will now feature narrow planters to allow for safe pedestrian circulation and improved service access as illustrated in Figure 3 below.

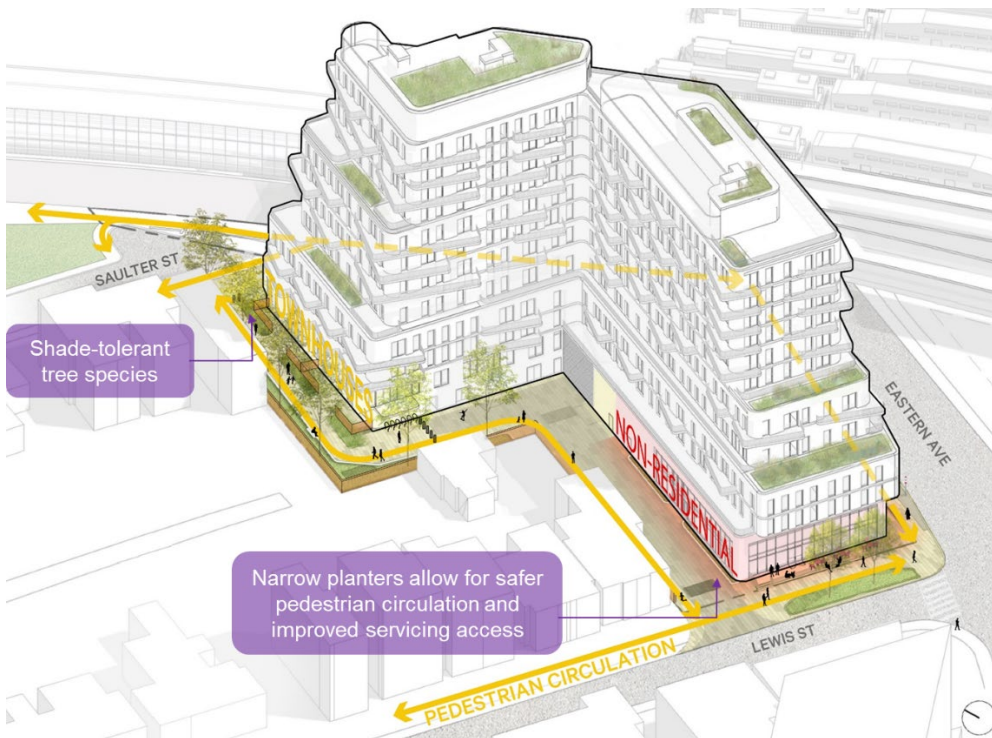


Figure 3 – Proposed Public Realm Approach

## 2.3.2 In-Progress/Future Updates

### Community Services

The project team presented a preliminary zoning framework, outlining some of the parameters for future uses of the land within the TOC. This framework will allow various multi-family housing types like townhouses and apartments but will exclude single detached housing because it is too low density for the site and station area.

The preliminary zoning framework also permits retail and office spaces.

The zoning will align with the proposed TOC concept for gross floor area, height, and setbacks; there are no anticipated changes to parking standards or amenity spaces, which will comply with city requirements.

The final programming and use of spaces will be determined by a future building partner, leaving room for flexibility based on community and building partner input. The project team has also noted that feedback on accessibility, unit layout, and size will be shared with future building partners including through the engagement summary reports as they refine the design.

### Housing

The project team addressed ongoing efforts to finalize affordable housing plans for the TOC sites along the Ontario Line; while specific targets for affordable housing are not yet available, the city and province are collaborating to maximize affordable housing delivery. Revenues generated by the Community Benefits Charge are intended to fund community facilities and services and the city could invest some or all of them in affordable housing. Provincial commitments on affordable housing will be shared publicly when details are available.

The city is addressing a council motion from May 2024 to explore strategies to maximize affordable housing in TOCs, with a focus on achieving 20 per cent affordable units. Working with a consultant, the city is conducting a feasibility analysis involving financial assessments of various TOCs citywide. The findings will be presented to the Planning and Housing Committee on December 5, 2024.

The project team also acknowledged the community's interest in a variety of housing unit sizes to meet diverse needs. Although the current proportion of single and multi-bedroom units is preliminary, the number of units with multiple bedrooms already exceeds the minimum requirements in the city's Growing Up guidelines. This breakdown remains flexible to enable future building partners to adjust unit sizes based on community needs and project feasibility.

### Commercial Spaces

The project team clarified that specific uses for the non-residential space, such as an office or retail space, are not yet determined. The designated non-residential area is designed to be adaptable for a variety of future uses. The space includes a mezzanine or second-level

option, which could create a double-height area suitable for uses like a film studio or production space. Although the exact purpose of the space will be decided later by future tenants, the design anticipates and accommodates multiple potential uses.

### 2.3.3 No Change/Additional Information Provided

#### Park Space

The project team emphasized that while there's a strong desire for more parks in the neighbourhood the site itself is too small to support a large park with significant programming options. However, the area is close to existing and planned parks that can serve the community well. These include parks within the East Harbour TOC, located just a 5- to 10-minute walk from the site, as well as the nearby Saulter Street Parkette. Additionally, other new and planned parks within the Port Lands are accessible via nearby trails, Broadview Avenue, and surrounding streets, providing further recreational options for residents.

#### Parking

The project team noted that some community members were surprised by the amount of parking proposed. Currently, the plan includes just one level of underground parking with a modest provision of 0.2 spaces per residential unit. This falls within Zoning By-law 569-2013 requirements for minimum and maximum number of parking spaces while some developments in the city have opted for no parking at all. But ultimately the amount of parking will be determined by a future building partner in accordance with the requirements of the zoning by-law. The team emphasized that they do not foresee needing to deviate from the parking requirements of Zoning By-law 569-2013 which allows for a range of parking spaces to be provided, including no minimum requirement for residential units.

## 3 Round Two Engagement

From June to September 2024, the province conducted a second round of community engagement for the Eastern Avenue TOC to update the community on what was heard, share the revised concept, verify the feedback received during the first round of engagement, and gather feedback on the revised concept.

### 3.1 Engagement Activities and Tools

The following section summarizes the engagement tools used in the second round of community engagement.

**Local Advisory Committee (LAC) Meeting #2:** On June 5, 2024, the project team met with 10 members of the LAC to review what was heard from stakeholders and community members during the first round of community engagement and verify the key themes heard from the community.

**Local Advisory Committee (LAC) Meeting #3:** The project team held its third and final LAC meeting with eight members on September 18, 2024, to present updates to the concept plans for the Eastern Avenue and Gerrard Carlaw South TOC sites, additional updates that are still in progress or will come in the future, and areas where no changes have occurred because they are out of scope or have been accounted for already. Members of the LAC were asked to share the presentation and minutes within their community networks.

**Virtual Public Engagement Meeting #2:** To conclude the public engagement process, on September 26, 2024, the project team facilitated a joint public meeting for the Gerrard-Carlaw South and Eastern Avenue TOCs. The open house was attended by 48 members of the public over a one-and-a-half-hour virtual session. It included an overview of the TOC program objectives and timeline, detailed presentations of the updated TOC concepts for the Gerrard-Carlaw South and Eastern Avenue sites, and a discussion with community members.

## 3.2 What We Heard in Round Two

The following is a summary of participants' feedback gathered from the second round of community engagement events, which discussed the revisions outlined in the Addressing Feedback from Round One section.

### 3.2.1 Unit Sizes and Affordability in the Building Partners Terms of Reference (ToR)

At the LAC meetings there was a concern regarding the mix and affordability of units that will be required on the site. The updated concept does have a few more 2-plus bedroom units than the initial concept, but the LAC emphasized that a greater portion of the residential space should be allocated to these larger units through the Terms of Reference (ToR). We heard concerns that if the amount or mix of unit sizes to build is not outlined in the ToR, then the building partner may build primarily smaller units that are more suitable for investors than end users. At the LAC we heard the recommendation that the ToR include affordable unit targets like the city's 20 per cent affordable housing target for TOCs to ensure that this goal is achieved.

The updated concept includes a proportion of two- and three-bedroom units that aligns with the City of Toronto's current guidelines. The expectation is that the building partner may propose a different proportion of two- and three-bedroom units but that they would still align with the city's guidelines.

### 3.2.2 Maximizing Density

The addition of two storeys and 18 units to the Eastern Avenue TOC was received positively at the LAC as was the need to concentrate density around transit. We heard questions about whether this is the most density that is permissible on the site such that the development is still feasible economically and from an engineering/planning perspective.

From a planning perspective, the project team determined a maximum height of 12 storeys based on the relationships between the site and the area that surrounds it, and site area

constraints. The site is immediately adjacent to low rise residential developments to the north and as such the site needs to be considerate of the shadow and wind impacts on those developments. The Eastern Avenue TOC is a midrise building, and its height is imposed on the streetscape without a podium, which makes its presence more notable in the public realm.

### **3.2.3 Proposed Built Form, Density, and Types of Housing**

At the LAC meeting, we heard some preference for the initial design of the Eastern Avenue site, where one portion of the building was taller than the other, as opposed to the updated concept for the built form which appears more monolithic.

Conversely, we heard comments from the LAC that the nine- to eleven-storeys, resembles the north side of Eastern Avenue and thereby fits the community more in terms of density. We also heard that the design looks good but that the size of the site limits having a park and that the need for more family sized units, rentals and owner-occupied suites is still a priority.

The OLTA explained that comments calling for more density suggest that there is an expectation that increasing the number of housing units in the TOC could lead to the provision of more affordable housing units.

### **3.2.4 Shadow impacts and analysis**

We heard questions about how the shadow impacts on the surrounding two-storey homes were analyzed. The OLTA explained they performed a sun shadow analysis for the site to model the shadow impacts on the community throughout the year. Due to the orientation of the site, the shadows will be longer in the fall and winter while in the summer and spring they will be shorter. As a result, there are a few hours of the day when the residential buildings north of the site are in shadow but through the mid-late afternoon, these shadows move onto Salter Street, the parkette, and the rail corridor.

Shadow impacts are inevitable with any building, but the project team concluded that this density is appropriate so close to rapid transit. Additionally, the site has been set back from the north property line as much as possible (8.5 metres, which is above what is prescribed in the zoning by-law) to provide relief for the adjacent homes and reduce the shadow impact on them -- an improvement on the previous concept which was built right up against the lot line.

### **3.2.5 Pedestrian connections between Eastern Ave. and East Harbour Station**

We heard the need for pedestrian connections between the Eastern TOC and East Harbour station. While the road crossing from the TOC to the station is not part of the project scope, the project team is ensuring that the connections within and adjacent to the site are well designed for pedestrian safety and connectivity because Eastern Avenue is not a traffic calmed road. Crossing the street from the TOC site to the station requires residents to travel



more than 200 metres to the Broadview Avenue intersection and may be a challenge for some residents, especially those who may have accessibility needs.

The proposal that the project team put forward in the first LAC meeting did include a crosswalk across Eastern Avenue and Lewis Street, though there were concerns about this not meeting the city's typical crosswalk spacing standards given that there is an existing crosswalk at Broadview. Ultimately the project team removed the proposed crosswalk from the TOC design as it was located outside of the TOC site boundary. The Broadview Avenue and Eastern Avenue intersection area will change notably and as such, there will be changes made to allow people to cross from the north side of Eastern into the south side more easily.

### **3.2.6 Competitive market process for Eastern Avenue**

When discussing the process for selecting a building partner, we explained that the property has been acquired by Metrolinx for transit construction and that after transit construction is complete, the land will be available for Transit-Oriented Community (TOC) development. Once the process for defining rezoning parameters and community benefit requirements is concluded, the province will select a building partner through an open and competitive process. Metrolinx estimates that by the mid 2030s, the TOC development site can be transferred to the building partner.

## 4 Next Steps & More Information

The community engagement process was designed to collect input from the community and key stakeholders ahead of planning and design milestones so they could be considered during the decision-making stage. The engagement process resulted in the community's identification of key themes, priorities, and benefits, which are summarized in the Eastern Avenue TOC final engagement report. The information will help inform the direction of future plans and designs of the Eastern Avenue TOC.

Now that the engagement process is complete, the project team will move towards concluding the TOC rezoning process with the city. Metrolinx will continue to construct the East Harbour station and required infrastructure as part of the Ontario Line subway. During the subway construction, IO will conduct an open, fair, and competitive bid process to identify a building partner to deliver the Eastern Avenue TOC. After a building partner is selected, required approvals are in place, and the Ontario Line's transit infrastructure is completed, TOC construction will begin.

All Eastern Avenue TOC project-related materials, available recordings of public engagement activities, and updates are available at <https://engageio.ca/en/EasternAvenue>.

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

## Appendix A. Eastern Avenue TOC: Local Advisory Committee

### Membership List

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

- Crow's Theatre
- Gerrard Square Shopping Mall
- Lakeshore East Community Advisory Committee
- Leslieville Business Improvement Area
- Leslieville Historical Society
- Leslieville Residents 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, such as libraries, arenas, and community centres, are not included in the LAC membership list, as the city coordinates consultation with these.