
Church-Wellesley BIA Streetscape Master Plan

Community stakeholder meeting



Meeting summary

Tuesday, September 7, 2021, 5:30-7:00pm

October 10, 2021

Overview:

On Tuesday, September 7th, 2021, the Church-Wellesley BIA hosted a virtual meeting with community stakeholders to present the 60% developed streetscape master plan. The session was communicated and organized by the BIA through emails with stakeholders. The meeting was attended by six stakeholders.

Jane Farrow of the Dept of Words & Deeds facilitated the meeting. Sneha Mandhan of the Dept of Words & Deeds took notes and prepared this summary. The summary is not intended to serve as a verbatim transcript.

Additionally, two stakeholders, who were unable to attend the meeting but were interested in participating, were engaged through virtual one-on-one meetings, facilitated by Sneha Mandhan of the Dept of Words & Deeds. Their comments are summarized at the end of this summary.

Meeting Attendees:

Stephanie McCracken, Executive Director, Church Wellesley Village BIA

Fung Lee, Principal, PMA Landscape Architects

Dylan Cassidy, PMA Landscape Architects

Antonella Nicaso, Streetscape Designer/Capital Project Coordinator, City of Toronto

Jane Farrow, Department of Words & Deeds

Sneha Mandhan, Department of Words & Deeds

Tyler Johnson, Senior Advisor, Constituency & Stakeholder Engagement, Cllr. Wong-Tam's office
Cllr. Kristyn Wong-Tam

Connie Langille, Church-Wellesley Neighbourhood Association

Robert Packham, Church-Wellesley Neighbourhood Association

Paul Farrelly, Church-Wellesley Neighbourhood Association

Chris Moise, Church Street Public School/Toronto District School Board

Laura Colonna, Project Manager, Pride Toronto

Curran Stikuts, Senior Consultant - Special Projects, The 519 Community Centre

Meeting Agenda:

- Jane Farrow opened the meeting with welcome remarks
- Stephanie McCracken gave a land acknowledgement
- Dylan Cassidy presented the design elements of the master plan in three sections: 1) How We Got Here and Corridor Wide Elements; 2) Activation Zones, and 3) Laneway Links And Implementation.
- Each section was followed by a feedback and discussion session facilitated by Jane Farrow
- Councillor Wong-Tam provided comments and encouragement
- The meeting was wrapped up with a discussion of next steps by Stephanie McCracken and Antonella Nicaso

Summary of comments and feedback:

Corridor Wide Elements:

- There was a discussion around the potential for pedestrianizing Church Street, including a discussion around the potential loss of parking spots which are valued by many businesses along Church Street for taxis, curbside drop off and pick up and so on. There was mention of the safety concerns related to vehicular traffic and speeds near the school.
 - o The BIA and Councillor Wong-Tam mentioned a pedestrianization pilot project that had run in the summer of 2007 on Church Street. The pilot had not been too successful given inadequate activation of the 4-lane street. However, given new development projects in the vicinity and other changes in the larger neighbourhood, the Councillor expressed support for a potential summer pilot project with adequate budgeting and activation programming in the future to test out the appetite for increasing pedestrian space.
- The interaction between the Church-Wellesley Streetscape Master Plan and the Yonge Tomorrow project was noted. Specifically, that Church Street could be narrowed to a 2-3 lane street, but that closing it off to car traffic would not be possible as Church St would have to handle some of the traffic if Yonge St is pedestrianized
 - o Councillor Wong-Tam suggested that there is opportunity for collaboration of designers at the next implementation stage between two projects, and supported the immediate and 'light' interventions in the interim
- A recommendation was made to incorporate the new 'Progress' re-design of the rainbow Pride flag that incorporates trans, Black and other marginalized communities.
- The iterative and flexible nature of the master plan was appreciated, especially the ability to see what works over the years and make changes accordingly.
- Safety concerns were voiced around how plantings, grates and street furniture could be used to stash drugs, weapons and needles as demonstrated in some areas of Barbara Hall Park

- It was stated that maintaining street parking was not a major priority for many people in the neighbourhood and that with recent developments a lot of underground parking has been added. A recommendation was made to bump the whole eastern lane out to expand the pedestrian realm and create lay-bys for parking, loading and drop-offs, as opposed to bumping out spaces for pedestrians.
- A recommendation was made to conduct a parking inventory to assess the need or quantity of street parking spots.
 - Feedback was received but it was noted that this was outside of the scope of this master planning process.
- A recommendation was made for the design team to look at the City utility maps to identify where trees could be planted.
 - Feedback was received but it was noted that this was outside of the scope of this master planning process.
- The biodiverse bump-outs were appreciated as being lively and sensible.

Activation Zones:

- The maintenance of gardens and plantings was expressed as a concern, especially in terms of accumulation of garbage in those spaces during festivals and gatherings and long-term sustainability and aesthetics;
 - Councillor Wong-Tam suggested that there is an opportunity for partnerships with residents for garden or planting maintenance
- A recommendation was made to also think about what is above the spaces, in addition to designing the ground plane. This could include a canopy of rainbow lights above the parkettes or projections, for example.
- A concern was expressed about the impact of the condominium projects that are ongoing for the next 5-8 years on the west side of Church Street.
- A recommendation was made to consider a sponsorship model for the parkettes – a program similar to San Francisco's, where businesses or individuals can sponsor a parkette.
- A concern was raised with regards to having colourful patterns painted on road surfaces as they can be distracting for drivers and City Transportation may not approve them;
 - Councillor Wong-Tam suggested that the City's stance on this is evolving
- A recommendation was made to rethink the northern edge to make a real statement – something grand and bold that draws passers-by north on Church Street since the side flankage is not very visible from a distance.
- A recommendation was made to activate and bring energy, such as having artwork that changes with time, on the Church-Wellesley intersection.
- The potential impact of street narrowing on the ability to set up vendor tents, have emergency vehicle access, and have large volumes of pedestrians pass through the space during the Pride Festival was noted.

- A recommendation was made to consider the incorporation of modern AV, LED lighting, and gobo lights to create a dynamic, modern, and animated atmosphere on Church Street.
- A recommendation was made to emphasize the expansion of the pedestrian realm, and to incorporate some of the bolder ideas from the State of the Village report that was previously published.
- A recommendation was made to add Indigenous elements to the design.
- The movable tree planters were appreciated, due to their ability to create flexible, dynamic spaces.
- A recommendation was made to add projections in the spaces along Church Street.
- A recommendation was made to identify the successful CafeTO interventions along Church Street which have been great wins for the local businesses and neighbourhood, including the one in front of Barbara Hall Park/519 Church.

Laneway Links:

- The design interventions shown for Anvil Alley were appreciated, especially since both sides of it are visible from many different approaches. A recommendation was made to consider projections for that space in addition to the murals.
- The design interventions shown for Alexander Place were particularly appreciated. It was noted that there is a ballet school and apartment building on the side, along with several businesses that back onto that laneway. Challenges associated with crime, garbage, disposal of drug paraphernalia, and poor road surfacing in that laneway were noted.
- Several opportunities to bring businesses and other institutions along that laneway were highlighted, including the opportunity to have murals and projections placed there to encourage pedestrians to take a detour through the laneway.
- One participant questioned whether Dapper Lane was suitable for activations because they felt it was not as community-minded compared to other laneways

Additional Feedback:

One-on-one meetings were held with Dennis Findlay from The ArcQuives, and Criss Habal-Brosek from Progress Place. Their feedback is summarized below.

- The incorporation of elements reflecting the heritage of the Village were appreciated, but a recommendation was made to expand the definition of heritage and history for the master plan to include the pre-1970s history of the neighbourhood – prior to when it became the Village. It was also noted that the emphasis on the queer identity of the Village has the potential to make other groups feel excluded from the neighbourhood.
- The absence of Indigenous voice and direct engagement, especially with Two-Spirit peoples, was noted as a concern.
- The laneway interventions were much appreciated as they provide exciting opportunities for creating public space in the neighbourhood. A suggestion was made to liaise with current and future developers to transform laneways into covered public spaces. This would allow for laneways to become ‘cozy little spaces’ for interaction and shopping in any season.

- The proposed greenery and tree canopy in the master plan were appreciated as they create a warm and welcoming streetscape and can define the Village to be an ‘iconic’ place to visit. A recommendation was made to conduct a more detailed study on planting materials to ensure durability and plant health.
- The proposed furniture was much appreciated as it made the streetscape more friendly.
- It was recommended that developers be engaged with to ensure that they don’t build right up to the sidewalk and instead provide space for expanded sidewalks for public interaction.
- The parklets were appreciated as ways to animate the streetscape.