
Church-Wellesley BIA Streetscape Master Plan

Pop-ups in Barbara Hall Park



Feedback summary

Saturdays, September 11 and 18, 2021, 11am to 1pm

October 6, 2021

Overview:

On September 11th and 18th, the project team, including members from the Church-Wellesley Village BIA, the City of Toronto, PMA Landscape Architects, and the Department of Words & Deeds, hosted two engagement pop-up events in Barbara Hall Park in the Church-Wellesley neighbourhood to share information and gather feedback on the Church-Wellesley BIA Streetscape Master Plan.

Three tables were set-up with display panels containing information about the master plan. Pamphlets containing project information were also made available. The team shared information about the master plan with passers-by, and asked them for feedback on the larger design approach as well as the detailed design elements.

Approximately 50 informational pamphlets were handed out, and approximately 80 participants were engaged through the pop-ups. The most commonly asked questions focused on the timeline and funding for the master plan, future opportunities for consultation, and the potential impact of the streetscape master plan on the larger neighbourhood. A summary of the feedback received, organized by the three key moves in the master plan, is below.





Photos of the pop-up events at Barbara Hall Park.

Key Themes:

Overall, participants expressed much support for the master plan, especially for the parklets, bump-outs, and parkettes. The emphasis on improving the pedestrian realm and adding more space for public 'wandering' and 'lingering' was much appreciated. Some key themes that emerged through the conversations are as follows:

- Participants wanted as much robust biodiverse greenery, trees, and shade as possible along Church Street. They noted the need for healthy trees, for well-maintained planting, and for shaded, comfortable seating along the street.
- Participants really appreciated the visual identity elements such as the pole wraps, rainbow benches, temporary and permanent art, and rainbow pedestrian lighting proposed in the master plan. They highlighted how these elements reflected the spirit of the neighbourhood and local community, which was important to the participants. Some participants highlighted the need for these elements to be sustainable, durable and easy to maintain. They also recommended creating flexible spaces for local artists to perform along the street.
- Participants were concerned about safety and security along the parklets and parkettes and recommended having better lighting, more robust fencing, and better maintenance of these spaces. They also suggested adding more garbage and safe needle disposal facilities along the street.
- Participants noted the need for activation of the spaces proposed in the master plan, during the night and during the winter.
- Participants also noted the need for more social services to accompany streetscape improvements, given the high levels of homelessness, addiction, and mental health concerns among local community members.

Summary of comments and feedback:

Corridor Wide Elements and General Feedback:

- The added colour and vibrancy in the master plan was much liked. 6 participants appreciated the colourful interventions, and asked for more of those. One participant noted the need to add more stylized street signs in the neighbourhood (similar to those in Yorkville)
- 5 people appreciated the proposed interventions as they would get people to come in and 'linger', 'wander' and 'digest'. A couple people noted that this would be good for local businesses, and for promoting interaction among different generations and community members.
- The benches, especially the rainbow benches, were appreciated by 14 people, especially the benches that were under trees. Suggestions were made to ensure that new benches were not defensive and were not arranged confrontationally.
- 5 participants liked the parklets and bump-outs as they create safer, active pedestrian public spaces along the street. A couple of participants recommended adding more parklets and widening the sidewalk. 2 participants noted potential safety concerns in the parklets and recommended using more robust fencing materials, such as Jersey barriers, to protect parklet spaces from vehicles. One participant also noted the need for traffic calming along the street.
- The pole wraps were liked by 2 participants, and was envisioned by one participant as a way to engage local artists.
- 2 participants noted the need for more regular laneway and street cleaning efforts. 8 participants noted the need for additional garbage bins, with proper maintenance provisions for these bins, and 6 participants highlighted the need for safe needle disposal.
- Durability of the proposed design interventions, in terms of maintenance, ease of cleaning, and resistance to vandalism, was noted as a concern by 6 participants.
- 2 participants noted that there should be a consistency in design elements along the street, and one participant noted the need to further define the connections between the various place-based interventions proposed in the master plan.
- 12 participants noted the need for more healthy trees and shade along the street as they provide respite from the concrete. One participant noted the need for shade during Pride weekend celebrations.
- Proposed greening along the streetscape was appreciated by 20 participants. 4 participants also noted the need to ensure that planting is well maintained. One participant noted that above-ground planters were ugly and took up too much space on the street.
- 8 participants expressed an interest in further activation of the streetscape, during the day and night, and during the winter.
- One participant recommended adding Indigenous programming to the streetscape.
- 14 participants supported the removal of parking along the street, and encouraged a more pedestrian-oriented streetscape design.
- Lighting was noted as an important need along the street by 15 participants. The feature lighting was appreciated by 10 participants.

- A couple of participants pointed to ‘informal’ community gathering spaces (the ‘steps’, and the ‘Luke’ garden) in the neighbourhood, and asked for those to be considered or incorporated into the streetscape master plan.
- The need for adding bike lanes and secure bike racks was noted by 4 participants.
- One participant noted the need for better car access to Maitland Street. They suggested having parklets on one side of the intersection, instead of both.
- 2 participants noted that the design should capture the identity of the Village. 3 participants noted that the neighbourhood should remain a ‘community’ or a ‘village’.
- One participant noted that Church Street gets fairly congested during peak hour. They suggested making the street one-way, South-bound, and suggested keeping parking, especially near essential services, during the winter. They also mentioned the need for space for storing snow during the winters.
- The need for flexible spaces for pop-up entertainment or ‘busking’, especially as a way to involve local artists in the area, was suggested by 4 participants. One participant suggested piping music onto the streetscape.
- 2 participants noted the need for public restrooms in the area.
- The incorporation of permanent and temporary art in the master plan was appreciated by 10 participants. They emphasized the need for art that was meaningful for and reflected the local community, and was interactive as that was something the Village was known for.
- 3 participants noted safety concerns on the street during the night.
- 2 participants suggested adding in more detailed phasing plans so that the incremental changes could be better appreciated by the local community.
- One participant noted that accessibility needs should be made a priority.
- One participant asked for more access to water for humans, pets, birds, and other animals.
- One participant asked for more spaces for adults to exercise/stretch.

Activation Zones:

- The use of bio-diverse, rainwater planting in the parkettes was appreciated by a couple of participants.
- The parkettes were appreciated by 6 participants. They found them inviting, vibrant, and helpful in activated ‘dead space’ at street corners. Suggestions were made to include pop-up art in the parkettes, add shade to them, and to rent them out to generate income for the BIA.
- 6 participants appreciated and asked for more sustainable, recycled, environment-friendly design interventions, especially in the paving materials used.
- One participant noted concerns around safety in the parkettes.

Laneway Links:

- The proposed activation of laneways for commuting, including interventions to make them more welcoming, was appreciated by 6 participants. One participant noted the need for more expedient connections between Church St and the Wellesley subway station.

- 5 participants appreciated the murals as a way to liven up the neighbourhood. The proposed mural in Dapper Lane was noted as much needed by one participant.
- 7 participants noted concerns about the paving materials used, including slippery paving during winter, faded paint, too much concrete, issues with freezing and thawing of pavement, and paving that is difficult to maintain and appears dirty.
- The ownership of laneways was noted as a potential barrier to implementation by one participant.

Other Comments:

The following feedback was recorded but was noted to be outside the scope of this streetscape master planning project.

- Safety in Barbara Hall Park was noted as a concern by 10 participants. They noted that the park did not feel welcoming. They did, however, appreciate the programming in the park. Participants suggested fixing up the stage, adding more foot traffic, security cameras, and law enforcement in the park.
- 13 participants noted concerns around the needs of people experiencing homelessness in the area, including those facing challenges related to mental health and addiction. They highlighted that the streetscape interventions need to be accompanied by social services.
- 2 participants noted the need to get the new condominium developments along the street on board to activate the streetscape, and provide parking.
- One participant suggested adding art similar to the Spectrum to the Wellesley subway station.
- One participant noted the need for a neighbourhood land trust in the area.
- One participant suggested keeping the statues as they are part of the heritage in the area.
- One participant noted that the streetscape interventions have the potential to lead to gentrification in the neighbourhood.