

Plans to improve look, function of Yonge Street Promenade take shape

Streetscape improvements along the Yonge Street Promenade from Wellington to Church Streets will be the focus of a September 25 open house at Aurora Town Square.

Revitalization of the Aurora Promenade has been a long-running topic of conversation throughout the community, and streetscape improvements have been discussed for more than a decade.

Following public input this month, the plan will continue to take shape before options are presented to Council.

According to the Town, the historic downtown core will be redesigned with streetscape improvements in key sections of the corridor to enhance public space, integrate the downtown business core with the newly-constructed Aurora Town Square, and address required rehabilitation of existing infrastructure.

Elements under consideration include street light pole upgrades, sidewalk and crosswalk improvements, signage and entry feature, modifications to improve accessibility, street furniture and trees, and a look at both parking and traffic flow.

Just recently in 2024 we finally received budget approval to proceed with a detailed design for this project, says Garry Anggawinata, Municipal Engineer and Project Manager. We're finally taking that conceptual plan and developing it until a full detailed design. We're also assessing other opportunities under this project that we can address. The concept is very preliminary and I imagine we'll have multiple of these kinds of events, but this will be the first iteration we'll be presenting.

For these conceptual plans, the main focus is basically improvement in the traffic layout of the Yonge Street corridor. That basically involves modifications to some of the lane configurations. Perhaps at busy intersections, we might consider adding some pedestrian crosswalks or some additional traffic lights and signals. It may involve imposing some turning restrictions on some of the lanes just to alleviate traffic congestion. As well, we've also assessed parking spots and tried to identify ways we can optimize the on-street parking. The first iteration basically involves mostly the traffic components of the design.

Feedback on the designs at the September 25 meeting, as well as on the Engage Aurora platform, will result in a more refined vision of the conceptional plan and more detailed elements such as streetscape features and landscaping will take shape in the future.

We're just trying to gauge the public and see what the needs are in terms of pedestrian walkways, parking spots and things like that, and how we can make the downtown area more attractive and integrate it with the Town Square area.

Ahead of the September 25 meeting, Anggawinata says public engagement sessions are important because projects like these are for the community and they are for the development of the public realm.

I think it's important for residents, business owners and anyone in the area who may be affected by this project and stakeholders to have their say, he says. It democratizes the process a bit, so it's not just one engineer making all the decisions or one political individual making all the decisions on what to do and how to proceed with this project. I think it's important to get feedback from various different parties and different people to hear everyone's concerns, hear everyone's ideas and thoughts because there may be some good ideas and good feedback as well that maybe the Town or consultants didn't take into consideration. It's important to get everyone involved and try to hear from all the different groups and parties who may be impacted by the project. At the end of the day, our objective is to have a final product that everyone can enjoy, that the Town and residents can be happy with, and that business owners also, especially along the Yonge Street area that can have a space that fully optimizes the business operations, as well.

We're looking to hear from people about pedestrian walkability, how they find accessibility, especially if you're walking round

Town Square and along Yonge Street. We want to hear about parking and what it's like driving through the area, how easy it is to find parking, or if they find that it's quite tricky and difficult. If there's not enough parking spaces, we'd like to hear more about that and find ways that will help inform our design on what problems need to be addressed, what the major concerns are, as well as driving through the area and what the traffic flow is like. If we hear enough complaints or concerns about traffic congestion, for example, we can find ways to address that or prioritize those features.?

For more information on the Yonge Street Promenade Plan so far, about the upcoming meeting, and how to provide feedback online, visit engageaurora.ca/streetscape.

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