

# Villiers Island Density Study Public Meeting Summary

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## Public Meeting Overview

In Fall 2023, the City of Toronto, CreateTO, and Waterfront Toronto will recommend to City Council a preferred approach for increasing densities on Villiers Island. The Council-endorsed preferred approach will inform an update to the 2017 Precinct Plan, resulting in more housing and affordable rental homes while respecting the overall vision for this new community. Public engagements will inform the evaluation of different approaches to building more housing on public lands by increasing densities by at least 30% above the 2017 Precinct Plan.

On June 19, 2023, the City of Toronto, CreateTO and Waterfront Toronto hosted a public meeting as part of this process.

This meeting was held online and approximately 200 people joined for a live presentation followed by a Q & A.

A recording of the meeting can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9TOQX9MOKc&>

At the live meeting, Mira Shenker introduced the presenters:

- Councillor Fletcher welcomed participants
- Chris Glasiek, Anthony Kittel, and Scott Pennington presented

Please see appendix A for the list of questions and answers during the meeting. Some questions were not answered during the meeting due to time constraints, and the answer is provided in the appendix.

## Breakout Room Activity

Two breakout room activities were planned. The first, an exercise in prioritizing the guiding principles set out in the 2017 precinct plan, did not yield useful results due to technical challenges.

The second breakout activity saw groups of 30-40 people in a room with a facilitator. The facilitator showed a screen with several different variables related to changing the precinct plan:

- Minimizing wind impacts in public spaces
- Maintaining sun access to the Keating Channel
- Maintaining sun access to the parks
- Preserving heritage views
- Maximizing the amount of new housing
- Preserving lake views
- Views to the parks
- Size of buildings in relation to park edges
- Putting towers near community amenities
- Lively, animated public spaces
- Putting towers near transit stops.

Based on the feedback of participants, the facilitator moved the variables up a continuum of importance, working to find consensus where possible.

No variable was rated more important in all seven breakout rooms.

The variables that were moved the highest up the importance continuum were:

- Towers near transit stops (4 rooms)
- Towers near community amenities (2 rooms)
- Preserving lake views (2 rooms)
- Maintaining sun access to the Keating Channel (2 rooms)
- Maintaining sun access to parks (2 rooms)
- Maximizing affordable housing (2 rooms)
- Views to the parks (2 rooms)
- Lively animated public spaces (1 room)
- Towers near amenities (1 room)

Variables that were moved up the importance continuum, but not as high as the variables listed above were:

- Towers near transit stops (2 rooms)
- Lively animated public spaces
- Maximizing affordable housing
- Size of buildings in relation to park edges
- Sun access to the Keating Channel
- Towers near community amenities
- Views to parks
- Minimizing wind impacts

Taken all together, putting towers near transit stops was the variable that was considered most important by most breakout groups.

## Question and Comments During the Meeting:

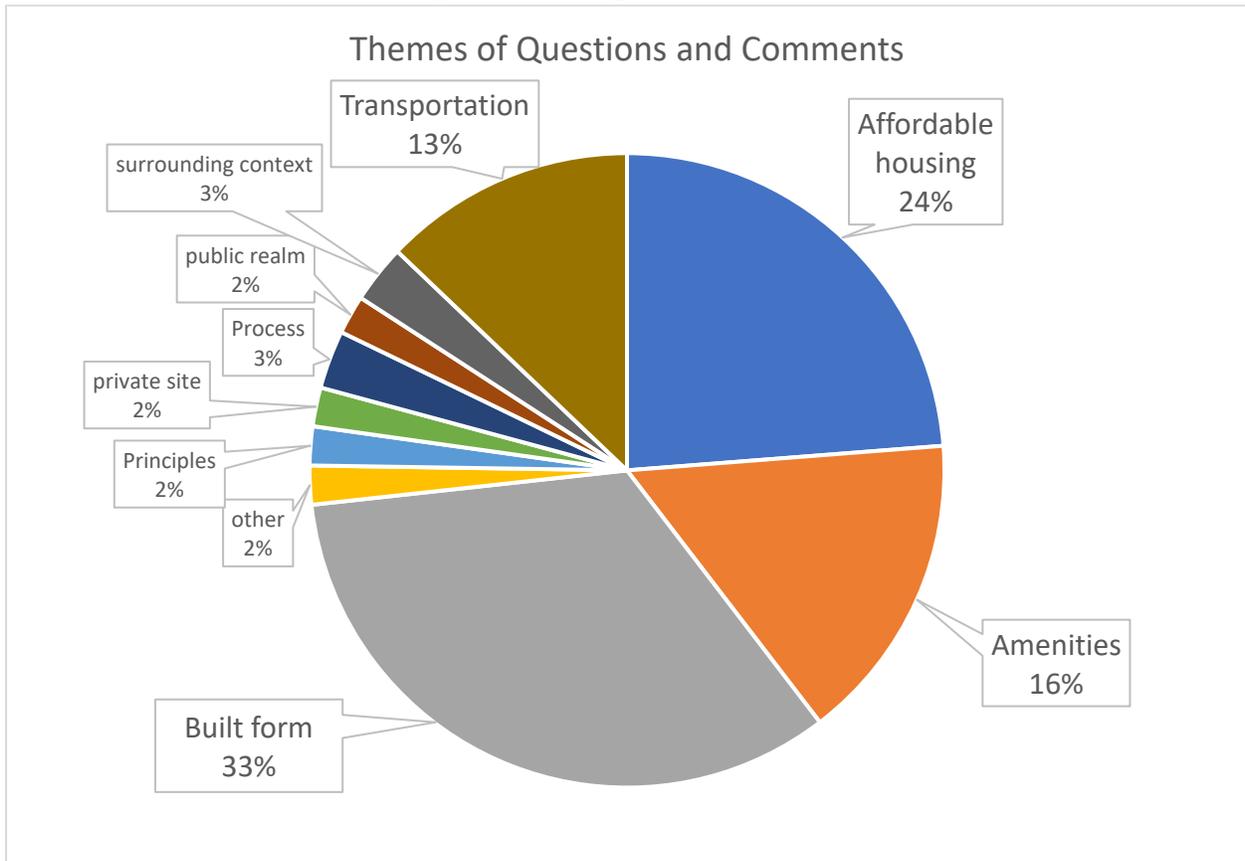


Figure 1. Breakdown of questions and comments by general theme.

We received 101 questions and comments during or immediately following the public meeting (this summary includes some comments submitted via email the day after the meeting). The majority of questions and comments were related to the built form, affordable housing, or amenities.

### Summary of Question Themes:

- Affordable housing: how much will be delivered, and what would that delivery look like?
- Amenities: what kinds of amenities will be provided on the island?
- Built form:
  - What factors have been considered as part of our due diligence?
  - Why can't you put height in specific places?
  - Questions about the design of the towers
- Transportation: questions were focused on vehicular access to the island, pedestrian and cycling access, and transit connections

### Summary of Comment Themes:

- Built form: a more detailed breakdown of these comments is provided below.
- Affordable housing:

- Majority of comments that expressed an opinion (9) supported maximizing affordable housing, although two comments supported limiting affordable housing
- Several comments talked about the delivery of affordable housing, including the mix of rent-gear-to-income, affordable ownership, and other delivery models.
- Amenities: all comments emphasized the need for various kinds of amenities. Most comments – many of them embedded in questions - focused on fostering a strong retail landscape, including a grocery store.
- Transportation: many comments (5 of 6) on this topic were focused on ways to restrict vehicular access or movements on Villiers Island. For example, by introducing a 30km/h speed limit.

Several comments had a secondary dimension of supporting the vision of a climate positive community and looked at the materials through a lens of sustainability.

### Built Form comments

As built form, specifically the location of density and massing, is the primary focus of this consultation, these comments have been broken into more detail here.

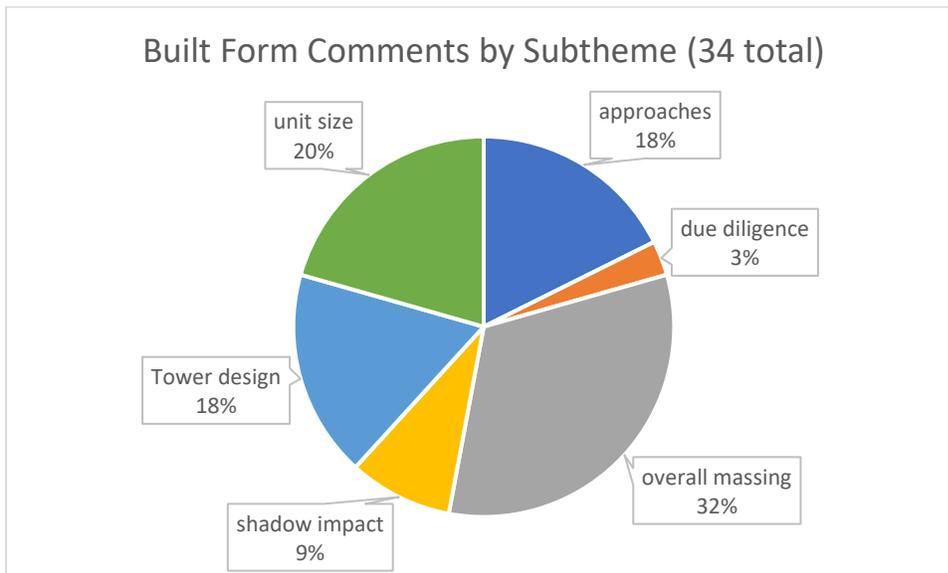


Figure 2. Number of comments about built form grouped by subtopic.

Unit size comments focused on the mix of units supplied in future buildings, and is less relevant to this consultation, though the comments are still noted.

#### Overall Massing & the three Approaches

Questions related to future massing focused on why certain approaches were taken or ‘what about’ questions with suggestions for other approaches.

- Can you put extra height in the northeast corner?
- Why can’t you just make all the buildings bigger or the same height instead of adding towers?
- What about towers with lighter podiums?

Many comments related to massing expressed opinions on where to locate massing generally:

- Support for dense mid-rise
- Focusing density on the west end and in proximity to transit stops and amenities, reducing density as you move east

Once the three approaches were shared, participants shared their preference between the three options.

- Three participants preferred approach 1. One comment offered some rationale, that it creates a “different experience while cruising in the water, giving the urban feel. Also, make the left space on the island more open.”
- Three participants preferred approach 3. Rationale included keeping a spacious public realm, visibility of the waterfront from the north and south, and maximizing the sun on the Keating Channel. However, one comment noted that if approach 3 did not maximize the increase in affordable housing, they also supported towers on the west end of the island and even a few towers along the Keating Channel.
- One participant identified approach 2 as their least preferred option because they did not like focusing density on the west end.

#### *Tower design and shadow impacts*

Many participants agreed that the towers should be well designed and interesting to look at. Some participants discussed providing terracing in the building design to create communal public spaces on the upper floors; there were opposing viewpoints and no clear majority.

The impact of shadow also did not produce any clear consensus, though there was no clear opposition to shadows. Some questioned why we avoided shadowing the new river valley, and one comment suggested that shadows are useful on a hot day. One participant noted that shadow and foot traffic studies would be useful to evaluate the three approaches.

## Appendix A: Questions and Answers

The questions below were added to the chat during the public meeting or transcribed verbatim. Minor edits have been made for clarity. Some similar questions were combined.

### Affordable Housing

#### **Q: How will residents be selected?**

A: In July 2022, City Council directed the Housing Secretariat to establish a Centralized Affordable Rental Housing Access System, under which all affordable homes will be made available. The system will help people find and apply for available affordable housing and help affordable housing providers to advertise available homes and find tenants. The City expects the new system to launch in 2024. As the City works to develop the new system, in the interim, all affordable rental homes in new buildings are posted on the City's website: [Affordable Rental Homes – City of Toronto](#)

#### **Q: Are there opportunities for an "ownership" stake, via co-ops, for instance?**

A: There are different options for providing the affordable housing and the strategy for Villiers Island has not been determined yet. As part of this work, we will ensure new development is guided by enabling Innovative partnerships; including advancing partnerships with Indigenous communities to ensure a complete community process.

#### **Q: Could you go into detail on the current breakdown for affordable/BMR/Rent geared to income units for the development, in specific numbers?**

A: Our mandate is to deliver a minimum of 20% affordable units and target of 30%, which would equal a minimum of 1,200-1,500 affordable units. We are at the precinct planning stage, which will be informed by an affordable housing strategy. Detailed breakdowns will be developed as part of business and implementation planning.

#### **Q: Do you have public estimates on how the gross floor area, residential gross floor area, and approx. total unit-counts of each possible approach 1, 2 & 3?**

A: The approaches deliver about 6,100 to 7,300 total units. Approach 1 and 2 are more or less equal – there are fewer opportunities to maximum affordable housing and density in approach 3. At a minimum of 20% affordable housing, the density in these options would deliver 1,200-1,500 affordable units.

The options right now are more about a general approach to siting the density clusters – the density/amount of housing delivered in the final approach will constitute a significant increase over the 2017 precinct plan.

**Q: You don't have any numbers and the numbers matter when we're making these choices, so it would be good if you're going to come back to the community that it includes some ballpark estimates of the gross floor area, the residential gross floor area, the heights that you're talking about, and the approximate total unit counts you're creating. I can't compare approach one to approach three if I don't know this one's going to create 7 000 units this one's going to create 9 000 units because we're going to create 30% of them as affordable. That's hundreds more units if we go with a 9000-unit massing options so just generally the more numbers and data you can put into some of these presentations that inform people about what their choices actually are. You know, a little bit more**

**shadow, but you get an extra couple of hundred affordable housing units, is a choice that might need to be made at some point in the process. Asking them to choose shadows or views without learning about the trade-off doesn't seem like an optimal set of information to give the public, in order to make an informed decision, but other than that it's, it's way more heightened density than it was in 2017, so go team.**

A: What we're trying to do here is maximize the density based on what the island can support, and so all of these approaches prioritize that, which is why we've taken it off the table as kind of a variable. They're all seeking to maximize that in different ways. There are minor differences across the three, but they more or less achieve the same result.

**Q: When will the housing be completed?**

A: Housing on Villiers Island will be developed in multiple phases over 20 to 25 years. We're currently anticipating full build-out on Villiers to be between 2040 and 2050.

**Q: Does the City have any appetite for developing an affordable rental plan modelled on the Provincial Lands Affordable Housing Program which is delivering 30% affordable rental in the West Don Lands?**

A: This program is comparable to the Housing Now program that the City is implementing on City-owned properties. Given the primarily public ownership of Villiers Island, there is a target to achieve 30 percent affordable housing units on the Island. The City is working with the Federal and Provincial governments and leveraging National Housing Strategy programs and provincial operating funding to achieve the target.

## Amenities

**Q: Will there be a medical centre to serve the people who live on the island?**

A: The Port Lands Planning Framework identifies the majority of Villiers Island as a mixed-use residential district, with a broad range of uses such as residential, office, retail and services, institutional, recreational and cultural activities. These uses are private and could be located in the mixed-use spaces.

**Q: Will there be schools and space for non-profit agencies? What about spiritual spaces?**

A: The 2017 plan identified the need for one elementary school along the Keating Channel Promenade, next to Villiers Park and a multi-purpose community centre will be located at the foot of New Cherry Street and Villiers Street, with an indoor pool, multi-purpose and gymnasium space. As we are increasing densities, we are meeting with the school boards and other community infrastructure providers to assess if changes are required. We will report on any updates as part of the updated precinct plan.

**Q: I'd be interested in knowing more about commercial retail options. As we discuss affordable housing, it's essential to include services and other amenities that make communities livable and vibrant, where residents can walk rather than drive to get basic necessities such as groceries. Will there be affordable grocery stores, cultural amenities, restaurants and food options that cater to Toronto's diverse ethnocultural communities?**

A: A consultant was engaged to produce a commercial study for Villiers Island, and it concluded that the Precinct Plan overestimated the amount of retail that could likely be successful on the island, especially in the early stages of the development of the island. They also concluded that big changes in the retail

landscape, including COVID and the explosion in online shopping with home delivery, has further reduced the demand for bricks and mortar retail.

We're planning as best as we can for a successful retail landscape, including a grocery store, but much of this will ultimately be a result of market forces.

However, a potential benefit of increased densities on the island is the increase in residents and therefore customers for local retail stores.

**Q: Will there be policies in place that support affordable retail for local entrepreneurs who want to open small businesses or micro enterprises? Will there be any areas that serve as a market, similar to Stakt market, supporting local businesses and artists?**

A: Retail planning hasn't been conducted at this level of detail yet. We are currently exploring interim activation strategies for the first phases of development on the islands and are looking at a variety of precedents.

**Q: How dense will the retail space be amongst the towers (All ground floor, only some buildings etc.)?**

A: Not all buildings will have retail at grade and some streets are planned to support the majority of retail spaces as the island develops. The Villiers Island Precinct Plan imagined primary and secondary retail streets on the island which focused retail spaces on these frontages and not necessarily on others. The City's commercial activation consultant prepared an update report in 2022 which recommended smaller and more concentrated retail areas on the island due to changes to the retail market.

**Q: Is there an idea of how commercial spaces in the form of a strip or a square, or a combination of the 2 are going to be incorporated in the project?**

A: Retail on the island will be incorporated in the podiums of many buildings, planned to be concentrated along the primary and secondary retail streets, generally as identified in the precinct plan, and with further input from the updated commercial activation study and market conditions as the island develops.

**Q: Are there any plans for local -- not destination -- entertainment options?**

A: A zoning by-law for the island is being drafted which contemplates a variety of mixed uses that will contribute to a lively mixed-use community. Entertainment uses are being considered with some conditions to limit their size and any potential impacts on the neighbourhood.

## Built Form

**Q: When we say "midrise character" above 11 storeys - do we mean 15 to 18 ish?**

A: Toronto is, and will continue to be, a city in three building scales – low-rise, mid-rise, and tall buildings. The City has guidelines for mid-rise and tall buildings. Generally, a mid-rise building is 6- 11 storeys, and a tall building is anything over 11 storeys. Some tall/mid-rise buildings use a step-back to feel less high – giving a “midrise character”, with a taller overall height.

**Q: Is there any plan to institute an architectural control for materiality or aesthetic requirements, so this doesn't become 20 more blue glass cubes?**

A: Developers haven't been selected yet. They will be selected through an international competition where proponents will bring forth their vision for the island. This is a similar process to what has occurred in Quayside, where Quayside Impact Limited Partnership was selected. (Read more about Quayside <https://www.waterfronttoronto.ca/our-projects/quayside>). Once selected, developers will still need to bring their designs to Waterfront Toronto's Design Review Panel.

**Q: Why not raise the height of the original plan overall to achieve the density goal rather than spiking the island with towers here and there?**

A: Base building heights (6-10 storeys) were established to minimise casting shadows onto streets and public realm. By raising the heights of the base buildings (the predominant type in the Villiers Island Precinct Plan) it will start to impact sun access throughout the day. We would have to think about adding incrementally or stepping the upper storeys back to maintain adequate sun access.

**Q: Why were additional towers at the east end of Villiers not considered? Can there be some reconsideration of extra height in the northeast corner of Villiers?**

A: There are towers at the east end, some up to 22 storeys high, however taller towers have been avoided on these eastern blocks in order to maximise sunlight and reduce impacts on the sensitive ecological areas being delivered as part of the flood protection project.

**Q: Why are we obsessed with towers? Why not just make all the building the same height?**

A: The variation in tower heights achieves several important goals. Primarily, taller towers increase opportunities for more housing and more affordable housing units on limited publicly owned lands. Achieving the same number of housing units in buildings without taller towers would result in significantly "chunkier" buildings that wouldn't allow light to penetrate to the majority of the streets and public realm on the island.

When sited properly and with adequate tower separation distances (40m is the standard on Villiers while the tall building guidelines recommend 25m for the rest of the city), shadow impacts are minimized and move more quickly over the surrounding lands. For instance, placing towers strategically can optimize sunlight reaching streets and public spaces throughout the day.

Different tower heights also make the urban design more interesting, adding architectural appeal. They also help define how the neighborhood connects with the new river valley, the existing Keating Channel, the Harbour, and views of the Islands' heritage sites.

Furthermore, tower heights influence the public spaces by affecting wind patterns, shading, and the feeling of openness. By carefully thinking about how tower heights work, the precinct plan can improve residents' quality of life and enhance the experience of living on and visiting the Island. The way the towers' heights are planned will create an environment that's comfortable for those who live there and inviting for those who come to explore.

**Q: What about higher towers with lighter podiums? It is not the height that is the issue, it is really what the ground floor pedestrian realm feels like.**

A: The Villiers Island density study has aimed to retain the general height and scale of the base buildings imagined in the 2017 precinct plan while finding ways to increase densities across the island through taller towers in appropriate locations.

The relationship between tower heights and podium design is crucial for shaping the overall urban experience and balancing tower height with the design and functionality of podiums is essential to ensure that the ground-level experience aligns with the future vision for the community. Each of the approaches to update the Precinct Plan envision both higher towers along with mid-rise base buildings. The base buildings on Villiers Island will range from 6 to 10 storeys and be designed to frame streets and create a consistent pedestrian experience. Base buildings will incorporate varying setbacks to reduce the perception of height from the street and create an excellent pedestrian environment.

**Q: Is that avoidance of shadow on the new river mouth due to reducing time of it freezing over? Or what was the reason for that?**

A: The Port Lands Flood Protection Project is creating 25 hectares of naturalized space, which includes new city parks and natural wetlands in the river valley. To support these new habitats and encourage the return of various species, the City, Waterfront Toronto, and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority have established policies to create an environment where wildlife can thrive. For instance, during the growing season, it's important for the plants to receive morning and early afternoon sunlight when the sun's rays are strongest. Additionally, preventing shading can help amphibians and reptiles breed and nest successfully in these new habitats.

**Q: Will there be certain parameters that would exclude some approaches based on the outcome of technical studies? Have those already been excluded or already considered in these three approaches? How is our input going to be used, and what is the ultimate process for making these calls?**

A: We have already evaluated a substantial number of criteria which determined that we could achieve a minimum of 30 percent density increase over the 2017 Precinct plan. That was based upon a transportation and transit analysis, and review of land-use compatibility, sun shadow impacts as well as servicing capacity. We are also undertaking technical studies, and we have already excluded approaches that aren't feasible.

The technical studies will help inform some parameters. Watch a video on some of the design considerations: YouTube (<https://youtu.be/aalU3oRfYQY>)

Some considerations are flexible, for example, shadowing on Keating channel or parks. We know there are different perspectives on flexible aspects like that, and that they may have changed since we last consulted, so that is why we are having this consultation. For instance, there has been an increased focus on the provision of affordable housing, and housing broadly, since 2017. Technical studies have and will continue to refine the parameters within which public feedback will inform the selection of a preferred approach.

We also considered priorities that were articulated in previous consultation. For example, we recognized the importance of the new ecosystem in the new river valley and as a result, did not consider options that would cast shadows beyond the top-of-bank to ensure we do not impact the new naturalized river.

## Process

**Q: Where can we receive updates on this matter?**

A: We will post meeting and survey summary on the Port Lands Flood Protection project website, here: <https://portlandsto.ca/public-information-centres/>. Updates will also be provided through Waterfront

Toronto's social media channels and newsletter. (Sign up for the Waterfront Toronto newsletter here: [Contact Us | Waterfront Toronto \(waterfrontoronto.ca\)](#))

We anticipate a City staff report will be presented to the Planning and Housing Committee this fall to provide an update on the density study and the considerations helping to inform this work. Further study and reports will likely be submitted to Committees and Council by the end of the year.

**Q: How did the Sidewalk Labs project factor into the development of Villiers Island, if at all?**

A: The Sidewalk Labs project was for another precinct, called Quayside. When Waterfront Toronto worked with Sidewalk Labs we sought a thinking partner to work with us in researching and devising a plan for Quayside. We learned a lot from the process and in 2021 initiated a new phase, seeking a new development partner with a proven ability to deliver on a clear and coherent proposal. Our development partners were selected in 2022.

You can learn more about Quayside here. <https://www.waterfrontoronto.ca/our-projects/quayside>

**Q: This process is changing an approved Precinct Plan. What are the next steps? What does that look like?**

A: The original precinct plan was adopted in 2017 by City Council, so this process will result in either an amendment or addendum to that precinct plan. The original intent of the precinct plan will remain. There will also be some enabling legislation to rezone the land on Villiers Island.

The first step is an update report in the fall that will speak to the preferred approach to implementing increased density on the island and will include an update on what further work we need to do before we can finalize the precinct plan update. We'll also be working on some official plan amendments and zoning by-law amendments, and undertaking various technical studies including a Community Services Review. The report, including stakeholder consultation reports, will go to the Planning and Housing Committee as well as the public. Then in the winter, we'll be advancing the zoning bylaw with either an addendum or amended precinct plan.

Whether it's an addendum or updated plan will depend on the scope of the changes proposed. That will then be supported by a business and implementation plan for the first phase of development on Villiers Island.

### Surrounding Context

**Q: Does this plan involve the removal of the Gardiner? These drawings show no Gardiner. What is the plan there?**

A: The plans for Villiers Island are not affected by the plans for the Gardiner, which is to the north, across the Keating Channel. The Gardiner East Environmental Assessment results in a completely new alignment of the F.G Gardiner Expressway and Lake Shore Boulevard East through the Keating Channel Precinct; however, the reconstruction of those major roads will likely not be complete until 2030. As such, a full Keating Channel precinct plan update is not immediately required. The first phase of the Keating East Precinct Plan update will simply establish a street and block plan based on the surrounding context. Waterfront Toronto recently released a Request for Proposals for a consultant to begin this work.

**Q: Will there also be a comparable reconsideration of the residential density for McCleary and the precinct south of the river (South River)?**

A: These neighbourhoods also fall under the Port Lands Planning Framework and will be subject to their own precinct planning exercises. The changing context around Villiers Island and the increased density of the Central Waterfront will be at play in these areas too.

Work on the McCleary District Precinct Plan is planned to commence by the end of 2023.

## Transportation

**Q: Will Villiers be car free?**

A: Villiers Island is planned to encourage transit and active transportation as much as possible, but it will not be car-free. Villiers Island will be part of the route to popular places like Cherry Beach. Center street and Old Cherry Street, as pedestrian priority woonerfs, will extend and connect the parks and public realm into the community.

**Q: Increased density means more development charges. I wonder if this may help pay for the New Munition Street bridge, for example.**

A: As a funding tool, development charges remain the City's primary means to support growth-related capital projects. Development charges are designed by legislation to specifically fund the portion of new capital projects that are needed to serve growth. However, development charges will not allow for full recovery of growth-related costs.

**Q: For retail spaces, would it be possible to have specified delivery times (e.g., in the morning before stores open) so that the space can be more pedestrian, transit, and other active transportation focused?**

A: City By-laws will be established to specific delivery zones and times. This would need to be studied and evaluated when the new streets are being designed.

**Q: What is the status of the red brick tunnel that was to extend Trinity through the rail berm, from the Distillery?**

A: The Trinity Pedestrian Tunnel was identified in the Lower Don Lands Infrastructure Master Plan EA and is currently unfunded and not included within the City's 10-year Capital Plan. There is not a timeline for extending Trinity Street under the rail corridor.

**Q: May I clarify that we expect the Broadview Streetcar extension will connect Villiers Island to the East Harbour Ontario Line/GO station?**

A: That is correct, the presentation showed the Waterfront East LRT that is currently being advanced to 30% design. The final build-out LRT will extend eastward over the mouth of the river connecting to the East Harbour transit hub.

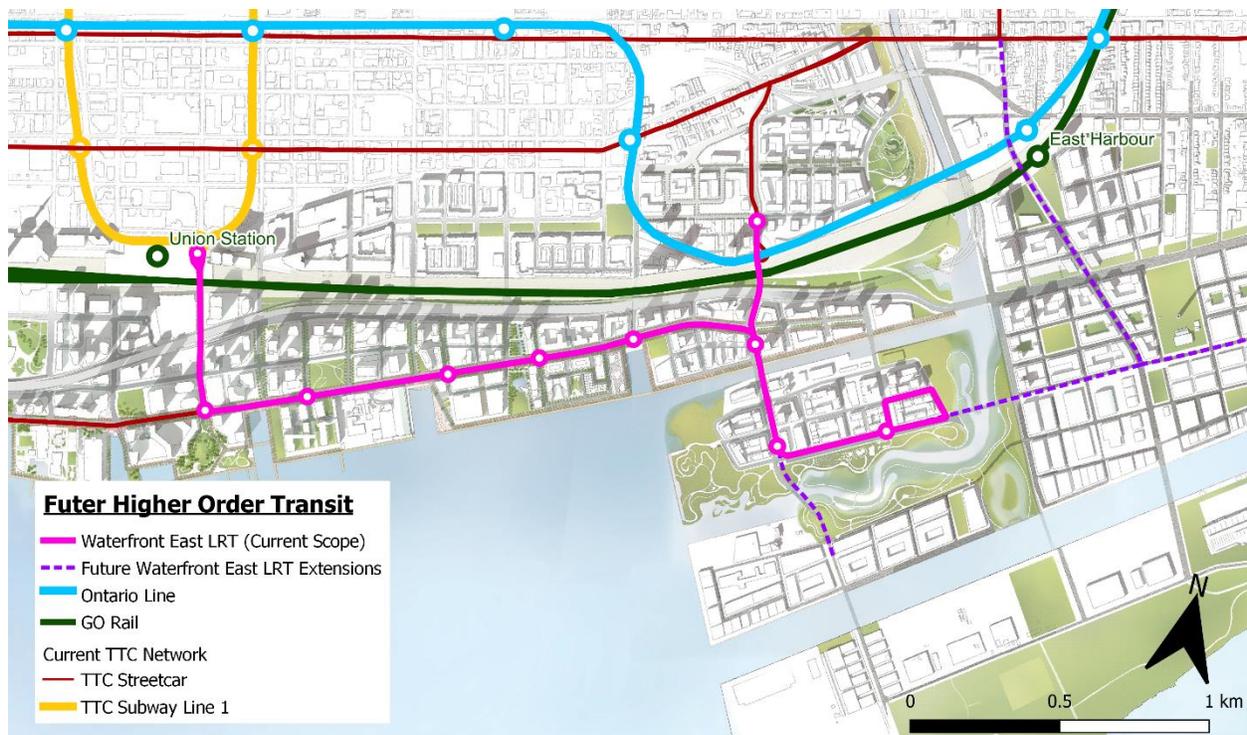


Figure 3 Map showing proposed future transit connections along the eastern waterfront.

**Q: Why not make Centre St. pedestrian and bike only?**

A: Centre Street was identified in the 2017 Precinct Plan as pedestrian-priority shared streets, where pedestrians, cyclists and motorists share the right-of-way. On most stretches, cars will have 1 lane in each direction with laybys on some blocks for pick-ups and drop offs, while the remainder of the street will be dedicated to pedestrian and cyclist use, public realm and landscaping. The detailed design of the street, which will take place when development begins, will review how best to prioritize pedestrian movement and flow, and incorporate pavers, physical barriers and obstacles to signal to motorists that pedestrians come first. Additional studies will further assess whether vehicular traffic could be restricted on Centre Street.

**Q: Will there be any water-based transit incorporated into Villiers Island?**

A: A Marine Use Strategy was updated and released in 2020 and it identifies a potential network of stops for expanding things like water taxis and sea buses. Waterfront Toronto, the City, Ports Toronto will be studying this possibility, including consideration for some type of docking facilities on Villiers Island and some type other of waterborne transportation.

## Appendix B: Villiers Density Study Survey Results Summary

### Survey Background

This survey was part of the Villiers Island Density Study. It was circulated following a Public Meeting on June 19<sup>th</sup>, and open until July 9<sup>th</sup>. It was sent directly to people who registered to the public meeting, as well as circulated on social media.

In total, 747 people completed the survey. 40 respondents received the survey by email since they had attended the public meeting. 600 accessed the survey on social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram), and 107 were directed to the survey by a paid Facebook ad targeting people who follow Waterfront Toronto and/or people with similar interests.

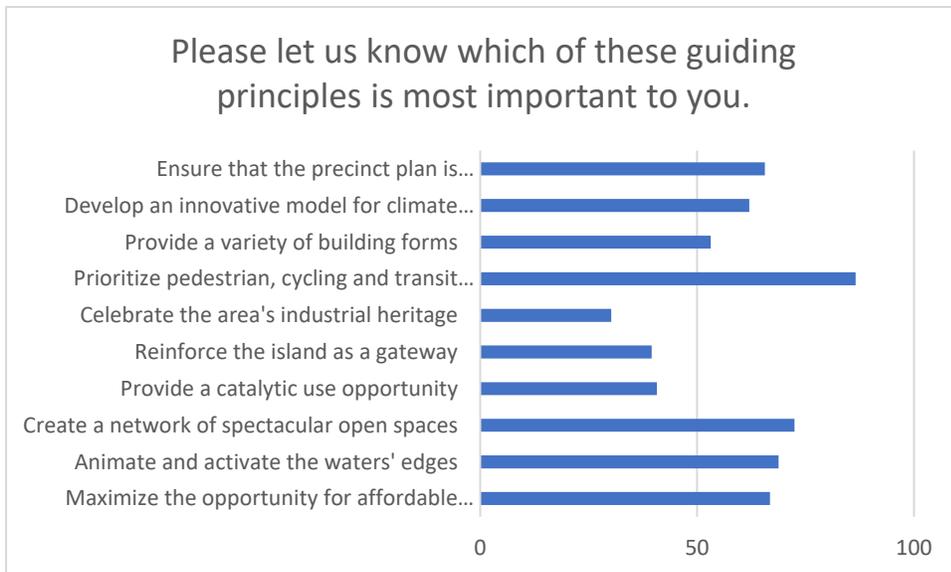
### Summary of Results

- The majority of respondents supported increasing density on Villiers Island
- Many supported increasing building heights everywhere to maximize the affordable housing that could be delivered
- The preferred location for towers were the central, western and northern blocks, including along the Keating Channel
- Creating lively, animated public spaces and putting towers near transit stops were the other main priorities identified
- A minority of respondents were opposed to any development on Villiers Island at all

### Survey Results

**Question 1: Please let us know which of the guiding principles is most important to you.**

In this question, all principles were set next to a slider, with the initial setting at the far left (or zero). Respondents moved the slider to the right to indicate how important they thought each factor was. Factors with the highest scores were considered most important, on average. While these answers were assigned a numerical value, respondents did not see the numerical value in the survey. Instead, the sliders position between the left and right edges of the scale indicated the level of importance from 'less important' to 'most important'.



The average ranking of the guiding principles shows that pedestrian, cycling and transit connections were the highest priority. The lowest priority was celebrating the area's industrial heritage. Many comments noted that they were unclear on the meaning of a 'catalytic use opportunity' or 'reinforce the island as a gateway'.

#### Tell us why:

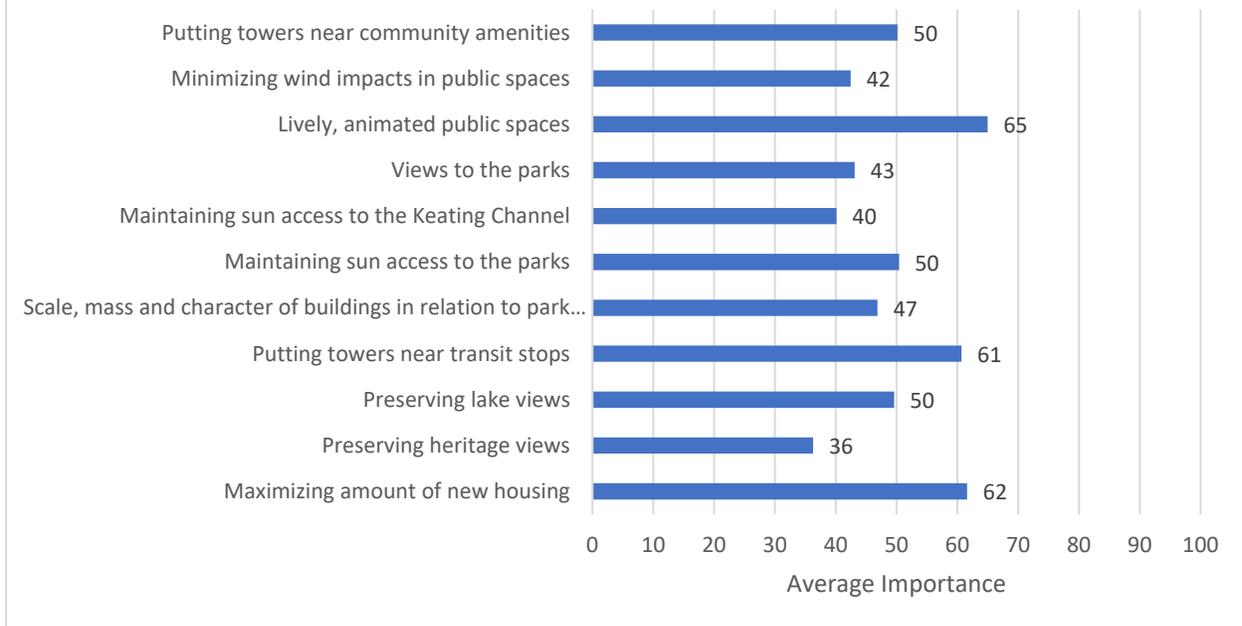
Comments in this section often reinforced the position of the respondent (e.g., simply saying that housing should be built, or that they oppose development of any kind). Some comments did explain why they ranked the principles in a certain way:

- 47 comments stated that we need to maximize affordable housing, and 93 comments said we need to maximize housing or density in general
  - 27 of these comments mentioned the housing crisis
  - Some comments noted that this is a unique opportunity because of the amount of public land available
- 24 comments talked about the need for Villiers to be a sustainable community
  - 6 comments mentioned the climate crisis
- 40 comments noted the importance of greenspace, for various reasons including a perceived lack of greenspace downtown and benefits to mental health
- 28 comments noted the importance of transit

#### Q2: What do you think should be most important when assessing different approaches to increasing density?

In this question, all priorities were set next to a slider, with the initial setting at the far left (or zero). Respondents moved the slider to the right to indicate how important they thought each factor was. Factors with the highest scores were considered most important, on average. While these answers were assigned a numerical value, respondents did not see the numerical value in the survey. Instead, the sliders position between the left and right edges of the scale indicated the level of importance from 'less important' to 'most important'.

## What should be most important when assessing different approaches to increasing density



The average rankings show that lively, animated public spaces are the most important priority when assessing different approaches to density. Maximizing the amount of new housing and putting towers near transit stops were the other top priorities. Preserving heritage views and maintaining sun access to the Keating Channel were ranked lowest.

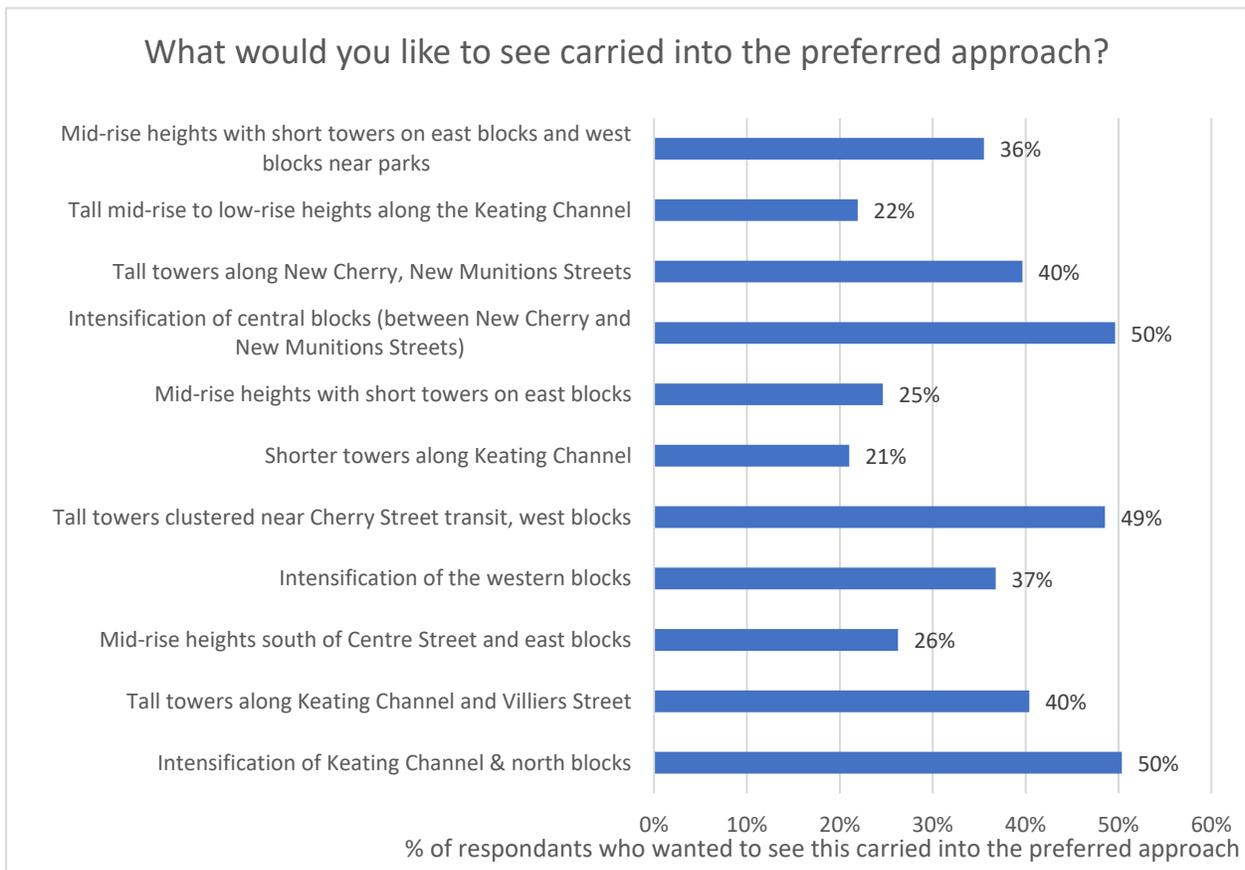
### Tell us why:

- Over 80 comments referenced the need to maximize housing.
  - 58 comments noted that more housing was necessary at any cost, or worth sacrificing the other priorities we asked about (e.g., views). Many comments referenced the housing crisis.
  - 15 of the comments suggested that increasing density was the responsible decision, due to factors like climate change, return on public investment, etc.
  - 10 comments said that a denser community would be more vibrant
  - 6 comments wanted to increase density to enable more people to live in the desirable area
- Of comments that suggested they prioritized other aspects more highly than housing:
  - 7 stated that downtown needs more greenspace
  - 5 said that downtown needs more public spaces
  - 10 said that nature should be the most important priority (for example, not impacting the river valley)
  - 9 said that towers impact views
  - 5 said that towers impact public spaces
  - 7 said that wind makes public spaces uncomfortable

- While there was one comment that said keeping sun in the parks was important, 21 comments expressly stated that shade was desirable because of increasingly hot summers due to climate change.
- 13 comments didn't identify a strong opinion on increasing density but indicated that respondents believed that a good neighbourhood balanced competing priorities.

Overall, many comments indicated a position regarding increasing density. 99 comments indicated support for increasing density or building more housing, and 39 comments were opposed to any development on Villiers Island whatsoever.

**Q3: What would you like to see carried into the preferred approach?**



In this question, respondents could select more than one item. 50% selected 'Intensification of central blocks' and 'Intensification of Keating Channel and north blocks', and 49% selected 'tall towers clustered near Cherry Street Transit'. Only 21% selected 'shorter towers along Keating Channel' and 22% selected 'tall mid-rise to low-rise heights along the Keating Channel'.

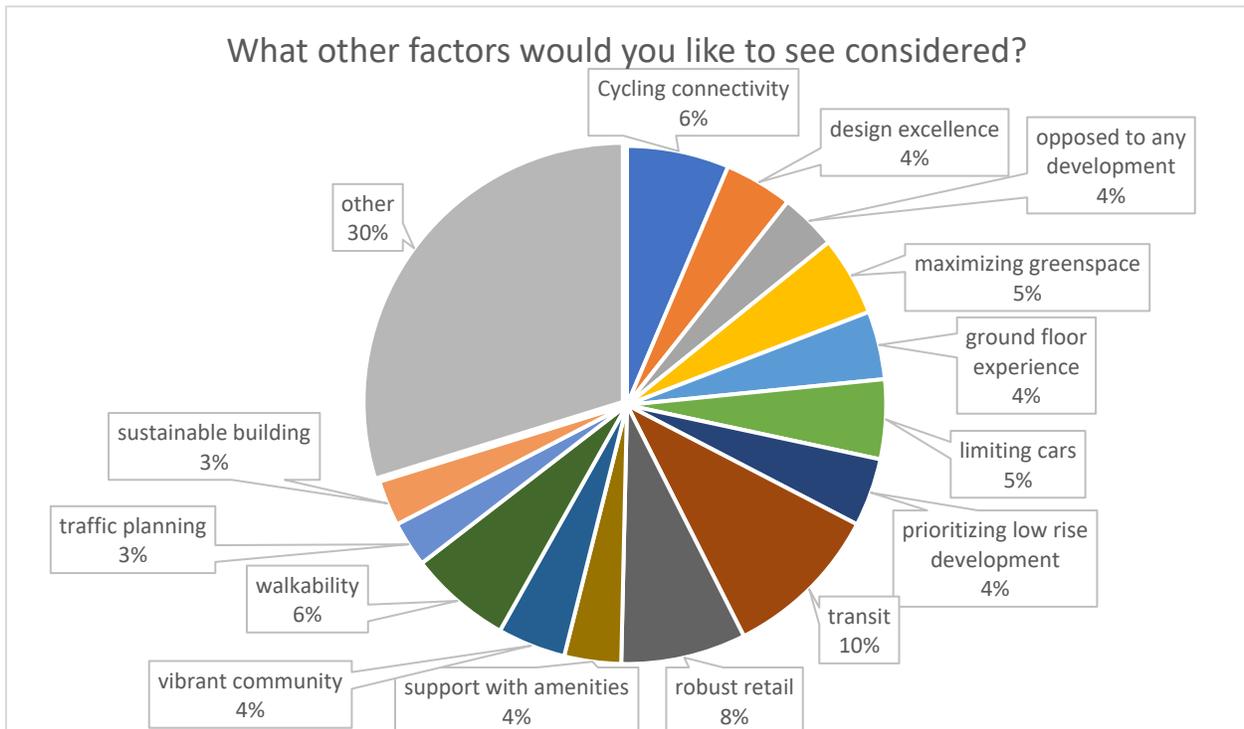
Many of these areas overlap. Taken more broadly, there was the most support for tall towers or intensification in these locations:

- Along the Keating Channel/Villiers Street
- The north blocks
- Central blocks

- Along New Cherry Street
- The west blocks

However, these results somewhat contradict the results of question 5, which asked where people thought the most appropriate location is for towers. Part of this may be due to the way the question was phrased, given that intensification or towers was not given as an option in all locations. Based on responses to other questions where many respondents supported intensification everywhere, **not** selecting to carry over low-rise or mid-rise buildings could have been an indication that they supported intensification in these locations as well. In general, there was less support for options referencing low or mid-rise buildings, regardless of location.

**Q4: What other factors would you like to see considered?**

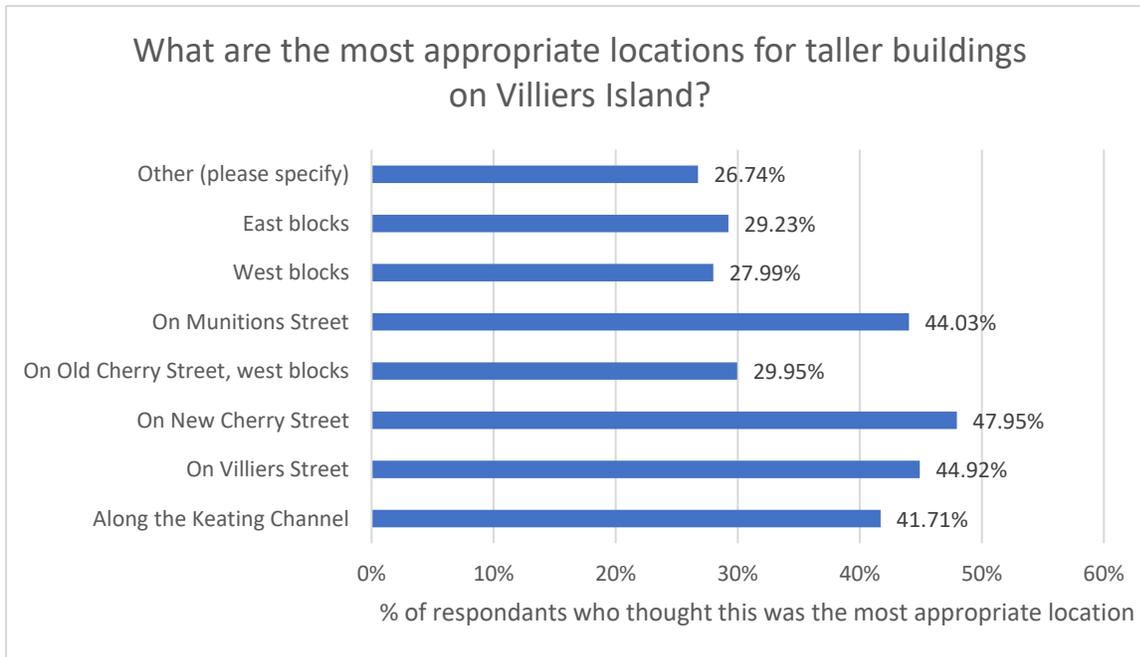


The most common factors people wanted to see considered were:

- **Transportation:** 10% of comments related to transit, both in terms of the proximity of new developments to transit and in establishing transit quickly. Other comments related to transportation talked about the need for cycling connections (6%) and limiting the movement of cars on Villiers Island (5%). 6% indicated the need for a walkable neighbourhood, and 3% were concerned with traffic planning.
- **Robust retail (8%) and ground floor experience (4%):** these comments noted that the impact of buildings on the public realm is most relevant on the ground floor, and that the heights are less relevant if the ground floor offers an enjoyable experience for passers by. Comments suggested that the retail strategy should be thought out in terms of available spaces and the buildings design (e.g., building materials at grade). 4% of comments spoke about the need for design excellence so that any towers built are aesthetically pleasing.
- 5% of comments indicated that maximizing the available greenspace was important.

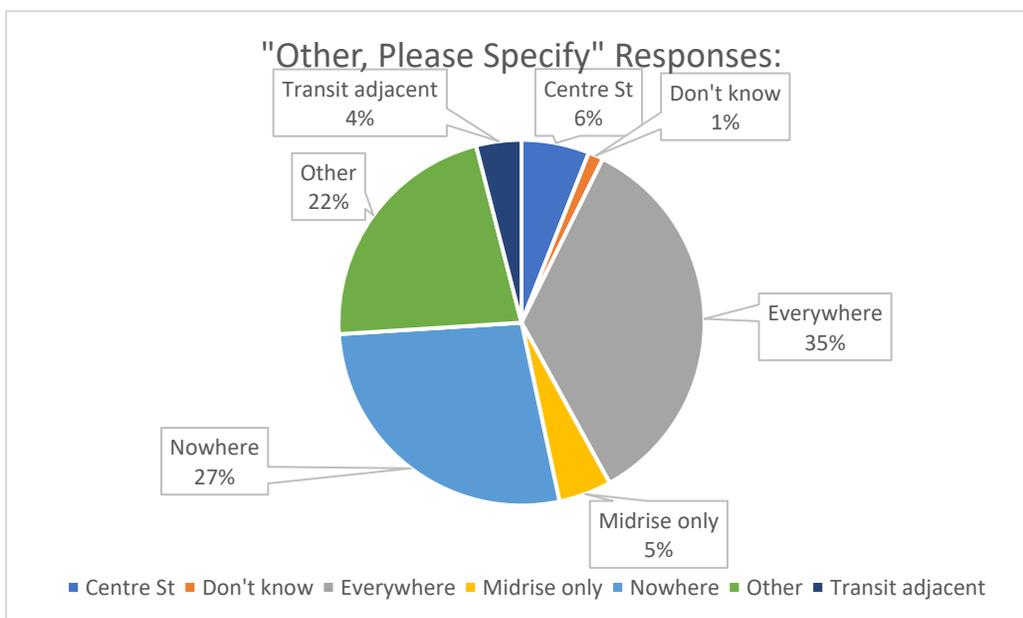
- 4% were opposed to any kind of development, and 4% indicated a preference for low-rise development only.

**Q5: In your opinion, what are the most appropriate locations for taller buildings on Villiers Island?**



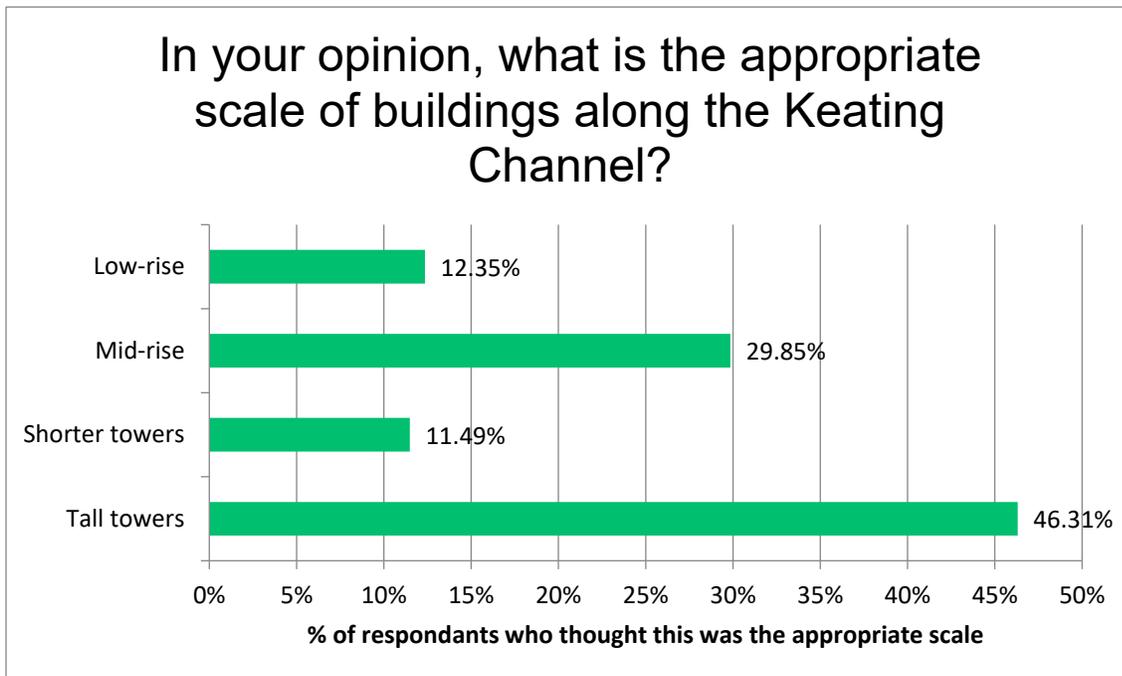
In this question, respondents could select multiple options. The most popular location for taller buildings was on New Cherry Street, with 48% of people selecting it. Villiers Street (45%) and Munitions Street (44%) also received a lot of votes, followed by the Keating Channel, at 42%.

**Breakdown of 'Other (please specify)':**



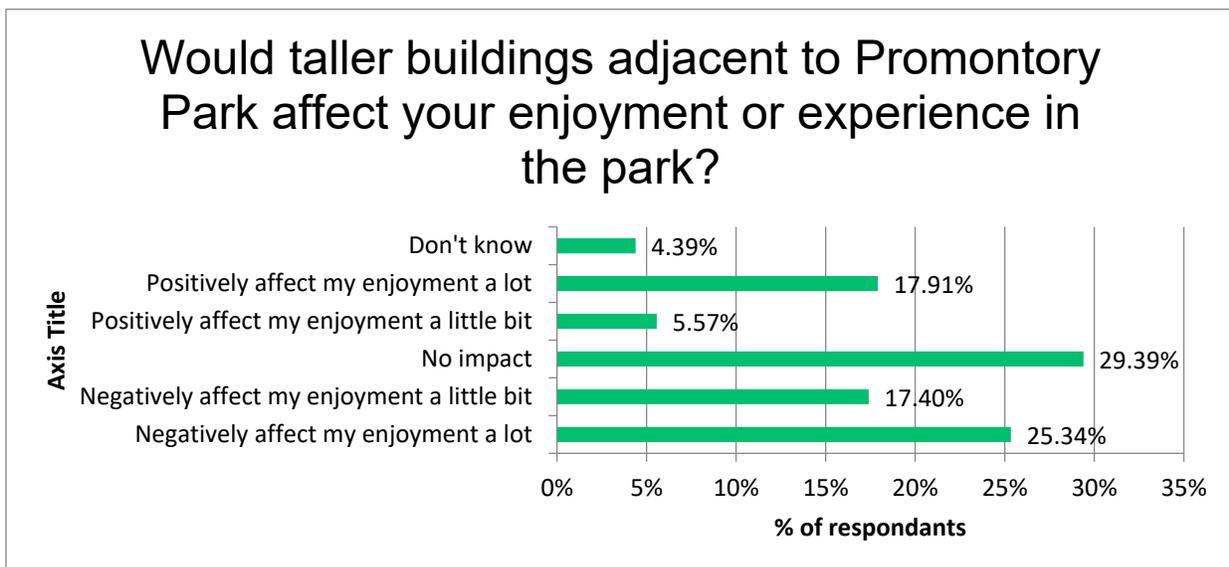
Of respondents who selected 'other', 35% said they wanted to see towers everywhere, and 27% said they didn't want to see towers anywhere. 6% indicated a preference for towers on Centre Street.

**Q6: In your opinion, what is the appropriate scale of buildings along the Keating Channel?**



The majority of respondents (46%) thought tall towers were the appropriate scale of buildings on the Keating Channel, followed by nearly 30% who preferred mid-rise towers.

**Q7: Would taller buildings adjacent to Promontory Park affect your enjoyment or experience in the park?**



43% of respondents said that taller buildings adjacent to Promontory Park would negatively affect their enjoyment of the park a little bit or a lot. 30% said that taller buildings would have no impact on their enjoyment of the park.

**Tell us why:**

Of people who said that towers would negatively impact their enjoyment, the most common reasons were:

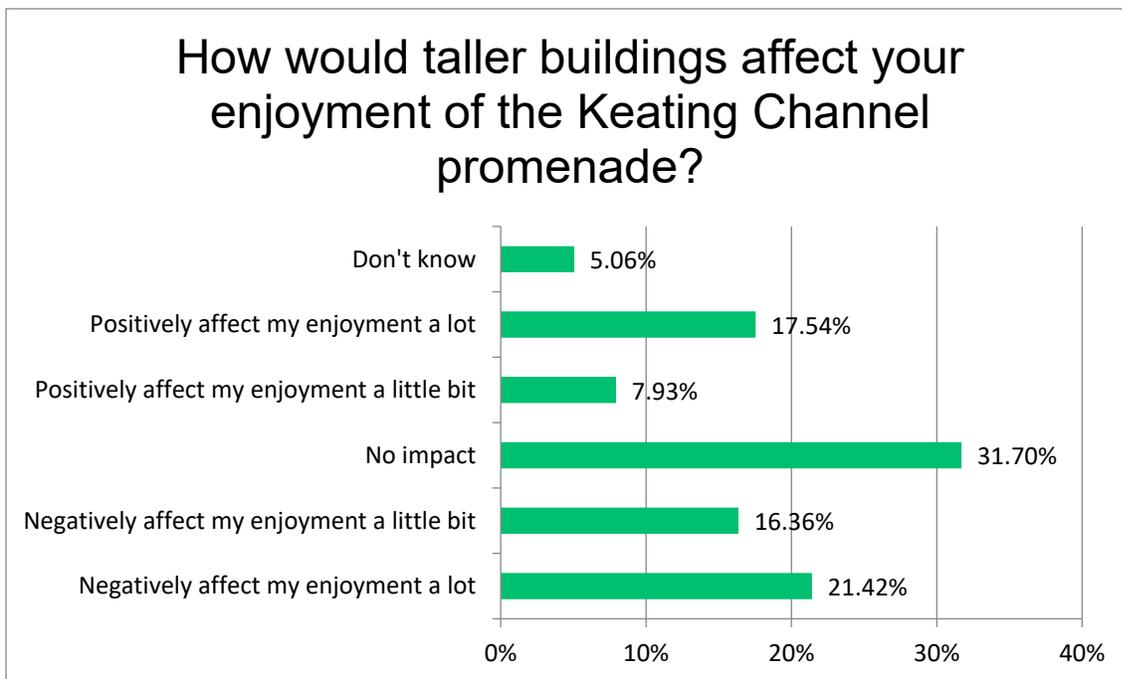
- Desire to preserve lake views (10 comments)
- Desire to preserve views of open sky (14 comments)
- A dislike of shadows in parks (12 comments)
- Concerns about thermal comfort (10 comments)
- A desire for a place to escape from the city (6 comments)

Of people who said that towers would not impact, or would positively impact their enjoyment of the park, the most common reasons were:

- A denser community would be more vibrant and animate the park (34 comments)
- They like similar parks like New York City's Central Park (11 comments)
- They want to have shade in the summer (13 comments)

Several comments (11) mentioned that the transition between the park and the neighbourhood would be as important, if not more important, than the view of towers from the park.

**Q8: How would taller buildings affect your enjoyment of the Keating Channel promenade?**



37% of respondents said that taller buildings would negatively affect their enjoyment of the Keating Channel promenade by a little or a lot. 32% said it would have no impact.

**Tell us why:**

Of respondents who said that towers would have no impact, or a positive impact, the reasons were:

- A more dense community would be more vibrant and support ground-floor uses (23 comments)

- That the Keating Channel was the best place for the towers compared to the rest of Villiers Island (13 comments)
- Shade is welcome in the summer (9 comments)
- An enjoyment of similar places like Chicago (12 comments)

Of respondents who said that towers would negatively impact their enjoyment, the reasons were:

- Concerns about thermal comfort or a dislike of shadows (22 comments)
- A desire for an escape from the city (4 comments)

**Q9: Anything else you want to tell us?**

77 comments included a lot of variety, but the most common themes were:

- Recommendation to take a balanced approach to increasing density (6 comments)
- Keeping the development at a 'human scale' (6 comments)
- A desire to preserve nature (9 comments)
- The importance of a vibrant street level (11 comments)
- The need for transit and for density to be close to transit (8 comments)

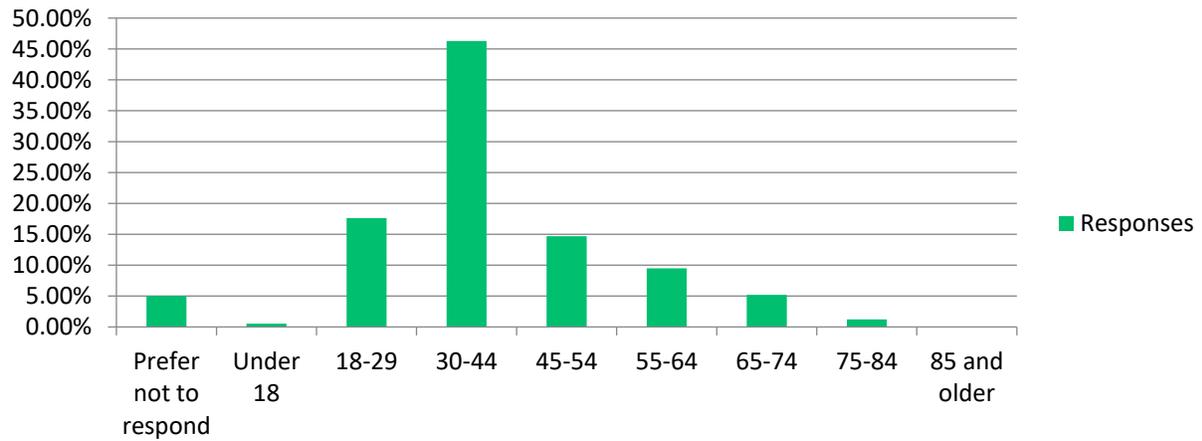
[Survey Demographics](#)

The majority of respondents were:

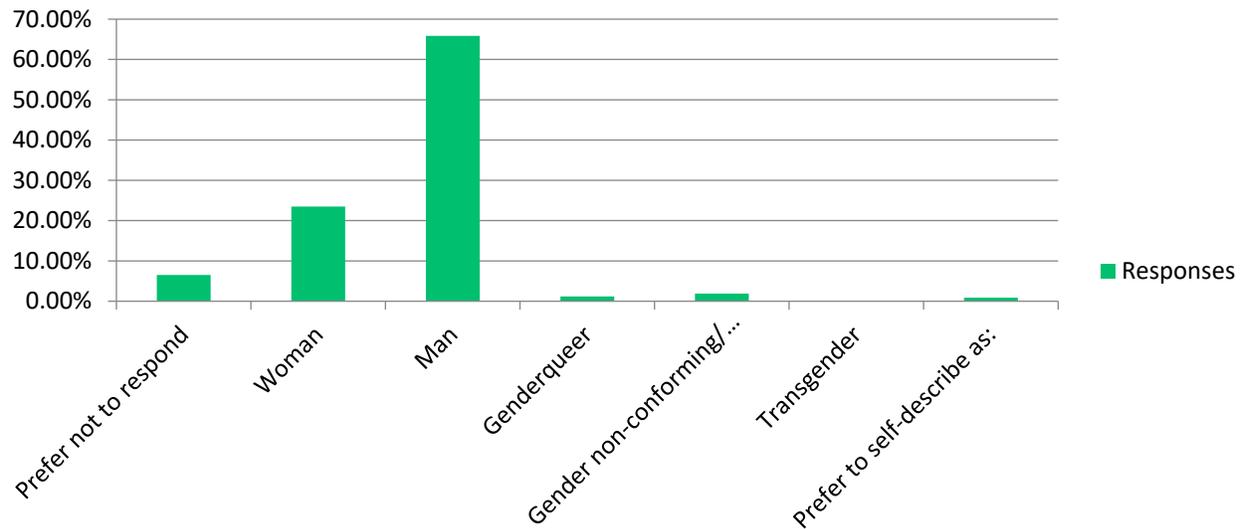
- Aged 30-44
- Self-described as male
- Household income over \$100,000 per year
- White
- College/University educated
- Employed full-time
- Able-bodied

**Detailed demographic breakdown:**

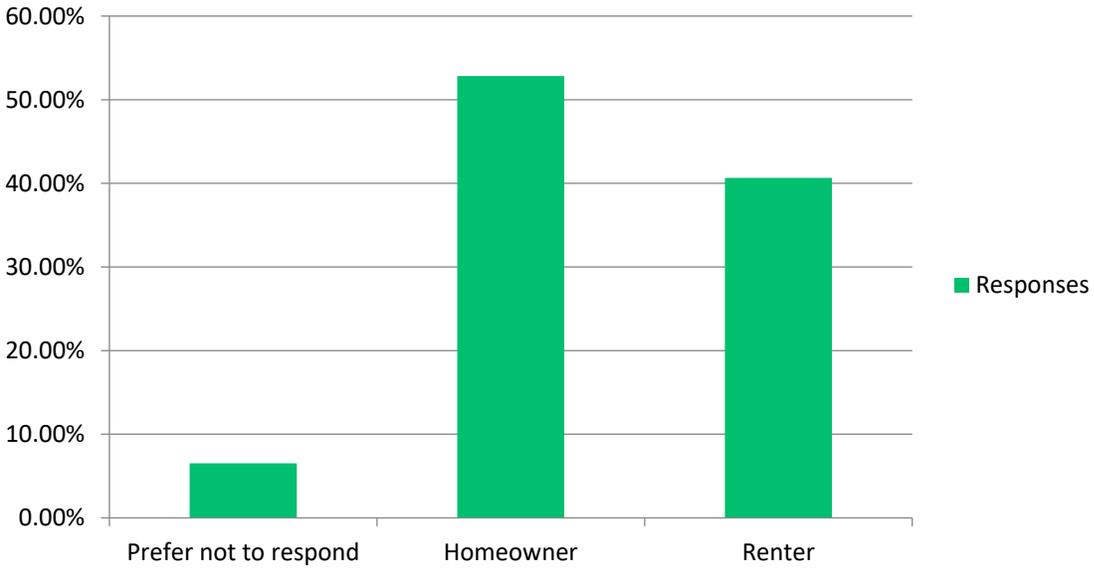
## What is your age?



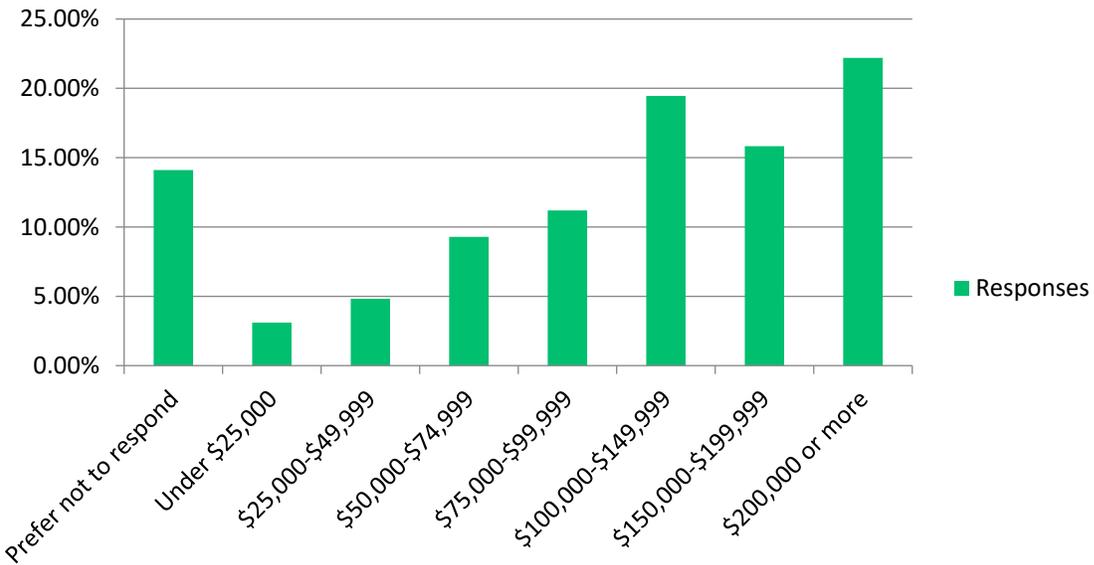
## How would you describe yourself?



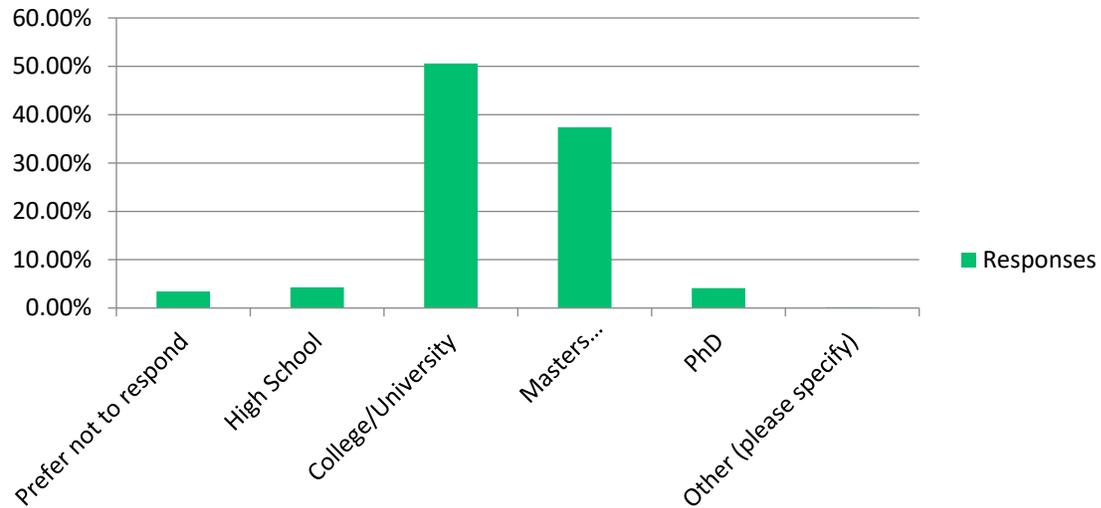
## Are you a homeowner or renter?



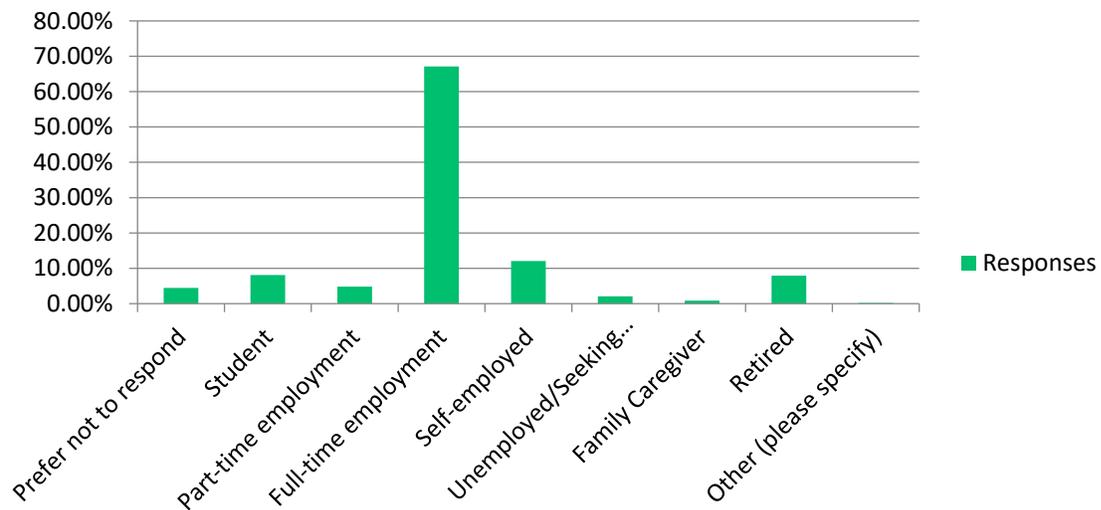
## What is your household income?



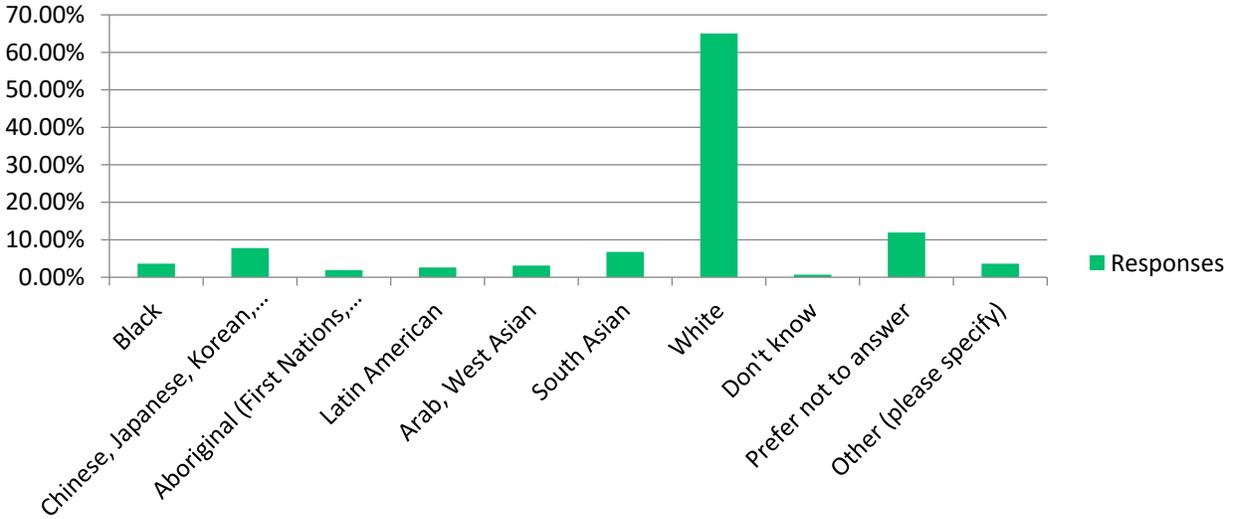
## What is your highest level of education completed?



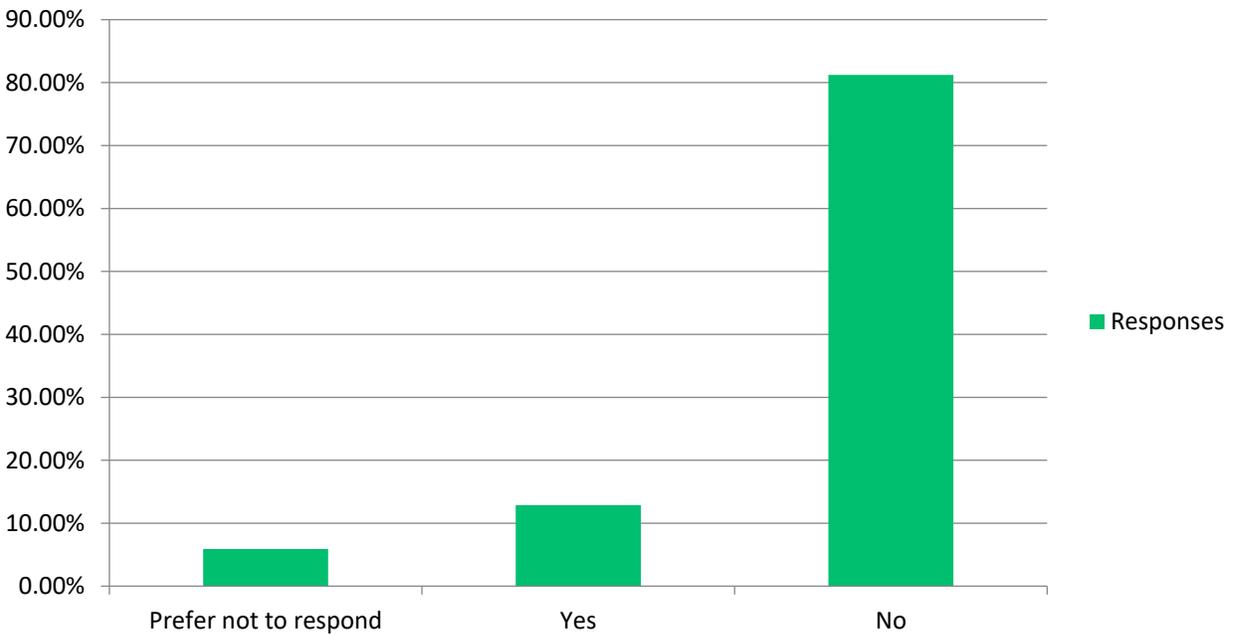
## What is your occupational status? Please check all that apply



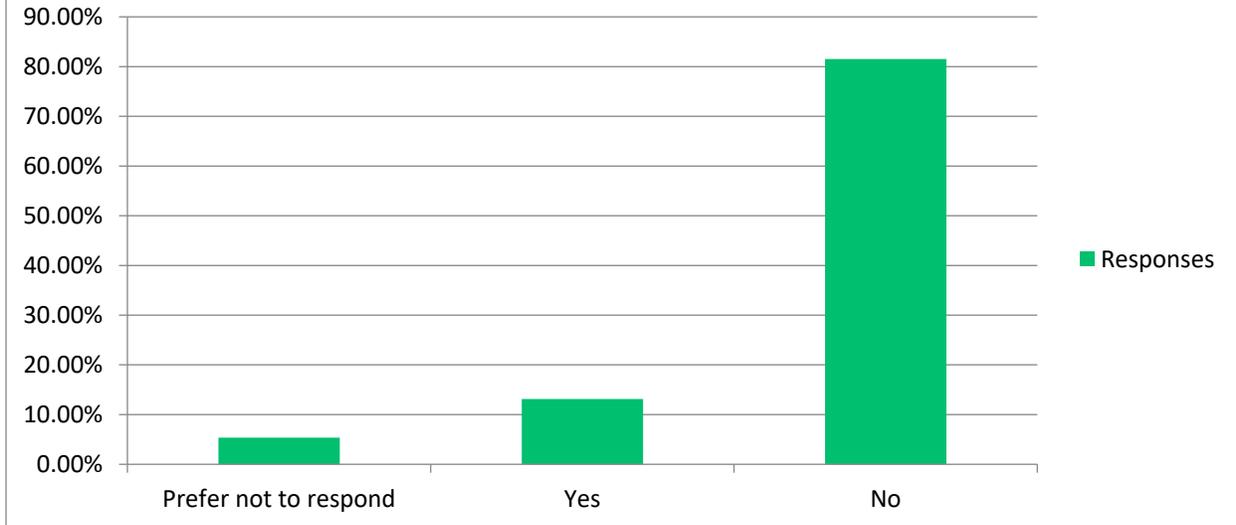
## Which of the following do you identify as? Please select all that apply. Based on 2016 Statistics Canada Population Census



## Are you a person experiencing a disability?



## Do you sometimes experience mobility issues when navigating the city (i.e. travelling with a mobility device, stroller, etc.)?



For questions about this study, please email [info@waterfrontoronto.ca](mailto:info@waterfrontoronto.ca).