

Sidewalk Labs Advisory Council - Meeting 1 Summary

January 3, 2019

Background

On Wednesday, October 17, 2018, Sidewalk Labs held the first meeting of our Advisory Council. We brought this group together so they could learn more about Sidewalk Toronto and share their thoughts on the project with us. Each meeting is an opportunity for Sidewalk Labs to hear from a broad range of people and organizations from a variety of sectors including business, not-for-profit, academia and civil society. This is another way we are consulting – and it doesn't replace any other mode of engagement. We're excited to hear from more Torontonians as we continue to develop our ideas.

What follows is a summary of the feedback we heard, broken into top themes. To read the full speech that was delivered at the meeting please see [here](#).

The questions posed to participants to frame the table discussion were:

- Which aspects of our plan most resonate with you, and where do you think we've missed the mark?
- Are there challenges facing the city that you believe could potentially be addressed by Sidewalk Toronto that you don't presently see in our plans?
- How do we better communicate the goals of this project to the public?
- What are the greatest challenges you see this project facing over the coming year?

The following is a summary of what we heard in response to those questions.

Communication

Participants wanted more communication from Sidewalk Labs about the project, particularly around timelines and milestones. Participants also said we should tell people about the problems we are aiming to solve, and how we plan to address them. We heard that we should be clear that this project is more than just a plan – it's a \$50 million investment.

While many were able to cite the innovations involved with the project, some expressed a desire to understand how those innovations would impact each family, student, and

resident. Most importantly, participants encouraged Sidewalk Labs to continue to communicate the plan, clearly and often, as a means of keeping the public informed, engaged, and excited.

The Plan

Participants told us they would like to see more clarity on what Sidewalk Labs' mission means, what success looks like, and how we will measure that success. They would like to see positive social impact, opportunities for small and local businesses, and open standards integrated into the plan. Participants noted that Sidewalk Labs' role as a catalyst company means that others will have to step in, and they would like more information about how Sidewalk Labs will hold those partners (for example, developers) accountable. Participants also noted the importance of not creating a "gated community." They felt that Quayside must be linked to the rest of the city.

Benefit for Toronto

Participants identified the opportunity for Toronto to be an early adopter and leader that can verify and export this social model to the world. They felt that there is a legacy component for Toronto that will exist even if Alphabet decides to reduce their involvement in the project after it is finished. Along these lines, participants identified the need to consider the benefits for Toronto at large, including how Toronto will tie into any scaling plans. Participants saw the potential for a positive impact on the Toronto workforce, including local hiring and procurement, training, and filling skills gaps. They also saw the engagement of community leaders as a benefit to the city.

Equity

Participants had some questions when discussing equity, including:

- What does equity look like (with examples)?
- How do people see daily benefit at all points along the wealth spectrum?
- How will you ensure you don't repeat the pattern of harm against marginalized communities that new development often follows?

Participants also recommended that Sidewalk Labs:

- Address how data can improve the lives of marginalized communities;
- Consider the use of social benefit agreements;

- When addressing healthcare, consider the social determinants that feed into the model, as it's not only dollars and social status that determine health.

Governance

We heard that it is important to leverage partnerships and work with organizations already developing solutions to the challenges we're addressing. There was a suggestion to build from existing successful collaboration models, ensuring greater involvement by the City of Toronto. Participants also wanted us to be clear about the role of Sidewalk Labs and the role of Waterfront Toronto, particularly beyond the Master Innovation and Development Plan.

What about the money?

Participants were satisfied with the description of the business model that Sidewalk Labs presented and they encouraged us to publicly provide as much information as possible. They recognized that we are working with many Canadian companies and they felt those stories should be widely told. Some felt the economic argument was valid and reasonable. Others wanted to see a commitment from Alphabet/Sidewalk Labs of infrastructure dollars.

Participants asked questions about how much money Sidewalk Labs would make, and what the returns are for stakeholders, leading to the suggestion of a detailed business case for stakeholders. They asked how this project can empower and reduce costs for other stakeholders (health, cultural, community etc.). We also heard that we need to make it clearer that Sidewalk Labs will not make money from the sale of personal data.

Data governance

Participants identified a number of areas that require more public education, including data governance and how data can be used to improve life in marginalized communities. They noted that governance of data should cover both personal data and metadata.

Ability to execute

Participants wondered if Sidewalk Labs is over-promising. With the City of Toronto's resources stretched, inadequate existing infrastructure (such as no LRT extension), and having to work within existing regulatory frameworks, they questioned how we will demonstrate our ability to execute. While some believed the support of Alphabet

increases the chance of success, others suggested the need for a new development corporation, with time-limited and delegated powers. Either way, there was a desire for Sidewalk Labs to demonstrate its ability to execute.

Community Buy-In/Public Perception

Participants noted a lack of public awareness of both Sidewalk Labs and the Toronto project. Participants suggested that when building awareness, Sidewalk Labs needs to recognize that technology isn't always seen as a welcome solution. They also noted a general distrust of technology companies. They suggested we show how we can use technology to build community. They encouraged us to embrace and demonstrate the idea of "nothing for us without us" – the principle that no public policy should be developed or put in place without the full and direct participation of those impacted by the policy. Participants also wanted us to ensure we are bringing younger voices to the table and are mindful of the Canadian context of the project.