



Coordinated Street Furniture Program Publication Boxes Meeting - Meeting Notes

April 12, 2006, 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Metro Hall, Room 307

1.0 Introduction and Meeting Overview

Andrew Koropeski called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. He said staff will provide presentations about the Coordinated Street Furniture Program and publication boxes. He explained the Coordinated Street Furniture Program consultation process to date and reviewed the meeting agenda.

2.0 Presentation on Toronto Urban Design, *Robert Freedman*

Robert Freedman, Director of Urban Design - City of Toronto

Robert Freedman provided background information on improving urban design and street furniture in the City of Toronto:

- The City takes direction from the Official Plan, which contains language about enhancing the way the City looks.
- The Clean and Beautiful City Initiative was established to find ways to make the City of Toronto more beautiful.
- The Civic Improvement Program aims to enhance streetscapes. When Transportation Services rebuilds or does a major repair work on a City street, Urban Design staff may provide input into how to make the street look better.
- Streets are not just conduits for cars, buses, pedestrians and bicycles to get from A to B. Streets can be thought of as outdoor spaces and urban design should help create a sense of space within the street.
- The Avenues Initiative helps plan how arterial roads within the City will intensify, grow, or change over time. The transformation plan for the avenues includes bringing buildings up to the street, enhancements to the streetscape, enhancements to public transportation, an increase in trees growing, and denser streets.
- Various cities have inspiring examples of street furniture, including Chicago, New York, Paris, Vancouver, Los Angeles, and Dundee (Scotland).
- A wide array of furniture can be seen on the streets of Toronto. The current mix of street furniture in the City is a result of the operation of different divisions, jurisdictions.
- The City is looking to improve street furniture design, coordination, and placement. The Streetscape Manual contains general guidelines for furniture placement.
- The City held two design charrettes - Local designers, architects and planners came up with design principles for street furniture in the City after working through various design exercises.

A copy of **Robert Freedman's** presentation can be found on the City's website.

3.0 Presentation - Coordinated Street Furniture Program

Bob Millward, R.E. Millward and Associates

Bob Millward provided details of the Coordinated Street Furniture Program (CSFP). His presentation included the following topics:

- Definition and objectives of the CSFP
- The importance of having quality street furniture
- Street furniture elements that may be included or considered for inclusion in the City's RFP (Request for Proposals)
- Public consultation lessons learned from other cities
- Design lessons learned from other cities
- Street furniture project structure and decision-making - Design Advisory Committee, Project Steering Team, Works Committee, City Council, etc.
- Purpose of the public consultation process
- Key communication tools - Consultation guide, self-directed questionnaires, display panels, website, dedicated phone line
- Guiding Policies and documents - design and policy document, the streetscape manual
- Street Furniture Request for Proposal (RFP) content
- Street Furniture RFP direction issues - whether to have one contract or more
- Street Furniture RFP direction issues - incorporating design principles in the finished product, finding an appropriate method of adjudication
- Timing of Street Furniture RFP Process
- Potential evaluation framework for Street Furniture RFP

A copy of **Bob Millward's** presentation may be found on the City's website.

4.0 Presentation - Publication Box Inventory Process

Angie Antoniou, Manager Transportation Services - City of Toronto

Angie Antoniou described the Publication Box Inventory Process and provided the following information in her presentation:

- In recent years there has been a proliferation of both licensed and unlicensed boxes on City Streets. The safety and efficiency of pedestrian movement has been severely compromised. Some modest improvements to the streetscape may be achieved simply through coordinated placement of publication boxes.
- The City needs a thorough understanding of the number of boxes and their location. The Publication Box Inventory Pilot Project was initiated in 2005 to capture all of the publication boxes in the field and their current conditions.
- A Geographical Information System (GIS) application was the most efficient and cost effective manner to gather the publication box data.
- A "Collection Team" has been assembled to inventory publication boxes and determine By-Law Compliance City wide. The "Collection Team" will review the locations of each publication box in the City and license the boxes under the new By-law criteria. Before and after photos are taken of each location for referencing and dispute resolution. A Senior By-law Officer is overseeing the process. Boxes will be reconfigured where feasible and removed only as a last resort.
- Publication companies will be consulted on an ongoing basis.
- The GIS system will be used by staff for all future field verification, enforcement, and application approvals.

- A Street Furniture Group within Transportation Services will oversee the program in connection with the overall Coordinated Street Furniture Program.

A copy of **Angie Antoniou**'s presentation may be found on the City's website.

5.0 Questions and Answers Period

The following is a summary of questions and comments from consultation participants, with responses from City staff.

| <u>Questions/Comments</u> | <u>Responses</u> |
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| <p>All publications agree that the street furniture program is a great initiative but the City should keep two things in mind. First, Toronto is one of the most competitive markets for publications in North America. Toronto has 12 publications rather than 6-8 like Chicago. The configuration of each publication is important. Both the design and the functionality of the publication boxes are important. For the publication boxes, Toronto is the landlord and we are the tenant. It is hard for us to pay for something that does not suit our needs.</p> <p>Can we have the names of senior by-law officers? Some publication boxes are taken from the street without notice.</p> <p>We need to understand the City's process for removing publication boxes.</p> | <p>Andrew Koropeski The City is anxious to begin the pilot project in order to incorporate its findings into the new furniture and publications program.</p> <p>Andrew Koropeski We recognize this is a sore point. At this time, district managers are dealing with publication boxes on a district-by-district basis.</p> <p>Angie Antoniou One of the first steps staff will take is ensuring that there is one point of contact in the City for managers of publication boxes.</p> <p>Andrew Koropeski Boxes have been removed based on physical criteria related to safety and number of boxes.</p> <p>Robert Freedman At the design charettes, we heard that "one size does not fit all" and that furniture designed should be appropriate to the location. We have to make sure the design solution works for the street, given its width and other characteristics.</p> <p>Andrew Koropeski The City is not contemplating a full-scale removal. Proposed solutions include decorative fences or some variation of the t-bars. It may not be appropriate to have one type of solution applied to the whole City.</p> |
| <p>I hope the City in its planning is taking into account the needs of new publications. If the number of publication boxes on the streets of Toronto stays the same, then new publications should get access.</p> | |

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| <p>Will the GIS information be made available to the publications? Are the publications going to be able to verify the information collected?</p> | <p>Andrew Koropeski The by-law includes a requirement that businesses provide us with inventories and this has not been happening. The City will provide information about the publication box inventory.</p> |
| <p>If publication boxes that were removed were not licensed, then owners were not paying for them. Will those who were not paying be billed retroactively since people who were paying were being charged unfairly?</p> | <p>Andrew Koropeski There has been a moratorium on placement of new boxes since October 2004. If through the inventory we find there are more boxes than have been licenced and reported by the companies, we will have a problem. Certainly we will be looking at billing for the boxes that are on the City streets.</p> |
| <p>What date is being used for the GIS inventory? The number of boxes fluctuates because boxes are added, removed and moved.</p> | <p>Andrew Koropeski The inventory will take a number of months. Boxes shouldn't be added, removed or relocated without notification to the City in any event. They are licenced to a specific location. If there is a change the City should be advised.</p> |
| <p>Is any consideration given to changes in people's traffic patterns? Patterns determine where we place our boxes. What kind of process or consideration is given for the fact that sometimes the ideal location for a box changes?</p> | <p>Andrew Koropeski There is already a process to address the need to change box locations: the licensing and application process. Despite the licensing process, sometimes the approach taken by publications is the removal of someone else's box.</p> |
| <p>The licensing process is a six-month process. How do we achieve a solution more quickly?</p> <p>We may be moving boxes on a nightly basis. The City's licensing process nullifies our ability to do business.</p> | <p>Andrew Koropeski The parameters are stated in the by-laws. Are you moving boxes on a nightly basis? ... Andrew Koropeski The City has been fair and has been criticized by Council for not going further. With the right to place boxes on street, there is also a responsibility to comply with by-law requirements.</p> |
| | <p>Chris Phibbs - Mayor's office</p> <p>This project is a key component of what the mayor sees happening over the next couple of years. It's fabulous that staff has gone this far to accommodate the changing needs of publications while trying to maintain design and balance on the street. Vending boxes are one of the primarily complaints of the public and City Council. This issue has a lot of interest from the mayor and City Council.</p> |
| <p>In High Park, some of those publication boxes were chained to City t-bars and they were removed regardless. We were complying with the by-laws. How much more compliant do we need to be? What is the current process for dealing with non-compliant boxes? There is no process. It is unclear.</p> | |
| <p>The City should use modern methods of communication when it has a problem with a publication box on the street, rather than having knee-jerk reactions and putting a letter on the box.</p> | <p>Paul Buttigieg - TTC What kind of approach would you like to see? The TTC faces a serious problem with publication boxes on its property. The TTC puts notices on problem boxes but finds no contact information on the boxes.</p> |

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| Sometimes we think we are complying with by-laws while the City interprets the by-law differently. We need written notice with an explanation of the infraction and the name of a contact person at the City. | ... Andrew Koropeski The by-law requires each publication box to post a contact number. The City will commit to providing contact information to publication box owners. |
| I represent a small paper. The City has to treat everyone equally. There cannot be side settlements or agreements. | Andrew Koropeski Through its by-law, the City has enacted a framework to avoid these problems. |
| The bylaw should allow publications to work with the City to determine the feasibility of a test site, so that publication boxes are placed in the most commercially appropriate location. | Andrew Koropeski I would be happy to look into this proposal if you contact Angie Antoniou. Such a test process could be part of the application process. |
| Where are we in the multi-box pilot process? It is frustrating that this is a slow process. | Andrew Koropeski The publication industry has taken carriage of that project and the City is looking to you to move forward on the project. |
| Staff's presentation made a point about advertising and I would like to make a distinction between branding and advertising. Branding is one of the important reasons we are out there. Will the multi-boxes still provide branding opportunities for the publications (e.g. blue boxes for the Star, red for the Sun)? | Andrew Koropeski The pilot is essential for determining these issues. Staff is reporting to City Council in May about basic aspects of the coordinated street furniture program design and policy guidelines, such as the role of advertising and whether there will be one contract or more. More detailed specifications going into the RFP will be determined after then. |
| Will we be contacted 48 hours prior to removal of boxes or will the City simply remove boxes? | Angie Antoniou The City will not begin moving boxes without talking to the industry about what is being moved. Staff will be going into different areas to verify that publication boxes meet by-law and right-of-way criteria. When going through an area, staff will consult with publication box owners. |
| We would like notification before the City inspects an area and moves boxes; otherwise, we will think somebody else was moving the boxes. | |
| Could we reserve permit for another location in a given area? | Andrew Koropeski I have difficulty envisaging any licensed box that we would not be able to accommodate, unless we have a situation where two boxes from the same publication are in one spot. |
| Could a representative from the publications industry be on the street furniture consultation group? | Andrew Koropeski This group will not be formed for some time. I think there should be continued dialogue with your group. |
| I am concerned that the location requirement will mean there will be only a few boxes in some locations. Will the inventory be done under the existing by-law or under the new by-law? Note that the new by-law is not in force yet and I don't think the location requirements are in force yet. We have not done inventory based on the new by-law. I would have concerns about removals done based on the new by-law before it is even in force. | Andrew Koropeski The inventory will be done based on the new by-law provisions, but subject to clarification from our Legal Division, I believe the location requirements are in effect. |
| We have to know what we are cited for when a box | |

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| is removed. | |
| With the GIS, how will the City decide which boxes to remove if some but not all boxes at an intersection must be removed? | Andrew Koropeski We did not put any lottery provisions in the by-law. During the pilot, we will get a sense of how prevalent this issue will be. |

6.0 Meeting Close

Andrew Koropeski said the dialogue at the meeting was beneficial and invited meeting participants to contact City staff with further comments or questions.

A meeting participant recommended having regularly scheduled consultation meetings with representatives from publications every couple of months.

The meeting ended at 10:30 a.m.