



**Coordinated Street Furniture Program
Open House & Meeting on Draft Placement Guidelines
July 18, 2006
Metro Hall Civic Centre, 55 John Street
Open House 5:30 – 8:00 p.m.
Presentation: 6:30 p.m.**

1.0 Welcoming Remarks and Overview

- **David Nagler** (Toronto Public Consultation Unit) opened the presentation portion of the meeting at 6:30 p.m. He explained that he works with the Public Consultation Unit for the City of Toronto. He stated that his role is to ensure that City staff and in turn City Council are aware of any comments or feedback the public may have regarding the Street Furniture Placement Guidelines. The purpose of tonight's meeting is to present details of the Draft Placement Guidelines for Street Furniture and gather feedback.

David Nagler updated participants on the progress of the Street Furniture Program:

- For those who have not seen the website (www.toronto.ca/streetfurniture) the Design and Policy Guidelines for the Coordinated Street Furniture Program are posted.
- The City is currently preparing to release a RFP (Request for Proposals) for companies to bid on a Coordinated Street Furniture Program.
- To put tonight's meeting into context, the draft placement guidelines will be part of the RFP.

David Nagler introduced **Robert Freedman**, Director of Urban Design and **Andy Koropeski**, Director of Transportation Services. He also introduced **Councillor Carroll** and **Councillor Giambrone**.

David Nagler noted that meeting minutes would be posted on the project website: www.toronto.ca/streetfurniture.

2.0 Presentation - Street Furniture Placement Guidelines

Robert Freedman, the City of Toronto's Director of Urban Design, presented on the Street Furniture Placement Guidelines. The presentation is posted on the project website.

3.0 Public Feedback

Individuals were given as much time as they wished to make a deputation. Not all attendees identified themselves at the microphone.

Feedback
<p>I see this as a good step in the right direction. But, I have some concerns about some of the widths that are specified. For example, you say that the clearways should be at least 2 metres wide, but in some cases they are 1.5 metres. Realistically, if you look at how sidewalks are used, two people want to walk side-by-side making it hard for people to pass. So I think those widths are unrealistic. In the last example, on McCaul Street, I think it is a big improvement. If you specify a width of 2 or 1.5 metres it is better than what we have now by far. Still, it will lead to sidewalk rage that is already happening. Pedestrian sidewalks can be wider if bus shelters were narrower. So, there is a need to be realistic here- focus on pedestrians first. Vancouver understands the importance of pedestrians. In Toronto it seems like we're far down the list. First is advertising, next are cars, then you have things like garbage being put out. This process is a huge improvement, but, I still feel like the first priority is advertising.</p> <p>Bus shelters could be a lot narrower and still be functional. To summarize, I think you have to be a lot more realistic about the criteria. You need to look at how sidewalks are being used. Currently it's not a place where people can shop and walk and stop and talk with friends. It is a conveyor belt-single file, both ways. It is so narrow. Think of how much better it could be if sidewalks were wider.</p>
<p>Richard Gilbert explained that he had seven points. The first one is that the idea of having coordinated street furniture is a wonderful idea. Everything else is the problem here. I really don't have comments, except that I agree that the practice of City in the past and previous constituent municipalities is to go for advertising. I'm not against advertising per se, but I think it should be the number six or number seven factor down the list, rather than number one.</p> <p>The previous speaker's concerns about width I think are very well founded. If you have a 1.5 metre width which is probably less than old City standard of 2.1 metres, two wheelchairs cannot pass. In fact one pedestrian and one modern day wheelchair, which tend to be wider, cannot pass. I think the minimum standard should be two metres for the pedestrian clearway.</p>

If you can't get that on some roads like Avenue Road, then widen the sidewalk. Pedestrians are the most important users of our streets and they shouldn't be third or fourth on the list.

The clearway is an excellent idea, but we shouldn't have the clearway by the curb if possible. The clearway should be by the buildings. Increasingly, cities around the world are putting clearways by the buildings and putting marketing by the curb side. It's done in Paris; many European cities; Philadelphia; Santiago; most cities in Florida. It looks a lot better. Pedestrians are more protected. Storefronts are more visible. Storefronts are next to a patio. The restaurants have it better as people are almost walking through the restaurants. The whole thing works better. I'm concerned that these guidelines will entrench the not very good system that we have here of putting the patios up against the buildings and putting pedestrians mostly against the street.

The question of newspaper boxes has always been a vexing one. I think we shouldn't have them within 200 metres of a store that sells newspapers. They are local small business operators paying taxes to the City to be able to sell newspapers. If you did that you would get rid of two thirds or more of the newspaper boxes. They would still have a use where no one else is marketing newspapers and have a better and safer environment.

Where you have the green street, the ideas there are good. Except, I would like you to consider the idea that the clearway should take into consideration the safety of pedestrians as it is so important. If you can't create a clean buffer by the curb, take space from the park or public land to make a pedestrian clearway further away from the traffic. There are situations where you cannot make the green barrier next to the curb, you showed one on College Street.

I hope as well as considering the central point of coordinating the street furniture, you can entrench some of these other key issues that need to be considered. I happen in my job to be in a lot of different cities in the world and in terms of major cities, Toronto has been on the downward trajectory for pedestrians. So I am really glad these initiatives are coming out of the city to improve it. It would be wonderful news. I think what I have proposed here would move us towards that direction.

Dave Hannah stated that the concept is good in principle. There has been no mention of tree trenches. I think sustainability and tree canopies are the key things, if not the number one issue. With pedestrian right of way being number two. The aspect of looking at large trees if possible and a variety of trees. The other aspect, and I'm not sure if it is considered street furniture, is walls on the street, awnings for buildings. And, I'm not saying that they should be standardized, as diversity is key in terms of colour and materials. There should be some sort of standard. As they're not only inviting, historical precedence, sun protecting, cooling, wind and rain protecting.

Another aspect is the rings for bicycles. We have a few examples in the City; most of them are private examples. In Barcelona, Spain, they tend to be functional art pieces. I think we need to look at merging art and bike rings because they can be boring now. In some places they are put where they are redundant and other places there are not enough. Need to look at where they go and how many.

Speaking of sustainability, look at the aspect of using solar in the realm of pedestrian lights. And the other aspect of pedestrian lights, such as the lighting of sidewalks. In some cases, it may not be necessary and in fact can be intrusive. For example, some of the ones the BIA did at Roncesvalles. I think we have to get away particularly from this globe design/Yorkville design because it's just been overused and it is dating things. We need some innovation here. That could be subject to a design competition. I understand that is how the globes got there initially. But, why not have a design competition again?

The aspect of the Bell boxes, the square boxes, I am wondering if there were some recommendations to Bell to do their wiring smaller to make them smaller. Coordinating could happen with these companies to come up with a better design.

The aspect of the 20 year lease, I'm afraid that we could get stuck with something we don't want.

The aspect of hanging baskets and trying to get to the aspect of living street furniture. Vertical gardens elements are good, which we see in occasional spots, for example on University Avenue and on Roncesvalles-sponsored by the BIA.

The aspect of bench variety, not only in terms of painting them, but also look at other types of benches-different forms and shapes. For example, in Etobicoke there are morph benches.

The aspect of sound, overabundance of sound from speakers coming out of stores. In some areas the sound is part of excitement of the area and in other places it is overdone and not wanted. Volume should be monitored and controlled.

The 'info booths', for example the large Gillette Razors, I guess you really wanted three blades rather than five blades. I think they become dated very quickly and I don't think they are attractive myself.

The news boxes, as shown in Chicago in Eye Magazine with them up off the ground, so you can clean under things, and get to the snow are good. But there has to be the space, as you have to take motor scooters into consideration. Boulevards are the best place for most of the greenery.

The other problem is the standardization of garbage. The example of Spadina comes up. Do not want to undercut economic activity that predicates that. However, the City has to make sure it is picked up on time, and ensure that what can be recycled is done, rather

than thrown out.

The last thing is the pedestrian lights, those little blue columns that used to be there at the corners. It's easier to get to for a pedestrian, but if you look at Dundas Street West and Bloor it is easier for trucks to knock them over when they turn a corner.

Wi-Fi, seems to be a good idea but I am worried about possible health affects.

Garnett Martin introduced himself as a member of Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation (ACAT). I am Concerned about things that affect seniors and people with disabilities, both ability and vision impairment. There are a couple of comments I would like to make. One of them relative to the new design of pedestrian buttons on aluminium poles close to sidewalk. This is the most important thing relative to those people who are responsible for this because when we are designing sidewalks we think of pedestrians first. In designing for the sidewalks that should be taken into account first. Let me draw your attention to how a blind person navigates a sidewalk, and so far no one has mentioned this in any of the diagrams we have seen. Looking at this particular intersection [on screen College Street @ Mccaul intersection photograph from PowerPoint slideshow is displayed], a blind person will come to that intersection and know there is a audible pedestrian signal because there is a clicking sound within the button. The placement of it is extremely important to a blind person. They will feel the edge of the curb, and you can see in this picture [refers again to College Street photograph] that the pavement has four grooves in the concrete.

A person with a white cane will feel these grooves and know they are at the edge of the curb. There is a curb cut, basically for people in wheelchairs, but also to alert a blind person to know when they are approaching the roadway. Now, whereabouts are they on the sidewalk? They will feel until they come to the place where the ramp goes back up to the full height of the curb. The pedestrian button is placed at the intersection of the stop line and the curb in an area of about one square metre from that point, which means that when the person with the white cane feels where they are, at arms length they can feel where the pedestrian button is.

Sometimes in this city, we have pedestrian buttons that are ten feet away from that intersection, so that blind person cannot find where that button is. The ultimate pedestrian is the blind pedestrian. Now once again, let's look at this intersection, at the placement of the bicycle rings and the posts. Imagine if you are blind and you are trying to make your way down this sidewalk as we see it now. You can't find your way down the curb side because there are so many posts every one of which is an obstruction for a person with a white cane. You can't find your way down the other side, because the first obstruction is the streetcar shelter, garbage bins, newspaper bins, two bicycle rings. What are the bicycle rings there for? There are no doorways into the buildings and there is no where for you to get off and go anywhere. So why place a bicycle ring where they are not needed? It seems to be incongruous where we have things there that are not really needed for pedestrians, in this case cyclists who are going to get off their bicycles.

So why not give more consideration to use of things.

The next thing that I found with this presentation is that there is not a slide which shows Toronto weather. There is no snow there. Everything is photographed in ideal conditions. So when we have a large snowfall and the snow is piled off onto the sidewalk, how is a pedestrian, particularly one in a scooter or motorized wheelchair going to get onto the sidewalk from a bus shelter over the snow to get into the bus? There is no way to do it. So the person in a wheelchair comes to that corner and wonders how to get into the bus when it comes and can't do it. So they go home and have someone drive them to work. Once again, not only the appearance and beauty of it, but also the practicality of it. And, start with people who must be pedestrians. Not those people who have a choice, but have to be pedestrians because of their situation. And please, look at the use of the particular furniture item, the design of the thing, why it is there, why it is being done and it should be done to accommodate pedestrians in every situation that you happen to see.

Gord Brown (Harbord Village Residents Association) I strongly support a lot of the speakers. Accessibility is very well presented as were some of the other points made. This is an excellent opportunity for Toronto to boldly go forward and take back public space. For far too long pedestrians have been given 'what's left' as opposed to 'what's best'. I am really encouraged by hearing tonight that people are saying: a minimum of 2.1 metres; give the best space to the pedestrians; let's figure everything else around them. And, the benefits to Toronto both in terms of the look of city, but also in terms of promoting ourselves as an accessible city in terms of our diversity, I think is something the Mayor could jump on quite quickly.

I strongly support the concept of zones. It is a very logical way to go across the entire city and build in high quality pedestrian space. It is very important.

I strongly support 2.1 metres as a minimum. It is okay to have a wider space, especially where you can afford it so people can actually walk along and swing their arms. When I see something like on Front Street, just east of the Harbour Castle, I walk down what should be a lakefront promenade, in fact there are four very generous traffic lanes, two very generous bike lanes, and a five foot sidewalk that you share that you share with bike rings and utility poles and everything else. This is the worst example of public space and this is the waterfront.

I am a bit confused as to whether the bike parking is included in the furnishing or not? Is it? [Staff member responded: Yes.] I would strongly encourage that vision is put in so that the vendors understand when they are designing where the need is. I tend to agree that there is no need for two bike rings to be there at a side corner where there is no entrance [referring to College Street photograph, as mentioned by previous speakers]. Looking along College Street, there are a variety of institutions-University of Toronto; Centre for Addiction and Mental Health [CAMH]; Ontario Power Generation [OPG]. When you plan an institution you put in car parking, you are required to provide it. There is no reason why we shouldn't have concentrated bike parking in these areas as well. As opposed to what we are seeing now which is a littering of bike rings along every street in the city. It is a vast waste of public space.

I would support what I've heard here in terms of the alternative locations for main streets. I would support the idea that as opposed to being against the building, we should find a way to put all of the street furnishings along the curb to help buffer pedestrians as well to get a predictable line where people can walk.

My final point is in terms of a design jury. There are a lot of really good ideas of who should be there. There are industrial designers and landscape architects. The one group I didn't see there were users. I would strongly encourage that the design jury judging the bids should include people from Toronto Pedestrian committee, or Accessibility, or Canadian National Institute for the Blind [CNIB]. There should be actual users of the furnishings. And, to balance off that the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas [TABIA] has someone on the design jury, there should be at least a nominal representative from a residents' association or other users of the street. Just so that we don't have a perfect design that doesn't pass the test of actual users of the system.

Shan Dhingra said that the universal design, as indicated in reports on the project website, is an excellent way to go about placing furniture. Once it is a universal design, it would be good for blind people and people in wheelchairs and good for normal people too. That is the way to go and I commend that.

One obvious thing is that in so many places there are metallic benches in Canada. Who wants to sit on them?

A light standard like this one [referring to College Street photograph] which is leaning. I mean it is a separate issue, but it is connected. You can't improve landscape on the street if you do all of this, but if you have the post leaning it is so ugly looking.

Roller skates and skateboards: How do they get accommodated? I don't know where they go. They have to be accommodated somewhere, we can't kick them out. At the same time I don't want to be walking with them on the sidewalk. Someone could snatch somebody's purse. The design team needs to consider this and come up with the answers.

Boyd Hipfner (CNIB) said that first of all, I'd like to thank **Garnett Martin** for the comments that he made regarding consideration of people with disabilities. I've got a few points. Particularly for people who are blind or people who are visually impaired. Number one is I heard somebody mention the idea of newspaper boxes being off of the ground. We want everything to be cane detectable. Elevated newsboxes might be nice for clearing away snow, but I'll tell you they're not nice to walk into. So any street furniture needs to be cane detectable.

Secondly, all of the street furniture needs to be colour contrasted with the surroundings. Otherwise, people cannot see these items and bump into them and can hurt themselves. It is essential that the street furniture be very detectable from the standpoint of a person who is blind or is visually impaired.

I have come late. The trees don't seem to fare very well when they are on the sidewalks, for example due to salt. Trees should be on the other side of sidewalk. And, if there is no place for them, then don't plant them.

Deanne Taylor (Queen St. West Neighbourhood Group) I'll start with the issue of placement. It seems to me, looking at pictures that you've shown us, that the City could do a great deal by simply doing the placement exercise with the furniture that we have at the moment, the furniture that we inherited from lapsed contracts. With the money that we have from the budget we could buy garbage cans on our own dime without advertising. As said by staff in the summer of 2004 if we indeed want the introductory photographs that you showed us at the beginning of the speech. . The City's very interested in being beautiful, the City's very interested in attracting tourism, and very interested in being distinctive and anxious to brand itself in all these ways. And yet, I'm sorry for the bureaucrats who are genuinely trying to do something as I think your leadership has truly let you down and I think your citizens have let you down because of the selling of the public realm to advertising is really what this is entire deal is about. Nothing will stop this from sinking into an oblivion of advertising. It really is the jobs of you as public servants to tell the politicians, to be brave to come forward and say there are other ways to do this. We can afford to have a beautiful city. We can afford to have a distinctive city. A city that isn't branded by the major corporations on every piece of furniture in the city. And making us look like every other city that is falling for this argument all across the world. So I really wish you could advise, in the public interest, at a much higher level. You're all educated to do that. You're all trained to do that. You all really know that this is an exercise of putting ads on our streets. It's selling eyeballs of the Toronto citizens to advertising. So the placement guidelines, as sweet as they are, will not cover up that ugly fact.

Jonathan Goldsbie (Toronto Public Space Committee) These are all the best of intentions and ideals here. Most of what is done is pretty good. I wanted to ask about this document that Eucan sent around recently that were talking myths and one of them was about placement. I just want to read part of Eucan's material:

"Myth Number Three: MegaBins block Sidewalks. This was another statement we heard frequently from opponents. Again, nothing could be further from the truth. We have continued to comply with all city guidelines and bylaws. Eucan set out to give comprehensive placement protocol for every MegaBin and EcoBin we installed. Right of Way Management, solid waste, the local BIA, and the board of council were all consulted before our media was placed in a particular location. In the manner of written confirmation, existing safety guidelines established by the City. Because of this rigorous pre-approval process Eucan has improved upon. Not one single bin sold during the pilot violates the use of locations..."

Of course we have hundreds of photos to disprove Eucan's claim. What I was wondering is that it says that Right of Way Management was consulted for the Eucan tests/testing. I'm just wondering if this is a newfound desire to enhance accessibility and safety. If so that is fantastic, but if that is the case, why did it just come up in the past few months? Why didn't this exist one year ago when the MegaBins were being placed around? Because it says that, at least they claim that, Right of Way Management was consulted

and if that's the case why was nothing said one year ago about all of these wonderful things?

I'll say something just to contradict the other people that mentioned something about the bike posts. There aren't enough bike posts in Toronto. I drive, I bike, and I walk around. If the bike posts aren't in front of something, like a door, it means that you can't put one there. I've owned two businesses in the past and I've tried to put bike posts in front of businesses. There are parts of the city, like College Street and Kensington Market, where you have to park your bike blocks away from where you are going because all of the bike posts are taken. There's not enough.

Closing Remarks and Next Steps

David Nagler explained that if participants had any questions, staff would be available until 8:00 p.m. He thanked participants for attending and noted that minutes would be posted to www.toronto.ca/streetfurniture

The deputation portion of the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.