



## **Description and Results of Public Consultation Process - Coordinated Street Furniture Program**

The City conducted an extensive public consultation process from February, 2006 to early April, 2006 in order to receive input on the Coordinated Street Furniture Program from a diverse range of stakeholders. The following stakeholders were consulted:

- The Public, including ratepayer and other stakeholder groups
- Toronto Pedestrian Committee
- Toronto Cycling Committee
- Toronto Disability Issues Committee
- Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas (TABIA)
- Roundtable on a Beautiful City and the City Policies, Standards and Practices Subcommittee
- TTC
- Toronto's professional design community – architects, landscape architects, industrial designers, graphic designers
- Industry (potential bidders on an RFP)
- Toronto Public Utilities Coordinating Committee (TPUCC)
- Publication Box Association

### **1.0 Consultation Activities**

#### **Meetings**

Meetings were held with the Toronto Cycling Committee (February 13), the Toronto Pedestrian Committee (February 15), and the Toronto Disability Issues Committee (February 27). The City met with the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas on March 21. An informal meeting was held with a representative of the Toronto Public Space Committee on February 17. Meetings were also held with the Toronto Public Utilities Coordinating Committee (March 22) and the Publication Box Association. (April 12).

#### **Public Workshops**

Project staff hosted four public workshops. One was held in each of the four City Districts to ensure residents from across Toronto had an opportunity to participate. An information notice was sent to each residents association/community group on file with the Clerk's Division and to all BIAs on February 21, 2006. The notice provided project details, dates and times of the workshops, the project website ([www.toronto.ca/streetfurniture](http://www.toronto.ca/streetfurniture)), a dedicated phone line and a mailing address, so that those who were unable to attend a workshop could provide comments. A dedicated e-mail address ([streetfurniture@toronto.ca](mailto:streetfurniture@toronto.ca)) was provided on the website for submission of comments. The Fall 2005 edition of City Routes was distributed across Toronto on October 30, 2005. It included an article about the Coordinated Street Furniture Program and instructions to visit the City website in the coming months for more details. A public notice of the workshops was sent to all City Councillors on February 20, 2006.

Advertisements for the public workshops were placed in The Etobicoke Guardian - February 22, The Scarborough Mirror - Feb. 26, The North York Mirror - March 1, and Now Magazine - March 2. The workshops were held as follows:

- Etobicoke Civic Centre - Feb. 28, - 18 participants signed the optional sign-in sheets
- Scarborough Civic Centre - March 1 - 33 participants signed the optional sign-in sheets
- Metro Hall - March 6 - 118 participants signed the optional sign-in sheets

- North York Civic Centre - March 7 - 27 participants signed the optional sign-in sheets

All workshop minutes were posted for public review at [www.toronto.ca/streetfurniture](http://www.toronto.ca/streetfurniture) by March 21, 2006.

### **Design Community Charrettes**

The City of Toronto partnered with the Design Exchange to hold two “Design Charrettes”. Industrial designers, graphic designers, architects and landscape architects were invited to hear a presentation on the Program and provide City staff with advice on key design principles. The charrettes were held on Wednesday, March 8, and Thursday, March 16, 2006 at the Design Exchange. A summary of the Design Exchange Charrettes prepared by Design Exchange staff will be posted at [www.toronto.ca/streetfurniture](http://www.toronto.ca/streetfurniture) as soon as their report is submitted.

### **Industry Consultation**

The City hosted a two stage Industry Consultation process, endorsed by City Council, to receive input from potential bidders regarding the structure of a Request for Proposals. Notice of this consultation and specific Terms of Reference were posted on the project website on Friday, March 10, 2006. Advertisements for the Industry Consultation were placed in the Toronto Star Business Section on Thursday, March 23. The Stage One consultation was held on Wednesday, March 29. Stage Two consultations, in which each participant was given an opportunity to suggest to project staff how an RFP should be structured, were held on April 5 and April 6 at City Hall.

## **2.0 Public Consultation Summary – Key Themes**

A number of common themes emerged from the public consultation. The following is a summary of key themes raised and recommendations submitted to project staff. A more comprehensive compilation of feedback is included following this summary.

### **Key Themes and Recommendations**

#### **1. Focus on Design and Functionality**

Workshop participants and those that e-mailed the City and filled out questionnaires expressed very clearly that the design and functionality of all street furniture items must be primary. These individuals expressed the opinion that Megabins are advertising vehicles rather than functional recycling bins. They are opposed to them and any other item that, in their opinion, functions as a “billboard” first and street amenity second. Across the city, residents felt that plastic benches were geared primarily for advertising at the expense of comfort. A concern was also raised --particularly at the downtown workshop and in questionnaires-- that information pillars place advertisers’ needs before functionality, because two sides of the pillars have ads and the map side is placed away from pedestrians.

#### **2.0 Street Furniture Placement**

##### **2.1 Enhance Safety and Accessibility**

There was unanimous opinion that the current clutter from newsboxes not only detracts from the appearance of streetscapes, but, more importantly, creates an impediment to pedestrians. The Toronto Disability Issues Committee and the Toronto Pedestrian Committee raised concerns that the current placement of newspaper boxes often pushes pedestrians into streets and makes sidewalk navigation difficult. Residents across the city would like to see the implementation of a “multi-publication” box to reduce clutter from newsboxes which were cited as the most problematic item in terms of impeding pedestrian movement. Some residents also requested the complete removal of all newspaper boxes from sidewalks.

The Toronto Pedestrian Committee, the Toronto Disability Issues Committee, the Toronto Cycling Committee and residents at the workshops cited Megabins as a safety concern. Residents indicated the Megabins block sightlines at corners for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists.

The Toronto Disability Issues Committee and workshop participants across the city want to ensure that any new street furniture item is fully accessible and cane detectable. A request was made for any new street furniture colours --particularly on bollards-- to contrast with the pavement colour and general surroundings. Contrasting colours would help people with sight impairment detect furniture items.

A strong desire was expressed by the Toronto Pedestrian Committee, the Toronto Disability Issues Committee, representatives of the TTC's Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation (ACAT) and many workshop participants --particularly the sight impaired-- for a Pedestrian "Clearway" of 1.5- 2 metres on sidewalks. This "Clearway" would be free of any street furniture (including sandwich boards) and would enhance pedestrian circulation and safety, particularly for people with disabilities.

The Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children provided the following safety recommendations for the Coordinated Street Furniture Program:

- Adequate lighting should be installed and maintained in every bus shelter. Currently, all shelters are equipped with roof lights, however many are not functioning. The City of Toronto must ensure that lighting is maintained consistently.
- Sightlines of pedestrians should be ensured when the new street furniture is installed. Currently, the Megabins are very large and obstruct sightlines.
- Glass bus shelters should be transparent on all 4 sides with no advertisements obstructing sightlines.
- Bus shelters should have 2 exits/entrances.
- Coordinate placement of street furniture to ensure accessibility on sidewalks and with bus shelters.

The Riverside Area Residents Association which represents residents from Munro St., Hamilton St., Blackburn St., and Mount Stephen from Dundas St. East to Gerrard St. East, has requested that no new phone booths operated by private companies be installed in their neighbourhood as part of the Program. They indicated that such booths were formerly used in the drug trade.

## **2.2 Improve the Placement of Street Furniture - Create a Well-Organized and Attractive Streetscape**

Participants in consultations noted that improved placement of street furniture must work hand in hand with the new Program. This would significantly enhance the appearance of Toronto streetscapes by reducing the current clutter.

## **3. Create Opportunities to Express Local Character and Incorporate Art**

Business Improvement Areas expressed a strong desire to maintain their unique characters and would like to ensure that they are able to customize new street furniture that is placed in their area. Some BIAs expressed concern that even with this option, it would be challenging to accommodate their need to make their area unique. Residents and BIAs would like the Coordinated Street Furniture Program to provide high quality design standards, but ensure there is flexibility built-in to allow the unique character of different neighbourhoods to shine.

At all of the City consultations, residents and BIAs indicated they would like opportunities for art to be incorporated into new street furniture to beautify Toronto's streets.

#### **4. Concern about Amount and Placement of Advertising**

At all workshops, and through emails and questionnaires, the public noted that the current amount of advertising on City streetscapes is overwhelming. This includes advertising on street furniture and billboards. There was the expressed opinion that advertising should not be placed in parks, near community centres, schools or religious institutions.

In Etobicoke and North York participants expressed a desire to reduce advertising on street furniture and the need for the City to control where it is placed. At the Scarborough workshop there was a desire to reduce advertising, however, some residents stated that it would be better to have *some* advertising and allow for a greater number of items than to settle for fewer items with zero advertising.

At Metro Hall, there was a great deal of discussion of the need to make advertising subordinate to furniture design and to find ways to completely remove or minimize advertising on street furniture.

A minority opinion was expressed indicating that the City should design and fabricate street furniture in-house --to ensure high quality-- and lease advertising space to companies to recover costs if absolutely necessary.

There was an opinion expressed across the city that a certain percentage of space should be reserved on street furniture for community announcements. In particular, residents and BIAs would like to see space reserved for announcements of local cultural events and festivals that bring vitality to neighbourhoods.

#### **5. Opposition to an Advertising-Funded Program**

Many workshop participants, particularly at Metro Hall, (which was well attended by members of the Toronto Public Space Committee) and individuals who e-mailed the City and filled out questionnaires, expressed opposition to any process that would fund a street furniture program through advertising revenue. These stakeholders believe strongly that the design (aesthetics), maintenance, placement, safety, and functionality of street furniture would be sacrificed for advertisers' needs. Megabins were the most common example illustrating the position that street furniture funded by advertising would compromise the aforementioned principles. These stakeholders would prefer that the City of Toronto allocate funds to design, fabricate and maintain street furniture to ensure a high quality product.

#### **6. Enhance Maintenance of Street Furniture**

An ongoing theme throughout consultations was the need for a well-funded maintenance plan for the program. Residents were concerned about the proliferation of graffiti and postering on street furniture across the city. They noted that a coordinated program would fail, if maintenance was not strictly enforced. A recommendation was made to incorporate a provision into the RFP that places financial penalties on companies who fail to meet maintenance requirements. A recommendation was also made to include a phone number on furniture items to enable the public to notify staff of poor maintenance.

#### **7. Environmental Recommendations – Opportunities for “Greening” the City and Energy Efficiency**

There was unanimous agreement at all public consultations for the City to integrate as much well-maintained greenery into new street furniture as possible. Green roofs on transit shelters, hanging flower baskets, and trees -- particularly where benches are placed-- were listed as items that should be implemented to beautify the city. Residents also stressed that the City must provide the necessary funds and plan to properly maintain both existing greenery, particularly trees, and new greenery.

Residents would like to see conservation of energy to the greatest extent possible and the use of solar/wind power where lighting is used. Workshop participants and questionnaire respondents indicated that bins should include slots for the recycling of styrofoam, batteries and green waste. Suggestions were also made to build furniture items from recycled material and/or use material that can be recycled.

### **3.0 Summary of Public Workshops and Questionnaire Responses**

The following is a summary of responses to each of the four questions posed at the Public Workshops and in the City's Questionnaire. The purpose of the workshops and questionnaire was to garner ideas, views, and recommendations from stakeholders about street furniture. These activities were not intended for purposes of an empirical, statistical analysis. The questions at the workshops and in the questionnaire were the same. The project website- [www.toronto.ca/streetfurniture](http://www.toronto.ca/streetfurniture) includes minutes from the public workshops. As of April 12, 2006, 125 questionnaires (online and offline) were filled out. A total of 196 people signed the optional sign-in sheets at the four public workshops.

#### **1. What do you like about street furniture in the City?**

##### **New Transit Shelters**

- New shelters are attractive, smooth design
- Functional and well-lit which enhances safety
- Clean and modern looking
- New shelters without ads are functional

##### **The post and ring bike stand**

- It is simple, functional, made in Toronto and does not contain any advertising
- Iconic of Toronto
- Elegant and attractive
- Efficient, effective and unobtrusive

##### **Business Improvement Area furniture**

- Residents across the city support the individuality and enhanced quality of street furniture in Business Improvement Areas. Specifically, they enjoy the planters, flower baskets, decorative paving/lighting, benches and curb cuts
- Benches in Liberty Village
- BIAs make a great effort to choose items that signify their neighbourhood and are high quality

##### **Greenery**

- Any vegetation, gardens, tree plantings, that are well-maintained
- Raised planter boxes
- Hanging baskets
- The more well-maintained greenery the better

##### **Benches**

- Comfortable benches without ads
- Benches - particularly in parks and at transit stops

##### **Items that go above and beyond normal street furniture**

- Art work on Spadina Avenue
- Fountains and statues on University Avenue
- Public art, murals and outdoor sculptures

##### **Other comments**

- I like that you can recycle, but bins should be more functional with bigger slots

## **2. What don't you like about street furniture in the City?**

### **Newspaper boxes**

- Appearance is “hideous”, creates clutter, impediment for pedestrians, covered in postering and graffiti – particularly free papers
- Remove all newsboxes as in Montreal

### **Megabins -**

- Geared for advertising, not functional, block sightlines at corners, difficult to identify as bins

### **Advertising**

- Current state of ads on street furniture is overwhelming, makes the city look cheap
- City should fund design of furniture as opposed to relying on ad revenue
- Ads are given precedence over safety, functionality, and aesthetics of street furniture – most common examples given: megabins, information pillars, plastic benches
- Don't like advertising near schools and community centres in particular
- Ads in some bus shelters block sightlines

### **Maintenance**

- Overall maintenance is poor - graffiti and postering on all items – particularly parking metres, Canada post boxes, newspaper boxes, telephone booths
- Lack of maintenance of planters and tree pits, design of tree pits is poor
- Litter bins not emptied frequently enough

### **Placement**

- Clutter around bus stops from all items impedes pedestrians – particularly people with disabilities
- Sandwich boards/newspaper boxes in particular block sidewalk
- Gas shut-off valves cut off sidewalk space
- Furniture placement pushes pedestrians into the street
- Traffic signal boxes poorly placed and not designed well
- Pedestrian clearway free of any street furniture is needed

### **Shortage of Items**

- More functional recycling/litter bins needed – particularly near parks, fast food restaurants and convenience stores, and throughout Kensington Market
- Need more benches – comfortable ones without ads
- Well placed and well designed benches and bollards needed for people to sit on and lean against
- Not enough bike racks, especially near transit
- Add more post and ring bike stands - will prevent cyclists from locking their bikes to street posts, private property, gates or other objects
- Not enough public toilets

## **3. What would you do to improve street furniture as part of this program?**

### **Advertising – removal, reduction**

- Needs of public must be placed before needs of advertisers
- Remove advertising completely from all furniture, do not use this approach to secure new furniture
- Design beautiful furniture that de-emphasizes advertising
- Reserve a % of space on transit shelters and other items for local artists to beautify the city

- Make rules about ads – how much, where and what, specific in RFP
- Provide room for non-profits to place posters
- The City should do a cost-benefit analysis on providing street furniture without advertising
- If ads are placed, spread them around to reduce visual clutter
- Information pillars must place maps toward street not ads
- No ads in parks

### **Removal of Items**

- Remove newspaper boxes
- Remove Megabins
- Remove all items that place advertising ahead of function
- Remove ugly utility boxes on roadways
- Remove plastic benches
- Remove traffic signal boxes –no need for large ones
- Hydro wires should be buried, there is duplication and triplication in some instances
- Remove redundant utility poles

### **Enhance Safety**

- Implement a Pedestrian Clearway with no street furniture
- All items must be cane detectable
- Install only open phone booths
- Cover the open stairwells to subway with something that prevents water (snow and rain) from getting on the stairs and that has attractive architecture
- Old sewer covers are a safety issue for bikes
- Translucent ads
- Street furniture (particularly benches) should be designed to encourage people to spend more time in the public realm, participating in the life of the city

### **Beautify the City - Art and High Quality Design**

- Increase use of art, involve local artists
- Art should be a feature of any RFP – either as an integrated item (part of the traditional types of furniture) or as art on its own
- Tie in the greening of Toronto to the street furniture project. e.g. bench and a tree, a shelter and a green roof
- There should be consistency of high quality design, but flexibility to allow flavour of neighbourhoods to come through

### **Maintenance**

- Dedicate budget to enforce contract and ensure compliance (cash penalties for companies who fail, record number of public complaints)
- Well-funded maintenance plan needed for all street furniture

### **Coordination and Standards**

- Placement of items should be determined by functionality and accessibility – hierarchy of items should be established
- Coordinated typography needed on all street furniture and street signs –develop custom font for Toronto with local expertise
- There should be a mechanism that resolves private vs. public interests (i.e. a business that wants a bench or shelter removed vs. the public need)
- Incorporate more consistent themes of street furniture within neighbourhoods, BIAs
- Give the people in the neighbourhood a say about what the furniture should look like. This will create a balanced vision for an area
- Quality of any furniture item proposed for streetscapes after an RFP is issued must be to same standards as set out in an RFP and follow the same guidelines

- Neighbourhoods require a proper assessment of needs
- Areas with higher pedestrian traffic would require a greater number of trash bins than areas with less traffic, BIAs/ratepayer groups can be consulted on this
- Precise rules needed for every furniture item

#### **4. What new street furniture items would you like added?**

##### **Greenery**

- Green roofs on transit shelters and TTC entranceways
- Flower baskets on utility poles
- Improved tree grates (for healthier trees, etc.)
- Decorative metal grates around street trees to allow in more water and air – e.g. Montreal

##### **Multi-publication newsracks**

- Multi newsracks to reduce clutter and remove ugly chains that hold boxes together - e.g. Chicago
- Would love to see a well-designed concentrated newspaper box (a la Chicago or New York, but better designed) - Proliferation of boxes on Toronto's streets is awful

##### **Public Toilets**

- Supervised and properly maintained public toilets
- Toilets that are fully accessible for people with disabilities
- Only self-cleaning toilets
- Toilets are needed for people with IBS or gastric problems. An automated system like Paris's or London's would do a lot to make long shopping expeditions more comfortable
- Toilets needed in urban downtown - Chinatown, Little India, Greektown, Queen St., Jarvis St. - essential for residents and tourists
- Place next to Green P Parking

##### **Kiosks**

- Kiosks for community/cultural postings like in Spain or France
- No commercial postings on kiosks - focus on community
- Kiosks will reduce graffiti and postering
- Staffed vendor kiosks - keep an eye on the street, replace newspaper boxes, may include public toilets, e.g. New York
- Kiosks in places where they do not compete with local merchants
- Consolidated newspaper kiosks similar to Calgary and Chicago
- Designated kiosks for graffiti artists

##### **Furniture as focal points**

- Water fountains, drinking fountains, flower beds (if well-maintained)
- Sculptures
- Space for local artists
- Furniture should encourage public use of streets, enhance vibrancy and safety of city

##### **Bus Shelters**

- New technologies – talking bus shelters, VIVA info of next bus coming
- Install convenience machines that sell bus tickets
- Phone booths integrated with shelters

##### **Bicycle Sharing**

- Automated Bicycle Vending Machines e.g. France; Norway
- Call-A-Bike system, e.g. Germany

- Place bike shares outside of TTC stations, close to hotels, close to parks and the Waterfront and in the business and tourist core.

**Others**

- Public clocks
- Community Art Board to discourage graffiti
- Covered TTC entranceways with public art integrated
- Way finding tiles on sidewalks for the blind
- Music from bins, directions on how to use bins
- Music, poetry on the street – e.g. Murmur program
- Gateways to neighbourhoods
- Increased use of bollards for safety between pedestrians and traffic
- Dog litter receptacles
- Ashtrays
- Gum receptacles
- Outdoor gallery exhibits for local artists
- Bicycle lockers would be excellent and prevent bikes from being vandalized
- High density bike lockup racks with lighting (e.g. 10 bike rings on a rack mounted to a light pole)
- “Way-finding” signage to guide pedestrians to libraries, schools, community centres, etc.
- Tourist information boards that have maps showing where you are, and nearby local attractions. (eg. Museums, shopping districts, buildings of significance, city landmarks, unique neighbourhoods, markets, parks, etc.)
- Benches that allow homeless to sleep on them (without homeless hoops) – BIAs expressed disagreement

**4.0 E-mail and Letter Correspondence**

Of the 31 e-mail comments submitted to the City, 26 indicated a clear objection to advertising on street furniture. A total of six letters were mailed to the City. The letters expressed opinions ranging from the need to enhance safety and improve accessibility on sidewalks (4) to improving the placement of information pillars and the need to limit advertising.

Permission has been requested from the Corporate Access and Privacy Office to include the entire text of each e-mail submitted --with personal information removed-- on the project website [www.toronto.ca/streetfurniture](http://www.toronto.ca/streetfurniture) and to include the text of each letter submitted in an appendix. As of April 13, 2006, ten individuals who submitted e-mails had granted the City permission to post the full text of their e-mails on the project website in an appendix to this document and one had declined.

**Appendix 1.0 Email Comments Submitted – Coordinated Street Furniture Program**

The following is a list of e-mail comments submitted to the City. Messages have not been edited. Names and e-mail addresses have been removed to protect privacy. Each individual who submitted an e-mail that appears below has given expressed written consent to post the message.

<b>Date Submitted</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Feb 24	Just heard about the City's idea to sell whatever happens to be on the street to advertisers to increase revenue. Please don't do it! Citizens are more than targets. Let us imagine our own city.
Feb 24	My Toronto includes public spaces that are free of paid advertising.  Please, Mayor Miller, leave me some Toronto space that has not been

	<p>and will not be sold to the highest bidder for the sole purpose of selling more stuff. Toronto has been such a beautiful and vibrant city in the past. Please have the courage to keep it from becoming just another soulless, North America urban hole.</p>
Feb 24	<p>I am a very proud citizen of Toronto. I believe that is the best place to live in the world, and I actively promote the city among my friends and family. This is just one of the reasons why it pains me to read of things such as the proposed Street Furniture project. When I read that possible items that could be included in the deal are phone booths, light poles, benches, mailboxes, flower baskets, fire hydrants, street signs, traffic lights, and bicycle racks, I was shocked and dismayed. Flower baskets? Doesn't slapping a huge sign on something that's meant to beautify our city negate it's proposed purpose? Traffic lights? These are meant to ensure the safety of drivers and pedestrians! They are NOT meant to be owned privately. Fire hydrants? These are vital in the survival of our citizens. I do not see how something that is so necessary in ensuring the lives of Torontonians can be for sale. Why don't we just sell our hospitals to Coca-Cola and have them fill IVs with the new great taste of Coke Zero? Where do we draw the line? When are we going to finally stop selling our city, piece by piece, to the highest bidder? I sincerely hope that you reconsider your position on selling our city.</p>
Feb 24	<p>I would like to add my voice to those people who would like to stop the City from selling advertising in public spaces. David Miller, I thought you shared my concern for quality of urban spaces. Surely you are personally sick of all the advertising that inundates our lives. And I am not a student, but a 53-year-old woman with 4 children. I would rather pay more taxes than see more invasive things in our public spaces.</p>
Feb 24	<p>dear whomever  i have lived in toronto my whole life. jane jacobs is our municipal treasure. do you not understand? public space is the reason Why european cities and culture are considered 'culture'. it develops in public.... people react and respond and build dialogues and community thru the living of Shared Public Space. i am a musician that travels the world 8 months of the year and i have seen results: what do pedestrian only sections of downtown do for the harmony of the city? what do squares and parks and piazzas and plazas do? what about Art and street-generated art? how do they contribute and inform those citizens that actually Live within the bounds of the city? these, dear reader, are rhetorical questions.</p> <p>Do Not sell our visual domains in some vain effort to generate 'increased revenue'! Long term effects are too heinous to calculate. we are talking about your (un) consciousness being bombarded with Yet More Advertising.... branding our world is taking us all down a few notches, emotionally, psychically, intellectually and ultimately physically. It is not worth it! furthermore, not All the people will passively accept this. there will be repercussions for such a short sighted act and easy-out solution.</p> <p>do you understand where i stand?</p>
Feb 24	<p>Mayor Miller,</p> <p>This city elected you in large part taking into account your vow to CLEAN UP Toronto. Admirable and much needed. This is why I cannot understand the ever-increasing push to clutter this city's landscape with yet more advertising, no matter where you look. We're already being plagued with monster electric (!) garbage bins with tiny receptacles and useless "info pillars" on which it takes longer to find said "info" than it would to get an explanation from the nearest passerby.</p> <p>And you know what? I work in advertising. I've done so for the last 10 years. Not for the small companies who are trying to make their niche and their millions by coming up with the last remaining public spaces on which to plaster needless messages, but for large corporate firms (and, currently, a small, ecologically sensitive one – concentrating on helping consumers make more informed choices for their environment</p>

	<p>and the future).</p> <p>But that's beside the point. Aside from the quite real problems of energy sapping, obstruction of sightlines, and lack of functionality /complete uselessness, this "street furniture" initiative simply makes our city look schlocky.</p> <p>Improving the city, CLEANING UP the city, would involve actually putting money into its infrastructure rather than short-sightedly taking so-called "increased revenue" from a company morally bereft enough to favour ad space over city or community space. It's not clean, it's not pretty, it's not useful, it's not smart, and it's not Toronto.</p>
Feb 24	<p>I am writing to object to the Coordinated Street Furniture Program. Public space in the City needs to remain public. It is my understanding that the program involves the design of street furniture by one advertising agency. I am disturbed that the City is considering an option that sees elements of our public space as advertising opportunities.</p> <p>Toronto has great potential, and it is unfortunate many at the City believe that money raised through advertising in public space is a valid way of realizing that potential. Although the plan suggests that it is about "elevating and celebrating Toronto's urban beauty," I'm concerned that it is more about increasing revenue. Advertising, after all, does not make cities beautiful.</p> <p>As Mayor Miller rightly points out, "the public realm allows us to come together as citizens, residents, and visitors to enjoy, discover and appreciate this wonderful city." I certainly hope that forging connections between people, the City, and civic space is at the forefront of your minds, rather than connections between people and the products the ad agency represents. I urge the City to rethink the privatization of our shared urban space.</p>
Feb 24	<p>(addressed to Mayor Miller)</p> <p>I remember shaking your hand at the skating rink (you even asked me what my button was) at your inauguration party. I had such great hopes for our great city. Hoping that Toronto will live up to what we think should be the best city in the world. Now I learn that it is for sale. We are already bombarded by ad-pollution with mobile ads on the back of trucks (which should be banned for their disastrous environmental impact. How can you sell our benches, parks, garbage bins and sidewalks to the highest bidder without realizing the moral and social implications. Please Dave, don't sell us out. If you want to increase revenues bring in the tolls, that will at least be progressive and taxing or charging the devastating impact rather than reinforce it by supporting advertising at every turn. I'm a citizen first and a consumer dead last. Save us from unruly corporate encroachment.</p>
Feb 26	<p>Hello,</p> <p>I do not want to see any more commercial advertising on city streets, in parks, billboards, etc. No more visual pollution! Only good quality benches, trashcans etc with NO advertising! The streets are for people, not businesses. Postering for public events is OK. Very democratic to communicate.</p> <p>If the city wants more money, why don't the mayor and councillors do the right thing and go to the provincial government and insist they take back their responsibility for welfare!? No city in the world carries such a financial burden. That is why Toronto is impoverished. End the sellout.</p> <p>Borrow from the bank of Canada interest free for good programs for people and stop corporatizing us. Thanks.</p>
Feb 27	<p>I submit these suggestions for consideration,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bus Shelters - Shade</li> </ol>

	<p>- for the first time new bus shelters do NOT provide an escape from direct sun. The latest design has many merits but the glass top allowing direct sunlight to come through is not one of them. - Shelters must provide a means to escape direct sun (while walking or waiting for a bus) on the street. I remind you of the increasing number of plus 30 deg C days, etc</p> <p>2. Newspaper Boxes - Appearance Conformity</p> <p>- newspaper boxes are useful conveniences (both for users and distributors); however, their appearance tends to be a city blight. - I suggest that there are ways to maintain the convenience and improve the city appearance:</p> <p>- Develop appearance/design consistency standards; provide rigid connections to link together boxes in a neat row (no chaining to utility poles); provide a box grouping shelter with paid advertising; do not allow stand alone boxes; provide a paper recycling bin at each box grouping</p> <p>3. Comfort Benches with advertising</p> <p>- we note the many benches are situated with the advertising view as the primary objective. - all benches must be situated with access and comfort of users a first consideration; - all benches must sit well on an all weather pad connected to a sidewalk. - all benches must be tagged with an id number and servicing support telephone number.</p>
Feb 27	This is terrible, and shows how Toronto's officials feel about the priority of the Public. Where is our Urban Planning committee at times like this? Our city will be the next Disney world in no time.
Feb 27	Please don't sell off our streets. Public space is just that, public space. Advertising is not 'beautifying' the street. We are overwhelmed already with advertising in our faces everywhere we look. The companies that will design this street furniture will not be doing it for beauty, it will be for selling ad space. Nothing is free. It will be the citizens who pay for this in the end. Why don't you try nature to beautify the street, a novel idea. The monster bins are an eyesore. We don't need anything more like that. Don't you listen to your constituents?
Feb 27	<p>Dear, Mr.Mayor.</p> <p>While the expressed goal of beautifying our streets is both well-intentioned and necessary, the Coordinated Street Furniture Program seems designed to accomplish a very different task. The City is demonstrating a profound lack of imagination and commitment to its citizenry by intentionally limiting the scope of possibilities the initiative presents by mandating it increase revenue and that it be crafted by an advertising company. We all know the City's in dire financial straits. Is selling public space to advertisers really the best solution that we can come up with? Is this the boldness of purpose and the promise of better things you campaigned on? More Eucan MegaBins as planes continue to fly overhead to the island airport is not what I expected nor what I voted for.</p>
Feb 27	<p>Hello City,</p> <p>My name is _____ and I live in North York. I have a problem with being forced to look at awful advertisements the whole day through. I cant watch tv, go to the movies or use a public washroom without being sold one absurd commodity or another. Now, i cannot even walk down the street, take public transit or recycle without being forcefully exposed to the average multinational corporation's filthy sales pitch. The aesthetic value this city loses in selling it's public space to media companies is only the tip of the slimy ice berg (one of the few that aren't melting these days). Think about what happens to our mental health when we are constantly bombarded with messages meant to transform us into passive consumers. In turn, think of the havoc and lowered intelligence that this type of society endures. Think of the gargantuan waste that passive consumerism creates in a world already littered with raunchy landfills.</p>

	<p>Furthermore, I believe that, looking at this whole situation and not even considering the human casualties and instead focusing on finances, we can conclude that it's not even economical. One point I would like to make is that the more these corporations spend on advertising, the more money there is that comes out of the everyday consumers pockets (as the price of the commodity rises). Another point I would like to make is that the more expensive and competitive advertising gets the harder it is for small business to succeed (especially if advertising is 'efficient' is it seems to be). Just try to convince your average citizen that bigger business is better for society, just try it. So, even strictly looking at the finances, selling public space to private companies for advertising purposes seems to have its flaws.</p> <p>If you want to keep toronto a clean city DO NOT sell public space to advertising companies. If you truly want to see Toronto and the people who inhabit it thrive, make toronto ad free.</p>
Feb 27	<p>Dear Mr. Miller and City of Toronto Staff,</p> <p>Over the years I have grown up in this city I have seen project after project turning our public spaces into billboards in an effort to gain revenue for the city. It crushes me everytime I see new efforts to expand such projects, as I know once these new forms of advertising (privatization of public spaces) come into existence, almost all hope of ever having free space again is lost. It crushes me inside to know that our children will be forced to grow up in such a tasteless, cultureless and consumer driven society. I beg you to please reconsider these proposals and please search for other ways of bringing the city revenue. The action the city plans to take will have severe-long term effects on the beauty, culture, and essence of our city, things difficulty to achieve, and easily lost. Please don't turn our city into urban labyrinth of slogans and pitches which demean us all.</p> <p>Please do what you can to stop these projects.</p>
March 1	<p>What person in thier right mind would ever think an advertising company would GIVE for free to this city functionable furniture that would be asscticly pleasing to anyone who is not looking to put an advertisement, in MY and every other Torontonians face. For council to come with new initiatives like this my tax dollars are going to be used to keep an ineffective council in place for another year. I think you and your cronies can do enough damage in 3yrs and I do not like the 4 year mandate, not like I can do much about it.</p> <p>Hoping to see you and your defeated in the up coming election.</p>
March 5	<p>Dear Mayor Miller,</p> <p>I understand that the city is soon to embark on new program to have one ad company design all city street furniture. I hope that the city will consider the long-term consequences of allowing a advertising company decision making authority over what we will all see in our public space. The experience of Eucan MegaBins shows just how unsightly and dysfunctional the results can be. For the sake of all of Toronto citizens, please think very carefully before awarding this responsibility. I know that I personally would rather not have street furniture that be assaulted with such visual pollution.</p>
March 6	<p>Thank you for an interesting even last Tuesday night in Etobicoke. I enjoyed hearing of the plans that the city has and am very pleased that this initiative is underway - it is desperately needed.</p> <p>As I was thinking about the challenges you face a couple of more ideas came to mind and I wanted to pass them on.</p>

	<p>Re the newspaper boxes - these are so unsightly and really need to be removed. The kiosks are a much better idea but also, the TTC stations could be used more effectively in this regard. For example, at my location station, Royal York, there is a kiosk inside for buying papers, etc., but it is not accessible unless you pass through the turnstile. There could be kiosks at both ends of the station. At the Jane St. station, it is outside, so that you can purchase even if you are not a rider. It would be an idea to make these kiosks available to both riders and non-riders, thereby eliminating the need for all the newspaper boxes outside the station and boosting the revenue at the kiosk.</p> <p>Re the info posts - I finally saw one of the information posts as I was driving around Queen's Park on Saturday afternoon. They look great but, the "I" is too small. In other countries you can easily find information because the "I" is large enough that you can see it from everywhere. I only knew what this post was because I had my introduction at your session.</p> <p>Re the bus shelters - I was looking at the bus shelters again, with the incumbent bus stop pole, garbage bins, etc. and wondered if that could all be integrated. People who are in the bus shelter can't seem to get outside to the rubbish bin. Is it possible to integrate these more?</p> <p>Re advertising - please try and limit this - nothing makes a street look cluttered than all this unnecessary advertising. I know that we need this for revenue because of our inadequate funding, but let's try and limit it as much as we can.</p> <p>Again, thank you for an information evening - I look forward to the next session.</p>
<p>March 6</p>	<p>To the Clean &amp; Beautiful City Initiative:</p> <p>Please consider benches for the city that are NOT skateboard friendly. If you don't understand what I mean, please check out the once beautiful black granite benches that occupy the Metro Hall Square off King Street and the benches between the WSB and CBC buildings off Front St. near John St. Over the years skateboarders have used these benches for their recreation and have consequently marked up these benches with ugly scratches. Traditionally benches were designed for temporary respite from walking * or as in the above examples respite from the workplace.</p> <p>Either these parks be used as places of relaxation or by skateboarders, but the two functions cannot co-exist * happily.</p> <p>To balance this suggestion, so that the City (and I) are not perceived as anti-skateboarders * PLEASE CONSIDER CREATING A CITY SKATEBOARD PARK, which is safe to use and accessible to Inner City kids.</p>
<p>March 9</p>	<p>High Speed Internet</p> <p>Benefits:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Revenue stream for the city is maintained, possibly enhanced</li> <li>2. Amount of advertising is kept to a minimum and in better taste</li> <li>3. Provide even more high-speed internet coverage and choice to Torontonians</li> </ol> <p>Solution: Here's my win-win proposal: London England (corp) has partnered with a Wi-Fi Internet firm to provide high speed access using the city's street furniture (see article below). Mayor Miller recently praised his decision to sell the street lamps to Toronto Hydro Telecom. The street lamps allow Toronto Hydro Telecom to provide ubiquitous high speed service and this worries the incumbents such as Telus, Bell and Rogers. Toronto can take the London lead and build street furniture (benches, info booths, garbage bins, etc) that are designed to accommodate the wi-fi units out of sight.</p>

	<p>Wi-Fi units are quite small and do not require a large amount of space. Auction off the wi-fi "seats" in chunks in order to create competition and to drive the price up. The furniture would be allowed to have a small emblem that identifies it as a hot spot and the carrier. Companies such as Bell have to buy or lease space in buildings in order to get coverage and that is expensive and has to be negotiated one building at a time.</p> <p>An alternative idea - Build integrated newspaper boxes into the sides and backs of benches and other street furniture. Actually would reduce the number of pieces of furniture on the street and still provides a revenue stream that is ad free.</p> <p>This may could be combined with my previous idea to maximize revenue or to replace my previous idea if by providing the Bell's of the world access for wi-fi spots, you're creating competition for the city owned Toronto Hydro Telecom.</p> <p>Here's a few more that are related to the freight &amp; shipping industry:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Canada post: Integrated mailboxes and drop boxes (mailperson letter pickup).</li> <li>2. Purolator Courier(Canada Post), FedEx, UPS, etc: integrated drop boxes</li> </ol> <p>Integrated (and small) vending machines: nothing tacky or perishable. Items such as calling cards, cellphone refills, gum, energy bars, access cards for wi-fi hot spots etc.</p>
<p>March 9</p>	<p>In the summer of 2004 when the OMG/Eucan contract came up for renewal, city staff recommended that sidewalk garbage facilities be returned to public ownership and be advertising-free, and further indicated there was little if any income to be lost by such a decision. This recommendation was supported by city-wide BIA's and concerned citizens.</p> <p>Yet members of Council and Staff, while touting the goal of a "Beautiful City", continue to pursue policies that pollute our public space and public infrastructure with intrusively large and ugly excuses-for-advertising, now prettified with the name 'street furniture'.</p> <p>Invading small business areas and pedestrian vistas with ad-bins (or wrapping our transit system with commercials or turning a public square into a shopping channel) is a failure to preserve publicly owned property and, by extension, the social goods that public ownership enhances -- beauty, civility, and civic pride. The city is not only giving away priceless public property for a tuneless song, but cynically selling the eyes and minds of its citizens to advertisers. We urge you to revise present policies, and reject future plans, for the privatization of Toronto's streetscape.</p>
<p>March 23</p>	<p>Hello, and please find below my comments on the Street Furniture proposal, which follow my attendance at the Metro Hall rm 308 meeting on it.</p> <p>Basically, the entire meeting was strange, because it started with a problem, supposedly pressing in urgency, of cleaning up the 'street furniture' in Toronto, which has looked about the same for 30 years at least.</p> <p>The instant solution exposes the real motive: a single large RFP, part of a bidding war between large advertisers, which will generate new revenue for the city, at the price of selling out residents to massive advertising.</p> <p>The meeting was about selling the supposed necessity of this outcome.</p> <p>Underlying the transaction being considered is that the attention of residents</p>

	<p>is somehow not their own to do with as they please - a curious presumption that providing city services to citizens can be extended to selling the right to manipulate their beliefs through advertising.</p> <p>It's also interesting that this RFP is proposed just as a bylaw against poster and non paid signage was being passed. Clearly, it's not really about quality of street appearance, but whether those with a view are willing to pay off the city for the right to speak.</p> <p>The overwhelming single common view of all people at the meeting I attended was the hatred and objection to advertising on city streets. The people don't want this deal at all - and I mean, almost every person of 200 objected. This was despite blandishments offered by several city speakers in favour.</p> <p>Also, the amount of money raised would be trivial by the standards of the city budget - a few million a year perhaps? Compared to \$7 billion a year. But the effect on street culture - the obvious signs of corporatism, in place of the true collective of a city - would be directly against the aesthetic of so many of the cities cited as examples with good "street furniture".</p> <p>If my taxes were raised to replace all ad revenues expected from this contract, I doubt I would pay \$10 more a year. I'd be glad to pay it for ad free streets.</p> <p>Please note, this deal is huge for the winning bidder - likely \$200M a year, if Toronto sees royalties of 10%, and takes in a mere \$20M. For comparison, MFP was only \$140M over seven years. I suggest the closest scrutiny would be barely adequate.</p> <p>Also, the province is playing a game of chicken with city needs, and if we sell the city out for a few million, they'll just reduce supplemental payments to match the new revenue. How low will we go? Given the strained relation with the province, I doubt the city will net any new money on advertising.</p> <p>Advertising is not a service. I invite the city to reconsider that it exists to provide real services, not compromise the integrity of our community by ever making this RFP.</p>
<p>March 24</p>	<p>Megabins: unsightly, energy-consuming and impractical - sorry Mayor Miller!</p> <p>U-can bins: Their openings are too narrow (as are those of Megabins) which means that even moderately oversize garbage (eg even small bags of garbage and discarded coconuts on Spadina Ave) is left on the street around them - transforming these supposed garbage disposal units into unsightly, insanitary garbage traps.</p> <p>Cans with swing open lids (like those installed at provincial parks) might be more practical. If people dump really outsize garbage in them, so be it. Better that than dumped on the street.</p> <p>Garbage cans near garbage sources: an abundance of garbage is produced by ATMs (slips and discarded envelopes) and by fast food outlets (paper plates and mugs etc.) Maybe more should be done to encourage (require?) these places to place garbage cans of adequate size near their premises or to even tax the garbage they produce?</p>

	<p>Meanwhile, I am amazed at how clean College St (Bathurst-Spadina) has been since its reconstruction without garbage cans of any kind. There is an interesting human dynamic at play here, one worth heeding!</p>
<p>April 11</p>	<p>The Toronto Public Space Committee submitted the following comments:</p> <p><b>Getting the facts: a cost-benefit-analysis</b>  It is shocking that City Council has already decided that the Coordinated Street Furniture Program should be completely funded by advertising dollars. They have committed themselves to a process that will put more advertising on our streets at the expense of design, functionality, accessibility, safety and aesthetics. Their decision could not have been based on any real cost-benefit analysis because Council has never asked staff how much it would cost the City to purchase street furniture. How many millions are we saving? With a one-time capital investment spread out over 10-15 years, with very little operating costs, is this really a budget item that we can't afford?</p> <p><b>Functionality &amp; usability</b>  Toronto's street furniture has to work properly as its <i>primary</i> function. The design of the items should be driven by the needs of pedestrians and the end-user. The Astral "Info Pillars", for example, have two panels with ads that face pedestrians, and one panel with information that faces away from the sidewalk. Eucan's MegaBins function well as billboards, but with hard-to-find receptacles, poor placement and poor labeling they are virtually useless as garbage cans. The guidelines in the RFP (Request for Proposals) should be comprehensive, specific and must meet the standards of Toronto's Accessibility Guidelines.</p> <p><b>Safety</b>  We need to see much more emphasis on safety than we have seen in recent deals with Viacom, Astral and Eucan. Some of these items are too large (the MegaBin is a good example), blocking sightlines for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists. As well, glass panels on transit shelters and phonebooths provide a level of visibility that discourages physical and sexual assault. Recently both Viacom and Bell and covered many of their windows with translucent or opaque advertising that creates an unsafe environment.</p> <p><b>Use of electricity</b>  Electricity should only be used for items where it benefits the functionality of the item. Illuminated advertising is a waste of electricity in a time when we need to be reducing consumption. We do not need electric garbage cans or electric benches in Toronto, even if they are powered by wind or solar technology which depends on batteries that are hard to dispose of safely.</p> <p><b>Placement</b>  Aside from design criteria for the size, height and shape of the items we need to see specific requirements for how and where the items will be placed of the sidewalk. Over and over, we have seen advertising companies place their items in unusual places and at awkward angles to maximise the visibility of their ads by car drivers. Items should be placed based on the needs of pedestrians, the needs of the end-user and also to meet the requirements of Toronto's Accessibility Guidelines.</p> <p><b>Proximity determined by use</b>  Another problem we have seen with the items produced by advertising companies is that they need to leave a certain distance between the items so as not to block the advertisements. This means that a bench can't be placed beside a garbage can and a bus shelter can't be near an information pillar. The City should not be constrained by the needs of the ad companies when deciding how close to place the items. Therefore, the proximity of items has to be outlined in the RFP.</p>

**"An opportunity to reduce the total amount of advertising while simultaneously increasing its overall value and revenue for the City"**

This quote from City documents sounds nice, but we'd like to know how the City plans on measuring the "total amount" of advertising. So far, they have used square feet. This is a misleading figure that does not take other important factors into account such as illumination and height. The best way to measure the impact of advertising on a community is by the price paid by the advertiser.

**Excluding ads on certain items**

Phonebooths, light poles, benches, mailboxes, flower baskets, fire hydrants, street signs, traffic lights and bicycle racks are all included in the staff report as items that could be included in the RFP. The report does not state which items might have ads on them. This needs to be made clear.

**Excluding certain items completely, from the RFP (or at least specifying public ownership in RFP).**

Items that are currently functioning properly and are owned by the public, should not be redesigned and sold to an advertising company. This includes light poles, mailboxes, fire hydrants, street signs and traffic lights. These items should be excluded from the RFP, or specifically stated in the RFP that they would remain public property, even if they are re-designed.

**Criteria and enforcement of maintenance**

Maintenance has been a big problem with the existing Eucan contract. The doors never worked properly, the sticker labels have not been maintained properly and the workers who clean posters off the bins with pressure washers, leave piles of wet pulp on the sidewalk. Maintenance expectations should be **made** clear in the RFP, and a mechanism for enforcement should be created.

**Prevent new furniture deals outside of the RFP**

There is no point in trying to take a coordinated approach to street furniture in 2006, if another company can come along in 2007 and request to install another piece of ad-furniture that is not part of the RFP. We would like to see a motion at council that prevents private contracts for street furniture to take place outside of the RFP, for the duration of the contract.

**Facilitating public discourse**

We would like to see some of the street furniture items equipped with poster boards for community announcements. Instead of allowing private companies to contribute more invasive advertising to a neighbourhood, why not give the neighbours a chance to express *themselves*?

**Aesthetic compatibility with streetscape**

Toronto's street furniture should be designed in the context of the diverse look and feel of Toronto's neighbourhoods.

**Ad-free zones**

Some areas of the city should be ad-free. This could include: in parks, near schools, in front of Civic Centres, near religious buildings, and on residential streets.

**Public evaluation**

We have been disappointed with recent "surveys" facilitated by the City. We feel they have been characterised by loaded (biased) questions, lack of information and poor data analysis. So far, with the Coordinated Street Furniture Program, we are feeling encouraged and optimistic about the process. We have seen a genuine attempt by City Staff to reach out and gather public input. We appreciate this and hope to see it continue.

April 12	<p>Please, please say goodbye to those awful monstrosities. Am I the only one who has had potential jaywalkers pop out from behind one of those things? What if it were some small child? God help us all. A whole class from school could hide behind one. What about during the Winter when the horizontal opening area (brilliant, eh) is covered with snow? Do you honestly believe anyone will risk plunging their hand through the snow pile to deposit their refuse? Think again! Dropping it on the ground is way safer. Or any other time as the grit, grime and other unmentionables accumulate on the horizontal surface? And what a waste! Refuse openings at both ends when only one is actually accessible by anyone. Did anybody think about the poor fella charged with having to empty one of those. Or the traffic piling up behind his truck while he takes the requisite two to three times longer to complete the task? They even require electricity! Who's paying for that? Who pays to run wires into it? Who'll maintain it? Surely not the guy mentioned above and certainly not the guy changing the advertisement sheets. And man, do they take up a lot of room! Aren't our sidewalks cluttered enough with hazardous obstacles?</p>
April 12	<p>I have been watching the old eglinton bus station at young/eglinton - it would be nice if they built a 2-3 story structure, perhaps stores on the bottom, offices second floor, and a cement park with a great deal of garden and grass area with a few trees on the roof. I have been dissatisfied with the amount of flat roofs in this city that have no support for garden space - i believe we should be making this as green a city as we possibly can =) and of course, what is a nice tidy green area without benches</p>