

TORONTO STAFF REPORT

May 18 2006

To: Planning and Transportation Committee

From: Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning

Subject: Union Station District Plan
Area bounded by Bay Street, Wellington Street, Simcoe Street, the Rail Corridor,
Rees Street and Lake Shore Boulevard/Harbour Street
Ward 20 - Trinity Spadina, and Ward 28 - Toronto Centre-Rosedale

Purpose:

A Union Station precinct study was undertaken at the direction of City Council at its meeting of November 30, December 1 and 2, 2004. This report presents these findings as the Union Station District Study and recommends approval of the Union Station District Plan, including a number of specific recommendations pertaining to improvements to the public realm surrounding Union Station.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

The Union Station District Plan has prioritized the Union Station Master Plan initiatives and identified certain opportunities and constraints to implementing them. The first and immediate priority is construction of the south entrance to Union Station below the rail corridor. GO Transit is undertaking construction within and below the rail corridor as part of its rehabilitation project commencing later this year and has offered to incorporate the necessary tunnelling work to create the south entrance as part of its project, subject to the City reimbursing GO Transit for this work over two years. A preliminary estimate of the cost is \$6,000,000. As City Council must commit to this project immediately, it is recommended that the \$3,000,000 in 2007 and \$3,000,000 in 2008 be included in the Union Station 5-Year Capital Plan, funded from debt until an alternate source of funds can be provided.

Other high priority projects include the commencement of environmental assessments and/or other feasibility studies for the re-design of Front Street and a new northwest connection to the PATH system. The funding for these studies can be drawn from various programs' 2006 Approved Capital and Operating Budgets. Any requirement to draw upon similar funds next year would be contingent upon Council's approval of the 2007 Operating and Capital budgets. City staff will be exploring the feasibility of offsetting some of these study costs through potential cost-sharing arrangements with other Union Station operators.

The Master Plan Implementation Working Group will be reporting on a strategy to fund and implement the Master Plan initiatives shortly. In addition, the Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer should be directed to pursue federal and provincial funding for this project.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and concurs with the financial impact statement.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that City Council:

- (1) adopt the Union Station District Plan dated May, 2006 prepared by architects Alliance, in association with ERA Architects, Entra Consultants, Metropolitan Knowledge International, Bruce Mau Design and Diana Gerrard Landscape Architects;
- (2) authorize execution of the necessary agreements, satisfactory to the Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer and the City Solicitor, to allow GO Transit to incorporate construction of the south access route as part of its Trainshed Rehabilitation Project to be cost-shared with the City over a two year period;
- (3) commit to debt funding in the amount of \$3,000,000 gross and net, in each of 2007 and 2008, for a total of \$6,000,000, to fund construction of the south entrance to Union Station below the rail corridor by GO Transit pending identification of other potential sources of funds and that staff be directed to include these amounts in the Union Station 5-Year Capital Plan;
- (4) authorize the Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer, in consultation with the Master Plan Implementation Working Group, to pursue federal and provincial funding for the Master Plan initiatives, including prioritizing all or a portion of the \$25,000,000 offered by the federal government to implement these initiatives;
- (5) reconfirm the importance of requiring the owner of 25 York Street to build, operate and maintain a public building to function as the south entrance to Union Station in accordance with the Revised Precinct B Precinct Agreement and the Union Station District Plan as a major public space and south façade to Union Station;
- (6) authorize and direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division to take the necessary action on a priority basis to commence environmental assessments for the creation of a northwest PATH connection and improvements to Front Street West between York and Bay Streets, in accordance with the design directions noted in the Union Station District Plan;
- (7) identify the Union Station District as a prime candidate for a pilot project to implement Intelligent Transportation Systems or other transportation initiatives to enhance pedestrian movement; and

- (8) appropriate City staff be authorized and directed to take all necessary actions to give effect thereto.

Background:

Council has recognized the importance of the Union Station district to the efficient functioning of daily life within the City. The goal of maintaining and improving the Station and surrounding district is enunciated in the Official Plan, the Railway Lands East Secondary Plan and the Master Plan for Union Station. With the adoption of the Union Station Master Plan by Council at its meeting of November 30, December 1 and 2, 2004, the importance of the Station was again emphasized. The Master Plan detailed the criteria for the restoration and refurbishment of both the Station and its surrounds. At that time, Council directed staff to undertake an urban design study and to determine whether the area around the Station warranted designation as a Heritage Conservation District.

architectsAlliance, in association with E.R.A. Architects, Entra Consultants, Metropolitan Knowledge International, Bruce Mau Design and Diana Gerrard Landscape Architects were selected through a public request for proposals to undertake the study which includes a heritage conservation district study, associated transportation work and an urban design plan for the area surrounding Union Station.

The proposed Union Station District Plan sets out a thorough analysis of the range of issues supporting recognition of the district as a Heritage Conservation District and provides policies to support the enhancement of the public realm and improvements to the pedestrian environment. These recommendations are supported by an analysis of traffic and transportation data and a study of current development applications in the area. A report recommending the designation of the Union Station District as a Heritage Conservation District will be considered at the May 18, 2006 meeting of the Toronto Preservation Board.

Comments:

The Union Station District is defined as an area bounded by Yonge Street on the east, Wellington Street on the north, Simcoe and Rees Streets to the west and Lake Shore Boulevard/Harbour Street to the south. It is the primary gateway to the central core of Toronto. Union Station delivers over 43 million GO Transit and VIA Rail passengers into this district annually and it is the first area of the City that many visitors see on arrival. It is forecast that the overall number of commuter and other rail passengers will more than double within the next 20 years. With the provision of a new second platform for the TTC's Union Station subway and a potential link to Pearson Airport, the significance of Union Station and its environs will become even more critical to the health of the City. The district also provides access to the major sports and entertainment venues in the City, to the office and commercial core and is increasingly becoming the focus for many new residential condominiums in the central core, the Railway Lands, the Waterfront and the St. Lawrence areas. As the front door to our City, it is important that the district function well and showcase the urban quality of this City.

The design study process began with a thorough analysis of the urban condition, including its patterns, significant heritage, complex transportation linkages and salient urban design characteristics. Throughout the study process, City staff and the consultants met with a variety of stakeholders and the public, including the Union Station Revitalization Public Advisory Group, the Toronto Pedestrian Committee, the Toronto Cycling Committee, taxi industry representatives, landowners, including the Royal York Hotel, representatives of the Royal Bank Plaza owners, Public Works Canada staff and various community representatives. A design charette focusing on Union Plaza and the south entrance to Union Station was held with the landowners to the south and three public forums to discuss the issues, findings and recommendations were held.

The Union Station District Plan identifies the following as catalysts for urban improvement:

- the creation of a Heritage Conservation District with clear guidelines for preserving and enhancing the historic character of the area;
- the development of an improved public realm that shifts the design focus to the pedestrian sphere; and
- enhanced connections and flows that acknowledge the multi-directional “hub” that Union Station has become.

Throughout the last century, the Union Station District received large capital investments that resulted in cultural assets and some of the grandest civic architecture in the country. Its location adjacent to the financial, entertainment and administrative centres requires the district to play an important role in moving people in, out and around the central core. The main urban design initiatives of this study are rooted in the goal of developing a clear and coherent public realm. The proposed Union Station Heritage Conservation District identifies district and heritage features and informs an approach to urban design that will protect the existing features of the district while enhancing the sense of the public realm.

As a City-owned building, critical to the future of Toronto, any revitalization of Union Station must be supported by a variety of public works in the surrounding district to complement the Station’s continued role as the busiest inter-modal transit hub in Canada. This study has undertaken a comprehensive review of the development issues which impact on the operation of the station. Attached to this report is an Executive Summary of the study. The complete study document is available upon request and will be posted on the City’s web site.

The study examines the Union Station District in terms of its heritage, the public realm and enhanced connections. The boldest changes proposed in the Union Station District Plan include the creation of a grand urban room on Front Street and a unique public realm south of the station at Union Plaza. This would require major changes to the surface of the streets and sidewalks to enhance the pedestrian environment and delineate uses. Immediate attention is also directed to the creation of enhanced connections to the south and northwest.

The plan provides a number of recommendations addressing actions or design philosophies prioritized as either short or mid to long-term initiatives.

Short term priorities include:

- create a Heritage Conservation District
- initiate an environmental assessment process for Front Street improvements, including a review of taxi operations
- reorganize and formalize taxi and pick up and drop off areas on Front Street
- create a connected network of bicycle facilities, including co-ordinated bicycle signage
- develop a cycling amenity strategy
- maximize public space
- improve Union Station's south entrance capacity and civic prominence
- develop a simplified strategy for all streetscape elements and a consistent vocabulary
- consolidate Street vending amenities
- create a "Pedestrian Priority Zone"
- identify opportunities for Intelligent transportation Systems (ITS) initiatives
- complete a feasibility study and implementation strategy for a north-west PATH extension

Mid to long term initiatives include:

- promote the heritage character of the district
- create major public spaces that relate to and complement the heritage character of the district
- aspire to the highest standards of design excellence
- redesign Front Street as a grand urban room
- reclaim streets with high quality materials
- increase capacity for dedicated taxi waiting areas
- enhance taxi marshalling opportunities and eliminate restrictions on taxi stands
- implement infrastructure improvements for bicycle accessibility
- create Union Plaza to the south as a unique pedestrian square through use of architectural interventions
- implement major changes to surface treatment of streets and sidewalks in the district, starting with Front Street
- enhance intersection pedestrian crossings
- coordinate pedestrian environment enhancements with improvements to Union Station public realm
- carry out further investigation of short and long term options for mid block crossings in conjunction with the revitalization of Union Station

Of the report's overall conclusions, the principal recommendations that have the greatest significance for City Council are outlined below in order of importance:

- a) there is an immediate need to construct a new south access route from Union Station beneath the existing VIA Rail concourse to Union Plaza adjacent to the west of the entrance to the Air Canada Centre;

- b) City Council should reconfirm the requirement for the developer of Block 4 (immediately to the south of Union Station) to provide the Union Station Public Building at the north end of Union Plaza in accordance with the Railways Lands Precinct Agreements and as further defined in the Union Station District Plan as a grand south façade to Union Station;
- c) the design concept for Union Plaza should be implemented in conjunction with the development applications already under consideration for the blocks to the south of Union Station;
- d) in order to take advantage of the reconstruction of Front Street required as part of the TTC's Union Station subway second platform project, staff should immediately initiate an environmental assessment to review the options identified in the Union Station District Plan to recommend improvements to Front Street West between York and Bay Streets;
- e) further studies related to the development of a northwest connection to the existing PATH network, including an environmental assessment if necessary, should also be undertaken as soon as possible; and
- f) the Union Station District should be identified as a pilot project for implementation of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS).

As a result of the review of development applications in the area, architectsAlliance identified an immediate window of opportunity to develop a south entrance to Union Station in conjunction with the south public building identified in the Railway Lands East Secondary Plan and secured in the Precinct B Precinct Agreement with the owner of 25 York Street East. If not acted upon before 25 York Street (also known as Block 4) is developed, the ability to tunnel a south entrance into Union Station may no longer be feasible except at inordinate cost.

Commencing this year, GO Transit will be undertaking a significant repair and improvement program to the rail corridor including track improvements, signals and repairs to the trainshed roof. As part of this program, GO will be required to shut down two tracks at a time to undertake the various improvements. To maintain its service, GO is in the process of preparing a proposal call to design and build a new platform between the southernmost passenger rail tracks (13/14), including tunnelling below the rail corridor to provide egress from the platform. In discussions between staff, GO has offered to expand the scope of its project, scheduled to commence construction in 2007, to include the south entrance to Union Station. A preliminary estimate of the cost to construct this entrance is \$6,000,000 pending more detailed design.

This window of opportunity to create the south entrance to Union Station must not be missed. In addition to creating a new south façade to Union Station, this south access is an important component in a fire life safety strategy to handle the potential increases in commuter activity at Union Station over the next 20 years.

The Master Plan Implementation Working Group is developing a strategy to prioritize, fund and implement the Master Plan's public initiatives in accordance with the design principles

enunciated in the District Plan. The working group is expected to report to City Council shortly. In the meantime, it would be prudent to increase the capital budget for Union Station by \$6,000,000 over two years (2007 and 2008) to cover the City's anticipated share of the construction to be undertaken by GO Transit. If approved, City staff will negotiate the necessary documentation with GO Transit.

As noted above, the Revised Precinct B Precinct Agreement requires the owner of 25 York Street to build, operate and maintain a public building to function as a major public space and south façade to Union Station. City Council should ensure that this requirement is met and the south public building developed at no cost to the City in accordance with the design guidelines identified in the Railway Lands East Secondary Plan and the principles enunciated in the Union Station District Plan.

To the north, the District Plan reviews a number of options for re-design of Front Street as recommended in the Master Plan. Another opportunity exists to co-ordinate the District Plan design proposals with the reconstruction of Front Street that will occur as part of the TTC's Union Station subway second platform project. It is therefore necessary to commence the necessary environmental assessment as soon as possible to take advantage of the resultant cost efficiencies.

Increasing pedestrian activity in the Union Station District must be addressed. Mid-block crossings and the ratios of pedestrians to vehicles must be addressed in non-traditional ways. The study has recommended identifying the Union Station District as a pilot project area for implementation of Intelligent Transportation Systems under consideration by the General Manager, Transportation Services. With the proposed expansion of GO Transit operations into a west concourse in Union Station, creation of a new path connection to the northwest will become a priority. Planning should begin now.

Conclusions:

The Union Station District Plan is the result of a comprehensive review and consultation process. It recognizes the fundamental significance of Union Station and the district surrounding it to the economic health of the central core. The value of the station will be maintained by having a safe, clean and beautiful environment around this main point of entry to the City. The economic vigour of the central core is predicated on a high level of operational efficiency to ensure that the growth expected over the next several decades can be sustained. Regardless of how well the Station is restored or by whom, the district must showcase the talent and character of the City while accommodating the planned levels of growth. The Union Station District Plan addresses these significant issues and provides a blueprint for the future.

Private development in the area and public infrastructure projects at Union Station provide both opportunities and constraints that require immediate action. The City must seize the opportunity to redefine the Union Station District and restore its civic prominence.

Contact:

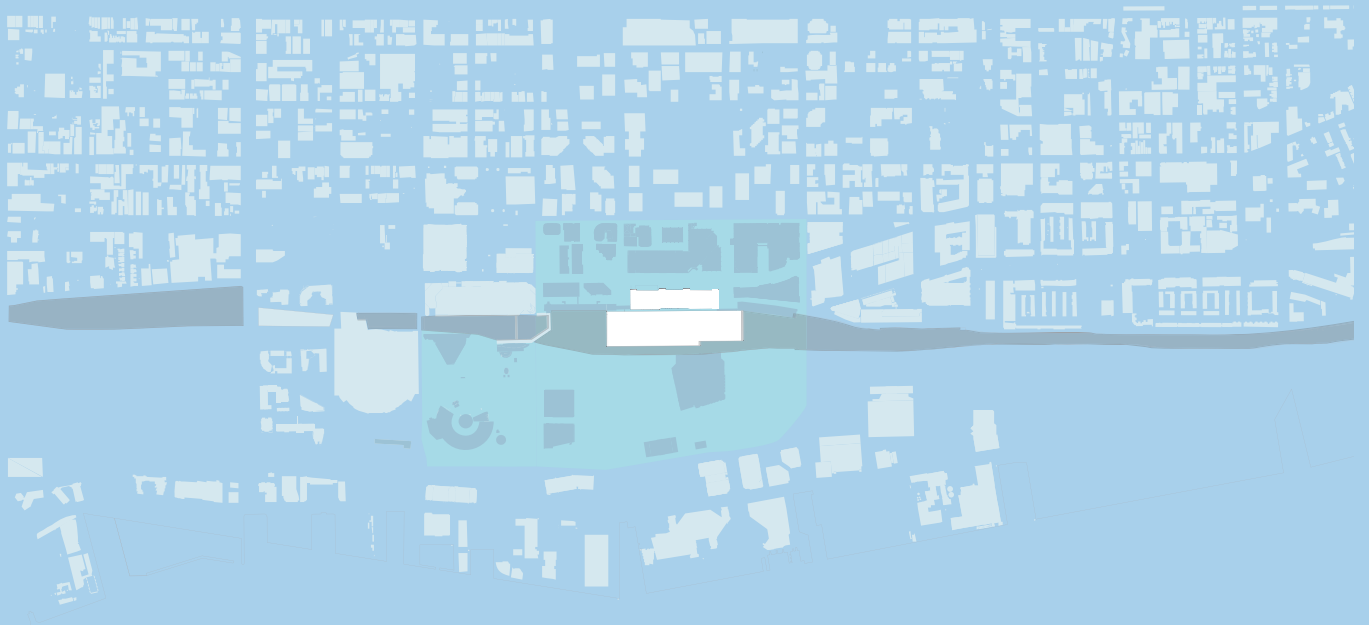
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List of Attachments: Attachment 1: Union Station District Plan, Executive Summary

union station district plan
executive summary



2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. 1 A GRAND VISION FOR UNION STATION

The Union Station District Plan uses a comprehensive heritage analysis to distill relevant urban planning principles that respect the significant history of the district, while allowing it to thrive as a vital, multi-modal transportation hub.

The process began with a thorough analysis of the urban condition—its patterns, its significant heritage, its complex transportation linkages, and its salient urban design characteristics. It also included input from key stakeholders.

Integral to the development of the plan was the delineation of the Union Station Heritage Conservation District. The following plan acts as a key to the three areas identified within the study as catalysts for urban improvement:

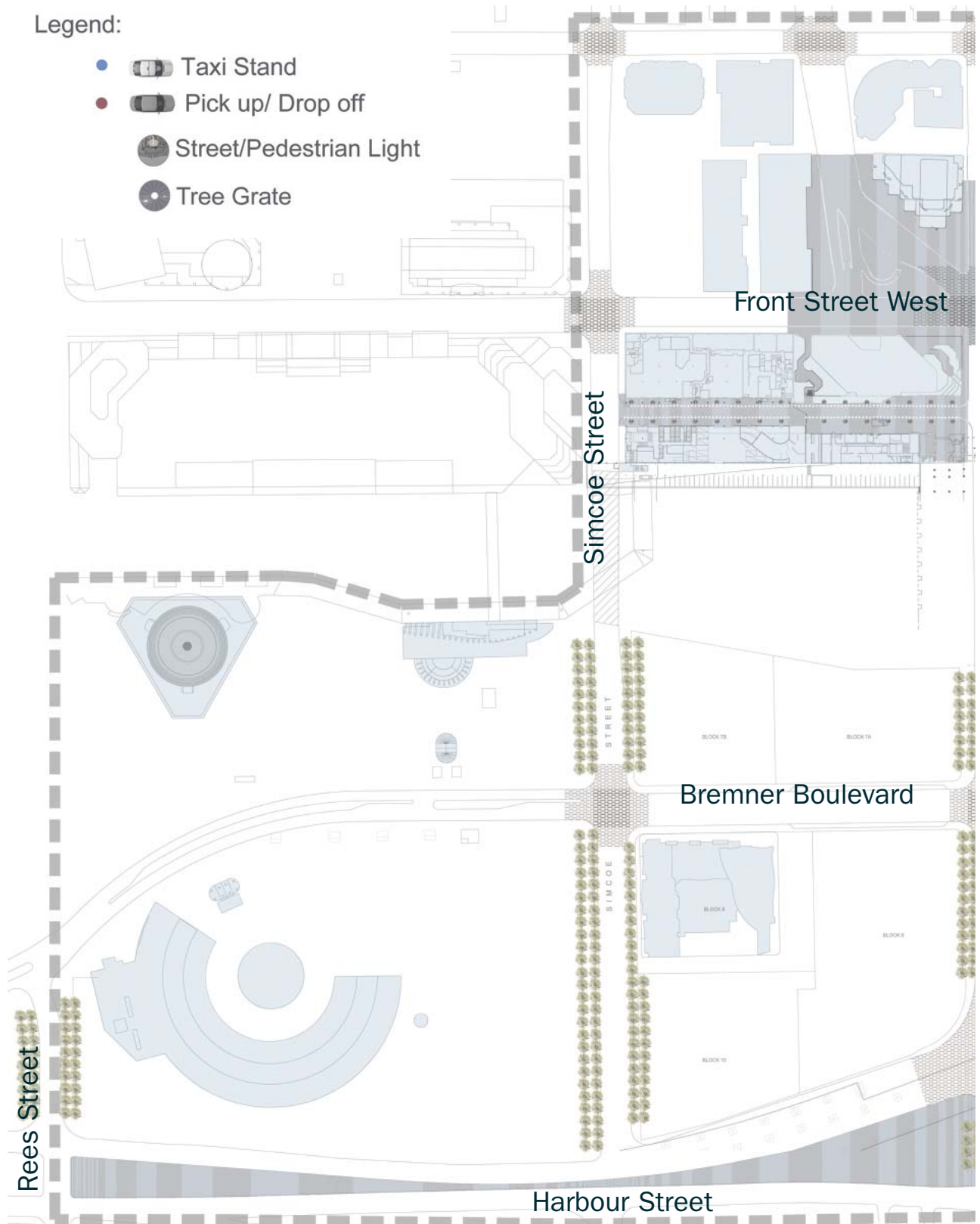
- The creation of a [Heritage Conservation District](#) with clear guidelines for preserving and enhancing the historic character of the area;
- The development of an improved [public realm](#) that shifts the design focus to the pedestrian sphere; and,
- [Enhanced connections and flow](#) that acknowledge the multi-directional “hub” that Union Station has become.



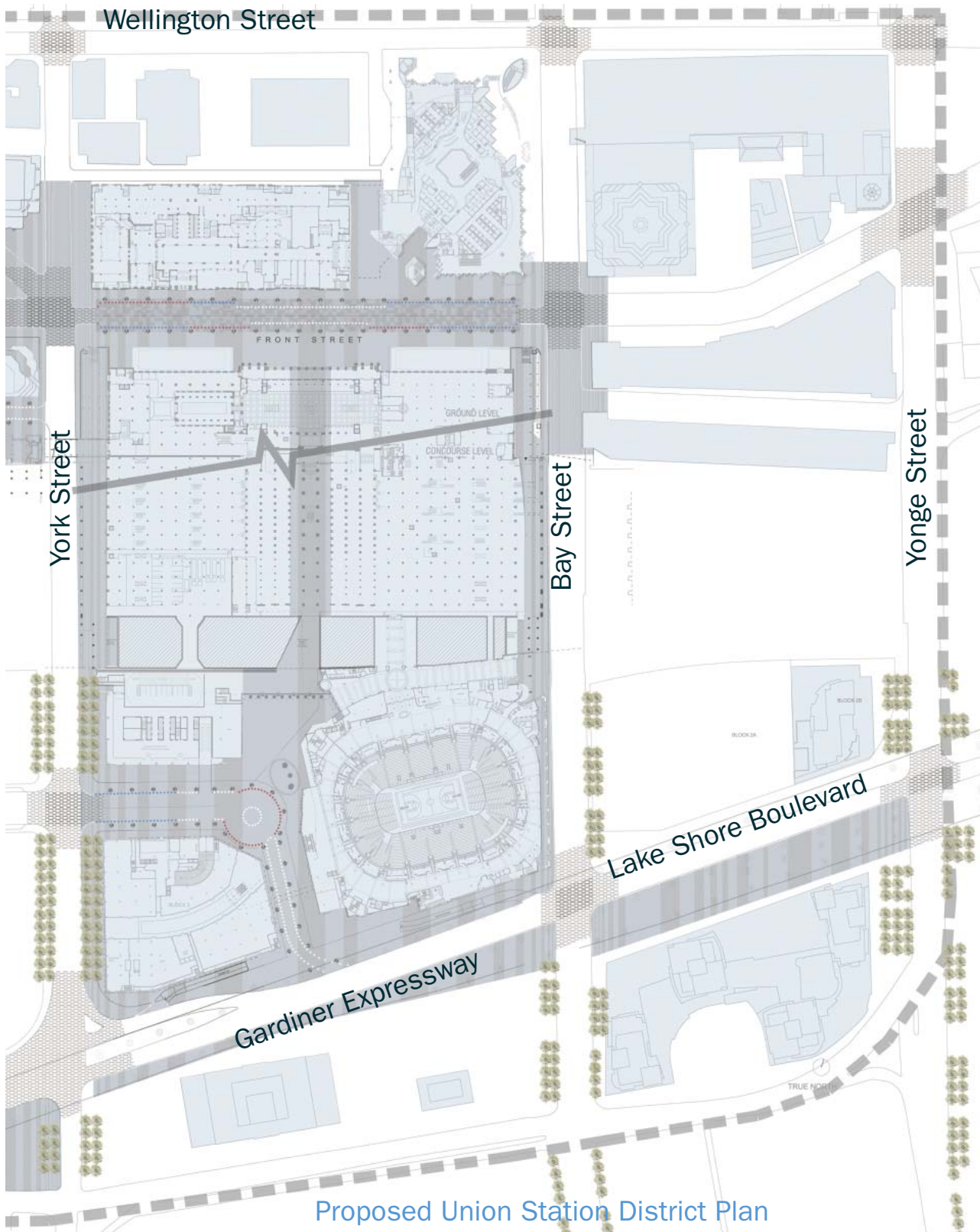
A night view of Front Street looking east at Union Station. The image shows an urban design strategy that uses high-quality materials extending from building face to building face and incorporates a new, simplified language of street furniture elements. The lighting strategy brings heritage buildings to life at night and de-clutters the public realm by introducing a simplified language of taxi stand signage and street lighting.

Legend:

- Taxi Stand
- Pick up/ Drop off
- Street/Pedestrian Light
- Tree Grate



The **Proposed Union Station District Plan** shows the two public realm areas that are the focus of immediate improvements: Front Street and Union Plaza. Both public space initiatives involve a consolidated pavement and high-quality streetscape strategy, with the intent of creating enhanced public realms that extend from building face to building face. These public areas are intended to be simple open



Proposed Union Station District Plan

spaces that facilitate pedestrian flow, further enhanced by rebalancing pedestrian connections at intersections. Trees native to the area are used to identify north - south linkages to the waterfront and emphasize east - west main routes. The Proposed Union Station District Plan supports the City's proposed extension of Simcoe Street to help alleviate traffic congestion of both cars and pedestrians between the city core and the waterfront.



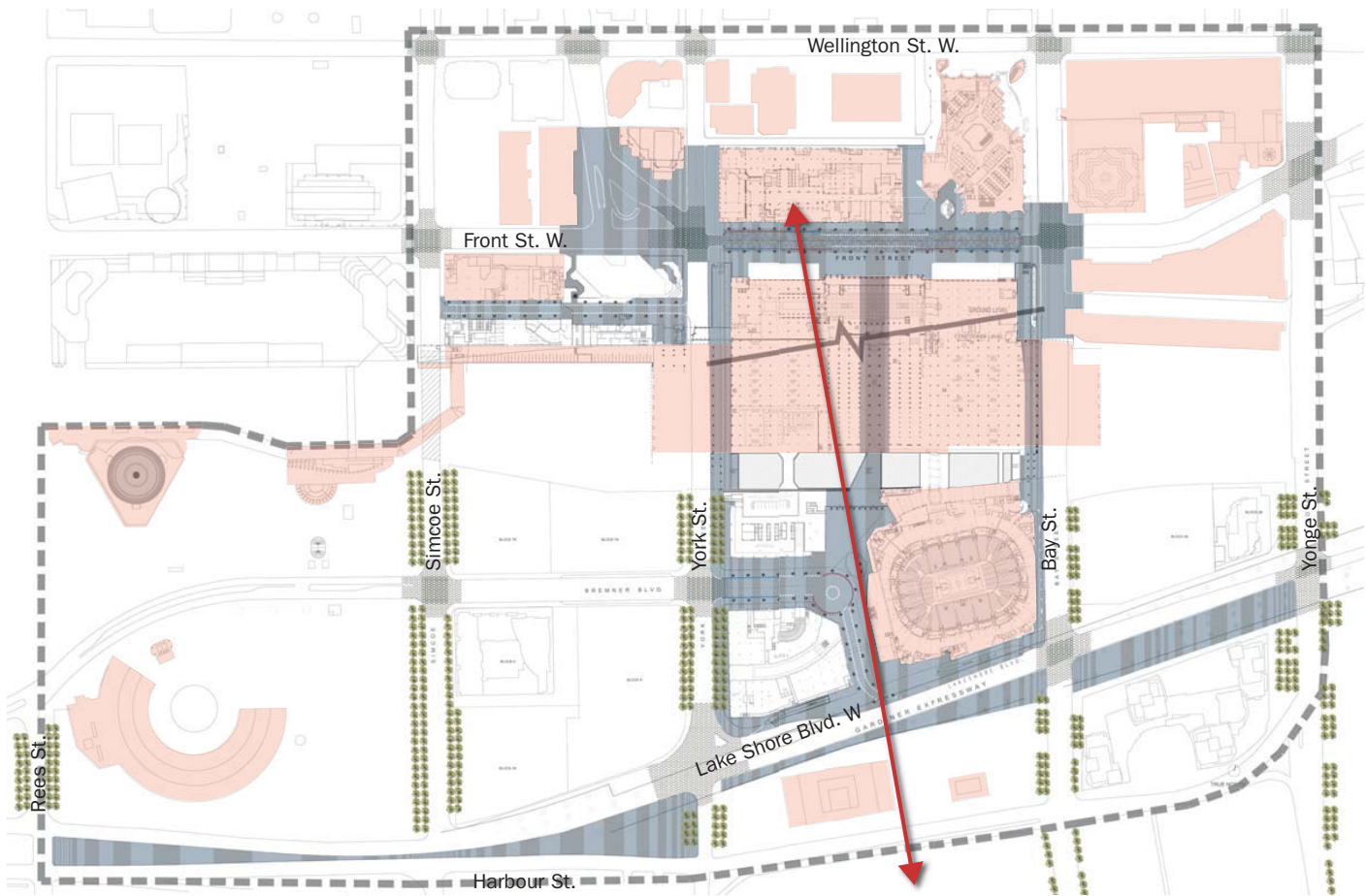
Front Street looking east at Union Station and the Royal York Hotel (1931). This view shows the clarity of the relationship of Union Station and the Royal York Hotel. Even though pedestrian demand has increased dramatically, the amount of sidewalk space available today is not significantly different from that provided in 1931. Note also how the lack of clutter and the absence of a median and extraneous signage clarifies the public realm.

2.2 HERITAGE

The Union Station District has served a variety of functions since Toronto's founding. Throughout the last century, it received extremely large capital investments that resulted in cultural assets and some of the grandest civic architecture in the country. Adjacent to the financial, entertainment and administrative centres, the Union Station District plays an important role in moving people in, out and around the downtown core.

The heritage character of the district is an assembly of buildings, streets and open spaces whose collective history and interdependence represent an important asset to the downtown core. The overlapping development and planning of Toronto's railway lands, Waterfront and central core; historic and monumental architecture; as well as physical patterns of interrelated function, are key heritage attributes that contribute to Union Station and its surroundings' significant cultural heritage value.

The main urban design initiatives of this study are rooted in the goal of developing a clear and coherent public realm. The Union Station Heritage Conservation District Plan identifies district and heritage features and informs an approach to urban design that will protect the existing features of the district while enhancing the sense of the public realm.



- Contributing Buildings
- Royal York View Corridor

Heritage Conservation District Components

This plan of heritage conservation district components identifies “contributing buildings” – or buildings that add to the heritage character of the district and their relationship to one another. It also illustrates the goal of preserving views of designated historical buildings – namely the Royal York Hotel and Union Station – through the creation of view corridors.

Guiding Principles

PRESERVE ORIGINAL OR HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT MATERIALS AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES THAT CORRESPOND TO THE DISTRICT'S PERIODS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Distinguishing historic architectural elements and the character of a building's structure should not be destroyed. Removal of historic architectural features is strongly discouraged, and is only appropriate if these features cannot be restored.

REPAIR RATHER THAN REPLACE

Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced wherever possible. Continual maintenance can prevent deterioration.

REPLACE WITH COMPARABLE FEATURES OR MATERIALS

Removal or alteration of significant architectural features should be avoided whenever possible. However, if replacement of these features is unavoidable, historic evidence—in the form of physical, photographic or historical record—should be referenced for accurate replacement.

DRAW FROM EXISTING EXAMPLES WITHIN THE DISTRICT

When replacement or reconstruction is necessary and there are no clues from the building or through research, other contributing buildings in the district may provide usable prototypes. For alterations, new elements and new buildings, lessons can be learned from other buildings about the design of a building element and use of materials in a way that respects its neighbours. New elements may be interpretive, but should always preserve the integrity and scale of the district's character.

ALLOW FOR CREATIVE AND CONTEMPORARY DESIGN SOLUTIONS

Inventiveness in new construction should be encouraged as long as such projects respect the historic character of the district.

Design Opportunities

The following design opportunities were identified as key to protecting and promoting the heritage character of the district:

- Creation of a clearly bounded [Heritage Conservation District](#) that identifies and celebrates the significant cultural heritage of the Union Station area.
- The articulation and clarification of [two major public spaces, Front Street and Union Station](#), that protect and enhance the heritage character of the most significant architectural and urban landmarks in the area.
- New development and design that respects the contributing [heritage elements](#) of the district.

Recommendations

Short-term Priorities:

CREATE A HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

In accordance with the Union Station Heritage Conservation Plan contained in Appendix 4, appropriate steps should be taken to ensure the creation of the Union Station Heritage Conservation District.

Mid to Long-term Priorities:

PROMOTE HERITAGE CHARACTER

Lighting should be used to emphasize building forms at night, in a manner representative of the grandeur of the architecture. Historical precedents in planning around Union Station should be used to inform the importance of establishing connections to the south of the district. Historical connections, both visual and physical, should be maintained and enhanced, such as the view of the Royal York Hotel and the physical connections between the John Street Roundhouse and Union Station. The moats, teamways, and bridges of Union Station and the Toronto Viaduct should be better utilized as important connections to the various components of the district.

CREATE MAJOR PUBLIC SPACES THAT RELATE TO AND COMPLEMENT THE HERITAGE CHARACTER OF THE DISTRICT

Heritage considerations should inform the creation and character of key public spaces in the district.

ASPIRE TO THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF DESIGN EXCELLENCE

Ensure streetscape materials are of high quality, representative of monumental significance of the district. Streetscape elements shall be clarified with a view to foregrounding heritage elements.

2.3 PUBLIC REALM

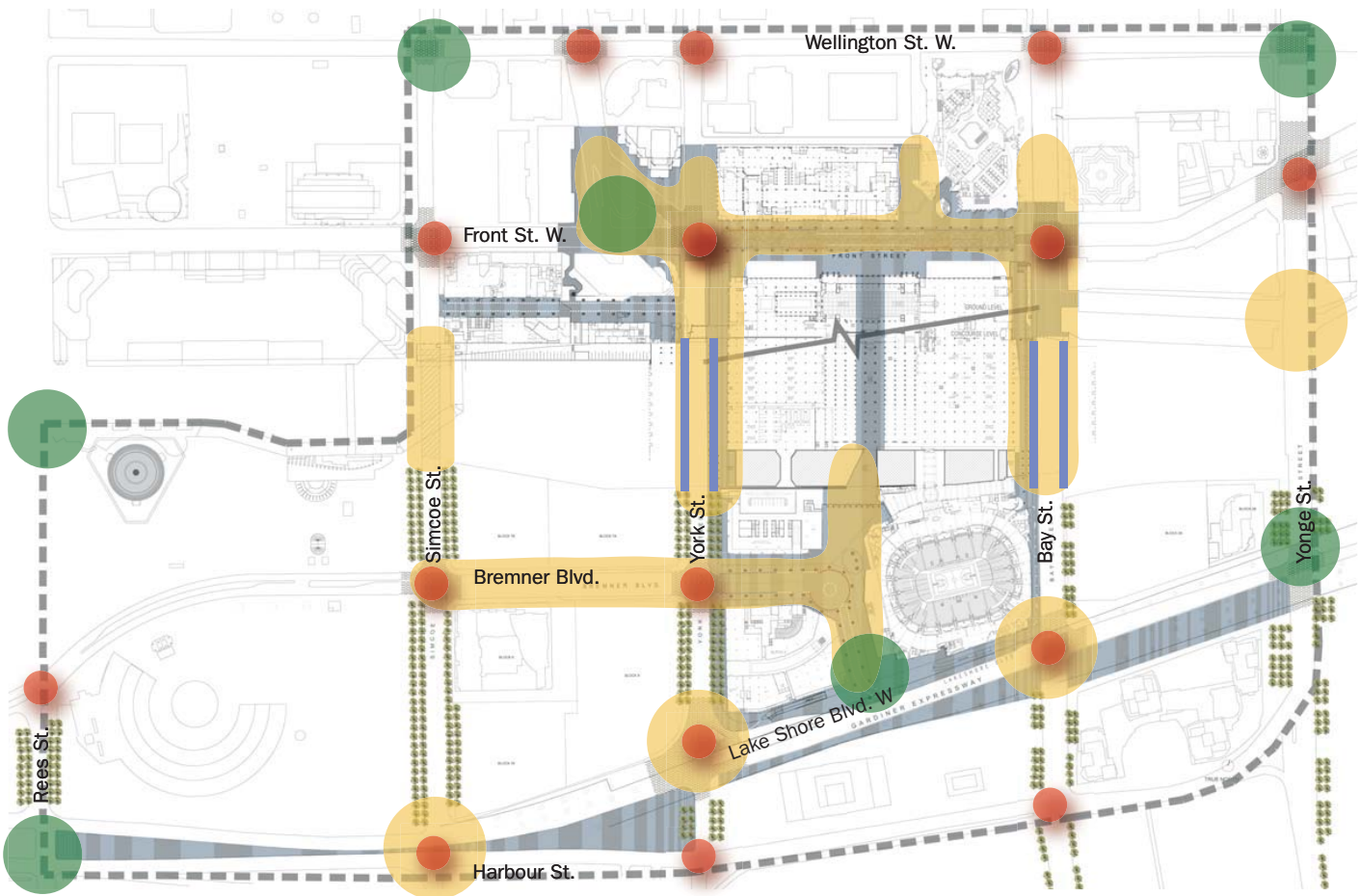
The public realm provides a stage for the daily life of the city and is defined by gathering spaces such as parks, public squares and streets. The design of functional aspects of the public realm (e.g. sidewalks, streetscapes, and boulevards) provides public spaces with both form and a sense of place.

Streets are the central and the most diverse aspect of the public realm. Front Street has many characteristics of a great street. It is a journey as well as an experience. It tells a story that stretches into the past while connecting with the present. Its iconic presence is largely due to the stature of Union Station, the Royal York Hotel, and the Dominion Public Building – and the profound physical relationship between those buildings.

One of the most exciting aspects of Front Street is its function as a conduit for flow from Union Station to the central core. However, it has been necessary to consider how to support multiple and often conflicting transportation elements, including pedestrians, private automobiles, buses, taxis and bicycles, while ensuring that Front Street becomes an inspiring public space.

Union Plaza represents a unique opportunity for the City of Toronto to further enhance the public realm. The plaza will provide access to Canada's busiest transportation hub and the Air Canada Centre, a well-used entertainment and sports facility, and several proposed mixed-use buildings that will offer shopping, service-related amenities and residential accommodation. The vision for Union Plaza is to create a destination: a modern pedestrian gallery that can host outdoor art exhibits, act as a meeting place, and allow travelers to linger at patio cafés before catching a train after a concert or a game.

The prevailing urban condition of the district is characterized by substantial visual and spatial clutter. The pedestrian experience can be improved by reducing the existing clutter, such as newspaper boxes, hotdog vendors, garbage cans and bicycle racks. When the clutter is removed, and the desired amenities reorganized, the new clarity will add to the beauty and functionality of the street. Removal of clutter also results in increased "pride of place" by users who increasingly feel ownership of the public realm.



- Opportunities for Enhancement
- Teamways
- District Markers
- Intersection Markers

Public Realm Analysis

This map shows the district and emphasizes urban design opportunities within its public realm, with Union Station identified as the pivotal point at its centre. It also identifies opportunities for enhanced pedestrian flow and connections - key to creating a strong relationship between the city, the district and the waterfront.



The current high volume and anticipated expansion of pedestrian traffic is accommodated by creating a “pedestrian priority zone” on Front Street between Bay and Yonge. In this zone, traffic lanes are reduced, the sidewalk expanded and new high-quality paving extended from building face to building face. These modifications enable pedestrians to cross the street at any point.

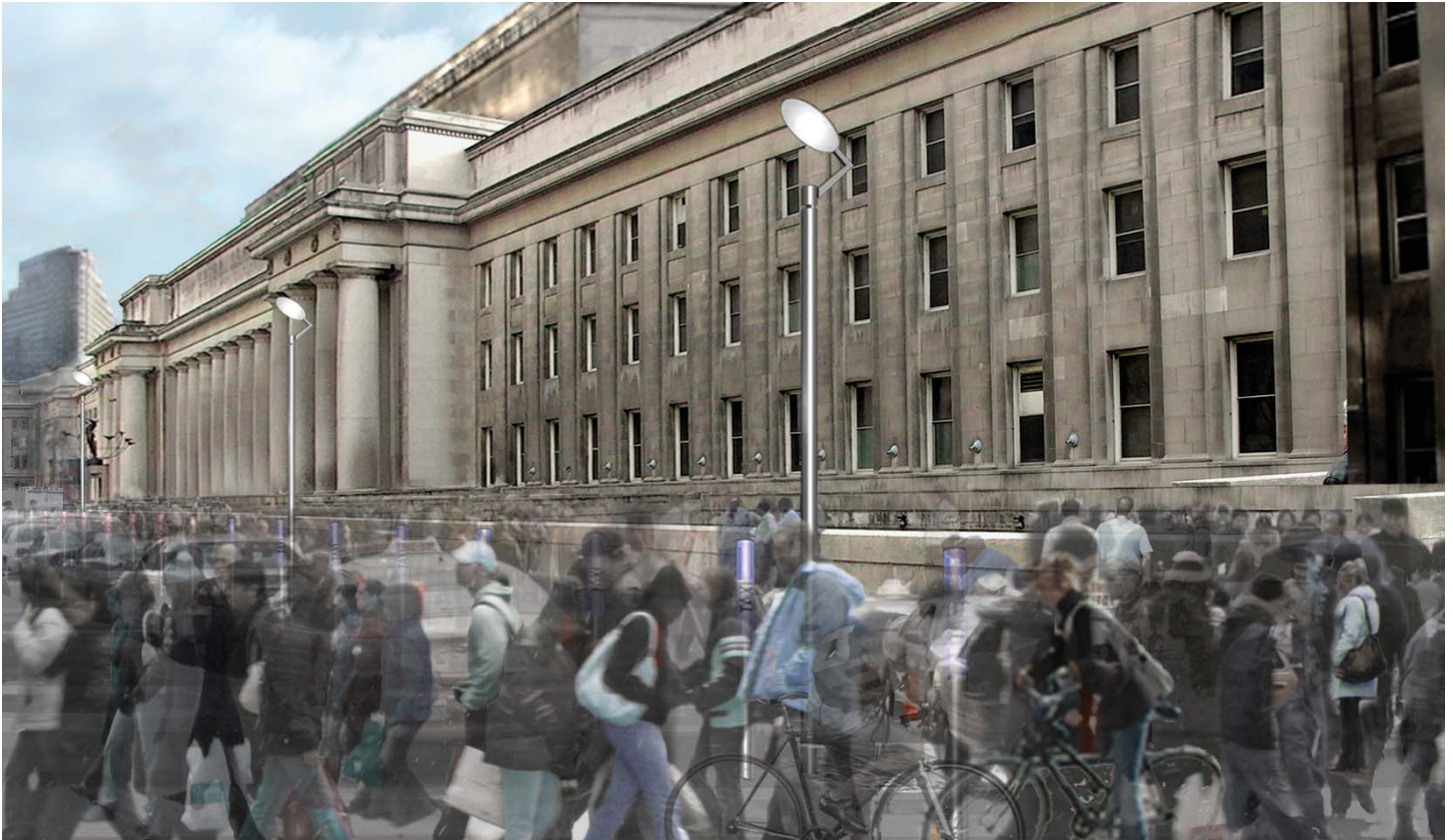
General Principles

CREATE A CLEAR DESIGN PHILOSOPHY FOR THE PUBLIC REALM

Foster a well-ordered and harmonious sense of place. Subtle but highly visual and innovative design measures applied throughout the area create a clear design philosophy. This establishes a public realm that is representative of the historical and cultural significance of the area. Eliminate clutter with a rationalized and coordinated approach to streetscape elements.

CONTEMPORARY DESIGN MUST REINFORCE AND ENHANCE HERITAGE ELEMENTS, RESPECTING THEIR ESSENTIAL VALUE AND CHARACTER

Heritage considerations guide where and how public spaces work, enlarging and celebrating the spaces around the district’s most significant heritage structures.



Design Opportunities

The request for proposal identified several major design opportunities within the public realm requiring further analysis:

- Front Street improvements;
- Union Plaza;
- Streetscape elements; and,
- Development over the trainshed.

Improvements to Front Street are based primarily on the reinstatement of a monumental civic pedestrian realm from building face to building face. The reconfiguration of Front Street would result in an enhanced pedestrian realm allowing for better coordination of secondary transportation modes.

Union Plaza, located south of Union Station, represents the opportunity to create a grand southern entrance to the train station and a connection to other significant destinations, such as Harbourfront, the Air Canada Centre and the CN Tower. Articulation and clarification of the vision for Union Station will further facilitate its realization.

Improving the quality of the streetscape is the primary task of urban design elements proposed by the district plan. A consistent network of paving material applied throughout the district can delineate distinct uses in the public realm, (e.g. bicycle paths, pedestrian zones, etc.) and connect key buildings in the area. Similarly, a reduction and reorganization of street furniture will reduce clutter and improve visual attractiveness.

The Union Station District Study determined that development over the trainshed should not be undertaken at this time based on identified constraints and challenges, including structural feasibility and servicing requirements. A detailed analysis of development constraints for the trainshed is provided in Appendix 10.

These public realm design initiatives create an elegant and formal space directly associated with Union Station's entrance connecting the district with downtown Toronto. Nowhere else in Toronto will such a large, formal outdoor urban space be so intimately tied with the daily life of the city.

Guiding Principles

ENHANCE THE PEDESTRIAN REALM

Balance the needs of current users and future anticipated demands on Front Street by improving and expanding the pedestrian realm.

ENHANCE HERITAGE QUALITIES OF FRONT STREET

Create a clear, well-organized space that reinforces and enhances the intended stature of Front Street, and amplifies the heritage qualities of the surrounding buildings.

ENHANCE FRONT STREET DESIGN

Support the necessary multiple and often conflicting transportation elements, while ensuring that Front Street becomes an inspiring public space.

ENABLE SAFE AND CONVENIENT DISPERSAL OF PEDESTRIANS INTO THE CITY

Expand and allocate dedicated taxi facilities separated from other pick-up and drop-off activities; improve visibility and organization of taxis.

PROVIDE INTEGRATED CYCLING AMENITIES WHERE APPROPRIATE

Use dedicated bicycle lanes to accommodate cyclists, reduce potential conflict with pedestrians and cars, and strive to provide a full range of options for both short- and long-term bicycle parking, with particular emphasis on convenient locations in well-supervised areas either within or adjacent to Union Station.

CREATE A GRAND SOUTHERN ENTRANCE TO UNION STATION COMPLEMENTED WITH A UNIQUE PEDESTRIAN PLAZA

Expand the public realm with the creation of a plaza adjacent to a grand south entrance to the station that recognizes the stature of the building in both form and function. This

includes the necessity of constructing the new tunnel connection from Union Plaza to the proposed retail space below the Via Rail concourse.

ASPIRE TO HIGHEST STANDARDS OF DESIGN EXCELLENCE

Streetscape elements should be of high-quality design and enduring materials that are appropriate to the district. The approach to design and materials used should reflect good contemporary design to emphasize a confidence in moving forward.

STREETSCAPE FURNITURE SHOULD FIT INTO THE STREET RATHER THAN BE ITS' FOCUS

Street furniture should have high standards of functionality, durability, environmental performance, and visual attractiveness.

REDUCE CLUTTER

In order to reduce clutter on the streetscape, the size and number of objects like waste and recycling receptacles and newspaper boxes should be reduced.

COORDINATE DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION AND MAINTENANCE OF STREETSCAPE ELEMENTS

The overall design of the public realm should be carried out in a consistent and well-coordinated manner to ensure that design measures complement each other and work towards enhancing the district's identity.

Recommendations

Front Street Traffic Review

Short-term Priority:

INITIATE AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

An environmental assessment process should be initiated for Front Street.

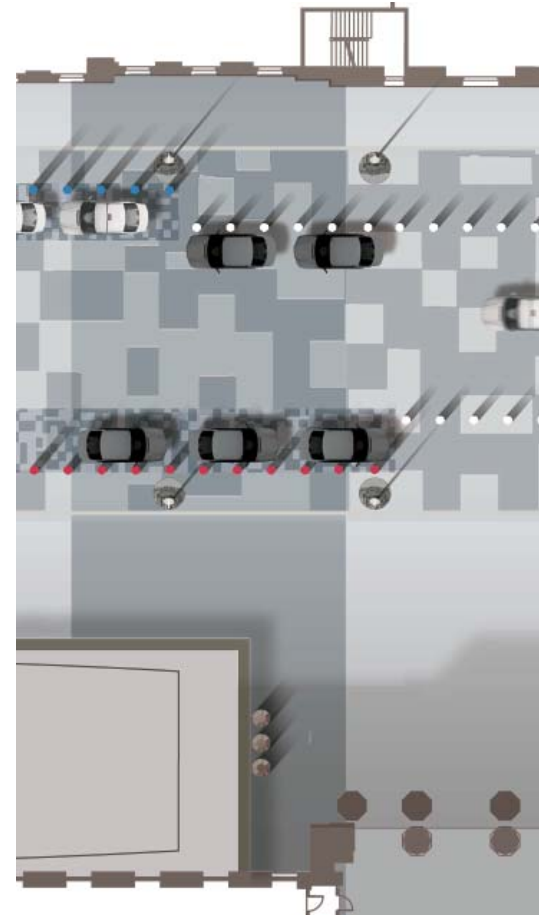
Long-term Priorities:

RECONFIGURE FRONT STREET DESIGN

After the environmental assessment has been completed, Front Street should be reconfigured in a manner consistent with the alternative that best addresses the planning, operational and design objectives set out in the study's evaluation criteria.

RECLAIM STREETS WITH HIGH QUALITY MATERIALS

Reclaim streets with high quality materials to reinstate the idea of an urban room by eliminating the median that visually divides the space and proportionately expanding the sidewalk realm; utilize a consistent, high-quality palette of materials.



Proposed improvements to Front Street reduce car lanes, allocate generous space for pick up, drop off and taxi queuing, eliminate clutter and introduce an orderly plan for streetscape elements.

Taxis and Pick-up and Drop-off Review

Short-term Priorities:

INITIATE TAXI REVIEW IN CONJUNCTION WITH FRONT STREET ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

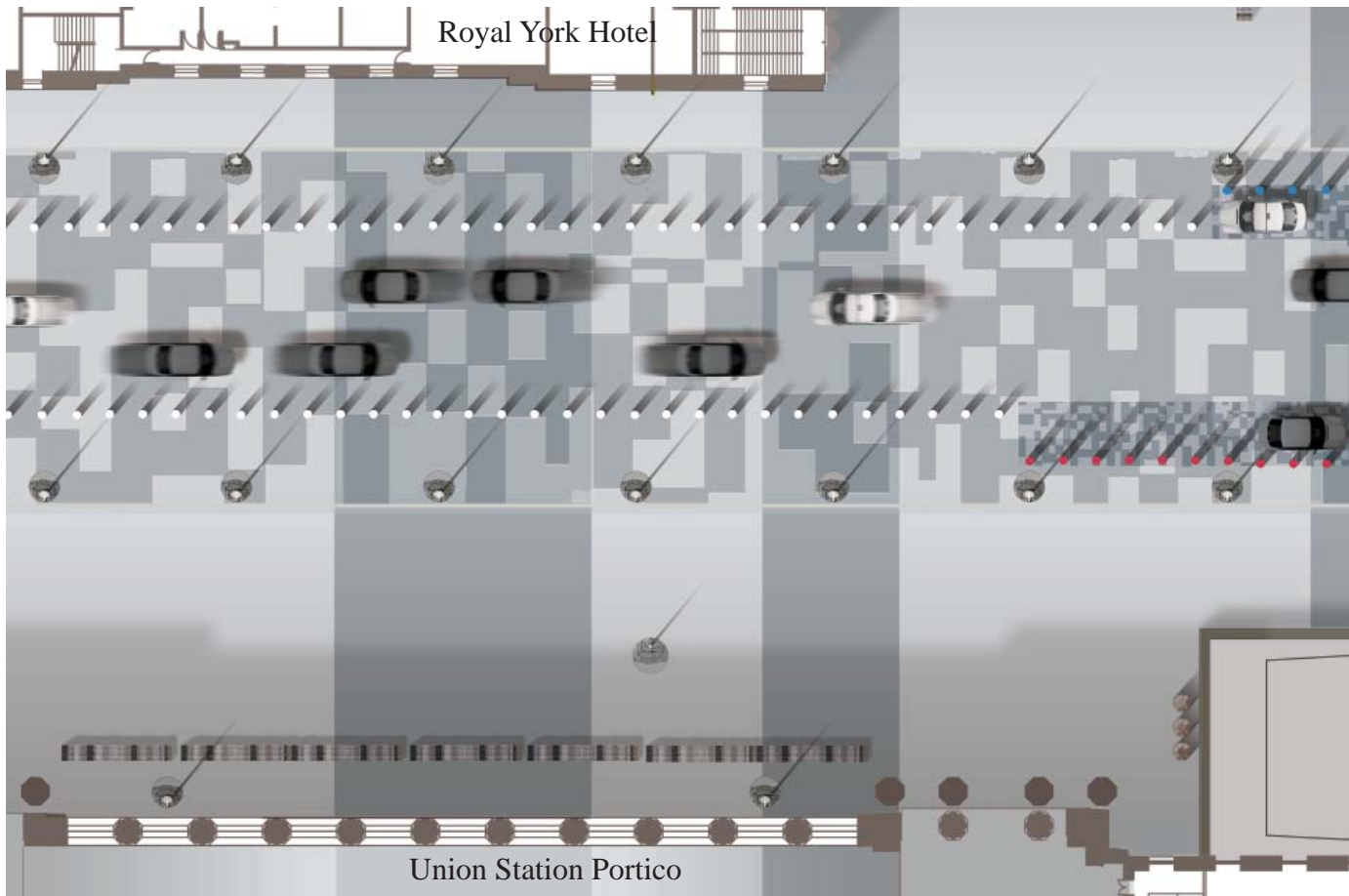
Impacts on the taxi industry should be evaluated as part of the environmental assessment that looks at Front Street traffic configuration options, including options to consolidate taxi stands on the south side of Front Street.

REORGANIZE TAXI AND PICK-UP AND DROP-OFF AREAS

Eliminate east taxi stand and designate as pick-up and drop-off for the public and replace some of the existing pick-up and drop-off area with taxi stands to extend the west taxi stand and maintain the existing overall taxi supply. This will require further consultation with the taxi industry.

FORMALIZE EXISTING TAXI STAGING AREAS ON FRONT STREET

Formalize existing taxi staging including south side of Front Street west of York Street and north side of Front in front of the Royal Bank Plaza, and implement appropriate signage.



IMPROVE SIGNAGE

Implement improved taxi stand and pick-up and drop-off signage in Union Station and adjacent areas.

Long-term Priorities:

INCREASE CAPACITY FOR DEDICATED TAXI WAITING AREAS

With the completion of renovations to Union Station and the implementation of the south access, Union Plaza and the GO Transit west concourse, introduce taxi stand facilities on Bremner Boulevard, east of York Street. It is imperative that the City agree to the construction of a new south access route in conjunction with GO Transit’s current plans to create new access to their southern tracks.

ENHANCE MARSHALLING OF TAXIS

In conjunction with taxi and pick-up and drop-off facility modifications and/or additions in the district, give consideration to:

- Re-introducing the taxi captain/dispatcher function, either for implementation on the south side of Front Street, in front of Union Station only, or in a coordinated manner across the district; or
- Introducing a user-pay system for controlling taxi stand and pick-up and drop-off use.



A unified language of streetscape furniture elements is introduced to Front Street to eliminate clutter (top images) and instill a sense of pride and ownership on the part of users. Newspapers, benches, signs and lighting assist with creating a distinct identity for the district.

ELIMINATE RESTRICTIONS ON TAXI STANDS

Consider reviewing existing restrictions on taxi stands on Front Street to provide use by all operators – independent operators, brokers and others. Such actions would require further consultation and cooperation with the taxi industry.

Cycling Review

Short-term Priorities:

CREATE A CONNECTED NETWORK OF BICYCLE FACILITIES

Pursue strategic implementation of the Toronto Bike Plan’s cycling facilities in the Union Station district, along with those facilities identified in the City of Toronto Lower Yonge Street/Bay Street Conceptual Pedestrian Promenade Plan - to create a connected network of bicycle facilities in the district that accommodates cyclists through the district and to and from the station.

DEVELOP A CYCLING AMENITY STRATEGY

Develop a strategy that would establish facilities and amenities for cycling that could be staged over time from Type 1 bicycle stations to Type 3 bicycle stations according to demand, and operational and financial resources available:



existing



proposed

- Type 1 bicycle station: secure, monitored parking with shelter from the elements and limited access.
- Type 2 bicycle station: Type 1 with the addition of small retail or co-location with other organizations.
- Type 3 bicycle station: includes showers, change rooms, bicycle oriented retail and services and transit information, all centred on a staffed, “valet” parking structure.
- Provide a range of options for secure short and long-term bicycle parking at selected station entrances and within the district, including numerous post-and-ring racks.

COORDINATE BICYCLE SIGNAGE

Coordinate bicycle signage, particularly in pick-up and drop-off areas of the station, with ongoing district wayfinding initiatives.

Mid to Long-term Priorities:

IMPLEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Identify locations for sidewalk cut-outs for pull-ins at all bicycle parking locations as well as locations for ramps or “bicycle channels” on stairs surrounding / within the station to improve access to the station and railway platforms.

Union Plaza

Short-term Priorities:

MAXIMIZE PUBLIC SPACE

The size of Union Plaza should respond to the stature of the surrounding buildings and be able to accommodate anticipated pedestrian traffic and the demands generated by a major public gathering room.

IMPROVE SOUTH ENTRANCE CAPACITY AND CIVIC PROMINENCE

This new entrance to the station should be capable of accommodating future pedestrian traffic and gatherings; interior should welcome pedestrians in a similarly impressive fashion as the north entrance; design should be commensurate in scale with that of Union Station.

Mid to Long-term Priorities:

CREATE A UNIQUE PEDESTRIAN SQUARE THROUGH THE USE OF ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTIONS

Encourage innovative design of a scale that addresses the need for visual enclosure for the plaza, as well as announcing the space and acting as a visible landmark from Lake Shore Boulevard and the Gardiner Expressway.

Streetscape Elements

Short-term Priorities:

DEVELOP A SIMPLIFIED STRATEGY FOR ALL STREETScape ELEMENTS

Elements to be considered include redesign and rationalization of paving, curbs, signage and signage base plates, vertical elements, lighting, trees, tree grates, street furniture and street vending operations. Key recommendations include:

- Establish a function-specific “language” of paving patterns;
- Use bollards to separate pedestrian from vehicular traffic along Front Street and Bremner Boulevard;
- Install large tree grates and large signage base plates;
- Use a consistent aluminum pole for all vertical components;
- Incorporate lighting that is a simplified version of that used in the central core;
- Minimize and rationalize signage and develop a simple, consistent interior/exterior signage system;
- Plant varying single-species trees on north-south streets sparingly and not in main public spaces;
- Use district as a pilot project for the City’s Coordinated Street Furniture Program; and,
- Clarify roles, responsibilities and priorities further to manage design, maintenance and implementation.



View of the proposed Union Plaza looking north. The public realm strategy recommends taking advantage of proposed developments on the south side of Union Station to create Union Plaza: an expanded public space and a new entrance to Union Station that connects the public realm to the waterfront. Creation of this generous civic plaza also preserves significant views of the historically designated and iconic landmark of the Royal York Hotel. The plaza's design and new entrance should be sensitive, simple, and contemporary.

CREATE CONSISTENT VOCABULARY OF STREETScape ELEMENTS

Rather than relying on district “branding” to identify the district, a consistent vocabulary of well-organized, functional streetscape elements will lend a unique identity to the district.

CONSOLIDATE STREET VENDING AMENITIES

Further study should be undertaken to determine the feasibility of eliminating or consolidating street vending activities as well as introducing permanent infrastructure and/or redesigning vending stations with a consistent district-wide design.

Mid to Long-term Priorities:

IMPLEMENT MAJOR CHANGES TO SURFACE OF STREET AND SIDEWALKS

The most urgent changes include the creation of a grand urban room on Front Street and a unique public realm south of the station at Union Plaza. Major changes to the surface of the streets and sidewalks are required to enhance the pedestrian environment and delineate uses. The following recommendations apply:

- Granite to be used as main paving material to reinforce the connection between the city and the lake;
- Variations in paver size, texture and colour to distinguish vehicular, cycling and pedestrian zones;



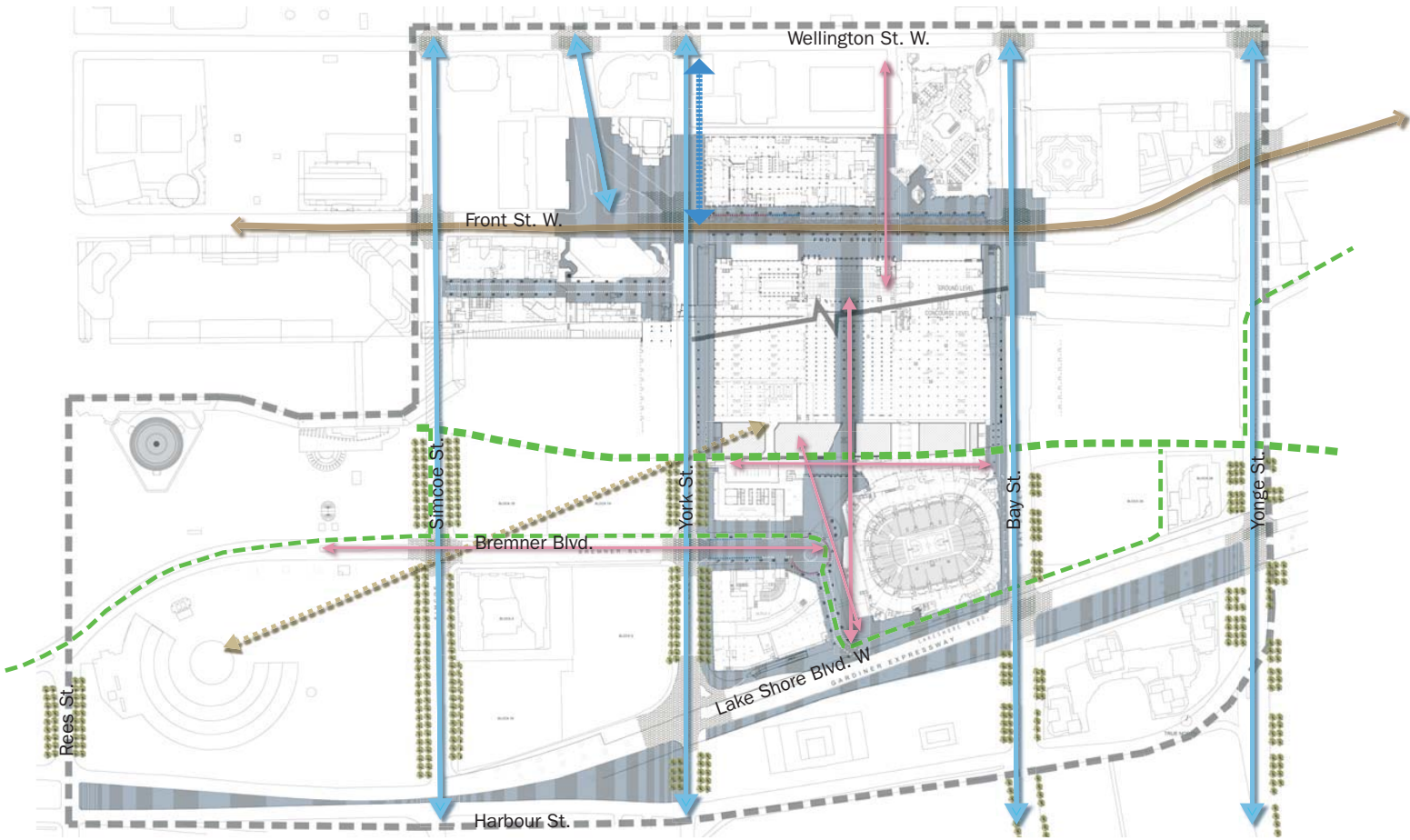
Streets and corners along Front Street are redesigned providing wider pedestrian crossing zones and a clarified pavement pattern language that identifies different uses. Pedestrian traffic lights announce crossing times.

- Removal of Front Street traffic median to promote visual and functional pedestrian flow;
- Insert continuous row of ground-plane bollards at the outer curbs to separate vehicles from pedestrians on Front Street and along Union Plaza; and,
- Improvements to the York/University intersection should maintain the recommended palette of materials but should be subject to a design competition led by staff of the Clean and Beautiful City program.

2.4 ENHANCED CONNECTIONS AND FLOW

The third area identified within the context of the Union Station District Study explores how urban improvement can enhance connections and flow. Union Station is the centre of multi-directional traffic flow that serves an increasing volume of pedestrian traffic. The major underlying theme identified by the Union Station District Study is the under provision of pedestrian facilities, with recommendations aimed at enhancing and rebalancing the pedestrian realm.

To enhance connectivity within the district, it is imperative that the needs of pedestrians - the most vital and numerous means of movement in the district - be addressed.



- Axis
- North / South Connection
- East / West Connection
- Historical Connection
- North / South PATH Connection
- Bicycle Route

Connections and Flow Analysis

This drawing identifies significant connections including the main north-south connections between the district, the downtown and the waterfront, main pedestrian traffic routes and possible east-west cycling connections.

The existing building layout and street configuration pose challenges to safe and convenient connectivity and flow. Pedestrians jaywalk in an effort to take the shortest route to their destination. This situation can be improved with the redesign of intersections and mid-block crossings.

The existing pedestrian requirements at Union Station and those resulting from the expansion of GO Transit indicate the need for an extension of the PATH system from Union Station to the north-west. The below-grade connections of the PATH system are critical to movement through the City. The existing PATH network does not provide a direct connection to the north-west. Enhanced connectivity requires the consideration of additional PATH connections.

General Principle

IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIVITY

Improved pedestrian connectivity is the key underlying principle, whereby enhanced infrastructure and street design establish primacy of pedestrians and facilitate ease of pedestrian flow.

Design Opportunities

The Public Realm section of this document addresses several design initiatives that will result in improved connectivity and flow, including:

- Organizing activities and services, (taxi and pick-up and drop-off areas, bicycle facilities, etc.)
- Rationalizing streetscapes (coordinating street furniture and providing easy to understand wayfinding and signage systems)
- Enhancing infrastructure (widening sidewalks along Front Street, creating an unparalleled pedestrian plaza).

Furthermore, two key design initiatives have been identified to enhance connectivity within the district and improve pedestrian linkages in particular, including:

- Pedestrian crossings; and,
- North-west PATH connection(s).

Guiding Principals

ENHANCE PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS

Make the public realm accessible, comfortable, convenient and safe for people traveling through public spaces.

IMPROVE NORTH-WEST PATH CONNECTIVITY

Further analysis, including an environmental assessment, is required to determine the feasibility of improving north-west PATH connectivity.

Recommendations

Intersection Crossings

Short-term Priorities:

CREATE A “PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY ZONE”

As part of a broader public realm improvement initiative for Union Station, consideration should be given to the creation of a pedestrian priority zone. This area would be designed and operated in a manner that signals to other road users that they are passing through a primarily pedestrian realm. The priority zone would include pedestrian infrastructure elements, amenities and treatments that would give pedestrians a higher measure of protection, and signal to drivers that they should be prepared to slow down or stop for pedestrians in the area. It is important to note that a pedestrian priority zone does not necessitate the segregation of motor vehicles and pedestrians.

With the possible creation of the pedestrian priority zone, staff should coordinate pedestrian needs with ongoing Union Station wayfinding initiatives, including investigating and reporting on measures to communicate pedestrian presence.

IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTELLIGENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS (ITS) INITIATIVES

Investigate and report on the potential for establishing the Union Station District as a pilot area for emerging ITS initiatives being pursued by Transportation Services.¹

Mid to Long-term Priorities:

ENHANCE INTERSECTION PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS

Investigate and consider low-cost options to improve the pedestrian realm at special intersections (pavement markings and widened crosswalks) in the immediate term.

CO-ORDINATE PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT ENHANCEMENTS WITH IMPROVEMENTS TO UNION STATION PUBLIC REALM

Investigate and coordinate initiatives to enhance the pedestrian domain; tie into initiatives related to urban design/engineering/culture/economic development and tourism to make it organized and legible.

¹ The City has initiated a review of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technology. ITS deals primarily with maintaining acceptable levels of mobility through the use of technology (computers, communications and sensor technologies). Information is analyzed on a dynamic basis and appropriate responses coordinated to encourage optimal circulation, such as changing traffic signal timing from “go” to “walk”.

Mid-Block Crossings

Mid to Long-term Priority:

CARRY OUT FURTHER INVESTIGATION OF SHORT AND LONG-TERM OPTIONS

Investigate and report on short-term options presented in this report to improve the pedestrian realm at the Bay and Front streets intersection (pavement markings and widened crosswalks).

A similar approach should be applied to the longer-term options in conjunction with the station operator and GO Transit through the ongoing station redevelopment and subsequent site plan approval process. Timing and prioritization of recommendations should be according to factors previously identified.

North-West PATH Connection

Short-term Priorities:

COMPLETE FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR NORTH-WEST PATH EXTENSION

Complete an engineering feasibility review or environmental assessment study, as may be appropriate to determine the preferred routing for a north-west PATH extension, including a functional plan and preliminary cost estimates.

INVESTIGATE AN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Once the preferred route is identified, an implementation strategy can be created, including identification of potential partners and sources of capital infrastructure funding. Ideally this work should be coordinated with other capital works programs where possible.

2.5 NEXT STEPS

The coordination of recommended actions for the district with other developments in the area is paramount. Careful timing of the implementation of these recommendations will enable the City to capitalize on potential development synergies.

The following is a list of priority actions for the City:

Short-term Priorities:

Creation of a Heritage Conservation District – To be followed through immediately by adoption of the Heritage Conservation District boundary and guidelines by Council.

Union Plaza – To be followed through immediately. The anticipated expansion of the Air Canada Centre and development of blocks 4 and 5 provide a one-time opportunity for coordinated development with Union Plaza and the south entrance of Union Station.



This diagram shows a designated taxi pick-up area in front of Union Station with rationalized and consolidated taxi signage. These improvements reinforce the idea of a 'pedestrian priority zone' acting as a traffic calming influence

The City has expressed a commitment to lead a coordinated design approach that enables realization of an unparalleled pedestrian plaza and south entrance to the station at a scale worthy of the grandeur the eminent building. As agreed with the City, development of block 4 must provide a “new City building”. As part of this, the City should confirm its commitment to providing access under the tracks to create a new south access route.

Development and expansion around Union Plaza provide the City with a one-time – and urgent – opportunity to create a significant public plaza and a grand south entrance to Union Station.

Front Street – The planned construction of the TTC second platform at Union Station provides the City with an opportunity to carry out street level construction work in tandem, minimizing construction costs and disturbances to pedestrians and automobiles. The City also needs to encourage the Royal York Hotel and Royal Bank Plaza to work towards enhancing the pedestrian realm located between the two buildings along Front Street, including resolving loading issues.

The City should thus commence environmental assessment work as required for Front Street and the Bay and York streets intersection. Environmental assessment work

undertaken should recognize the primacy of the pedestrian and the importance of design measures that further enhance the pedestrian realm.

Funding Mechanisms – Traditional financing may not be able to meet the funding requirements for proposed redevelopment recommendations, particularly Front Street. Traditional infrastructure financing has been highly reliant on municipal taxes and levies, which do not often grow in tandem with service delivery and alternative avenues to channel funds, which are crucial, promote economic sustainability and carrying forward the vision.

Traditional financing approaches may no longer be sufficient, making it necessary to tap into new leveraging techniques. Further study into opportunities to stretch the municipal, provincial and federal dollars will need to be conducted. The applicable best-fit funding options will depend on what is permissible under current legislation and the political will to adopt changes to the legislation to leverage these alternative structures. In order to identify and develop the most appropriate financing options this study should also include development of capital costs for the recommended work.

North-West PATH Connection – Complete an engineering feasibility review or environmental assessment study, as may be appropriate to investigate ways to create north-west PATH connections under York Street as well as additional north-south PATH connections.

Signage Program – It is recommended that the City move forward with an expanded signage study in order to coordinate exterior and interior signage and wayfinding systems.

Mid to Long-term Priorities:

Streetscape Pilot Project – Streetscape recommendations should be implemented as part of a pilot project, in conjunction with the City's coordinated street furniture program.

