
City Council

MM45.6	ACTION			Ward: 22
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Yonge-Eglinton Urban Growth Centre: Urban Design Study - by Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Stintz

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Toronto and East York Community Council. A two thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Stintz, recommends that:

1. City Council direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, to conduct an Urban Design Study for the intersection of Yonge Street and Eglinton Avenue within one block in all directions.

Summary

The intersection of Yonge Street and Eglinton Avenue (Yonge-Eglinton) is one of the five Urban Growth Centres in Toronto identified by the Provincial government in the Places To Grow Act where hyper-intensification of development built form is directed and encouraged to sustainably accommodate the population growth projections of the City's Official Plan and the Places to Grow Act.

Yonge-Eglinton is the geographic centre of the City, the intersection of two major transit lines with a bus station hub, and has plenty of everything except open-space. Presently, it is confronted by three major potential changes: 1) the TTC is preparing to build an underground streetcar line under Eglinton Avenue; 2) Build Toronto wishes to redevelop the public land on the southwest corner to a height of 120 metres and density of 9.0 times coverage of the lot; and 3) the only existing open-space (on the northwest corner) is proposed to be filled in by a developer.

In order to ensure Yonge-Eglinton develops the way it should, City Planning must conduct studies with the community residents. The Yonge Eglinton Focused Review Planning Study was conducted between 2002–2009 with members of the community and City Planning. The results are area specific Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendments that guide the height, density and urban design of development in the southwest quadrant, as well as intensification policies for all four quadrants of the intersection. Now, City Planning needs to conduct a study to generate urban design guidelines for all four quadrants.

Urban design is an integral part of how Yonge-Eglinton will develop. Urban design directs the relationships of built form, massing and architecture between developments to facilitate aesthetics, sustainability and efficiency. Good urban design also ‘makes things work’, like linking pedestrian connections from shopping to transit so it is easy to find the way; or removing vehicle ramps from mainstreets to create a seamless pedestrian environment; or limiting the size and shape of a tower’s floorplate to reduce the impact of shadows on our neighbourhoods.

An Urban Design Study examines the existing conditions and evaluates the features that should be kept, encouraged or discouraged; it enunciates a vision for a specific area. Topics of discussion for an Urban Design Study of Yonge-Eglinton should be (but not limited to):

- open-spaces and natural features
- network of streets
- pedestrian circulation
- transit circulation
- vehicular circulation
- building typologies
- landmark buildings
- streetwalls and frontages
- character and identity
- gateways and focal areas
- revitalization areas

Yonge-Eglinton has not had an Urban Design Study conducted for its four quadrants. It is the only Urban Growth Centre that does not have complete Urban Design Guidelines. The local neighbourhood and City needs good urban design at Yonge-Eglinton to make future changes work and provide a long-term vision.

(Submitted to City Council on January 26 and 27, 2010 as MM45.6)