

## **Pedestrian Zones – Gould Street/Victoria Street, and Willcocks Street**

<b>Date:</b>	August 5, 2011
<b>To:</b>	Toronto and East York Community Council
<b>From:</b>	Acting Director, Toronto and East York District, Transportation Services Director, Public Realm Section, Transportation Services
<b>Wards:</b>	Toronto Centre-Rosedale, Ward 27 and Trinity-Spadina, Ward 20
<b>Reference Number:</b>	p:\2011\ClusterB\tra\pr\te11003pr

### **SUMMARY**

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This report is about a matter for which the Community Council has delegated authority from City Council to make a final decision.

It is recommended that two pedestrian zones – one on Gould and Victoria Streets at Ryerson University, and one on Willcocks Street at the University of Toronto – be temporarily extended for an additional six months, to enable staff to report back on proposed permanent closures, with ongoing operation, maintenance and programming during the temporary extension at no cost to the taxpayer.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Transportation Services recommends that Toronto and East York Community Council:

1. Approve extending the temporary closure to vehicular traffic of Gould Street, between O'Keefe Lane and Bond Street, of Victoria Street, between Gould Street and a point approximately 64 metres south of Gould Street, and of Willcocks Street, between Huron Street and St. George Street, all as shown on Appendices A and B attached to the report dated August 5, 2011 from the Acting Director of Toronto East York District and the Director of the Public Realm Section, for a further period of six months commencing October 1, 2011.
2. Direct Transportation Services to report back to City Council through the Toronto and East York Community Council on the proposed permanent closure to vehicular

traffic of the pedestrian zones described in Recommendation 1 on Gould Street, Victoria Street and Willcocks Street, prior to the expiry of the six month extension period.

3. Approve the narrowing of Victoria Street between Dundas Street East and a point 70.9 metres north from 8.5 metres to 6.0 metres using planters as shown on Appendix A attached to the report dated August 5, 2011 from the Acting Director of Toronto East York District and the Director of the Public Realm Section, for a further period of six months commencing October 1, 2011.
4. Approve the narrowing of Gould Street between Church Street and a point 35.3 metres west of Church Street from 8.6 metres to 6.0 metres using planters as shown on Appendix A attached to the report dated August 5, 2011 from the Acting Director of Toronto East York District and the Director of the Public Realm Section, for a further period of six months commencing October 1, 2011.
5. Approve the amendments to traffic and parking regulations outlined in Appendix C, attached to the report dated August 5, 2011 from the Acting Director of Toronto East York District and the Director of the Public Realm Section, Transportation Services.
6. Approve the amendments to parking machines/meters outlined in Appendix D, attached to the report dated August 5, 2011 from the Acting Director of Toronto East York District and the Director of the Public Realm Section, Transportation Services.

### **Financial Impact**

To date, the City has received external contributions of \$240,293 from Ryerson University and \$131,500 from the University of Toronto for year-round maintenance, labour, landscaping, street furniture set-up, storage, security, snow removal, cleaning, litter/waste management, events programming and area improvements for their respective pedestrian zones. Contributions of about 40 percent of the above figures are expected to continue annually.

The cost to the City for new signage, additional planters, and pavement markings for a new left-turn storage lane on Gerrard Street East to improve vehicular access and truck deliveries is about \$11,300, and is included in the 2011 capital budget in account CTP 709-09.

### **DECISION HISTORY**

City Council adopted the Toronto Walking Strategy in May 2009 and directed the General Manager, Transportation Services, to work with Ryerson University and the University of Toronto to design and implement two pedestrian street projects by 2010.

On September 15, 2009, Toronto and East York Community Council adopted Items TE27.59 (entitled "Lane and Sidewalk Closure – 122 Bond Street") and TE27.166 (entitled "Lane and Sidewalk Closure at University of Toronto"), and in doing so directed staff to review the feasibility of implementing pedestrian zone pilot projects at Ryerson University and at the University of Toronto respectively, and to report back on the results in the third quarter of 2010.

On August 17, 2010, Toronto and East York Community Council adopted Item TE36.111, entitled "Pedestrian Zone Pilot Projects – Gould Street, Victoria Street, Willcocks Street and Devonshire Place – Community Council," granting authority to implement Pedestrian Zone Pilot Projects for 12 months at Ryerson University and at the University of Toronto and to report back on the effectiveness of the pilot projects by the fourth quarter of 2011.

On August 25, 26 and 27, 2010, City Council adopted Toronto and East York Community Council Item TE36.112, entitled "Ryerson University and University of Toronto – Pedestrian Zone Pilot Projects – Gould Street, Victoria Street, Willcocks Street and Devonshire Place – City Council," authorizing staff to enter into maintenance agreements, with each of Ryerson University and the University of Toronto, which outline the roles and responsibilities of the City and the respective university.

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

City Council adopted the Toronto Walking Strategy in 2009. One of the key strategic actions in the Walking Strategy is "Creating Spaces and Places for People," including steps to design gathering places for pedestrians, support a beautiful public realm and transform streets into attractive destinations. Such initiatives enable the city to remain vibrant, economically competitive, and attractive for residents, employees, visitors/tourists and businesses.

The Gould and Victoria Streets pilot pedestrian zone at Ryerson University, and Willcocks Street pilot pedestrian zone at the University of Toronto were previously approved by Toronto and East York Community Council for one year, starting September 2010 to September 2011. Both these areas had predominantly pedestrian usage prior to the implementation of the pilot projects. Both universities identified these pedestrian zones as part of their master plans and their implementation had been requested by the respective universities prior to the pilot. A third pilot project on Devonshire Place at the University of Toronto was also approved for the same period; however, the pilot was discontinued within two months due to low usage and is not recommended for continuation.

Measures of success were: creation of a new public space, safety and quality; economic, social and community impacts; and transportation and access impacts. Data reviewed included public evaluation surveys, feedback from key partners, City divisions, local councillors, businesses, residents and community associations; and traffic data and observational data.

Around 3,600 citizens responded to the surveys on the two pedestrian zones. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of university respondents and ninety-seven percent (97%) of non-university respondents are in support of making them permanent.

To date, the universities have contributed about \$372,000 for the two pedestrian zones, and are willing to continue to provide for year-round maintenance, landscaping and plantings, street furniture set-up, storage, and security, snow removal, cleaning, litter and waste management, and events programming for their respective pedestrian zones.

Toronto's Walking Strategy won the 2011 National Award of Excellence for Transportation from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities – in part because of the innovative and successful pilot pedestrian zones – implemented in locations with significant pedestrian activity and in partnership with universities.

Staff have consulted and worked closely with representatives from Ryerson University, the University of Toronto, local businesses, local Councillors, and residents on making the Gould and Victoria Streets, and Willcocks Street pedestrian zones permanent. Staff from Transportation Services worked with Legal Services, Insurance and Risk Management, Fire Services, Toronto Building and Toronto Parking Authority in the preparation of this report.

Transportation Services requires about six months to complete the process for making the pedestrian zones permanent and report back to City Council, through the Toronto and East York Community Council. The six-month extension proposed in this report would allow adequate time for this process.

## **COMMENTS**

### **Pilot Projects – Evaluation Criteria**

The key measures of success used to evaluate the pilot pedestrian zones included:

- **Improved Pedestrian Experience**
  - New public space/destination created
  - Increased pedestrian safety (from traffic, security)
  - Increased pedestrian usage and activity
  - Improved quality of experience for pedestrians
- **Economic, Social and Community Impacts**
  - New attraction for foot traffic and potential increased retail, tourism and recreational activity
  - Increased branding and recognition for the University, local businesses and the community
  - Increased social engagement
  - Partnerships to lever resources and funding for streetscape improvements
- **Transportation and Access Impacts**
  - Access for deliveries and fewer traffic conflicts among pedestrians and vehicles
  - Traffic circulation maintained, and travel options for all modes in the vicinity
  - Continued parking options and parking access, including passenger drop-offs (such as to the day care) and for accessibility.

While the same evaluation approach was applied at each university, it should be noted that these zones are unique and have their own operational characteristics. The Ryerson University pedestrian zone has more scheduled events while activities at the University of Toronto pedestrian zone have been more impromptu and informal.

A range of information sources were used to evaluate the pilot pedestrian zones, including surveys; traffic data from the City's count program and collision data; and feedback and meetings with local councillors, businesses, residents and community associations.

An online evaluation survey was administered for each of the pedestrian zones (distributed primarily through electronic newsletters and email lists, as well as some handouts in the pedestrian zone). Approximately 3,600 responses were received in total.

### **1. Gould and Victoria Streets – Ryerson University Pedestrian Zone**

Appendix A provides a map of the Gould and Victoria Streets pedestrian zone, and Appendix E provides "before" and "after" photos of the area.

The survey for the Gould and Victoria Streets pedestrian zone received over 2,600 responses. Ninety seven percent (97%) of both the University and local community respondents support making the pedestrian zone permanent.

#### **Joint Partnership – Value to the City**

The City provided a one-time, upfront contribution of street furniture, planters, and paint, as well as planning and design; and the university provided year-round maintenance, landscaping and plantings, street furniture set-up, storage, and security, snow removal, cleaning, litter and waste management, and events programming. Ryerson University has invested staff time and equipment totalling \$182,476 to maintain the pedestrian zone in addition to \$57,817 of event related costs. The University will be investing in redesign and improvement of the entrance of the parking garage on Victoria Street to complement the changes made to the street operation.

The University's Master Plan (2006) identifies “People First: Pedestrianization of the Urban Environment,” as one of its three major goals. As such, Ryerson is committed to continuing to improve the pedestrian experience on campus as funding becomes available. Making the pedestrian zone permanent will provide certainty to attract new streetscape capital funding.

#### **Pedestrian Destination**

The feedback and media coverage of the pedestrian zone have been positive, despite challenges with water main and building construction on Gould and Victoria Streets and a building collapse on Gould at Yonge Street. An article in the Toronto Star ("Ten Reasons Why Toronto is Getting Better All the Time" on October 6, 2010) identified the pedestrian zone as number two in a top 10 reasons why Toronto is getting better. The survey results show that these benefits are enjoyed by the University community as well

as local residents, employees and businesses. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the university community and 64 percent of the local residents, employees and businesses reported to have changed their walking/cycling route to go through the pedestrian zone. In addition, 82 percent of the university community and 72 percent of the local residents, employees and businesses reported that they use the pedestrian zone as a new public space/park.

### **Pedestrian Activity and Quality of Experience**

The pedestrian zone provided a safe walking/cycling route, a venue for organized events, a relaxing outdoor place for reading and studying, a public space for socializing, eating and drinking, and a space for year-round physical activities.

About 70 percent of all survey respondents use the pedestrian zone either daily or a few times a week to have a coffee, lunch, or meet with friends or colleagues to enjoy the public space. Almost 90 percent of all respondents are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the cleanliness and maintenance of the pedestrian zone.

### **Economic, Social and Community Impacts**

Appendix F provides a summary of about 47 organized events that have taken place within the pedestrian zone over the pilot period. The new public space has provided an opportunity for Ryerson University to enhance its branding and engagement with the broader community. The events include ones for student/parent orientation, farmers markets (extending into the early evening), food, sports, and arts and entertainment, which also serve the greater community around the Ryerson University campus. The demand for the space has resulted in bookings several months in advance. When organized events are not taking place in the space, the pedestrian zone remains busy and well used into the evening.

The space has been supported by local residential associations, including the McGill-Granby Village Residents' Association, Bay Cloverhill Community Association, Garden District Residents' Association and Church Wellesley Neighbourhood Association. Moreover, the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area support making the pedestrian zone permanent. Discussions are underway for the possible relocation of the displaced vendors as a result of the Bloor Street Transformation project.

Ryerson University's contributions are integral to the successful implementation of the pedestrian zone. The University has hired an additional groundskeeper for the pedestrian zone and spent about \$60,000 on maintenance equipment, such as snow removal machines. In total, the university has spent about \$240,293 on setting up events and maintenance of the space.

### **Transportation and Access Impacts**

With over 62,000 annual student registrations, motor vehicle and pedestrian conflict was a significant issue in the area prior to the pedestrianization of Gould and Victoria Streets.

**Pedestrian Safety** – Ninety six percent of the survey respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the improved level of safety as a result of the implementation of the pilot

pedestrian zone. This is a significant improvement from conditions prior to the pilot, during which the university and Traffic Operations observed regular conflicts and received frequent complaints from both pedestrians and drivers. During the period between 2000 and 2009, a total of 18 collisions resulted in injury to pedestrians in the area. These collisions occurred at the intersections of Gould Street with Yonge Street, Victoria Street, Bond Street and Church Street.

**Considerations for the Future** – The pilot project enabled City staff and Ryerson University to find ways to improve future operation of the zone, including some additional signage, advance notices about events and events outside of class hours, and more active parking management (enforcement, improved accessibility and additional parking). During the pilot project City staff worked with key stakeholders on modifications and improvements to access for deliveries, traffic circulation, parking access and passenger drop-offs in the adjacent area.

### **Traffic Operations in the Vicinity of Ryerson University**

- The road sections below will continue to be closed to vehicular traffic with the exception of emergency vehicles. The pedestrian zone will maintain a fire route as shown in Appendix A.
  - Gould Street, between O'Keefe Lane and Bond Street, with an average width of 8.53 metres.
  - Victoria Street, between Gould Street and a point approximately 64 metres south, with an average width of 8.53 metres – allowing continued access to the 10 Dundas East parking garage entrance.
- The "No Parking Anytime" regulations on both sides of Gould Street, from Yonge Street to O'Keefe Lane, and on the east side of Victoria Street, from Dundas Street East to a point 64 metres south of Gould Street, were changed to "No Stopping Anytime" for the pilot project and will remain as "No Stopping Anytime" to deter illegal parking, and to provide an unobstructed turn-around area for delivery vehicles.
- O'Keefe Lane, from Gould Street to Gerrard Street East, currently designated as a one-way northbound lane, will be changed to one-way southbound, primarily to facilitate a more efficient flow for delivery vehicles accessing O'Keefe Lane and the 10 Dundas Street East building loading bay, in addition to providing another option for accessing Elm and Walton Streets from Gerrard Street East.
- In order to allow for a westbound left-turn movement on Gerrard Street East at O'Keefe Lane, an exclusive left-turn lane will be designated generally as shown in Appendix A. This will facilitate traffic flows on Gerrard Street East and deliveries going south on O'Keefe Lane without an impact on through traffic on Gerrard Street East. This modification requires removal of six parking machine/meter spaced on the north side of Gerrard Street East as outlined in Appendix D.
- The width of Victoria Street between Dundas Street East and a point 70.9 metres north will be traffic calmed as vehicles approach the parking garage and the

pedestrian zone, and will be narrowed from 8.5 metres to 6.0 metres using planters. Adequate road width for two-way traffic to and from the parking garage will be ensured. The narrowing will shorten the east/west crossing distance thereby reducing pedestrian exposure to vehicular traffic and reducing illegal parking and delivery activity which currently takes place on Victoria Street.

- Bond Street, between Gould Street and a point 77.2 metres south has been operating one-way northbound and will continue to do so. This modification has not resulted in any traffic operational issues. As a traffic calming measure and to provide additional parking access, on-street parking will be added to the east side of Bond Street, between Dundas Street East and a point 77.2 metres south of Gould Street; and on the west side of Bond Street between Gould Street and a point 77.2 metres south. The "No Parking Monday to Saturday" regulation on the east side of Bond Street and the "No Parking Anytime" regulation on the west side of Bond Street will be changed to a "No Stopping Anytime" regulation where parking is allowed on the opposite side.
- The section of Gould Street between Church Street and Bond Street, currently operating two-way, will operate one-way eastbound. As well, the width of Gould Street between Church Street and a point 35.3 metres west of Church Street will be traffic calmed and narrowed from 8.6 metres to 6.0 metres using planters. These modifications will ensure a more efficient flow of traffic to and from the area and will provide a visual cue to drivers on Church Street that the pedestrian zone is being approached.
- A Pick-up/Drop-off Area for the Ryerson Early Learning Centre will be designated on the north side of Gould Street, from a point 35.3 metres west of Church Street to a point 42.0 metres further west, restricting parking to a maximum of 20 minutes on the north side of Gould Street, from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday to Friday, from a point 35.3 metres west of Church Street to a point 42.0 metres further west.
  - The intention is to provide short-term parking spaces for people picking up or dropping off children, as well as provide a parking option for individuals with valid disabled parking permits (in addition to the increased on-street parking on the west side of Bond Street).
  - Parking on this section of Gould Street will be prohibited from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. Monday to Friday and at all times Saturday and Sunday.
- There are no TTC routes along the portion of the road where the pedestrian zone is located.

## **2. Willcocks Street – University of Toronto (U of T) Pedestrian Zone**

Appendix B provides a map of the Willcocks Street pedestrian zone, and Appendix E provides "before" and "after" photos of the area.

The Willcocks Street online survey (conducted in June and July 2011) had over 900 respondents including university members (students and staff) and non-university community members. Ninety six percent (96%) of the respondents in both groups are in support of making the pedestrian zone permanent.

In addition, there is broad community support for making the pedestrian zone permanent. The City of Toronto-University of Toronto Community Liaison Committee made up of representatives from the university (students and staff), and the local residential community – including Harbord Village Residents' Association, Huron-Sussex Residents' Organization and the Annex Residents' Association unanimously supported making the pedestrian zone permanent at its meeting of July 18, 2011.

### **Joint Partnership – Value to the City**

The Willcocks Street pedestrian zone was implemented for one year from about September 2010 to September 2011. Appendix B provides a map of the area, and Appendix E provides "before" and "after" photos of the pedestrian zone. The City provided a one-time, upfront contribution of street furniture, planters, paint and planning and design; and the university provided year-round maintenance, landscaping and plantings, Astro Turf (artificial grass), pick-up sports facilities (basketball hoops and hockey nets), street furniture set-up, storage, and security, snow removal, cleaning, litter and waste management, and events programming. The University of Toronto has invested staff time, equipment, and resources totalling an estimated \$31,500 to maintain the pedestrian zone during the pilot period, not including events. Approximately \$100,000 has been spent by the University on improvements to areas adjacent to the pedestrian zone, including the Sidney Smith Hall public space and the New College patio.

The University's Master Plan (1994) and the University of Toronto Area Plan, approved by the City of Toronto in 1997 identified the need for a pedestrian connector between the Sir Daniel Wilson Walk and Sidney Smith Hall to complete the University of Toronto's east- west pedestrian network. Work on the revitalization of St. George Street was subsequently coordinated to include the future provision of the Willcocks Street improvements.

In 2009, the University sponsored an ideas competition for the Huron Street and Willcocks Street intersection, including the area of the pedestrian zone. The winning entry was a concept that created enhanced civic space in keeping with the long term objectives of the University of Toronto Master Plan and also addressed the deficit of open space in the area west of St. George Street.

### **Pedestrian Destination, Activity and Quality of Experience**

Prior to the pedestrian zone, there were few locations in the west part of the campus that provided informal public spaces and opportunities for large organized events. The pilot pedestrian zone addressed this deficit and has successfully provided an open space for casual, informal use and socialization by students, staff, local residents and other community members. It has also complemented the Sidney Smith Hall building located adjacent to the pedestrian zone. As well, it provides a safe walking/cycling route and a

space for occasional organized events, such as farmers markets and the university's science festival, "Science Rendezvous." See Appendix F for a summary of types of formal and informal events.

About 70 percent of all survey respondents use the pedestrian zone either daily, a few times a week or a few times a month to have a coffee, lunch or meet with friends or colleagues to enjoy the public space. Over 90 percent of all respondents are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the cleanliness and maintenance of the pedestrian zone in addition to improvements made to attractiveness of the area.

Survey results show that these benefits are not only enjoyed by the University community but also by the local residents, employees and businesses. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the university community and 54 percent of the local residents, employees and businesses reported to have changed their walking/cycling route to go through the pedestrian zone. In addition, 67 percent of the university community and 73 percent of the local residents, employees and businesses reported that they use the pedestrian zone as a new public space/park. The pedestrian zone has been covered by several media outlets (e.g. The Toronto Star, Spacing Magazine, UofT Bulletin) as an example of a successful and much needed public space in the U of T area.

### **Transportation, Access and Safety Impacts**

In general, there are over 60,000 students and staff travelling on foot in this part of campus on a weekly basis to reach teaching facilities, undergraduate laboratories, classrooms, offices or research labs. The Lash Miller building and Sidney Smith Hall building, located on the south and north side of Willcocks Street respectively, together house eight large lecture halls, many smaller class rooms and a large food court, resulting in significant foot traffic across Willcocks Street between class times.

As a result of implementing the pilot pedestrian zone, 95 percent of the survey respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the improved level of safety. This is largely due to the elimination of possible conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles. Specifically, the limited sidewalk space on the south-west corner of Willcocks and St. George often resulted in conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles, as pedestrians often spilled onto Willcocks Street and into the path of vehicular traffic. There have been no complaints or negative impacts to the flow of vehicular traffic on streets adjacent to the pedestrian zone as a result of the pedestrianization of Willcocks Street.

### **Traffic Operations in the Vicinity Willcocks Street Pedestrian Zone**

- Motor vehicle traffic will continue to be prohibited on Willcocks Street, in both directions, from Huron Street to St. George Street.
  - Willcocks Street, between St. George Street and Huron Street, has an average segment width of 7.38 metres.
- This street will continue to be closed to vehicular traffic with the exception of emergency vehicles. The pedestrian zone will maintain a fire route as shown in Appendix B.
- There are no TTC routes along the portion of the road where the pedestrian zone is located.

## **Conclusion**

The Ryerson University and University of Toronto pedestrian zones have created new public spaces with the ongoing operation and maintenance at no cost to the taxpayer. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of the 3,576 survey respondents are in support of making the pedestrian zones permanent. These zones have resulted in improved safety, a stronger sense of community and identity, and the establishment of two new unique public places.

Staff from Transportation Services, Legal Services, Insurance and Risk Management, Fire Services, Toronto Building and Toronto Parking Authority have been consulted in the implementation of the zones and in the preparation of this report. The evaluation included information from traffic data, feedback from key partners, local councillors, local businesses, residents, and community associations, and observational data.

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## **SIGNATURE**

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## **ATTACHMENTS**

Appendix A – Gould Street and Victoria Street Pedestrian Zone Layout  
Appendix B – Willcocks Street Pedestrian Zone Layout  
Appendix C – Amendments to Traffic and Parking Regulations  
Appendix D – "Parking Machines" – To Be Rescinded and "Parking Machines" – To Be Enacted  
Appendix E – Before and After Photographs of Gould and Victoria Streets Pedestrian

Zone and Before and After Photographs of Willcocks Streets Pedestrian Zone  
Appendix F – Summary of Organized Special Events – Gould and Victoria Streets  
Pedestrian Zones (September 2010-September 2011) and Summary of  
Events – Willcocks Street Pedestrian Zone (September 2010-September  
2011)