

**Downtown Yonge Street Studies – Status Report**

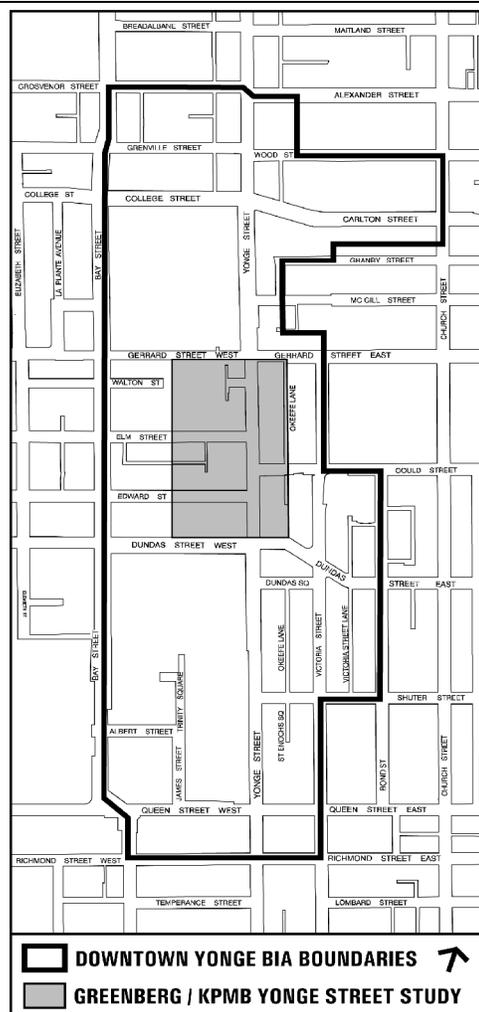
<b>Date:</b>	October 24, 2011
<b>To:</b>	Toronto and East York Community Council
<b>From:</b>	Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District
<b>Wards:</b>	Ward 27 – Toronto Centre-Rosedale
<b>Reference Number:</b>	11 267655 STE 27 TM

**SUMMARY**

Downtown Yonge Street generally focussed between Carlton/College and Richmond Street has been the subject of several studies in the last several years. The Downtown Yonge BIA has developed Streetscape Guidelines and a Public Realm Strategy. The BIA has requested that these documents be incorporated into the existing Community Improvement Plan that exists in the area, generally as a legislative framework that currently permits the facade improvement program.

More recently, a more focussed study was commissioned by Councillor Wong-Tam for the area between Gerrard and Dundas Street. The study produced suggestions for built form changes, public realm improvements and programming.

Community Council requested that these various studies and initiatives be reviewed on a harmonized basis prior to consideration by City Council. This report provides a status update on the review undertaken to date.



## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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### **The City Planning Division recommends that:**

1. City Council request City Planning, Transportation Services, Economic Development and Culture, Technical Services, and Parks, Forestry and Recreation Divisions, in consultation with the TTC, to report back to Council in the first quarter of 2012 with recommendations to implement the Yonge Street Studies outlined in the report titled Downtown Yonge Street Planning Studies – Status Report, dated October 24, 2011 including analysis of cost and feasibility and opportunities for pilot projects and various streetscape improvements.

### **Financial Impact**

The recommendations in this report have no financial impact.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

At its meeting of September 12, 2011 Toronto and East York Community Council approved the following motion:

1. That City Planning, Economic Development, Transportation Services, Technical Services, Parks Forestry and Recreation, and the TTC report back on the feasibility of the various recommendations in the Yonge Street Study, Downtown Yonge BIA Public Realm Strategy, and Downtown Yonge BIA Streetscape Guidelines;
2. That the divisions and agencies listed above work to produce a strategy for the implementation of the recommendations that are feasible; and
3. That the divisions and agencies listed above report back by the last quarter of 2011.

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

### **Study Recommendations**

The following is an overview of the various documents identified for review:

#### **(a) Downtown Yonge Street Community Improvement Plan**

By-law 1996-0135 was enacted March 4, 1996 designating and adopting a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) for Downtown Yonge Street. The CIP was subsequently amended 7 times from 1996 to 2002. The CIP contains policies which were originally put in place to support the Yonge Dundas Redevelopment Project. Amendments to the CIP over the years adjusted the boundaries of the Plan and added the City's facade improvement grant program as an eligible benefit.

### **(b) Downtown Yonge BIA Streetscape Guidelines**

The Downtown Yonge Street BIA developed Streetscape Guidelines which were published in November 2009. The guidelines provide direction on how the right-of-way should be treated within the boundaries of the BIA. The guidelines include direction on:

- street lighting;
- branded traffic poles;
- pedestrian lighting;
- details, including:
  - light pole details;
  - light fixtures;
  - branded banner programs;
  - hanging baskets;
  - branded street name signs; and
  - bicycle rings.
- tree planting, including:
  - designated tree planting areas;
  - tree planting details;
- sidewalk details; and
- the coordinated street furniture program.

### **(c) Downtown Yonge BIA Public Realm Strategy**

The Downtown Yonge Street developed a Public Realm Strategy which was published in June 2011. The strategy outlines desired improvements to the public realm within the BIA area. The intent of the strategy was to guide future investment in the BIA area by both private and public sector and joint initiatives.

The strategy divided the BIA area into precincts and further identified within each precinct as follows:

- College/Carlton Precinct
  - St. Luke Lane Improvement Project
  - College Subway Station Stairwell Canopy Project
  - Reverend Porter Lane Improvement Project
  - Wood Street Sidewalk Bump-out Project
  - Grenville Street Sidewalk Bump-out Project
- Parks Precinct
  - College Park Improvement Project
  - McGill Parkette Upgrade Project
  - Granby Parkette Upgrade Project
  - Mid-Block Cross-walk Project
  - McGill Dog Park Project
  - Yonge Street Median Improvement Project
- Mainstreet Precinct
  - Walton Street Project

- O'Keefe Lane Entrance
- Gould Street Project
- TTC Second Entrance/Exit
- Edward/Elm Street Precinct
  - TTC Stairwell Relocation and Canopy
  - Edward Street Project
  - Edward Mid-block Cross-walk Project
  - Mid-Block Connection Project
  - Elm Street Project
  - Elm Street Mid-block Cross-walk Project
- Entertainment Precinct
  - Dundas Square Street Project
  - Laneway Site Line Improvement Project
  - Victoria Street Project at Y-D Square and City TV/OMNI TV
  - DYBIA Discovery Team Visitor Information Booth Project
- Theatre Precinct
  - Shuter Street Project
  - Queen Subway Station Stairwell Project on Yonge Street
  - O'Keefe Lane/St. Enoch's Square Improvement
  - Victoria Street Project
- Trinity Square Precinct
  - Dundas Street West Mid-Block Cross-walk/Connection Project
  - Church of the Holy Trinity Lighting Project
  - James/Albert Street Project
  - Queen Street West and Bay Street Project
  - Old City Hall Heritage Lighting Project
  - Trinity Square Park Project

**(d) KPMB/Greenberg Yonge Street Study**

Councillor Wong-Tam commissioned a review of the focused area between Gerrard and Dundas Street in 2011 given changes coming to this area with the proposed Ryerson Student Learning Centre and potential redevelopment on at least two sites at Yonge and Gould Street, among other recent changes to the Street. The study was undertaken by KPMB/Greenberg Consultants and released in July 2011.

The study made four primary recommendations:

**Public Realm & Transportation**

- widening sidewalks and maintaining two broad lanes of traffic on Yonge Street;
- limiting signs and billboards on heritage buildings;
- create linkages between green spaces and pedestrian realm;

**Built Form**

- introducing a 7.5 m stepback for towers in place of the existing 44 degree angular plane;
- maintaining contextual heights of buildings for podiums;

- maximum permitted heights as in the current zoning of 20 metres to 35 metres, 52 metres and 107 metres on the east side and 35 metres on the west side;
- introducing increased height permissions at Gerrard Street and Yonge Street; and
- maintaining the heritage fabric where it exists.

### **Program and Land Use**

- maintaining the retail rhythm on Yonge Street that consists of small floorplate, fine grained retail;
- activate storefronts through the use of "garage-door" facades, French doors and open patios;
- provide a mix of use, including residential with a mix of tenure and affordability;
- encourage the return of a mix of cultural and entertainment venues; and
- allow for street vendors and markets to play an active role in vitalizing street life.

### **Implementation**

- develop pilot projects that could be implemented immediately to enhance the streetscape and public realm;
- revise the current zoning by-law to permit intensification along with site specific design guidelines;
- provide a new subway entrance/exit at Yonge Street and Gould Street or Edward Street; and
- use capital programs to enhance the existing pedestrian networks and expand the public realm.

### **Preliminary Staff Comments**

Staff have undertaken an initial review of the documents and will be considering them further as directed in consultation with affected Divisions, the TTC and community stakeholders.

The study area for the KPMB/Greenberg Yonge Street Planning Study focused primarily on Yonge Street between Gerrard Street and Dundas Street, but also looked at the adjacent built form as well. Planning Staff have characterized the study boundaries as Dundas Street, Gerrard Street, and the public lanes east and west of Yonge Street. The built form in this area has considerable variation from high-rise residential condominium towers to low-rise commercial. Yonge Street itself is characterized by primarily low-rise retail and commercial space with institutional uses and the large retail, institutional and commercial complex known as Toronto Life Square. The study area for the work done by the DYBIA is within their boundaries, which, due to its irregular shape, is defined loosely as Richmond Street, Victoria Street, Grosvenor/Alexander Street and Bay Street.

### **Official Plan and Zoning Considerations**

The area of the focused review between Dundas and Gerrard Streets includes recommendations for changes to the built form regulatory controls. The area is designated as *Mixed Use Areas* in the City of Toronto Official Plan. Furthermore, site specific OP Policy 174 applies in the area. *Mixed Use Areas* in the Official Plan are designed to accommodate a broad range of retail, residential and institutional uses. New

development in *Mixed Use Areas* should provide an appropriate transition between diverse built forms and provide high quality employment opportunities wherever possible. There are development criteria for *Mixed Use Areas* that guide the form of development.

Site Specific Policy 174 of the Official Plan states that Yonge Street is to be promoted as a place for street related retail and entertainment uses. Reinvestment in the Yonge Street corridor is to be encouraged. Any large changes from the existing built form are to be directed to the Yonge and Dundas area. The downtown Yonge redevelopment project should encourage and explore high quality architecture, and landmark buildings that could act as tourist destinations.

Appropriate linkages should be created between Ryerson University, Yonge Street, the redevelopment lands and major mixed-use developments. Generally, redevelopment should respect and reinforce the existing built form fabric of Yonge Street. Heritage buildings should be the target of adaptive reuse where possible, and the streetscape shall be treated in accordance with the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Association's streetscape guidelines.

Within the Zoning By-law (438-86), the zoning for the focused review area is CR, or commercial residential. Mixed-use zoning permits a wide variety uses including residential, retail, commercial and institutional uses. Most of the properties are also within the flight path of the Hospital for Sick Children and subject to the height restrictions associated with it.

The main difference between the in force zoning and that proposed in the KPMB/Greenberg Yonge Street Study is how the built form and massing is shaped. A 7.5 metre step back above a contextual height varying from 9.9 to 12.5 metres to a maximum height that ranges from 20.0 to 35.0 metres, with site specific height increases at Yonge Street and Gould Street as well as Yonge Street and Gerrard Street is suggested. This replaces the 44° angular plane which begins at 16 metres (measured from grade) and proceeds to a maximum height of 20 metres in the current zoning. A key consideration of this proposed change will be whether the general intent of the Official Plan to promote a comfortable pedestrian retail and entertainment experience is maintained.

## **Community Consultation**

As part of the DYBIA Public Realm initiative, the BIA held several public meetings, one for each precinct. The DYBIA also met with City Staff and made a presentation to interested Divisions. Feedback from the community was generally supportive of the initiative and the proposed projects. Staff asked that further priorities be set and a plan be put together for implementation. The DYBIA Streetscape guidelines were devised with the input from their membership and from City Staff.

There were three consultation meetings as part of the KPMB/Greenberg Yonge Street Planning Study. The team consulted City Staff, local businesses and residents respectively. According to the report there were mixed opinions on widening the

sidewalks on Yonge Street. There was support for weekend closures of Yonge Street, but there was an impression that reducing the vehicular traffic would hurt business. Local businesses felt that the turning restrictions on Yonge Street are frustrating and contribute to its role as a vehicular throughway. There was an impression by residents that more parking in the area was required. There was limited support for the PATH being expanded into this area. Some stakeholders stated that the city's right-of-way should be rationalized and redundant utility boxes and poles removed. There was support for seasonal narrowing of Yonge Street. There were also concerns about the heritage buildings, lighting and paving, and extending the scope of the study.

### **Circulation for Comments**

The KPMB/Greenberg Yonge Street Planning Study and the DYBIA Public Realm Initiative were circulated to the City Planning Division, Transportation Services Division, and Technical Services for comment. A wider circulation to all relevant City commenting agencies and divisions will be undertaken to assess and review the broad impacts the proposed changes could have to built form, TTC infrastructure, transportation impacts and heritage.

### **NEXT STEPS**

City Staff believe that there is a four part implementation strategy for this process that can be broken down as follows:

#### **(a) Built Form**

The City Planning Division will undertake a review of the built form recommendations of the KPMB/Greenberg Yonge Street Planning Study and report on alignment with the Official Plan, their feasibility and rationale. Zoning changes may be brought forward to reflect the recommendations in the Study for consideration once Staff have further considered the matter.

#### **(b) Streetscape Guidelines**

City Staff believe that the DYBIA Streetscape Guidelines are already largely incorporated within the City-wide Streetscape Manual and will confirm. This is the preferred means of implementing the guidelines as developments reviewed for site plan approval will be required to construct the streetscape in accordance with the manual.

#### **(c) DYBIA Public Realm Strategy**

Staff have attended meetings with the BIA during the development of the public realm strategy and the project opportunities included in the document. Many of the opportunities are well understood while others may need further development, understanding or assessment. Some are already being achieved as part of on-going initiatives.

While it would be beneficial to have the overall strategy approved by City Council, many of the projects and opportunities will only be achieved over time in coordination with private development, the implementation of the City's capital plan or as part of a BIA undertaking. A number of City divisions and agencies are affected depending on the

project. In addition, some coordination is needed between the BIA public realm strategy and the recommendations for public realm from the KPMB/Greenberg study.

It is recommended that staff from Community Planning identify and align the various public realm projects with public or private implementation opportunities in consultation with affected divisions. For example, the Strategy calls for the upgrade of Barbara Anne Scott Park. This is being achieved in relation to the redevelopment at Yonge and Gerrard for the Aura project and will be coordinated through Parks, Forestry and Recreation in consultation with area stakeholders.

This will provide a general implementation approach which can then be packaged with the BIA strategy and forwarded to City Council for approval in principle with a general direction to support implementation subject to funding and coordination with both public and private initiatives.

#### **(d) Public Realm and Right-of-Way**

Both the KPMB/Greenberg Yonge Street Planning Study and the DYBIA Public Realm Strategy comment on improvements to the public realm, specifically: sidewalk widening, laneway improvements, sidewalk bump-outs and other improvements that affect the City's Right-of-Way. Transportation Services Division will undertake a detailed review of the recommendations and proposed projects and report back on the feasibility of their implementation, opportunities for pilot projects, coordination with the Downtown Transportation Operations Study and further information requirements.

#### **CONTACT**

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#### **SIGNATURE**

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