

Round One Consultation Summary Report

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Executive Summary

YongeTOMorrow is a study that will develop and evaluate design options to increase pedestrian space and improve the way people move through and experience Yonge Street between Queen Street and College/Carlton Street. As part of the Round One consultation process, residents, businesses and stakeholders have been engaged in the consideration of many possible changes (long list of alternatives) in the re-design of Yonge Street.

Project Communications and Engagement Activities

Public communications to promote the first round of consultation included flyers delivered to residents within the study area, a promotional video, information postcards distributed at various locations, email invitations to stakeholders, project list members, social media posts, project posters, a billboard display at Yonge-Dundas Square, and advertisements in local news media.

A variety of engagement opportunities included the formulation of a Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG), project launch event at Yonge-Dundas Square, drop-in public event, and online questionnaire. To date, over 3,200 participants have been engaged in the yongeTOMorrow project.

What We Heard

In round one feedback from stakeholders and members of the public provided the following key insights and priorities:

- Sidewalks feel overcrowded and congested
- People often look for an alternate route instead of Yonge Street due to existing traffic congestion whether walking, cycling and/or driving
- Pedestrian experience needs to be improved and should be the priority of the street
- Public safety is a top priority, encompassing both improving road safety and design considerations to improve personal security
- Vehicle access needed to support local business operations
- Public realm should support local area businesses
- Street should be flexible for a variety of uses and changes in temporal demands (time-related)
- Different opinions about how much space to allot for different transportation modes, uses and in what combination
- Desire to make the area more attractive by adding greenery (trees and planters)
- Yonge Street well-suited for cycling infrastructure and cycling volumes will grow

Next Steps

The feedback received will be used to inform and shape the next phase of the study and related consultation activities. Round two consultation will occur in the fall of 2019. For more information please visit: toronto.ca/yongetomorrow.

Meet us there.

Overview of Public Consultation

As part of the Round One consultation process, residents, businesses and stakeholders have been engaged in the consideration of many possible changes (long list of alternatives) in the design of Yonge Street. This report summarizes the communications and consultation activities carried out and feedback received leading up to, during and after the public event held on May 9, 2019, which includes results from the online questionnaire.

The Project Team is committed to engaging stakeholders in a meaningful way that is transparent, inclusive, contemporary, and accountable. It is important to make it easy for people to learn about the project, provide feedback and help inform the evaluation of solutions for the re-design.

Notification and Communications

Public communications were used to promote awareness of the consultation process, collect broad perspectives and engage stakeholders and the public on current conditions in the study area and future priorities for Yonge Street.

- 89,786 flyers for public drop-in event delivered by Canada Post (April 24) to study area bounded by King Street, University Avenue, Roxborough Drive and Jarvis Street
- Video (30 second introduction) with call to action shown at Yonge-Dundas Square during May 3 Project Launch, shared on social media and available on website
- 2,000+ postcards distributed at local events, venues and stakeholders
- Email invitation to Stakeholder Advisory Group Members consisting of resident, business and community organizations
- 400 subscribers on the project email list
- Twitter: @CityofToronto, @TO_Transport, Instagram: @CityofTO (April 23, April 24, May 8) and Facebook: City of Toronto (week of April 23)
- Paid promotion on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram (started April 29, restarted May 7 through to May 24)
- Billboards (appearing at various roadside locations around Toronto)
- Posters in community centres and libraries
- Paid advertisements in NOW Magazine (April 25, May 2)
- Media stories in Toronto Star, The Globe and Mail, CBC Toronto and NewsTalk 1010
- Project Website: toronto.ca/yongeTOmorrow

Activities

Public input was collected through the following consultation activities:

- Stakeholder Advisory Group Meetings: (July 30, 2018, April 1, 2019)
- Project Launch Yonge-Dundas Square (May 3, 2019)
- Public Drop-in Event (May 9, 2019) – 161 registered participants
- Public Drop-in Event Materials:
 - Over 100 Post-it notes comments on display panels
 - Over 100 staff collected comments
 - On-line questionnaire – 3,025 completed
- 45 emails and phone calls logged (to date: June 19, 2019)

Submissions Received

- Letter from Walk Toronto
- Letter from Cadillac Fairview
- Letter from Ryerson University City Building Institute
- Letter from Ryerson University Facilities
- Letter from Toronto Youth Cabinet
- Letter from St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA

Feedback Summary

All comments received have been reviewed and organized according to key themes, priorities and preferences. The following section provides a high-level summary of the feedback received from the different round one consultation activities.

Stakeholder Advisory Group

Local community stakeholders were invited to join a SAG that will meet with the Project Team five times throughout the yongeTOmorrow study.

Who participated?

The stakeholders include representatives from: property owners/operators, Business Improvement Areas, Resident Associations, research and advocacy groups and educational institutions. Full meeting summaries along with a list of participating organizations is available to review on the project website.

Meeting #1: Vision, Opportunity Statement and Objectives

An introductory meeting took place on July 30, 2018, with presentation on the preliminary vision, opportunity statement and study objectives (Mobility, Liveability, Prosperity and Sustainability).

Key Points:

- Yonge Street needs to be seen as part of a broader transportation network that considers the projections of growth for residents, visitors and workers within the larger study area
- Pedestrians should be prioritized as primary mode of transportation on Yonge Street followed by cyclists and then vehicles
- Social issues and safety concerns are prevalent, and it is important for stakeholders to understand how the City plans to address these issues and their connection to streetscape design

Meeting #2: Existing Conditions and Draft Long List of Alternatives

The second meeting took place on April 1, 2019, with a review of both the Terms of Reference and presentation materials for the Public Drop-In Event.

Discussions focused on vehicular traffic and circulation, active transportation, operations and servicing, public realm, safety, growth and neighbourhood change.

Key Points:

- Pedestrian experience on Yonge Street needs to be improved with wider sidewalks to handle daily volumes
- Yonge Street is ideal for cycling infrastructure because currently no dedicated north-south cycling route between Sherbourne Street to the east and Beverly Street to the west; absence of on-street parking and streetcar tracks; and low vehicle traffic
- Desire to see public realm enhancements including trees, planters, hanging gardens, relaxing spaces, space for entertainment and festivals and the introduction of more street furniture
- Comments for enhancing safety on the street such as lighting and wider sidewalks
- Maintaining vehicular operations and servicing routes
- Plan for population growth and neighbourhood change

SAG meeting summaries, including list of participants, are available to review on the project website.

Public Drop-In Event

On May 9, 2019, the City hosted a public event for the yongeTOMorrow study to introduce and gather feedback about possible changes including a long list of alternatives for the re-design of Yonge Street. People were invited to drop-in and learn more about the study through display panels and conversations with the Project Team. Attendees were also encouraged to share feedback via the online questionnaire with tablets provided on site, posting comments directly onto display panels, completing printed questionnaire forms and/or submitting comments via email and/or phone.

Who Participated?

The event was well attended by approximately 160 participants who indicated the following:

- Residents (56%) or work in area (27%)
- Daily basis of travel downtown mostly by walking (94%), followed by taking the TTC (39%), cycling (21%) and driving (5%)
- Ages mixed with 34% of attendees between the ages of 54 and 72, 27% between the ages of 38 and 53, 20% over the age of 73 and 17% between the ages of 22 and 37

Key Points:

- In terms of both priorities and long list of alternatives, range of support from full pedestrianization to widening sidewalks
- Requests for a shared street that accommodates cycling infrastructure
- Critical to maintain access for vehicles providing goods movement/services
- Opportunity to green street with trees, shrubs and plantings
- Consider the social conditions and challenges that exist in the Downtown Yonge neighbourhood and seek positive social change through the road design process

See Appendix 1 for more information and feedback.

Online Questionnaire

An online questionnaire was made available between April 24 and May 24, 2019, and completed by 3,025 participants. Participants were asked to consider Yonge Street through three lenses: Current Conditions, Future Priorities and Physical Space.

Who Participated?

Participants indicated that their association with Yonge Street included:

- Residents (41%), diners or shoppers (28%), work in area (13%), business owners (18%) and "other" made up of business owners, students, visitors, and tourists
- Daily basis of travel downtown mostly by walking (40%), driving (10%)
- Age range with 71% of participants between the ages of 25 and 54 years with participants between the ages of 25 and 34 being the most commonly indicated

Key Points:

Future Priorities

- Most frequently expressed that Yonge Street should have more greenery
- Space and variety of retail options on the street should be improved
- Suggestions to ensure that the space is adaptable and used for a variety of activities such as street fairs, art exhibits, and performances
- Provide space for public art which should include the work of Indigenous peoples, Canadian artists and youth.

Current Conditions

- Yonge Street, between Queen Street and Carlton/College Street is crowded, dirty and sometimes feels unsafe
- Sidewalks are too narrow for the volume of pedestrians, which has made walking the street feel uncomfortable, difficult or unsafe for some people due to the close proximity to vehicle traffic
- Some cyclists noted that they avoid Yonge Street as it has not been made cyclist friendly and that the physical condition of the road is poor
- For drivers, route options from Yonge Street are limited due to turn restrictions
- Noted that Yonge Street is not currently a place where people enjoy relaxing or strolling as it is too busy and congested

Allocation of physical space on Yonge Street given to:

- pedestrian space ranged from 50% to 75%
- cycling and space for enjoyment were both given approximately 15% to 20%
- driving was given between 0% to 10%

See Appendix 2 for more information and feedback.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Public Drop-In Event Feedback, Long List of Alternatives

Appendix 2: Online Questionnaire Feedback Details

Appendix 3: Additional Feedback and Themes

Appendix 1: Public Drop-In Event Feedback, Long List of Alternatives

The Long list of Alternatives displayed at the public event is available to review on the project website under the Consultation, Public Events tab.

Note: each alternative below has multiple options/variations

Car Free

- Not allowing thru car traffic or restricting for a maximum of one block makes sense
- Preference for street closure and interest in different possible combinations i.e. seasonal (summer months) and/or for certain areas only
- For a pedestrian only option (Option A) consider people with low or no vision and potential conflict with other modes (i.e. cyclists without a cycling facility)
- If car-free street is not possible, support for two travel lanes with protected bike lanes on both sides
- Consider closing Yonge Street to certain motor vehicle traffic (e.g. King Street) and open up space to patios and festivals during summer months

One Driving Lane

- From a cyclist perspective, cycling lanes on either side of motor vehicle lane (Option B) not favoured
- Question about why trees aren't shown on both sides of the street with this option
- Comment that cyclists will continue to use Yonge Street even with parallel facility on another street

Two Driving Lanes

- Comment that bi-directional cycling facility is not great for pedestrians
- Support for bi-directional bike lane especially if requires less overall width than other types of cycling facilities
- Comment that cycling lanes on either side of motor vehicle lanes should have protection for cyclists and indication for a middle lane for emergency vehicles
- Support for no cycling facility option with a larger and more beautiful pedestrian walkway and reduction of motor vehicle lanes to one lane in each direction
- Feeling that reduction to two driving lanes is insufficient capacity to accommodate TTC subway closures, shuttle buses and emergency vehicles

Three Driving Lanes

- Support for three lanes and one cycling lane (Option A) as most useful
- Consider incorporating left turning lanes

General Comments about Long List

- Yonge Street functions fine as is and in comparison to neighbouring streets
- Evaluation criteria should be weighted to represent volume of users when comparing
- Support for one-way streets on either Yonge Street, Bay Street, Church Street or all
- Some not convinced of benefits and functionality of a one-way street
- Given the potential for conflict between road users, recommendation to combine either pedestrians and motor vehicles or pedestrians and cyclists but not all three

- Driving lanes shouldn't be taken away entirely
- Concerns about how neighbouring and parallel streets will be affected by option
- Cynical feeling about political will and possibility for change on street

Appendix 2: Online Questionnaire Feedback Details

Future Priorities

Participants in the online questionnaire were provided six specific elements pertaining to future priorities for the yongeTOMorrow study to consider. These elements align with the evaluation criteria and included: adaptable space, public art, activities and events, retail and dining, greening and relaxing spaces. Participants were asked to rank their top three elements that should be prioritized. The following section provides a summary of the feedback provided for each element which are in order of most popular ranking.

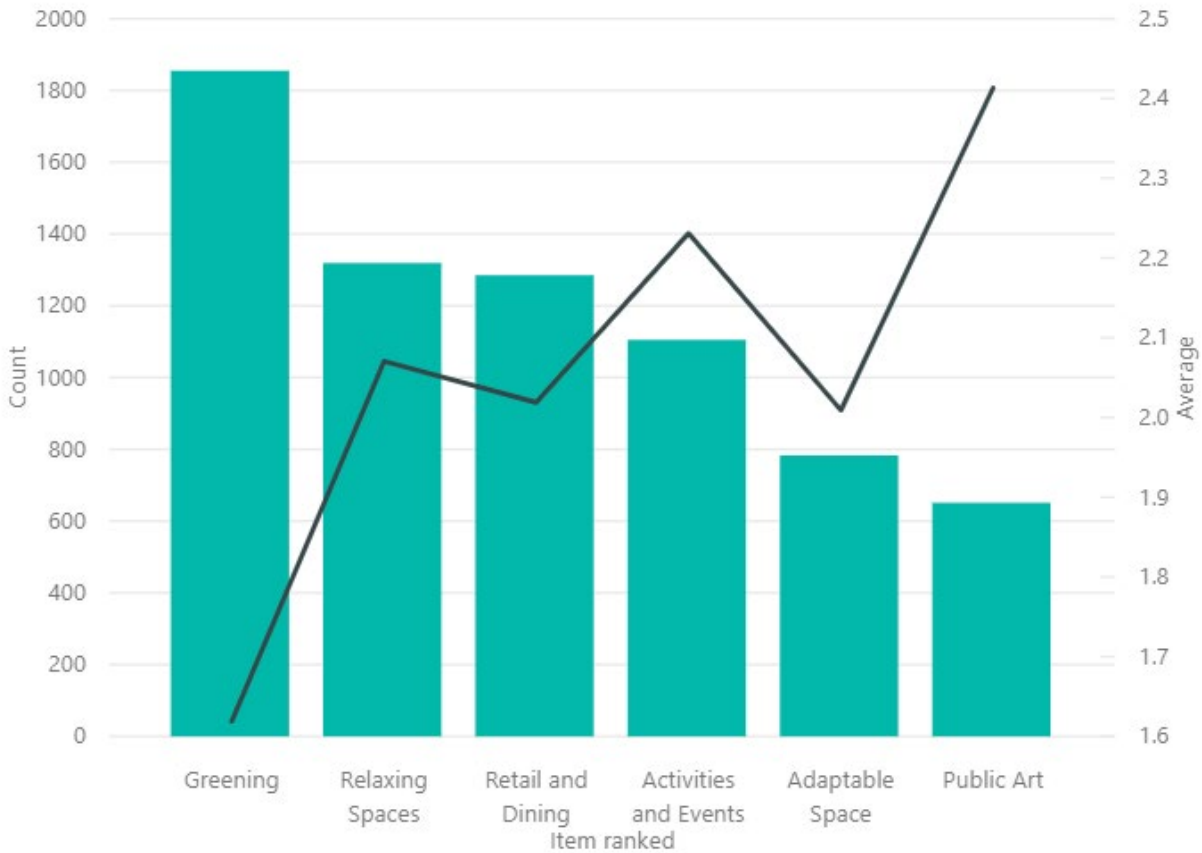


Figure 1: Future Priorities

Greening

- Provide a mix of trees, shrubs and flowers and include native species
- Plant plenty of trees to ensure that pedestrians have ample shade
- Incorporate green infrastructure into the redesign of the street to assist with flood control, air quality and heat management
- Greening the street can contribute to improved mental health

¹ The bar graph demonstrates the results of the activity. The bars show how often each category was chosen as a top three priority. The line depicts the average ranking (first, second or third) each category received when ranked as a top three priority.

- Ensure that trees or planter boxes do not obstruct or narrow the sidewalks
- Provide hanging gardens

Activities and Events

- Yonge Street is the perfect place in the city to host large-scale public events and festivals
- Consider a weekly market
- Encourage return of events such as BuskerFest

Retail and Dining

- Ensure retail space is affordable to allow for greater retail diversity and independent retailers and consider a tax structure that would support this
- Allow for food trucks
- Create more space for patios, outdoor cafes and street vendors

Adaptable Space

- Ensure that public spaces are accessible for people with limited mobility or using mobility aids
- Provide Wi-Fi in public space
- Open adaptable public space is critical to a thriving urban core
- Consider more attractions for tourists such as a digital arts museum
- Vary space depending on the programming (small or large)
- Trees and seating are essential to any public space

Public Art

- Display the artwork of Indigenous and young Canadian artists
- Create space for both art installations as well as performance space
- Incorporate more murals into the Yonge Street landscape
- Use art installations to balance the amount of advertisements in the area

Current Conditions – Getting Around

To assess current conditions, participants were asked to provide feedback regarding their typical experience on Yonge Street. Specifically, they were asked to share their experience getting around Yonge Street (e.g. by foot, bike, car and/or transit) and their experience enjoying the area. Participants gave each activity a ranking out five stars to symbolize their experience. Five stars represented the optimal experience while one star represented the least desirable experience. The following sections provide a summary of feedback received and the number of people who selected a star rating.

Pedestrian Experience

- Sidewalk section between Queen Street and College Street is too narrow for the volume of pedestrians it serves and often overcrowded and congested
- Construction projects further limiting sidewalk space
- Sidewalks are often dirty or littered with trash that makes the walking experience less pleasant
- Walking sometimes feels dangerous, especially when crossing the street (drivers can be aggressive with right turns or running through yellow lights)
- Heavy presence of people panhandling and sleeping on Yonge Street, contributes to a sense of limited safety for pedestrians
- Some people choose alternate routes such as Bay Street and Church Street

WALKING	
★★★★★	169
★★★★	375
★★★	884
★★	897
★	574

Cycling Experience

- Yonge Street does not currently provide a comfortable experience for cyclists and lack of dedicated cycling infrastructure makes it nearly un-rideable for novice cyclists
- Feels unsafe and often avoided in favour of alternate routes
- Not maintained well enough to support cycling (cracks, potholes and drainage grates contribute to unsafe riding conditions)
- While interest shown for adding bike lanes to Yonge Street, some feel street too congested to support reduction in motor vehicle lanes

CYCLING	
★★★★★	157
★★★★	57
★★★	230
★★	563
★	1687

Driving Experience

- Avoid driving on Yonge Street because difficult to maneuver due to limited turning options, congestion, and narrow lanes
- Currently congested and unpleasant driving experience
- Cars should not be the priority on Yonge Street and road should be shared with cyclists or completely pedestrianized
- Should be considered for a pilot project like King Street
- Concern about potential removal of traffic lanes and may negatively impact traffic flows elsewhere downtown

DRIVING	
★★★★★	201
★★★★	253
★★★	573
★★	644
★	897

Subway Station Experience

- Often crowded, especially during rush hour (e.g. attempting to get on the subway northbound at College Station is difficult as the train typically full which creates safety concerns
- Subway entrances too narrow to accommodate volume of users and could also benefit from wayfinding signage
- Some subway stations are still not physically accessible (i.e. elevators and other accessibility features are needed)
- Requires regular attention and maintenance from dirty and janitorial staff

SUBWAY ACCESS

★★★★★	440
★★★★	847
★★★	799
★★	535
★	260

Streetcar and Bus Experience

- Congestion on several bus and streetcar routes can make taking these transit routes inefficient
- Crowding on many bus and streetcar routes can make the experience unpleasant
- Older streetcars are still in service, despite being inaccessible and even accessible streetcars offer experience that is still not convenient or safe for those who require accessible service
- Bus and streetcar schedules are unreliable
- Dedicated streetcars or LRT lanes are needed to service the downtown core
- Safety is a concern for some on buses or streetcars

STREETCARS & BUS

★★★★★	185
★★★★	574
★★★	884
★★	701
★	453

Current Condition – Enjoying the Area

Comfortable Areas

- Opportunities to relax or enjoy Yonge Street lacking and reasons include: lack of seating, lack of greenspace, presence of street involved peoples, and uncleanliness
- With the exception of Yonge-Dundas Square, there are few spaces that would be considered public spaces
- Too busy and overwhelming to be comfortable
- More cafes and restaurants with patios
- Sidewalks are too narrow and cannot accommodate spaces for benches and other street furniture

COMFORTABLE AREAS

★★★★★	44
★★★★	85
★★★	342
★★	800
★	1402

Things to Do and See

- Opportunities for shopping and dining represent the most common things to do and see on Yonge Street
- Common response was that the street is too crowded and dirty to enjoy and therefore, avoid street entirely
- Observation that recent condo developments have resulted in a repetitious landscape of chain stores and restaurants with increase in storefront vacancies
- Yonge-Dundas Square is most obvious destination however not everyone enjoys it and for some, too corporate and uninviting

Cleanliness and Upkeep

- While not spotless, by comparison to other cities, Yonge Street is relatively clean (especially when considering pedestrian volumes)
- Yonge Street is not as clean or well-kept as it could be
- Regular maintenance is needed to ensure that the street remains walkable and accessible
- More garbage bins needed and emptied frequently

Safe Environment: Daytime

- Feels safe during the day and for some, because of the volume of people
- Feels safe in comparison to other big city/major thoroughfares
- Pedestrians and cyclists said that traffic often makes them feel unsafe
- Crowding on sidewalks makes the street feel unsafe
- Presence of people panhandling and sleeping on Yonge Street makes street feel unsafe
- Presence of persons with loudspeakers at Yonge-Dundas Square makes people feel uncomfortable or unsafe

Safe Environment: Nighttime

- Most frequently said they feel unsafe on Yonge Street at night
- Some avoid Yonge Street at night altogether
- While the majority of participants said they feel unsafe on Yonge Street at night, a fair number of participants said that Yonge Street feels safe at night
- Traffic is also a safety concern for pedestrians and cyclists during the night
- Suggestions to improve safety included adding more lighting and increasing the police presence on the street

THINGS TO DO AND SEE

★★★★★	193
★★★★	483
★★★	715
★★	750
★	525

CLEAN AND WELL-KEPT

★★★★★	59
★★★★	239
★★★	702
★★	865
★	805

SAFETY DAYTIME

★★★★★	367
★★★★	856
★★★	801
★★	393
★	260

SAFETY NIGHTTIME

★★★★★	106
★★★★	370
★★★	670
★★	749
★	748

Appendix 3: Additional Feedback and Themes

Other comments and suggestions received from all the consultation activities including the public event, online questionnaire and via phone/email are summarized below.

Accessibility

- Consider needs of seniors who require convenient pick-up and drop-off locations
- Request that no curbs be used in design (i.e. predictable infrastructure)

Business

- Consider that smaller businesses experience challenges with increasing rents, property taxes, competing with larger corporate franchises, and construction projects
- Concern about economic sustainability of area, threat of "dead zones" and economic and social challenges in certain areas along the street

Cycling

- Concern about potential conflict between cyclists and delivery/rideshare vehicles stopping in a cycling facility
- Consider a paving treatment that will slow cyclists down
- Connectivity is the most important consideration and therefore, open to cycling facility on Bay Street in order to choose best option
- Consider connecting north/south cycling facilities with east/west cycle tracks on Richmond Street and Adelaide Street
- Add Bike Share stations, racks and bike repair stations

Deliveries and Services

- Acknowledgement needed of new pressures to accommodate both deliveries due to online shopping and rideshare needs
- Consider retractable bollards that allow for flexible use and emergency, delivery, transit access
- Consider deliveries in the evening or during set times of day

Events, Festivals

- Use flexibility to shut down street for events and then re-activate traffic lanes
- Consider another street for cultural events or do them early on Sunday morning

Green the Street

- Plant more trees along street and consider that mature trees add a sense of significance to a major thoroughfare
- Add planter boxes, grassy parkettes, native species, and other greenery
- Include green infrastructure to account for flooding and urban heat caused by widespread paving

Health and Well-Being

- Student population is a positive contribution for the street and area
- Acknowledgement that people (with and without a home) are scared on street and don't want to be harassed
- Concern regarding the visibility and impacts of homelessness, addiction and substance abuse on Yonge Street
- Comments that street feels more dangerous than it used to be
- Experiences shared about challenges living in area including incidents of crime, violence and aggression
- Requests for more crossing guards, cameras on corners and police officers

Public Realm

- Feeling that benches cause obstructions for pedestrians
- Requests for waste receptacles and ashtrays
- Question for team to think about how people can enjoy public space during winter months and factor this into design
- Concern about experience on Yonge Street during summer with garbage smell
- Interest in more public art and requests for artists and busker performance space