

Authority: Toronto Community Council Report No. 11, Clause No. 6,
as adopted by City of Toronto Council on July 27, 28, 29 and 30, 1999
Enacted by Council: July 29, 1999

CITY OF TORONTO

BY-LAW NO. 456-1999

To amend further former City of Toronto By-law No. 1996-0135, being a By-law to designate certain lands in the Downtown Yonge Street Area as a Community Improvement Plan for the Downtown Yonge Street Community Improvement Project Area.

WHEREAS by enacting By-law No. 1996-0135, the Council of the former City of Toronto designated and adopted a community improvement plan for the Downtown Yonge Street Community Improvement Project Area; and

WHEREAS by enacting By-law No. 1996-0420, the Council of the former City of Toronto expanded the Community Improvement Project Area; and

WHEREAS by approving By-law No. 1997-0196 of the former City of Toronto, the Ontario Municipal Board enacted Amendment No. 1 to the community improvement plan; and

WHEREAS by enacting By-law No. 363-1999 City Council has further expanded the Community Improvement Project Area;

THEREFORE the Council of the City of Toronto HEREBY ENACTS as follows:

1. The Downtown Yonge Street Community Improvement Plan, as adopted by By-law No. 1996-0135 of the former City of Toronto and as amended by By-law No. 1997-0196 of the former City, as enacted by the Ontario Municipal Board, is amended further by adopting the following:

The Downtown Yonge Street Community Improvement Plan Amendment No. 2

1.0 Background:

The former City of Toronto Council enacted By-law No. 1996-0135, designating Downtown Yonge Street as a Community Improvement Project Area and adopting a Community Improvement Plan for the area generally along Yonge Street between Richmond and Grenville Streets. A number of community improvement initiatives have been undertaken in this area including a Commercial Facade Improvement Grant and Loan Program.

The Ontario Municipal Board amended the Community Improvement Plan (Amendment No. 1) in an Order dated November 25, 1998, approving By-law No. 1997-0196 of the former City of Toronto, a by-law "To amend the Downtown Yonge Street Community Improvement Plan to incorporate the Regeneration Program into the Plan in order to facilitate the implementation of the regeneration strategies developed under the Regeneration Program". Under the Regeneration Program, the City has undertaken the Yonge Dundas Redevelopment Project at the corner of Yonge and Dundas Streets.

The current Plan contains a map which defines the boundaries of the Downtown Yonge Street Community Improvement Project Area, the area being consistent with the Project Area by-laws adopted by the former City of Toronto Council as By-law No. 1996-0135 as amended by By-law No. 1996-0420.

In order to expand the Community Improvement Project Area for the use of the Commercial Facade Improvement Grant and Loan Program, City Council enacted By-law No. 363-1999 at its meeting of June 9, 10 and 11, 1999, expanding the existing Project Area to the north from Grenville Street to Davenport Road.

2.0 Authority provided by Section 28 of the Planning Act and the former City of Toronto Official Plan

(a) Section 28 of the Planning Act

The intent of Section 28 of the Planning Act is to provide jurisdiction for municipalities to undertake a broad range of community improvement initiatives which address the economic and social well-being of the community and may have regard for area specific concerns such as deficiencies in public amenities or the poor condition of buildings.

This area of Yonge Street has prominence with both the local downtown community and visitors and tourists. While this area does not suffer from blight, it has experienced retail changes which include a change in the retailing mix, turnover and vacancy, deterioration of building facades, including many historic buildings and changes in rent and tax structures.

(b) Section 15 of the former City of Toronto Official Plan

Section 15 of the former City of Toronto Official Plan contains community improvement policies which include the broad goal of economic and social well-being, objectives of community improvement programs and activities, measures to be used by Council and objectives with respect to commercial area improvement. In selecting areas for community improvement, considerations which need to be taken into account include the need for improved appearance or increased public amenities, the efforts of local business associations to promote their area, opportunities to co-ordinate improvements with other public works and the priority given to retail strips.

The extension of the Community Improvement Plan to the area of Yonge Street outlined in this amendment is consistent with these policies and approaches and meets the selection criteria set out in the Official Plan.

(c) Other relevant policies of the former City of Toronto Official Plan

This area of Yonge Street is designated as a Priority Retail Street and a Prominent Area. Applicable policies support the need to restore and reinvest in this area as an important downtown Toronto pedestrian shopping street.

3.0 Review of implementation within the existing Downtown Yonge Street Community Improvement Project Area

The existing facade improvement program has been in place since March 1996. In the last three years, 18 grant applications have been approved. \$330,000 in City funds has been allocated to the program with an additional \$80,000 for 1999. To date, the private sector investment spin-off related to these applications has been substantial: approximately \$2.5 million has been spent on exterior renovations and \$6.0 million has been spent on interior work. Other reinvestment in the area includes the reconstruction of the Eaton Centre exterior from Queen to Dundas Streets, the Atrium redevelopment north of Dundas Street, the Metropolis project at the northeast corner of Yonge and Dundas Streets, a new public square being constructed by the City and numerous other new tenants and related improvements.

It is desirable to build on this success and encourage the reinvestment in Yonge Street to spread north.

4.0 Character and Planning Objectives respecting the expanded Downtown Yonge Street Community Improvement Project Area

The expanded project area north of College Street generally along Yonge Street between Grenville Street to the south and Davenport Road to the north is the second segment of Yonge Street downtown which has traditionally been considered as Toronto's main pedestrian shopping street. The expansion area contains approximately 251 properties, including some larger properties which occupy entire block frontages and many multi-tenanted properties.

Unlike the area to the south between College and Queen, this northerly segment of downtown Yonge Street, while providing a tourist attraction, also plays a role as a local shopping street, providing a range of local convenience goods and services. The main characteristics of the expansion area include:

- local convenience shops and services (e.g. hair stylists and coffee shops) are common although a lack of food merchants is evident
- restaurants and fast food outlets are common throughout the area
- speciality clothing stores are common (e.g. surplus, second hand, shoes, leather)
- speciality services are common (e.g. cosmetics, tattoos, adult videos)
- the pattern of narrow storefronts and lots is apparent from the variety of shops, services and buildings
- the appearance of the street is dominated by historic storefronts and buildings, with a variety of signage, both permanent and temporary in nature
- vacancies and a lack of refurbishment tends to be more apparent south of Wellesley Street with more storefront reinvestment and greater tenant variety closer to Bloor Street
- sidewalks are narrow and the amenity of the streetscape is limited especially considering the pedestrian volumes

Approximately 17 vacant storefronts were counted in the area in June 1999. Short term tenancies (e.g. book sale outlets and liquidators) were also evident.

A significant characteristic is the predominance of historic buildings, often in strips of storefronts which are visible as one travels along Yonge Street. There are 146 properties listed on Heritage Toronto's List of Heritage Properties in the Project Area and 20 properties designated under the Ontario Heritage Act (data current to 1998). An important objective with facade improvement will be to maintain this fabric through renovation as an alternative to wide scale redevelopment. It is important to retain the large number of historic buildings as part of the history of Yonge Street and the City. The visual interest for pedestrians and the contribution of these buildings to the aesthetic appearance of the street are a public benefit.

A second planning objective is to improve economic viability and to provide support to this area as a retail shopping street. New investment will help reduce vacancies and turnover and reinforce the area's role and function as a shopping street and a tourist attraction. Facade renovations will contribute to the revitalization of the business environment, the aesthetics of the street, the vibrancy of the area, supporting street animation and public safety.

A third important planning objective to be achieved through facade improvement and retail reinvestment in this area will be to provide an improved retail environment for the new housing development in the area east and west of Yonge Street, for office building conversions which have taken place at Yonge and Wellesley Streets and for the hotel reconstruction taking place at 475 Yonge Street.

5.0 Other Community Improvement Initiatives in the area

Community improvement through facade renovations is the principal purpose of this amendment to the existing Community Improvement Plan. Other community improvement initiatives in this area which the City has been working on over the past ten years include the provision of open space (e.g. the greening of Parking Lot 2), the provision of parking (e.g. Charles/Hayden garage) and street scape improvements (e.g. Bloor Yorkville and Yonge Street road and sidewalk reconstruction). Facade improvement in the area should be considered as part of a comprehensive strategy to improve the quality of life in this very urban and dense downtown community.

6.0 Nature and Implementation of the Community Improvement Plan Amendment

(a) Nature of amendment

There are two amendments:

(i) Funding provisions

The Community Improvement Plan as it existed before this amendment provided two options for funding facade improvements, either through grants that are provided as tax credits on the tax bill or through loans. These provisions are amended to also allow the payment of the grant or loan to be made in cash to the property owner following satisfactory inspection of the approved improvement by City staff.

(ii) Term of the Program

The Community Improvement Plan as it existed before this amendment provided for a term of three years from March 1996. The term is extended by an additional three years from the date this amendment is adopted by City Council.

(b) Applicability of the Community Improvement Plan

While not technically part of the Community Improvement Plan, through Amendment No.1 approved by the Ontario Municipal Board, the Plan now includes a map containing the existing Community Improvement Project Area generally between Richmond and Grenville Streets along Yonge Street. The expansion area described in this report has been adopted as a Project Area by By-law No. 363-1999 and is not technically required to be part of the Plan. The amended policies of the Plan apply throughout the entire Project Area from the existing southerly boundary at Richmond Street to the new northerly boundary at Davenport Road, generally along Yonge Street.

(c) Implementation of proposed amendment

Consultations have been held with the Yonge Street Small Business Association, Bloor Yorkville Business Improvement Area, the Yonge Street Business and Resident Association and area Councillors. The existing facade improvement program between Richmond Street and Grenville Street along Yonge Street has been implemented with the co-operation of a community-based committee which reviews facade improvement applications. Improvement design guidelines for modern or older buildings with modern facades and for older buildings which retain all or portions of their original character are set out in the original Plan and are generally applicable in the expanded Project Area. As in the case of the original Project Area, emphasis in the expanded area will be placed on older buildings which retain all or portions of their original character, including listed or designated properties.

On April 29 and 30, 1996, the former City of Toronto Council authorized the Director of Economic Development to approve commercial facade grants in accordance with the Community Improvement Plan. This process has worked well and will be continued within the expanded improvement area. The process will include liaison with Heritage Toronto as appropriate, given the large number of historic buildings. Implementation of the program will be undertaken by the Managing Director of Economic Development.

Other than the amendments set out above, the program details, eligibility and application process are unchanged from the initial Plan approved by the former City of Toronto Council.

ENACTED AND PASSED this 29th day of July, A.D. 1999.

CASE OOTES,
Deputy Mayor

NOVINA WONG,
City Clerk

(Corporate Seal)