

# HARBORD VILLAGE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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April 2, 2012

Public Works and Infrastructure Committee  
Toronto City Hall,  
100 Queen Street West  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

## **PW13.8: Toronto Street Furniture Program – Lessons Learned and Changes Required**

Dear Committee Members:

This letter is to supplement our April 1, 2012 submission on the proposed Info Pillar Placement Guidelines, and to respectfully suggest a path forward that will:

- fully realize the vision of Vibrant Streets Guidelines and Toronto's integrated street furnishings program;
- avoid a repeat of the very dissatisfying Info Pillar redesign experience; and,
- ensure that "the public is put back into the Public Realm".

As outlined in the attachments to our April 1, 2012 and December 11, 2011 submissions, the root cause of the problem with street furnishing placement seems to be the current Staff interpretation that the Pedestrian Clearway is "what's left over after they've installed street furnishings 18 inches from the curb".

Experience with the modified Info Pillars clearly demonstrates that staff are focussing on the size of the gap between individual pieces of street furniture and the building face – resulting in bottlenecks in what is often an otherwise generous Pedestrian Clearway. The result is evident in the few examples provided in Attachment 1, and we respectfully suggest that it isn't acceptable.

To ensure a pedestrian and public space focus for the Integrated Furnishings Program, Vibrant Streets Guidelines speak the criticality of identifying sidewalk "zones" – the most important of which is the Pedestrian Clearway; which is to be a "clear, straight, continuous pathway of sufficient width to meet current and future pedestrian volumes". With the Clearway designated, available sidewalk space is then assessed for potential installation of street furnishings and other uses – all the while ensuring no obstruction to the primary, pedestrian function of sidewalks.

Staff confirm that they have yet to undertake the critical task of defining sidewalk zones as required by Vibrant Streets Guidelines, and have no plan to do so. And we suggest that the installation inefficiency and pedestrian impact of not pre-designating sidewalk zones will be

untenable -- as Staff move to place more than 18,000 additional street furnishings on Toronto sidewalks in coming years.

To their credit, we appreciate that Council has endorsed Vibrant Streets Guidelines, the Toronto Walking Strategy and has approved several high priority actions associated with the Toronto Walking Strategy.

However, to further benefit from the Lessons Learned with the Info Pillars, and ensure a more positive outcome going forward from these critical initiatives, we respectfully request:

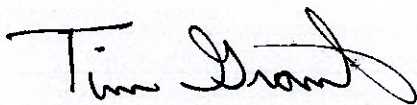
- That PWIC and Council direct Staff to develop a plan and timeline that will see the Public Realm Unit achieve full compliance with Vibrant Streets Guidelines. This review will include the designation of sidewalk zones throughout Toronto, and will serve to guide efficient and compliant installation of remaining furnishings and correction of non-compliant installations. The plan and timeline should be presented for public input at PWIC. (Walking Strategy Actions 4.2, 4.3, WS Pg 28).
- That PWIC and Council direct Staff to schedule and conduct the Annual Walking/Public Realm Forum (committed in the Walking Strategy) to discuss progress on making Toronto a great walking city, and obtain input on priorities. In the absence of the Pedestrian Committee or other identified "walking community" to provide input on such, this Walking Strategy initiative is critical to optimizing the pedestrian environment and public realm, and strengthening public accountability of the Public Realm Unit. (WS Action 1.5, Pg 16)

The promise of Vibrant Streets Guidelines is to use the Integrated Street Furnishing Program to enhance Toronto's image through the design and thoughtful installation of superbly designed street furnishings, and to dramatically improve accessibility and the pedestrian experience. With redirection at this point, that can still be a reality.

While our recommendations are important on that basis alone, such actions will also move Toronto closer to developing an inclusive, accessible environment for all -- as envisioned by the now legislated Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

We ask for your support to see that this vision is realized.

Sincerely,



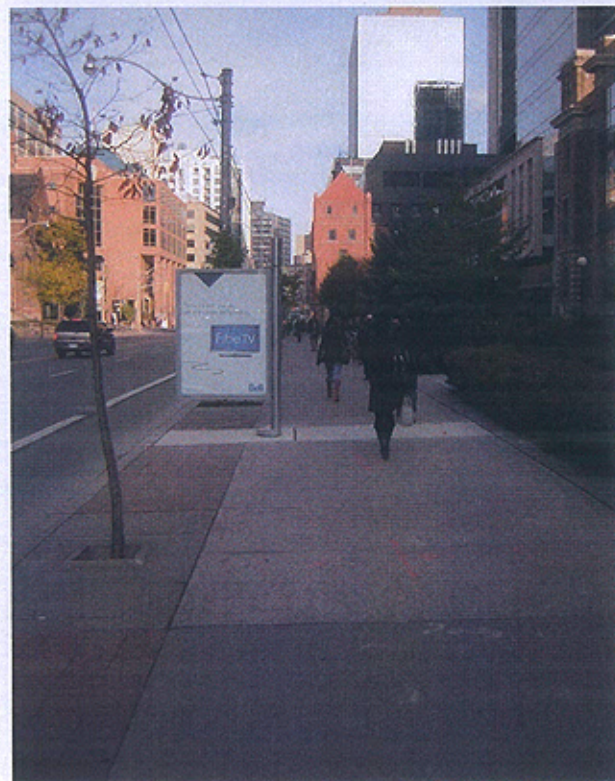
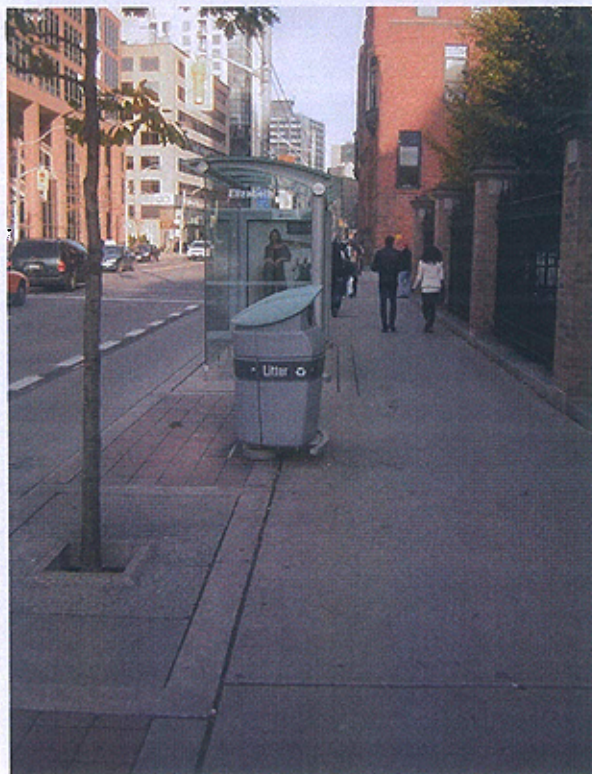
Tim Grant, Chair  
416-960-1244, [chair@harbordvillage.com](mailto:chair@harbordvillage.com)

Attachments showing street furnishings obstructing pedestrian clearway:

- 1a. Situations with a clearly-defined furnishing & planting zone
- 1b. Situations without a defined furnishing zone to guide pedestrians

**ATTACHMENT 1a: STREET FURNISHINGS OBSTRUCTING PEDESTRIAN CLEARWAY:  
SITUATIONS WITH A CLEARLY-DEFINED FURNISHING & PLANTING ZONE**

- ✓ A clearly-defined Furnishing Zone visually delineates the edge of the Pedestrian Clearway for all. This can and should provide an important visual cue -- especially for those with impaired vision.
- ✓ Furnishings can and should be limited to the Furnishing Zone.
- X All installations shown below violate Vibrant Streets Guidelines. All were subject to Staff approval.



**ATTACHMENT 1b: STREET FURNISHINGS OBSTRUCTING PEDESTRIAN CLEARWAY:  
SITUATIONS WITHOUT A DEFINED FURNISHING ZONE TO GUIDE PEDESTRIANS**

- X Situations without paving treatment, "rumble strip" or other visual indication of a Furnishing Zone.
- X All installations here violate Vibrant Streets Guidelines for an unobstructed, continuous Clearway.
- ✓ Vibrant Streets Guidelines allows furnishings in a minimum 1m curbside Furnishing Zone AFTER an appropriate Pedestrian Clearway is specified and ONLY IF furnishing use doesn't obstruct Clearway.

