



TE7.64.2



City Clerk
Toronto City Hall, 13th floor, West Tower
100 Queen St. West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

July 3, 2015

ATTENTION: Mr Ulli Watkiss

Dear Mr Watkiss

RE: LETTER OF SUPPORT: TE7.64 Revitalizing Yonge – Downtown Yonge Street (Wards 27, 28)

Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area (DYBIA) works as a tireless advocate for the economic well-being of the Downtown Yonge neighbourhood. Today, we are writing to support the Recommendation, as outlined in *Revitalizing Yonge – Downtown Yonge Street*¹, that Council authorize staff to initiate a study of Yonge Street from Queen Street to Gerrard Street.

1.0 Background

In 2013, the City of Toronto announced a revitalization initiative along Yonge Street from the Waterfront to Davenport to effect long-overdue infrastructure improvements². We immediately recognized the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to shape the future of both Yonge Street and the wider Downtown Yonge neighbourhood by improving our streets and sidewalks at the same time.

Our vision is to create an elevated street experience for Canada's most iconic street. We are the busiest pedestrian street in Toronto and in Canada, if not North America, and the face that Toronto shows the world.

DYBIA represents close to 2,000 property owners and businesses in the Downtown Yonge area of downtown Toronto and a total of almost \$5 billion of commercial property value. In addition, the DYBIA works closely with major stakeholders and community groups for the engagement, economic value and social innovation of the neighbourhood as a whole.

With an employee cluster of more than 500,000 people daily; a Ryerson population of some 110,000 students and faculty a year; over 175,000 residents within easy walking distance; 26% of the city's downtown hotels

¹ Staff Report: May 22, 2015 – City of Toronto. Reference number: P:\2015\Cluster B\PLN\TEYCC\TE15077

² Planning and Revitalizing Yonge Street: City Council referred Motion MM33.13 to the Toronto and East York Community Council on May 13, 2013.





rooms as well as some 42 million pedestrians on Yonge Street annually, the DYBIA has a unique perspective on the importance of public realm.

We strive to be a catalyst for creating vibrant urban experiences in the heart of downtown Toronto and actively champion attractive public spaces, popular events, safety and cleanliness.

2.0 Downtown Yonge as an Advocate of Public Realm Revitalization

During the last few years, the DYBIA has taken a proactive approach to public realm revitalization projects:

- Since 2011, DYBIA has had a strategic mandate to focus on public realm, with a Board-approved strategic directive to *“Create an exceptional public realm.”*
- As part of our thinking about public realm revitalization, we have crafted and or participated in a series of policy statements and documents, including: the Board-approved ***Downtown Yonge BIA Public Realm Strategy*** and ***Streetscape Guidelines***; and the ***2011 Yonge Street Planning Framework***.
- In 2012, DYBIA presented ***Celebrate Yonge***, a pilot transportation study that assessed the impact of street narrowing on traffic on Yonge Street and stretched from Gerrard to Queen Streets. Our role included event management, street activations, as well as the generation of metrics³ which were part of the City’s Staff Report assessing the event.
- DYBIA has been actively engaged in the development of the arts, culture and music sectors in the public realm. For example: in 2013, we launched Play the Parks, a now annual showcase for live music in our parks and squares during the summer months, supporting artist development and independent labels. Our music programming in public spaces is noted in ***The Mastering of a Music City***, published by Music Canada⁴.
- Our focus on revitalizing laneways in Downtown Yonge is referenced in Park People’s ***2015 Making Connections*** report⁵ as an example of initiatives focusing on commercial laneways in Downtown Toronto. We have also actively participated in collaborations like the Laneway Project first summit on laneways in 2014: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9o9qTpUF1_A

³ Staff Report: Celebrate Yonge – Post Event Review, City of Toronto. Deferred by City Council on June 18, 2013.

⁴ The Mastering of a Music City: Key Elements, Effective Strategies and Why it’s Worth Pursuing, Music Canada, 2015. See page 69.

⁵ Making Connections: Planning parks and open space networks in urban neighbourhoods; Park People – Toronto Alliance for Better Parks. See page 45: Leveraging Toronto’s Laneways – Downtown Yonge Laneways.





- Additionally, we have participated with Toronto Public Health on their Healthy Streets reports⁶, as well as taking part in The Active City Forum earlier in 2015.

3.0 Yonge Love: A Creative Community Consultation on the Future of Downtown Yonge

Catalyzed by the City's 2013 announcement on Yonge Street revitalization, and within the context of the initiatives mentioned above, DYBIA launched a creative and wide-ranging stakeholder consultation called **Yonge Love**, which ran for seven (7) months from July 2015 to January 2015⁷. The Campaign Findings Report will be published in the coming weeks.

With almost eight (8) million media impressions; more than 6,000 website visits; almost 1,700 online survey responses and more than 4,000 engagements at pop-ups and events, the Yonge Love campaign reached out to the wide community for its views on Downtown Yonge.

Some of the key findings captured by the Campaign are bulleted below.

- 3.1 People want human-scale, walkable neighbourhoods that connect them to their community: wider sidewalks, more trees and a vibrant street experience to draw people into the public realm. **The pedestrian experience must change, which makes the reduction of vehicle lanes and the widening of sidewalks a priority.**
- 3.2 We need to be increasingly creative in our use of public space: by finding new and surprising uses. Leveraging a limited number of green spaces is especially important. **This makes the greening of both Yonge Street and the neighbourhood's east-west arterials a priority.**
- 3.3 Intensification poses significant challenges that could impede neighbour growth. If crowding, congestion and log jams are managed now, those same challenges would transform into an opportunity to embrace growth. **This makes planning for flexible and complete streets a priority.**
- 3.4 Overall, there is a need for balance: for accessible, inclusive, complete streets that welcome residents, employees and visitors alike. **This makes programmable and flexible streets that are activated throughout a year a priority.**

⁶Toronto Public Health: Healthy Streets, Jurisdictional Review (October 2014) and Evidence Review (2014).

⁷The final report is pending, but further information is available at www.yongelove.ca





4.0 Concluding Remarks

We applaud the City for bringing forward the Recommendation and are pleased to provide our support for this important revitalization initiative. Please be assured of our ongoing commitment to participating in the City's decision-making processes to find optimal public realm solutions for Downtown Yonge.

Most importantly of all, we want to underscore the need for Toronto to recognize, acknowledge and evolve Canada's most iconic street as a singular experience – bar none – that does justice in representing the best of the city, the province and the country as a whole.

Sincerely,

Mark Garner
Executive Director & Chief Staff Officer

- Cc
- Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam
- Councillor Pam McConnell
- Elyse Parker, Director: Public Realm
- Harold Madi, Director: Urban Design
- Jeffrey Dea, Manager: Infrastructure Planning
- David Oikawa, Manager: Community Planning

