

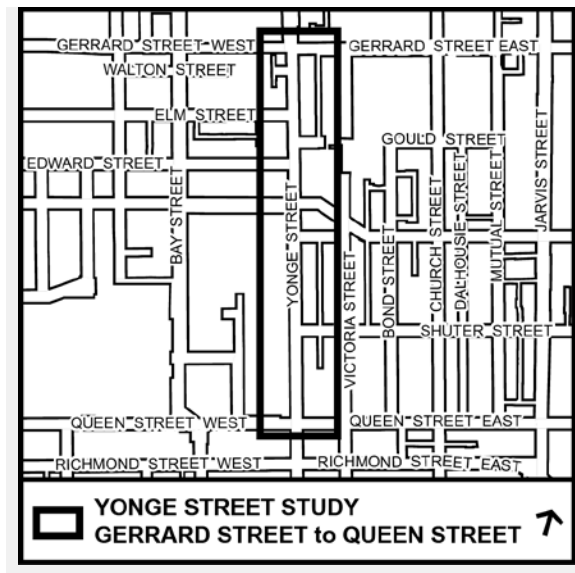
**Revitalizing Yonge - Downtown Yonge Street**

<b>Date:</b>	May 22, 2015
<b>To:</b>	Toronto and East York Community Council
<b>From:</b>	Director, Public Realm, Transportation Services Director, Urban Design, City Planning Division
<b>Wards:</b>	Ward 27 – Toronto Centre-Rosedale, Ward 28 Toronto Centre-Rosedale and Ward 22 – St. Paul
<b>Reference Number:</b>	P:\2015\Cluster B\PLN\TEYCC\TE15077

**SUMMARY**

This report recommends that Council authorize staff to initiate a study of Yonge Street from Queen Street to Gerrard Street, to explore design options for streetscaping and public realm improvements that would increase pedestrian space and have regard for cyclists through the narrowing of the roadway, including the potential reduction of traffic lanes. This study would be undertaken as a Functional Street Design Study.

This initiative would inform considerations for potential improvements to the broader Yonge Street corridor outside this segment that serves the Downtown, from Davenport Road to the Waterfront. This broader Yonge Street corridor is being considered as part of the TOcore project, the City's planning and infrastructure study currently underway for the Downtown. The TOcore team will be undertaking a Parks and Public Realm Strategic Master Plan, and will include considerations for public realm improvements along the length of Yonge Street within the Downtown.



This report recommends the Functional Street Design Study be managed by Transportation Services, in consultation with City Planning, and with input from other appropriate City Divisions. This study will commence in 2016 and will be funded from Transportation Services' 2016 capital budget.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**Transportation Services Division and the City Planning Division recommends that:**

1. City Council authorize the initiation of a Functional Street Design Study for Yonge Street from Queen Street to Gerrard Street by Transportation Services in consultation with City Planning and with input from other appropriate City Divisions (as described in Downtown Yonge Street Studies – Information Report, dated December 10, 2012;) and community stakeholders.
2. City Council receive for information, the report (December 10, 2012) from the Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District, entitled, “Downtown Yonge Street Studies - Information Report”.
3. City Council receive for information, the report (June 11, 2013) from the Acting Director, Transportation Services, Toronto and East York District, entitled, “Celebrate Yonge – Post Event Review”

### **Financial Impact**

The anticipated budget to retain consultants through an RFP to undertake the Functional Street Design Study for Yonge Street between Queen Street and Gerrard Street is between \$250,000 and \$300,000. This study will commence in 2016 and will be funded from the Engineering Studies budget in the 2016 Transportation Services capital program.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer have reviewed this report and agree with the financial impact information.

### **DECISION HISTORY**

There have been three separate matters relating to the revitalization of the public realm on Yonge Street which have been reported to Toronto East York Community Council: “Downtown Yonge Street Studies”, “Celebrate Yonge”, and “Planning and Revitalizing Yonge Street”.

## **Downtown Yonge Street Studies**

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.

On November 2, 2011, a staff report entitled, "Downtown Yonge Street Studies – Status Report" was considered by Toronto and East York Community Council.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2011/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-42005.pdf>

The report reviewed the background of the 3 studies cited above and in addition, also reviewed the Downtown Yonge Street Community Improvement Plan. Council directed staff to report back with recommendations to implement the studies including an analysis of the: cost; feasibility; opportunities for pilot projects; and, various streetscape improvements.

On September 11, 2012, a staff report entitled, "Downtown Yonge Street Studies - Final Report" was considered by Toronto and East York Community Council.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2012/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-49619.pdf>

At its meeting of October 2, 3 and 4, 2012, City Council adopted the following:

1. City Council direct the Deputy City Manager, Cluster B, to identify the project leads among City staff to co-ordinate and consult broadly with the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area and the local Councillor in co-ordinating and implementing the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area's public realm improvement plans and report back to the Toronto and East York Community Council in the first quarter of 2013.
2. City Council direct City Planning Division, Transportation Services, Economic Development and Culture, Technical Services and Parks, Forestry and Recreation Divisions, in consultation with the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area and the Ward Councillor, to evaluate the four week event "Celebrate Yonge", and to report back to the Toronto and East York Community Council in the first quarter of 2013 on the findings, such report to include the identification of what next steps and approvals would be required to advance the recommendations in the Greenberg/KPMB Yonge Street Planning Framework.

At its meeting of January 22, 2013, Toronto and East York Community Council deferred consideration of a staff report entitled, “Downtown Yonge Street Studies – Information Report”.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-54744.pdf>

The report remains deferred at the time of the writing of this report.

### **Celebrate Yonge**

At its meeting of May 15, 2012, Toronto and East York District Community Council considered a staff report entitled, “Celebrate Yonge – Street Event”. The report was adopted (as amended) by City Council on June 6, 7 and 8, 2012.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2012/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-46859.pdf>

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.TE16.52>

The report sought authority from Council to temporarily close two lanes of traffic on Yonge Street between Gerrard St. and Richmond St. from August 12 to September 12, 2012.

The closures were sought to facilitate a street event hosted by the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area. The event took place between August 17 and September 16, 2012 and consisted of lane reductions, from four lanes to two lanes on the portion of Yonge Street between Queen Street and Gerrard Street (for sample photographs of the event, see Attachment 1).

At its meeting of June 18, 2013, Toronto and East York Community Council deferred consideration of a staff report entitled, “Celebrate Yonge – Post Event Review”. The report remains deferred at the time of the writing of this report.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-59523.pdf>

### **Planning and Revitalizing Yonge Street**

At its meeting of May 7, 8 and 9, 2013, City Council referred a motion by Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, seconded by Councillor Pam McConnell to the Toronto and East York Community Council.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-58062.pdf>

The motion stated that:

“City Council direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, the General Manager, Transportation Services and the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to develop, in consultation with the Waterfront BIA, the St.

Lawrence BIA, the Financial District BIA, the Downtown Yonge BIA, the Bloor Yorkville BIA, the Garden District Residents Association, the McGill-Granby Residents Association, the Church Wellesley Neighbourhood Association, the Bay Cloverhill Community Association, the Greater Yorkville Residents Association, the Bloor East Neighbourhood Association, the Collier-Asquith Residents Association, the Avenue Bay Cottingham Residents Association, the York Quay Neighbourhood Association, the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association and the local Ward Councillors, a strategy to improve the streetscape and retail conditions of Yonge Street between the lakefront and Davenport Road and report the outcomes to the Toronto East York Community Council for its meeting on October 17, 2013."

On June 18, 2013, the motion was adopted by the Toronto and East York Community Council and subsequently by Toronto City Council on July 16, 2013.

### **TOcore: Planning Toronto's Downtown**

On May 13, 2014, the Toronto and East York Community Council (TEYCC) considered a Staff Report regarding *TOcore: Planning Toronto's Downtown*, along with a related background document entitled *Trends and Issues in the Intensification of Downtown*. Both reports are available at:

<http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=222101f2e9745410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>.

TOcore is looking at how Toronto's Downtown should grow, through a renewed planning framework and the infrastructure necessary to remain a great place to live, work, learn and play. TOcore is in its initial 'taking stock' phase, which involves an analysis of existing conditions, growth trends and priority issues in the Downtown. As part of the work program, a Parks and Public Realm Strategic Master Plan will be prepared that will include creating a public realm framework which identifies networks (pedestrian and cycling), recommends "Big Moves" and other improvement priorities. This work will integrate and complement the other transportation work focusing on surface transit, walking, cycling, curbside management and other mobility issues. The proposed Functional Street Design study will coordinate with TOcore's higher level efforts to ensure an aligned approach to public realm and active transportation improvements along Yonge Street are achieved.

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

In its' report entitled "Celebrate Yonge – Post Event Review", staff reported on the results of the independent Traffic Impact Study prepared by URS Canada Inc. which assessed the impacts of the Yonge Street lane reductions from four to two lanes, between Gerrard Street and Queen Street, resulting in approximately 4.0 to 4.5 metres of additional pedestrian space. The study found that pedestrian volumes increased by 10% over the year's previous volumes, for an average daily total of 221,456 pedestrians/day. The report also found that, following vehicular count, speed and delay studies in the area:

“Overall, the lane reductions associated with the Celebrate Yonge event did not have a significant impact on traffic operations in the downtown core.”

“The Celebrate Yonge Street Event received extensive positive media coverage across Canada and a post review of the event by City staff and related agencies confirmed a smooth operation undertaken by the event organizers with no concerns recorded.”

Given the positive results of the Traffic Impact Study and the post-review evaluation, the Downtown Yonge BIA wishes to develop a permanent installation similar in scale and impact to the event. Transportation Services staff have determined that the reduction of traffic lanes, increasing of pedestrian space and exploring potential for improving cycling infrastructure within the road allowance on Yonge Street would be subject to Schedule A+ of the Municipal Class EA. Under the Municipal Class EA process, Schedule A+ projects are pre-approved subject to stakeholder notification.

## **COMMENTS**

### **a) The Yonge Street Context**

Yonge Street is Toronto's "main street" and the area surrounding the intersections of Yonge and Queen and Yonge and Dundas has long been a focus of pedestrian activity in the Downtown. In the early 1970s, the City of Toronto closed Yonge Street to vehicles, and created a pedestrian mall in the summer months (for photographs of the pedestrian mall, see Attachment 2).

In the last decades there has been a renewed investment in the public realm and increasing the amount of pedestrian space within this portion of Yonge Street. The establishment of the Downtown Yonge Street Business Improvement Area (BIA) in 2001 and public realm improvements installed by the BIA have brought further interest to the area. Other investments in the public realm include the creation of Dundas Square, the expansion and improvements to the Yonge Street façade of the Eaton Centre and Ryerson University's Master Plan objectives for creating a prominent presence on Yonge Street, most recently with the opening of the Student Learning Centre at the corner of Yonge Street and Gould Street. There is a focus on expanding and improving pedestrian space within Ryerson's campus as well. In 2012, a permanent pedestrian zone was established along Gould Street between O'Keefe Lane and Bond Street, now called Ryerson Square.

Dundas Square, as a place for people to congregate in the Downtown, is sometimes referred to as Toronto's Times Square. In this context, there is a significant opportunity to capture the role of Yonge Street in promoting and enhancing pedestrian activity.

## **b) Area Growth and Pedestrian Volumes**

There has been tremendous growth in the Downtown since the 1976 Central Area Plan, with the population more than doubling. Non-residential space in the retail, institutional and office sectors has also been substantial. With a population growth rate of 18% since 2006, Downtown is now growing at four times the rate of the City of Toronto as a whole. The past decade has seen an incredible increase in the amount of development and the pace at which development applications are made, approvals granted and construction completed. With this increase in development has come an increase in pedestrians on the street.

Yonge Street, as the major north-south spine, has always been the central public realm focus for the Downtown. In addition, its' symbolic role as "Canada's Main Street" attracts a large number of non-resident visitors and tourists to Yonge Street. A 2014 Environics poll conducted by the Downtown Yonge BIA indicated that 28% of the pedestrian traffic in the study area is visitors to the area and a further 10% are tourists. With growing attraction to the area, Yonge Street is facing increasing pedestrian traffic.

Daily pedestrian volumes on Yonge Street at Dundas Street are approaching 100,000 per day (2012 data) and represent Toronto's busiest intersection. Pedestrian data from the Downtown Yonge BIA indicates that pedestrian volumes at peak times are rising to the point that congestion is occurring due to the narrow sidewalks in the area.

## **c) Past & On-Going Initiatives for Yonge Street**

Yonge Street is the focus of several on-going initiatives, including City-led studies, and campaigns led by other organizations. In addition to the TOcore Study as described earlier in this report, three others are listed below:

**"Yonge Love" Campaign:** the Downtown Yonge BIA is currently completing its "Yonge Love" campaign, which engaged Torontonians in a conversation about Yonge Street and imagining its future. The results of the campaign will help to inform the EA study.

### **Downtown Yonge Street Planning Study (by KPMB/Greenberg Consultants)**

In 2011, Councillor Wong-Tam commissioned a study to review Yonge Street between Gerrard and Dundas Street. This study was undertaken by KPMB/Greenberg Consultants and made a number of recommendations. Recommendations for improving the public realm on Yonge Street included widening sidewalks and maintaining two broad lanes of traffic on Yonge Street. For an excerpt from the Study, see Attachment 3.

For more Staff reports with further information on the Study, see the Status and Final reports here:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2011/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-42005.pdf>  
<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2012/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-49619.pdf>

**NXT City Prize:** In 2014, the NXT City prize winner was Richard Valenzona, whose “Yonge-Redux: A New Vision of Yonge Street” submission was selected in a contest for ideas to improve public spaces. The vision, (for an excerpt from the submission, see Attachment 4) illustrates how Yonge Street's public realm could be improved through sidewalk widening; tree planting; street furniture placement; and roadway design and materials. Servicing and parcel delivery was also accommodated.

**d) Precedents of Comparable Pedestrian-Oriented Initiatives**

Other key areas in Downtown Toronto, as well as numerous cities across North America are reconfiguring major downtown streets in an effort to increase space to accommodate existing and anticipated high pedestrian traffic volumes. In addition to expanding the pedestrian area, these initiatives include improvements to the design and quality of the streetscapes so that they become destinations in their own right, which in turn draws additional visitors, increases commercial activity and generates greater private improvements and/or investments in the area. Comparable pedestrian-oriented initiatives or improvement in other areas include Front Street at Union Station and John Street in Toronto, Ste. Catherine Street in Montreal, Granville Street in Vancouver, and Times Square & Broadway Avenue, New York City. See Attachment 5 for descriptions and photographs of these precedents.

These previously noted projects illustrate the benefits of expanding and enhancing space for pedestrians along major streets in downtown settings where a critical mass of pedestrian traffic warrants such considerations. Similarly, the Functional Street Design Study will enable the City of Toronto to explore opportunities to expand and enhance the public realm along one of the city’s most important and busiest destination streets.

**e) Coordination and Consultation**

Yonge Street traverses the geography of many residents' associations and several Business Improvement Areas within the Downtown. In addition, many of the City's larger institutions and mixed use complexes abut or are in close proximity to Yonge Street. Any study of the public realm and recommendations for its design will need to be coordinated with existing public realm improvement plans and a robust consultation undertaken with stakeholders. The Downtown Yonge BIA and Ryerson University are key stakeholders within the study area and have been strong advocates and supporters of this undertaking. The proposed study should also consider the upcoming cycling network plan and issues related to deliveries and servicing as part of its deliberations.

**f) Yonge Street Focus Area for Functional Street Design Study**

Yonge Street between Queen Street and Gerrard Street has a distinct character within the broader downtown Yonge Street context – it has a high concentration of street-related



retail and entertainment uses and high pedestrian volumes at all hours of the day and in all seasons. This area has traditionally been associated with the heart of Yonge Street and its iconic image. This was also the portion of the street that was narrowed from four to two lanes as part of the "Celebrate Yonge" event, and where the completed traffic study assessed the potential traffic impacts of the lane reductions while maintaining existing exclusive left and right-turn lanes at Yonge Street intersections. The results of this study showed that traffic on Yonge Street and intersecting streets would continue to operate at acceptable levels with a reduction in travel lanes in place.

Transportation Services staff have determined that the reduction of traffic lanes, increasing of pedestrian space and exploring potential for improving cycling infrastructure within the road allowance on Yonge Street would be subject to Schedule A+ of the Municipal Class EA. Under the Municipal Class EA process, Schedule A+ projects are pre-approved subject to stakeholder notification.

To assess the impacts of a reallocation of space on Yonge Street between Queen and Gerrard Streets on the public realm, staff are requesting authorization to carry out a Functional Street Design Study that will include subsurface investigations and servicing requirements, evaluate modal and street design alternatives and potential impacts, identify order of magnitude costs, funding sources and develop an implementation plan. As part of this study, an implementation plan will be developed that responds to the complexity and area-wide significance of Yonge Street. The need to develop an appropriate implementation strategy will be identified in the study's terms of reference and through the RFP process. Since Yonge Street is an arterial road, the implementation recommendations coming out of the study may be sent to Public Works and Infrastructure Committee for consideration. It is expected that any improvement would be provided through Section 37 funding. There is no capital funding program identified for any future capital improvements in the Study Area.

Staff estimate that a budget of between \$250,000 and \$300,000 would be sufficient to retain a consultant to complete the Functional Street Design Study, which would include public consultation. This is recommended to be managed by Transportation Services' Infrastructure Planning Unit who, within their mandate, manage all transportation EAs, and funded through the Transportation Services 2016 capital budget.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Elyse Parker, Director  
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Urban Design

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Celebrate Yonge Photographs

Attachment 2: Image of Yonge Street Pedestrian Mall

Attachment 3: Excerpt from KPMB/Greenberg Study

Attachment 4: NXT City Prize image

Attachment 5: Precedents of Comparable Pedestrian-Oriented Initiatives

Attachment 6: Report (December 10, 2012), headed "Downtown Yonge Street Studies – Information Report

Attachment 7: Report (June 11, 2013), headed "Celebrate Yonge - Post Event Review"

