

March 27, 2018

To Members of Toronto City Council

From Rhona Swarbrick and Janice Etter, residents of Etobicoke

Recommendations:

- **REImagine Yonge Street. Transform it.** Don't squander the opportunity of a generation! Give City Council a foot in the 21st century.
- Keep the bike lanes where they belong, on Yonge.
- Adopt Option 1. Option 2 is an embarrassment for the mayor and the councillors who devised it.

We have been absent from City Hall for a number of years, the result of drastically changed personal circumstances. However, we have been following our old issues.

We are long-time residents of Etobicoke, with deep roots in the old city of Toronto. Our interest in pedestrian and planning issues stemmed from our interest in what makes parts of the dense, mixed-use parts of downtown and its sharp contrast to the old suburban municipalities that ring it. We wanted to see the suburbs urbanized, and downtown further vitalized. Urban vitality, for the record, does not come from vehicles. It comes from people walking, cycling, connecting with each other, supporting local economies, and all those aspirational things that get talked about forever without much being done to make reality match aspiration.

Why this matters to us

1. We were the primary authors of the **Toronto Pedestrian Charter**, which was adopted by Council in 2002. Jane Jacobs unveiled it. Rhona was the chair of the Toronto Pedestrian Committee at the time. From the City's web site:

Adopted by City Council on May 21, the Toronto Pedestrian Charter outlines six principles for building a vital urban pedestrian environment:

- accessibility
- equity
- health and well-being
- environmental sustainability
- personal and community safety, and
- community cohesion and vitality.

It is the first such pedestrian bill of rights in the world. The charter is intended to serve as a reminder to decision-makers, both within the City

and the broader community, that walking should be valued for its social, environmental and economic benefits.

The accompanying report (<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.424.8174&rep=rep1&type=pdf>) was by transportation planner Greg Stewart.

2. The Pedestrian Charter was the logical extension of our opposition in 2000 to the proposed **Road Classification System** that consolidated and replaced the systems inherited from the seven former municipalities. We argued that “roads” need to be regarded and treated as “streets” that have functions well beyond moving vehicular traffic, and that the function of roads and roadways must also be defined by the adjacent land use. The seven documents had much in common with each other, since their common foundation was the 1992 provincial MTO revision of upper tier road classification criteria endorsed by the Municipal Engineers Association (MEA). Toronto engineers were going to have to loosen the ties of their professional organization and listen more to those of us who advocated for an approach to road design that was made in Toronto, for Toronto.
3. **Journeys Ended:** In 2004, with a new Council term starting, we took the issue of pedestrian and cycling fatalities to City Hall, mounting a display in the rotunda memorialising the *one hundred and thirty-two pedestrians and cyclists killed in collisions with cars during the 2001-2003 council term*. We had personally visited the sites of all of the 2003 fatalities. Our message was that better street design can prevent collisions. While the killing isn't intentional, it is predictable and preventable, rarely accidental. I have attached a copy of the poster we made at the time.

The map that still sits beside my desk shows clearly, without any doubt, that the highest number of collisions occur on arterial roads (note, not streets) in the suburban parts of the city where the roads are widest, the speeds the highest, and the protected crossings where the police keep saying you're supposed to cross at—even if it's half a kilometre out of your way!—are few and far between.

In 2002, 52 people died on Toronto streets; the toll in 2003 was 42.

Maybe Journeys Ended needs to be an annual event to remind councillors that it isn't just the people who die who matter. It's their friends and families, schoolmates and workmates, neighbours, and all the others touched by an unnecessary fatality.

4. In 2005 we advocated for a seminal research study on how decisions about how road design issues are made. The result was “**Making Toronto’s Streets,**” by U of T Geography Professor Paul Hess and Professor Emerita Beth Moore Milroy of Ryerson’s School of Urban and Regional Planning. It too is online on the web site of the Centre for Urban Health Initiatives: [http://faculty.geog.utoronto.ca/Hess/ Downloads/ Hess%20Milroy%20Making%20Torontos%20Streets%20report%20cuhi.pdf](http://faculty.geog.utoronto.ca/Hess/Downloads/Hess%20Milroy%20Making%20Torontos%20Streets%20report%20cuhi.pdf)
5. Also in 2005, we supported the City’s **drive-thru by-law** at the OMB. We did not believe that drive-thrus belong in the kind of urban environment we wanted to see in Toronto. The City won. So did all Torontonians.

In 2006, our life started to change and we had to put the brakes on the enormous amount of time and effort that, like many other citizens, we can invest in our communities.

Comments on Transform Yonge

Many of our old colleagues have spoken out on Transform Yonge. They have been joined by a new generation of citizens. We don’t want them to have to work as hard as we did to be heard. They were not heard at Public Works and Infrastructure.

People who get involved in issues like this spend an enormous amount of time, energy, and money, to bring about change. We understand that there has been an equal amount of support this time from within City staff and from some councillors, most notably John Filion and downtown councillors. There’s no excuse for the mayor and other councillors trying to turn back the tide that would see the public realm transformed into an accessible, equitable, healthy, sustainable, safe, and vital space.

We could hardly believe our eyes when we first saw the "Transform Yonge" project. It was everything we could ever have hoped to see for a stretch of Yonge Street that we know well. We were ecstatic when it was identified as the preferred alternative in 2016. Four lanes for cars, wide sidewalks, lots of trees, bike lanes, connections to transit: our only quibbles were so small we wouldn’t have bothered to speak them aloud,

What happened that there is now a watered down alternative on the table?

Sadly, we know what happened: tired old ideas based on assumptions made redundant by the last fifteen years of deeply informed and enlightened ideas about city streets and who owns them crept out of the woodwork. Some of the issues raised on February 28th we heard in another bastion of antique ideas a generation ago.

Please, do the right thing. Respect the city's future, respect the people who have invested hope to make this happen. Respect the staff that has changed its position since we challenged the Road Classification System eighteen years ago. The fears being expressed are unfounded and careless of the march of history.

You have a choice between REimagining Yonge and "Enhancing" Yonge, which sounds to us like tinkering with Yonge as little as possible in order to preserve an antiquated flow-through traffic function at the expense of the public realm. The following point from the staff report says it all:

2. City Council direct the General Manager, Transportation Services to conclude the REImagine Yonge Environmental Assessment (EA), if required, on the basis that an EA would not be required for the reconstruction of Yonge Street and Beecroft Avenue where there is no change to the capacity (e.g. number of lanes) or location of the reconstructed roads.

We saw that paragraph in the report on Prince Edward Drive in 1999 that killed the opportunity to transform an entirely residential collector road and deferred instead to flow-through traffic. We got the last bus bays the city will likely ever build.

If you don't support a change to the capacity of Yonge Street, you are failing to make the key change that makes a real transformation of a roadway into a street possible.

If I were still a cyclist, I would keep riding on Yonge even if you put bike lanes by whatever name you want to call them on Beecroft. Cyclists have as much right as cars to make direct trips to and from their destinations, just as pedestrians do, and they're using their own power to travel.

In 2018, the thought of rerouting cyclists to Beecroft to protect the interests of pass-through car drivers on Yonge over the interests of the people who live and work there is unconscionable.

It is equally unconscionable that six lanes of traffic on Yonge should prevent the widening of sidewalks, the narrowing of pedestrian crossings, the planting of trees and turning the street into an honest-to-goodness place.

The people who consider Yonge to be their neighbourhood's main street deserve nothing less than the transformation they have dared to imagine.

Thinking about streets has come so far. Don't hold it back. ■

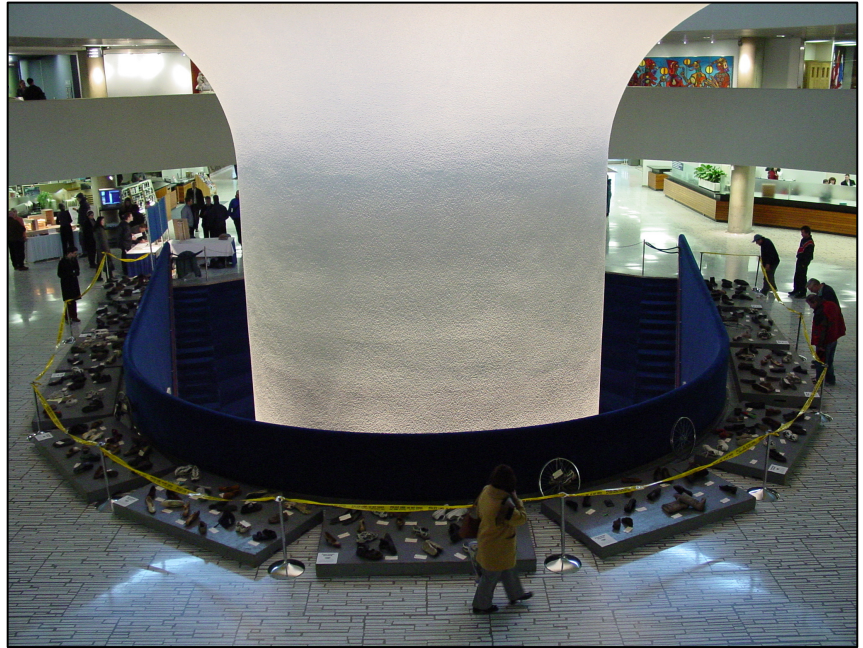
Attach.: flyer, Journeys Ended



Journeys Ended

**March 1-5, 2004
Toronto City Hall**

During the first week of March, the rotunda of Toronto City Hall was transformed into an exhibit memorialising the **132 pedestrians and cyclists who died in traffic collisions on the city's streets during the last term of City Council (2000-2003)**. Each person who died was represented by a pair of shoes.



132 pairs of shoes and three bicycle wheels were laid out on platforms in the rotunda of City Hall, surrounded by Police emergency tape.

The purpose of the exhibit and memorial was to reassure all citizens and especially the relatives and friends of those who died that they are not forgotten, and that efforts continue to reduce the number of pedestrian and cyclist deaths and injuries on Toronto's streets.



Memorial in Nathan Phillips Square, Tuesday, March 5th, Toronto City Hall.

Journeys Ended was a project of the Pedestrian Planning Network. The three principals who designed and interpreted the exhibit were Janice Etter, Andrew Furman and Rhona Swarbrick. Vid Ingelevics, Martin Reis and Sally Gibson photographed the exhibit and the memorial.