

## **Area-Specific Amendment to the Sign By-law: 306 Yonge Street**

**Date:** May 4, 2021  
**To:** Planning and Housing Committee  
**From:** Chief Building Official and Executive Director, Toronto Building  
**Wards:** 11 - University-Rosedale

### **SUMMARY**

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The Sign By-law is a harmonized, City-wide set of regulations governing signs which was adopted in 2010. The Sign By-law contains a process for any member of the public to apply to City Council to amend the Sign By-law in order to implement significant changes to the sign regulations for a specific property or area. Applications are commonly made requesting amendments to the Sign By-law to allow signs that are prohibited, to remove permissions for signs in an area, or to modify the administrative requirements of the Sign By-law. The Chief Building Official (CBO) brings applications to amend the Sign By-law together on an annual basis for City Council consideration, so that City Council can more easily assess the overall and cumulative impact of these applications on the city's built environment, and the Sign By-law itself.

This report responds to an application for an amendment to the Sign By-law to replace the existing regulations concerning third party signs displayed at 306 Yonge Street, which allow for a third party electronic roof sign containing five sign faces (the Existing Sign), with regulations which would allow the property to display a new third party roof sign, with two sign faces, directed north and south along Yonge Street (the Proposed Sign). The Proposed Sign will be displayed using the existing media tower located on the roof of the building at 306 Yonge Street.

One of the sign faces will display electronic moving copy facing south into Dundas Square, the other will display static sign copy facing north along Yonge Street. The proposed amendment also seeks to modify the applicable sign permit term by extending the initial permit term from five to ten years.

The property at 306 Yonge Street is located in the Dundas Square Special Sign District (DS-SSD), which allows for, and contains, many large scale electronic signs. 306 Yonge Street is subject to regulations contained in Schedule C of the Sign By-law, which outline the regulations for the entirety of the Dundas Square Special Sign District.

Currently, the Existing Sign displays five sign faces on the rooftop media tower at 306 Yonge Street displaying a combination of static and electronic moving sign copy, which are similar in overall size, height and orientation to the two sign faces on the Proposed Sign.

Toronto Building, in consultation with City Planning and Transportation Services, reviewed the application, and supports the proposal as it is consistent with the objectives of the Sign By-law for this area of the city, is consistent with similar signs that have been permitted on surrounding properties, and due to the property's location in the Dundas Square Special Sign District. As a result, the Chief Building Official and Executive Director, Toronto Building recommends that City Council approve this Sign By-law amendment application.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Chief Building Official and Executive Director, Toronto Building, recommends that:

1. City Council amend the Sign By-law to amend Section 4. F of Schedule 'C' Additional Special Sign District Regulations, to Chapter 694, Signs, General, to delete the existing Sign By-law regulations concerning third party signs applicable to the premises municipally known as 306 Yonge Street and replace the regulations with new regulations that would allow for, and regulate, a third party electronic roof sign containing two sign faces as further described in Attachment 1 of this report.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There are no current or known future year financial impacts arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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### **PG33.10 - New Sign Regulation and Revenue Strategy for the City of Toronto**

In December 2009, City Council established regulations creating the DS-SSD that allowed signs to be displayed on premises within the DS-SSD where the signs complied with the applicable provisions of Chapter 297, Signs, of the former City of Toronto Municipal Code, as they applied on the day before the current Sign By-law came into effect. With respect to 306 Yonge Street, this included provisions adopted by the Council of the former City of Toronto in October 1997, which exempted 306 Yonge Street from certain provisions of Chapter 297 of the former City of Toronto Municipal Code, and established regulations concerning signs erected or displayed on the structure described as the "media tower" at 306 Yonge Street.

(<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2009.PG33.10>)

## **SB21.2 - Application by Clear Channel Outdoor for Variances from Chapter 694 Respecting Five Proposed Third Party Signs at 306 Yonge Street**

In September 2013, the Sign Variance Committee approved variances to allow the five signs on the roof structure at 306 Yonge Street displaying a combination of electronic and static sign copy. The variances allowed for a roof sign with five sign faces, with four sign faces displaying electronic moving and static sign copy facing south, and one sign face displaying static copy facing north.

(<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.SB21.2>)

## **PG13.5 - Amendments to the Sign By-law**

In July 2016, amendments to Chapter 694, Signs, General, established modified regulations respecting the Dundas Square Special Sign District; City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square Special Sign District, the University Avenue Special Sign District; and the Entertainment District Special Sign District; as contained in Schedule C, Special Sign District Regulations, to Chapter 694.

The variances approved by the Sign Variance Committee in 2013 (SB 21.2) for five third party sign faces displayed on the media tower at 306 Yonge Street were incorporated into the updated regulations for the properties within the Dundas Square Special Sign District.

(<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.PG13.5>)

## **COMMENTS**

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### **Annual Reporting**

Area-specific amendment applications are considered together once annually. This practice allows for the applications made throughout the year to be more easily reviewed and considered in a comprehensive manner.

The Sign By-law allows for applications by sign applicants to amend the Sign By-law in order to implement significant changes to the Sign By-law for a specific area. Examples of those changes include: establishing regulations to authorize a sign that is prohibited by the Sign By-law, developing a comprehensive plan for all signage on a property, implementing a prohibition on signs in an area, altering a property's sign district designation, or changes to administrative provisions, such as permitting requirements.

This application is necessary as Branded Cities (The Applicant) has applied for an area-specific amendment which will modify the DS-SSD requirements for third party signs at 306 Yonge Street, as well as to establish an initial sign permit duration of ten years for the Proposed Sign.

## Applicant's Amendment Proposal

The Applicant is seeking an area-specific amendment to the Sign By-law to replace the existing third party sign regulations applicable to 306 Yonge Street to allow for a new third party sign containing two sign faces to be displayed on an existing media tower.

The Proposed Sign will be in approximately the same location as five existing third party sign faces on the media tower, displaying a mix of static and electronic copy, which have been in place since 2013. The requested amendment would not result in any changes to the permissions for first party signs at 306 Yonge Street.

The height of the Proposed Sign will be 49.9 metres above grade and the sign face area will be 2,174.1 square metres divided equally between two sign faces (1,087.05 square metres each); one sign face will display electronic moving copy to the south into Dundas Square; and, one sign face will display static sign copy to the north along Yonge Street. The proposed amendment also seeks to modify the applicable sign permit term by extending the initial permit from five to ten years.

The proposal also includes a requirement that the existing sign faces displayed on the media tower on the roof of 306 Yonge Street be removed and the permits for them revoked.

In 1997, the Council for the former City of Toronto enacted a site-specific by-law (By-law No. 1997-0615 of the former City of Toronto) which amended the former City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 297, Signs, to allow for 306 Yonge Street to contain a media tower with nine sign faces.

Figure 1 - Applicant's Rendering of the Proposed Sign (looking south along Yonge Street)



Figure 2 - Photo of the Existing Sign (looking north along Yonge Street)





In 2010, City Council enacted Chapter 694 of the City of Toronto Municipal Code, Signs, General. Chapter 694 established comprehensive sign regulations for all areas of the amalgamated City of Toronto. Chapter 694, at that time, allowed for permits to be issued for signs in the DS-SSD, provided the sign complied with applicable provisions of Chapter 297 of the former City of Toronto Municipal Code, as they applied to the properties within the DS-SSD on the day before Chapter 694 came into effect.

In 2013, variances to Chapter 694 were approved by the Sign Variance Committee to allow a permit to be issued for 306 Yonge Street to contain the Existing Sign. Variances were required because the Existing Sign was a third party electronic roof sign that did not comply with the applicable provisions of Chapter 297 of the former City of Toronto Municipal Code.

In 2016, City Council adopted a series of amendments to the Sign By-law, including updated regulations for all of the properties within the DS-SSD. The updated regulations as they applied to 306 Yonge Street, were consistent with the 2013 Sign Variance Committee decision.

The Existing Sign currently contains five sign faces, has a height of 49.9 metres above grade, a total permitted sign face area of 1,974.72 square metres and is permitted to display signs with almost all types of sign copy. The Applicant is now proposing to consolidate the five existing third party sign faces into two third party sign faces (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 - Comparison of Proposed Sign to the Existing Sign (not to scale)

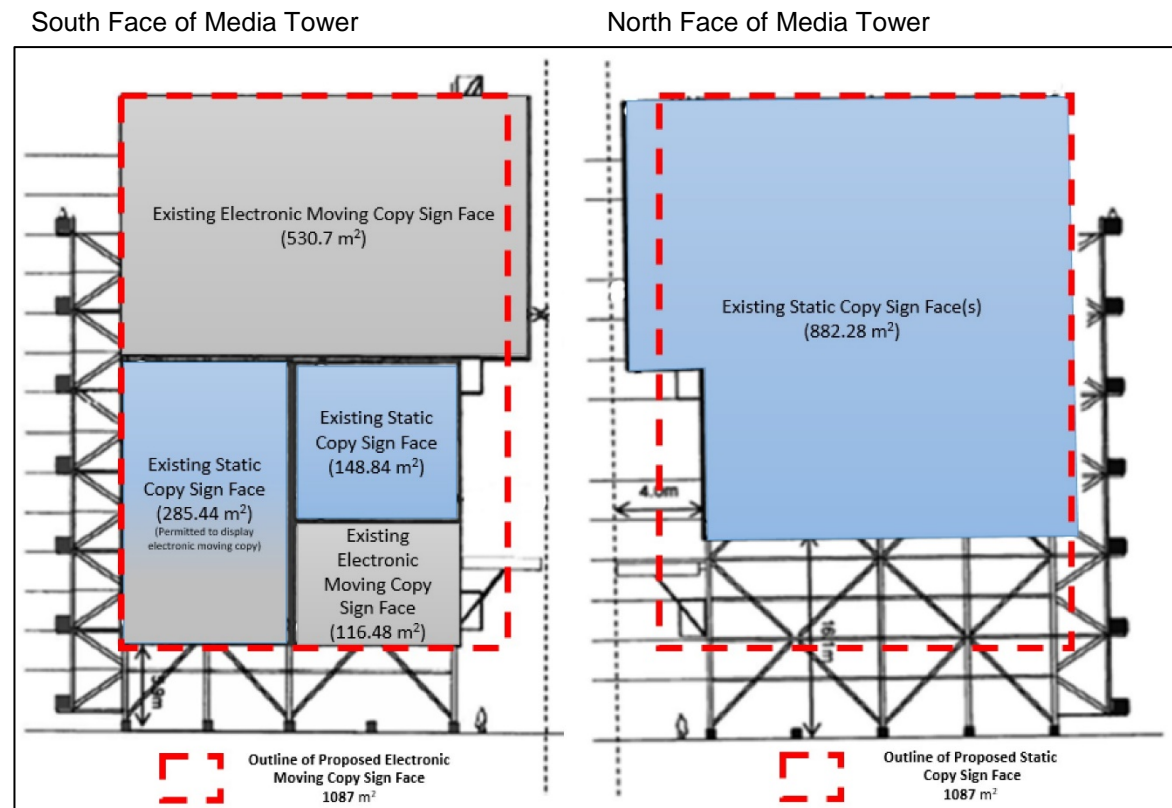


Table 1 contains a breakdown of the existing 1,974.72 square metres of sign face area which is divided over the five existing sign faces, and compares it to the proposed 2,174.1 square metres of sign face area which will be divided between two sign faces on the Proposed Sign. As can be seen, the Proposed Sign will lead to an overall increase of 204.77 square metres (23%) in sign face area on the north side of the media tower at 306 Yonge Street, and a very small reduction of sign face area (0.5%) on the south side.

Table 1 - Summary of Existing and Proposed Sign Face Areas:

Permitted Sign Copy Type	South Facing Side of Sign			North Facing Side of Sign		
	Existing	Proposed	Changes	Existing	Proposed	Changes
<b>Electronic Sign Copy (Sign Face Area)</b>	943.6 m <sup>2</sup>	1087.05 m <sup>2</sup>	+143.45 m <sup>2</sup>	0 m <sup>2</sup>	0 m <sup>2</sup>	No change
<b>Static Sign Copy (Sign Face Area)</b>	148.84 m <sup>2</sup>	0 m <sup>2</sup>	- 148.84 m <sup>2</sup>	882.28 m <sup>2</sup>	1087.05 m <sup>2</sup>	+204.77 m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Total Sign Copy (Sign Face Area)</b>	1092.44 m <sup>2</sup>	1087.05 m <sup>2</sup>	- 5.39 m <sup>2</sup>	882.28 m <sup>2</sup>	1087.05 m <sup>2</sup>	+204.77 m <sup>2</sup>

The maximum height of the Proposed Sign will be the same height as the Existing Sign at 56.8 metres above grade, approximately the same height as the media tower at 306 Yonge Street and 8.1 metres taller than the electronic sign located directly to the east at 10 Dundas Street East.

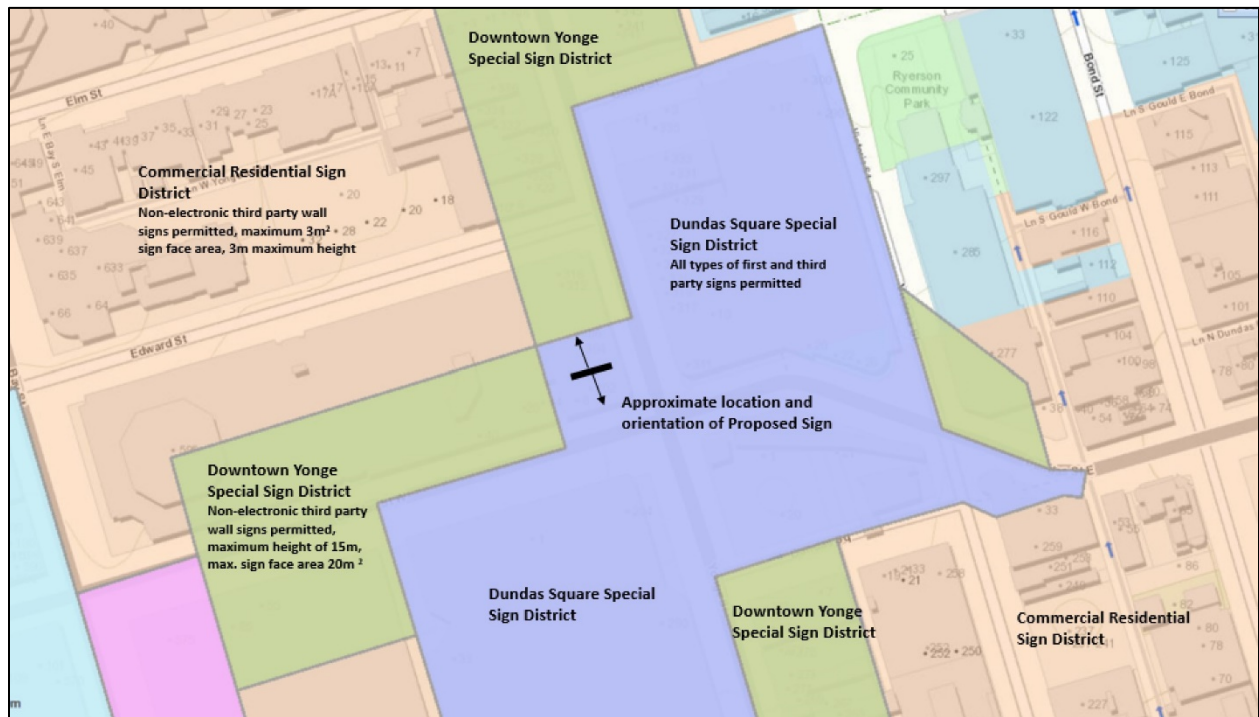
### Site Context - 306 Yonge Street

The property at 306 Yonge Street is located in Ward 11, on the west side of Yonge Street and the north side of Dundas Street, approximately 30 metres northwest of the intersection of Yonge Street and Dundas Street. It is currently surrounded by non-residential commercial and office buildings. 306 Yonge Street is located in the Dundas Square Special Sign District (DS-SSD).

To the north of 306 Yonge Street is the Downtown Yonge Special Sign District (DY-SSD) which serves as a transition between the very large and animated signs permitted within Yonge-Dundas Square, and surrounding Commercial Residential, Institutional and Open Space Sign Districts. As a result, the DY-SSD permits static third party wall signs that are larger and higher above grade than the surrounding sign districts permit, and does not have any restrictions on the time of day that signs are permitted to be illuminated.

306 Yonge Street currently contains retail spaces at the ground floor level and office uses in the upper storeys of the building. There are no residential uses on this property.

Figure 4 - Sign District Map Showing Proposed Sign Location and Surrounding Area



The majority of the signs in the DS-SSD have been specifically designed for their locations, and almost all are regulated by the Sign By-law on a site-by-site basis.

### Area Compatibility

In 2009, City Council adopted a report and recommendations relating to the “Signage Vision” for the Downtown Yonge BIA, which provided guidelines for large-format signage applications for properties with principal frontages directly on Yonge Street and Dundas Square, from Gerrard Street East to the north and Queen Street to the south, and included the portion of Dundas Street between Yonge Street and Bay Street.

The "Signage Vision" recognized that vibrant and large-scale signage existed and has become a defining characteristic of this area, and that future large-format signage in this area should be subject to rules that are exceptional to any other location in the city. The "Signage Vision" also identifies Dundas Square as the heart of the area and identified it as appropriate for the highest ‘peak’ for signage intensity, animation and scale which should remain the focal point for signage within the area.

This "Signage Vision" was one of many sources of information considered in the creation of the Dundas Square Special Sign District and the Downtown Yonge Special Sign District in the Sign By-law.

The Proposed Sign will complement City Council's vision for the area as it will contribute to keeping the signs in Dundas Square as a focal point along Yonge Street between Queen Street West and Gerrard Street and will be of a size and scale of sign that does not exist anywhere else in the city.

As well, the "Signage Vision" identifies 306 Yonge Street as being "Dundas Square Landmark Signage" which is intended to reinforce the primary importance of this area (Dundas Square) within the precinct. "Dundas Square Landmark Signage" is envisioned to be located at key corners and view terminus sites; be of high architectural quality and design and are sites which are appropriate for the tallest signage structures in the strip while giving to the context of the site.

As stated above, the maximum height of the Proposed Sign will be the same height as the Existing Sign at 56.8 metres above grade, approximately the same height as the media tower at 306 Yonge Street. The media tower at 306 Yonge Street was specifically built to contain some of the largest and tallest signs in Dundas Square and has always done so; the Proposed Sign will continue to make the media tower a landmark in the area.

In the past few years, a notable change in the area has been sign owners removing signs containing multiple smaller sign faces, particularly sign faces displaying mechanical copy (tri-vision) and static copy, and replacing them with signs containing a smaller number of larger electronic sign faces. As a result, the area surrounding 306 Yonge Street has seen a number of signs where there has been a "consolidation" of the number of sign faces displayed on a structure or building, as is being proposed with the requested amendment.

Examples of this in the area surrounding 306 Yonge Street are as follows:

- 1 Dundas Street West - Four sign faces consolidated into two sign faces in 2016; two sign faces then consolidated into one sign face in 2019;
- 10 Dundas Street East - Three sign faces consolidated into one sign face in 2019;
- 279-283 Yonge Street - Four sign faces consolidated into one sign face in 2017.

As can be seen from the signs in Figure 5 below, the proposed amendment would allow 306 Yonge Street to have regulations that would allow for the Proposed Sign, which is consistent with recent modifications to other signs and sign structures in the surrounding area.

Signs within the DS-SSD are subject to the maximum brightness requirements of the Sign By-law and cannot exceed 300 NITS between sunset and sunrise. The Existing Sign was constructed prior to this lighting level being in the Sign By-law and is permitted to be illuminated to the maximum level allowed under the Sign By-law's previous standard (500 NITS). The area-specific amendment has not requested any changes to the illumination levels as currently set out in the Sign By-law; as a result, the Proposed Sign will have a maximum brightness level that is 40% less than the Existing Sign at 306 Yonge Street.



The building at 306 Yonge Street has no residential or other uses that would be incompatible with the proposed new third party sign regulations, or be adversely impacted by the Proposed Sign.

Figure 5 - The Proposed Sign and similar signs in the Dundas Square Special Sign District



A portion of the Ryerson University campus is located to the northeast of 306 Yonge Street containing a parking garage and the Sheldon and Tracy Levy Student Learning Centre. There is also a mixed-use development under construction at 20 Edward Street, to the northwest of 306 Yonge Street.

The sign face of the Proposed Sign that would be facing north would only display static sign copy, which is the same copy type that is currently displayed. Although the Proposed Sign's north facing sign face will be larger than the north facing sign face of the Existing Sign, there should be no additional impact as the type of illumination will be unchanged and the brightness levels will be required to not exceed 300 NITS, instead of the 500 NITS which is currently permitted. As well, the additional sign face area will be located on the lower portions of the sign structure, further reducing any impact on surrounding properties.

The sign face that will be facing to the south will display electronic moving sign copy. Currently, 75% of the sign face area facing south is displaying electronic sign copy; the Proposed Sign will add another 261 square metres of electronic sign copy facing south.

The new portion of the sign face facing south that will display electronic sign copy will be in the lower portions of the sign structure, reducing any impact that they may have on properties to the south. In addition, there are also a number of tall mixed-use

buildings to the south of the proposed sign, further containing any impact that the Proposed Sign may have to the DS-SSD.

Since the DS-SSD was created in 2010, there have been several high-rise residential buildings located to the south of Dundas Square, located in the DY-SSD. Due to the unique nature and the types of signs permitted in both the DS-SSD and DY-SSD, signs are permitted to be illuminated/operate 24 hours per day. There are also no separation distances required between third party signs in the DS-SSD, nor are there any separation distances for signs in the DS-SSD from being located nearby or facing sensitive land uses, including CR Sign Districts.

Despite this and, as mentioned above, the maximum permitted brightness of the Proposed Sign's south facing sign face (as well as the north facing sign face) will be reduced by 40%, from a maximum of 500 NITS between sunset and sunrise to a maximum of 300 NITS between sunset and sunrise.

With respect to the requested extension to the sign permit term, the existing sign has been in place for more than 20 years and, as the largest sign in the area, is a major contribution to the "Dundas Square Landmark Signage" described in City Council's "Signage Vision" for the area. As a result, the extension to the Sign Permit term from five years to ten years in the requested amendment will allow the Proposed Sign to extend its positive contribution to City Council's "Signage Vision" for the DS-SSD and the surrounding area.

As set out in the Sign By-law, notification of the proposed amendment was sent to all property owners within a 250-metre radius of the subject property, and a notice of the amendment has been posted at the property. The notice provides details of the proposed amendment and invites feedback by email, telephone or in person at a public consultation which was held on the evening of April 19, 2021 through WebEx. No interested parties requested to attend the WebEx consultation, and, as of the date of this report, no feedback has been received on the proposed amendment.

### **Comments from Other City Divisions**

Staff from the City Planning and Transportation Services Divisions have reviewed the application and have no objections to the proposed Sign By-law amendment.

### **Conclusion**

The proposed amendment would establish third party sign regulations at 306 Yonge Street which are suitable for this specific property due to its location in the DS-SSD and allow the Proposed Sign to contribute to the "Signage Vision" for the DS-SSD and surrounding area in a similar manner as the Existing Sign has been doing for more than 20 years.

The CBO is supportive of this proposed amendment as the new regulations for 306 Yonge Street would allow for the Proposed Sign, which is consistent with signs that

are being displayed on surrounding properties as well as City Council's vision for the Dundas Square Special Sign District and surrounding area.

It is therefore the position of the CBO that the proposed amendment to the Sign By-law regulations respecting third party signs within 306 Yonge Street is appropriate, and that City Council should amend the Sign By-law to allow this sign as requested by the Applicant

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Will Johnston, P.Eng.  
Chief Building Official and Executive Director  
Toronto Building

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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1. Draft of Proposed Area-Specific Amendment – 306 Yonge Street