

## **King-Spadina Public Realm Strategy**

Date: June 4, 2021

To: Toronto and East York Community Council

From: Acting Director, Urban Design, City Planning Division and Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District

Ward: 10 - Spadina-Fort York

**Planning Application Number:** 09 123346 SPS 00 OZ

### **SUMMARY**

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This report recommends the adoption of the King-Spadina Public Realm Strategy (the "Strategy").

As the resident and worker populations in the King-Spadina area continue to increase there is a need to revitalize existing parks and open spaces, create new parks and open spaces and connect these spaces together through rejuvenated and enhanced streetscapes. Given the context and constraints within this historic, built-up area, a variety of approaches are required to secure a high quality of life for residents, workers and visitors alike. The purpose and intent of the Strategy is to provide the vision and framework to achieve an expanded, improved and connected parks and public realm network within the King-Spadina area to serve the growing population of the neighbourhood.

Over time, through the implementation of the draft Strategy within the King-Spadina area, the City has secured on-site parkland dedications that combined are comparable to the size of Victoria Memorial Square. In addition, the City has secured Privately Owned Publicly Accessible Spaces ("POPS") with a combined area comparable to David Pecaut Square. It is this incremental, comprehensive approach that adds not only new space, but also spaces that are strategically located to increase the connectivity of the public realm network.

The Strategy will assist in the continued expansion of much needed improvements, help determine priorities and provide guidance on what should be secured through development review and capital planning. It is aligned with the King-Spadina Secondary Plan, the Downtown Plan and with the Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Acting Director, Urban Design, City Planning Division and the Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District recommend that:

1. City Council adopt the King-Spadina Public Realm Strategy substantially in accordance with Attachment 1 to this report.
2. City Council direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, to use the King-Spadina Public Realm Strategy to evaluate current and future development applications within the Study Area as shown in Attachment 1 of this report.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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The City Planning Division confirms that there are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations included in this report in the current budget year or in future years.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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The Final Report for the King-Spadina Secondary Plan Update was adopted by City Council on January 29, 2020. The report brought forward an updated King-Spadina Secondary Plan (OPA 486), a policy framework that will provide clear and consistent guidance for development in the area over the next 20 years. The Secondary Plan built on the direction in the Downtown Plan by bringing forward more specific policy guidance on land use, built form, public realm and specific Areas of Special Identity. One of the recommendations in the report was for the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division to bring forward the Public Realm Strategy for the Secondary Plan Area. The OPA has been appealed to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal. The report can be found here:

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/te/bgnd/backgroundfile-141218.pdf>

## **LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

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This Strategy builds upon the King-Spadina Secondary Plan and provides a guiding document for the of implementation of provincial and municipal policies.

### **Planning Act**

Section 2 of the Planning Act directs the City have to regard to, among other matters, matters of provincial interest such as,

- (d) the conservation of features of significant architectural, cultural, historical, archaeological or scientific interest;

- (f) the adequate provision and efficient use of communication, transportation, sewage and water services and waste management systems;
- (h) the orderly development of safe and healthy communities;
- (h.1) the accessibility for persons with disabilities to all facilities, services and matters to which this Act applies;
- (i) the adequate provision and distribution of educational, health, social, cultural and recreational facilities;
- (m) the co-ordination of planning activities of public bodies;
- (q) the promotion of development that is designed to be sustainable, to support public transit and to be oriented to pedestrians;
- (r) the promotion of built form that,
  - (i) is well-designed,
  - (ii) encourages a sense of place, and
  - (iii) provides for public spaces that are of high quality, safe, accessible, attractive and vibrant.

The Strategy has regard to the relevant matters of provincial interest.

### **Provincial Policy Statement and the Provincial Plans**

The Provincial Policy Statement (2020) and A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020) provide for direction on creating a safe, accessible and vibrant public realm.

Policy 1.5.1 of the PPS 2020 directs that healthy, active communities should be promoted by: a) planning public streets, spaces and facilities to be safe, meet the needs of pedestrians, foster social interaction and facilitate active transportation and community connectivity; b) planning and providing for a full range and equitable distribution of publicly accessible built and natural settings for recreation, including facilities, parklands, public spaces, open space areas, trails and linkages.

Policy 1.8.1 of the PPS 2020 also directs that planning authorities support energy conservation and efficiency, improved air quality, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and preparing for the impacts of a changing climate through land use and development patterns which promote the use of active transportation and transit in and between residential, employment (including commercial and industrial) and institutional uses and other areas.

Policy 1.2.1 of the Growth Plan (2020) directs, among other matters, guiding principles, including supporting the achievement of complete communities that are designed to support healthy and active living and meet people's needs for daily living throughout an entire lifetime.

Policy 2.2.1.4 of the Growth Plan (2020) builds on that guiding principles by reinforcing a number of matters to support the achievement of complete communities, including improve social equity and overall quality of life, including human health, for people of all ages, abilities, and incomes; expanding convenient access to, a range of transportation options, including options for the safe, comfortable and convenient use of active transportation and an appropriate supply of safe, publicly-accessible open spaces,

parks, trails, and other recreational facilities; and provide for a more compact built form and vibrant public realm, including public open spaces.

As part of implementing the Growth Plan, Section 5.2.5.6 directs that in planning to achieve the minimum intensification and density targets in this Plan, municipalities will develop and implement urban design and site design official plan policies and other supporting documents that direct the development of a high quality public realm and compact built form.

The King-Spadina Area is characterized by a mix of uses, including retail, residential, commercial, cultural and employment uses. To support a complete community, the public realm is a key organizing element that supports the use of active transportation, contributes to the social and economic well-being of the area and the City as a whole. Dense urban areas like King-Spadina require ample, well-designed open spaces and an appropriately designed and integrated public realm to ensure a high quality of life.

### **Toronto Official Plan**

Policy 5.3.2.1 in the Official Plan identifies that "Implementation plans, strategies and guidelines will be adopted to advance the vision, objectives and policies of this Plan."

Section 5.2.1.4 e) of the Official Plan directs that City-building objectives for Secondary Planning areas will identify or indicate the following "urban design objectives, guidelines and parameters", such as those identified in Policies 1.4 and 1.5 of the King-Spadina Secondary Plan.

Section 3.1.1 of the Official Plan also provides directions on the importance of the public realm to building a successful City.

The King-Spadina Secondary Plan is contained within Chapter 6 of the Official Plan and therefore forms part of the Plan. The King-Spadina Public Realm Strategy advances the vision contained with the King-Spadina Secondary Plan.

The City of Toronto Official Plan can be found here: <https://www.toronto.ca/City-government/planning-development/official-plan-guidelines/official-plan/>.

### **King Spadina Secondary Plan (2020) - OPA 486, under appeal**

Policy 1.4 of the King-Spadina Secondary Plan speaks to the intent and purpose of the Strategy. The Strategy "will be used to illustrate the intent of the Plan policies, will guide development review, parkland dedication and acquisition priorities and the allocation of capital funding within the King-Spadina Secondary Plan Area." The policy continues with a list of public realm and design elements that should be included in the Strategy. The Strategy contains a section on each of the elements.

### **King Spadina Secondary Plan (1996)**

Brought into force in 1996 the in-force King-Spadina Secondary Plan was a response to the de-industrialization of the area and set in place a series of policies that incentivized

the protection and re-use of the heritage buildings that characterized the area and added permissions for a full range of uses. The flexible and permissive nature of the in-force King-Spadina Secondary Plan was successful in growing the employment base of the neighbourhood while introducing residents who now live close to a range of employment opportunities and keep the area vibrant at all times of the day and night. The in-force King-Spadina Secondary Plan can be found here:

<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/97ec-cp-official-plan-SP-16-KingSpadina.pdf>

## **The Downtown Plan**

The King-Spadina Secondary Plan falls completely within the area covered by the Downtown Plan. The Downtown Plan includes a series of policies on parks and public realm including the identification of Park Districts and the role of the Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan in guiding the future expansion, improvement and connectivity of the public realm downtown. Map 8 of the Downtown Plan indicates that the King-Spadina Area forms part of both the West Rail District and the Grange-John Street-Roundhouse Park District. Further guidance on the development of these two districts is contained within the Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan. The Strategy builds on both the policy framework in the Downtown Plan, and the guidelines in the Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan.

The Downtown Plan can be found here:

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2019/cc/bgrd/backgroundfile-135953.pdf>

## **COMMENTS**

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### **A Need for and Expanded Public Realm**

The population of the King-Spadina area continues to increase and the need to provide new, revitalized and connected public spaces grows with the rising population. Downtown has one of the lowest parkland provision rates in the City at 5.5 square metres per resident (utilizing the 2016 census) and 1.8 square metres per resident and employee compared to a City-wide average of 28 square metres per resident and 18 square metres per resident and employee respectively. As the population continues to increase, and if no new parkland is added, the parkland provision rates per person will continue to fall. The purpose and intent of the Strategy is to provide a vision and framework to achieve an expanded, improved and connected parks and public realm network within the King-Spadina area to serve the growing population in the neighbourhood.

The city-wide Parkland Strategy, which was approved by Council in 2019, identifies almost all of Downtown as a Parkland Study and Acquisition Priority Area. These were identified based on:

- Parkland provision (less than 12m<sup>2</sup> of parkland per person) and one or more of:
- Low Parkland Supply (less than 1.5 Ha total parkland within 500 m in 2016)

- Impact of growth (areas projected to have over 5000 people/Ha in 2033)
- Low income residents (25% or more of residents were low income in 2016)

King-Spadina is in a Parkland Study and Acquisition Priority Area. This is particularly relevant for the area east of Spadina Avenue which has been intensified dramatically over the past decade. A successful, high quality public realm is especially essential in dense, mixed-use, urban environments. Outdoor spaces and streets are where people gather, mingle and play. They enrich our quality of life by providing spaces for social interaction and leisurely activities.

## **Background**

### **1. History, Aligned Initiatives and Objectives**

The first draft of the Strategy was adopted by City Council in 2014, and it applied to the area east of Spadina Avenue. Since then the scope of the document has expanded to include the entire King-Spadina area and has been updated to include newly secured parks, Privately Owned Publicly Accessible Spaces ("POPS"), mid-block connections and other public realm enhancements.

The Strategy is aligned with several other City-initiated documents that all work together within the King-Spadina area. These include the King-Spadina Secondary Plan, the Downtown Plan, the King-Spadina Heritage Conservation District Plan, and the Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan ("PPR Plan"). In addition, the Strategy is aligned with other City-wide guidelines including the Privately Owned Publicly Accessible Spaces Guidelines and the Complete Street Guidelines. The Strategy also complements the Entertainment District BIA Master Plan. Each of these documents provides a different piece of the policy framework that, as a whole, create a comprehensive framework for the King-Spadina area.

The Objectives contained within the Strategy build on the overall objectives in the King-Spadina Secondary Plan and describe a public realm network that: continues to expand; is improved in terms of accessibility, legibility and amenity; contains a variety of types and sizes of spaces; provides an appropriate relationship between the public realm and the adjacent built form; and protects key views and vistas.

### **2. Existing and Secured Parks and Open Spaces**

There are three existing major, historic parks in the King-Spadina area, Clarence Square, Victoria Memorial and St. Andrew's Playground. All three are within the West Rail Park District as identified in the PPR Plan. Other significant existing parks within the King-Spadina area are David Pecaut Square, Simcoe Park, and Isabella Valancy Crawford Park. Through development applications the City has been securing new parks where appropriate. These include Dr. George Robert Grasett Park (at Cinema Tower), 525 Richmond Street West, 400 Front Street West and 543 Richmond Street West. Given the size of development sites in this area of the City and the maximum amount of parkland that the City can secure on each site, these new parks are smaller than the historic parks of the area. However, they all contribute to the connected and complex public realm of the area. The City has also expanded the public realm through

off-site parkland dedication, expanding existing parks, acquiring land for parkland and providing connections to parks adjacent to the King-Spadina area. Examples of these approaches are outlined within the Strategy.

POPS continue to play an important role in the overall public realm. These spaces are publicly accessible through legal agreements but they remain privately-owned. The Strategy contains the details of many of the POPS that have been secured in the King-Spadina area including their locations, size and anticipated programming. The purpose of including these examples in the Strategy is to illustrate the role that this type of space can play in the overall public realm. Through development review additional POPS will be secured where appropriate.

### **3. Existing and Secured Mid-block Connections**

Mid-block connections are important public realm assets, especially in high-volume pedestrian areas like the King-Spadina area. These corridors provide alternative routes for pedestrians and cyclists, create shortcuts and can contribute to the public realm network through appropriate programming, land use and sensitive design. Additionally, mid-block connections reflect a part of the historic pattern, including a system of historic laneways, within the King-Spadina area which are to be preserved and enhanced. These connections should be safe, accessible and lively corridors for pedestrians and cyclists. The Strategy contains a number of precedent mid-block connections that have been built and/or secured through development approvals as well as a map which indicates where future formal and informal mid-block connections should be secured.

### **4. Public Realm Constraints**

Dense urban areas like King-Spadina require ample, well-designed open spaces to ensure a high quality of life. Acquiring new open spaces in such areas can be a challenge due to: land availability; fixed right-of-ways; land value; mature urban fabric and recently constructed buildings; and heritage buildings. Considering the high density and limited opportunities within the King-Spadina area innovative approaches should be considered for the creation of a more desirable, enhanced and a more sustainable public realm network. The Strategy includes mapping of these constraints to show where opportunities may be more limited and where the City should be more focused to secure larger opportunities.

## **The Public Realm Strategy**

### **1. Potential Future Parks and Open Spaces**

City Staff studied all the properties within the King-Spadina area and identified opportunities for further parks and open spaces. These sites include City-owned lands, surface parking lots, parking decks, and existing buildings in need of repair. In addition to these sites, other sites maybe identified for public realm enhancement through development applications. Each site provides unique opportunities depending on its location, size and relationship with adjacent properties. A map showing both existing elements of the public realm and sites with further potential provides a visual representation of the framework for the area.

## **2. Gateways**

Gateways are important entry points to a neighbourhood. They have a key role in identifying a distinct area and creating a sense of place. The Strategy outlines the creative tools that will be used to accentuate these entry points including: special landscape treatment; tree planting; lighting; upgraded sidewalk treatment and special street furniture; landmark plazas and open spaces; public art; distinct architectural designs; and the use of special materials and façade treatments. A map in the Strategy highlights the important gateway locations within the King-Spadina area. Gateways can be achieved in a number of ways and does not necessarily correlate to the height, scale or size of a particular building(s) to achieve that objective. The focus is on the matters pertaining to the pedestrian and public realm experience.

## **3. Key Views and Vistas**

There are a number of key views and vistas which exist within the area and are mapped in the Strategy. The views are an important feature, structuring visual connections and helping to orient movement.

The following design directions are outlined in the Strategy to enhance and improve the termini of key views: special landscape treatment; public art; preservation of heritage and character-defining buildings; creating distinct architectural designs; and directing vehicular access and loading areas away from these locations.

## **4. Potential Mid-block Connections**

Potential mid-block connections have been identified and mapped within the Strategy. To ensure that potential mid-block connections are high quality, usable spaces, the following design directions are included in the Strategy to provide guidance through development applications and capital improvements. Mid-block connections should:

- be visible from main streets, creating safety and "eyes" on the space;
- have no visual or physical obstructions for easy movement and safety;
- have appropriate, pedestrian scale lighting for safety and visibility;
- have animated frontages and active uses at grade to create safety, vitality and visibility;
- have sitting and landscaped areas when appropriate;
- have outdoor patios and other forms of spill-out activities;
- have special pavement treatments to emphasize the continuity of mid-block access and circulation;
- have visible signage for safety and way-finding;
- in the case of an existing laneway, provide laneway widening, where possible, to allow for small format and narrow frontage retail at-grade, in conjunction with new developments. This approach will make these laneways not just a passage for vehicular access, but a space for interaction and leisure;

- be framed by buildings of appropriate height and scale to create a pedestrian friendly corridor; and
- ensuring that the heights of portico openings be no less than 6m.

## 5. Streetscape Improvements

Streets in the King-Spadina area are key corridors for mobility and, historically, emphasis has been to ensure the ease of vehicular movement. As the area continues to transform into a mixed-use urban neighbourhood, there must be a rebalancing of uses within the right-of-way to address the needs of all users. As the population increases a greater emphasis must be placed on walkability, cycling infrastructure, accessibility and pedestrian comfort. To achieve these goals the following general design directions are outlined in the Strategy which will be implemented through development review and capital improvements:

- The pedestrian clearway on sidewalks should be a minimum of 3 metres.
- There should be sufficient setback from the front property lines, where possible, to create wider sidewalks for easy movement.
- In areas adjacent to tall buildings, the minimum sidewalk width should be 6m (from the edge of the curb to the building face).
- At intersections, particularly with transit stops, sidewalks should be widened to provide enough space for standing and easy movement. This can be achieved with new developments by providing sufficient setback.
- In constrained areas with minimum flexibility to widen the sidewalk, basic improvements to the pavement material, better lighting and street furniture should be considered.
- Pavement materials and street furniture should be in conformity with the City of Toronto Streetscape Manual, as well as the Entertainment District BIA Streetscape Manual.
- Tree planting and landscape zones should be accommodated adjacent to the curb, providing a buffer between car movement and pedestrian movement.
- There should be appropriate distance between trees and the building face to allow trees to grow with a generous tree canopy.
- In constrained areas with minimum opportunity to plant trees within the public right-of-way (ROW), other greening improvements on the private property should be considered.
- New developments should have active uses at-grade to create vitality and vibrancy.
- Where space is available, outdoor patios and market zones should be provided.
- New developments should maximize transparency on the ground level to animate streets.
- Narrowing traffic lanes and paved roadway, where possible.
- Creating bump-outs for easier movement and crossings.
- Creating parkettes along specific streets by removing on-street parking.

In addition, Map 25 in the Strategy depicts the specific character of given streets including cultural corridors, pedestrian corridors, green corridors, cycling streets and mews streets. The Strategy then describes a number of initiatives within King-Spadina

including the John Street Cultural Corridor, the King Street Pilot Project, the King Street Capital Improvement Plan and other plans for specific streets in the area.

## **Community Consultation**

Between 2013 and 2017, five community consultation meetings were held on the King-Spadina Secondary Plan Update. Numerous stakeholder meetings were held with individual landowners, the Entertainment District BIA and others. All these meetings included content related to the public realm in the King-Spadina area and the need to expand, improve and connect all elements of the public realm.

A final open house was held on December 4, 2018. Approximately 60 people attended and had the opportunity to review a full draft of the King-Spadina Secondary Plan and review material on the Strategy. Staff answered questions from members of the public and comments were encouraged to be placed on the information boards. In summary, the comments staff received at the final meeting specifically related to the public realm included:

- the public realm should be more clearly defined;
- more green space is great, but there needs to be an appropriate budget to maintain what we have;
- wider sidewalks wherever possible, supplemented by interactive street art and parkettes; and
- laneways are a very important part of the neighbourhood and they need to be protected and expanded.

These comments were considered and revisions to the document were made where possible and appropriate.

Within the King-Spadina Secondary Plan (2020), Maps 16-3A, B, and C detail the views, midblock connections, existing and planned parks, POPS and other open spaces, and existing and planned public realm enhancements. The information in these maps was taken directly from the draft Strategy and was therefore available for public review and comment through the King-Spadina Secondary Plan approval process.

## **Conclusion**

The Strategy conforms to and is consistent with relevant provincial and municipal policies. The Strategy, as with other City guidelines, expresses Council policy and "advances the vision, objectives and policies of [the] Plan" as per Policy 5.3.2.1., although they are not part of the Official Plan and do not have the status of Official Plan policy under the Planning Act. The policy direction provided by the King-Spadina Secondary Plan assists with the direction to create the Strategy, as with other guiding documents, in evaluating development applications.

The King-Spadina Public Realm Strategy will continue to provide guidance on priorities and important future public realm enhancements as the King-Spadina area continues to

grow. This will ensure that an improved, enlarged and connected public realm will be secured over time to serve the growing population.

## **CONTACTS**

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Nasim Adab, Senior Urban Designer, Toronto and East York District, 416-392-0622, [Nasim.Adab@toronto.ca](mailto:Nasim.Adab@toronto.ca)

Joanna Kimont, Senior Planner, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District, 416-392-7216, [Joanna.Kimont@toronto.ca](mailto:Joanna.Kimont@toronto.ca)

## **SIGNATURE**

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Emilia Floro MRAIC, MCIP, RPP, Acting Director, Urban Design, City Planning  
Urban Design, City Planning

Lynda H. Macdonald, MCIP, RPP, OALA, FCSLA, Director Community Planning,  
Toronto and East York District

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1: Draft King-Spadina Public Realm Strategy (provided separately)  
Attachment 2: Summary of Parks and POPS recently secured in King-Spadina

**Attachment 1: Draft King-Spadina Public Realm Strategy (provided separately)**

## Attachment 2: Summary of Parks and POPS recently secured in King-Spadina

Parks in King Spadina

(Note – the park sizes listed in this table are approximate)

Address	Park Name	Size (square metres)	Status
303 Adelaide Street W	Dr. George Robert Grasett Park	145	Under construction
525 Richmond Street W	Musée Parkette	800	Built
543 Richmond Street W		550	Secured
400 Front Street W		1610	Secured
456 Wellington Street W	Cat Park	1000	Secured
450 Adelaide Street W	St. Andrews Playground Expansion	1310 new Existing park space is 4750 square metres. Total of 6060.	Secured
105 Spadina Avenue		1000	Secured
229 Richmond Street W		2635	Secured

## POPS in King Spadina

(Note – the POPS sizes listed in this table are approximate and the list may not include all secured open spaces)

Address	Size (square metres)	Status
300 Front Street West	825	Built
224 King Street West	170	Built
117 Peter Street	500	Secured
295 Adelaide Street West	335	Built
355 King Street West	310 plus 380 square metres of mid-block connections. Total of 690 square metres.	Built
283 Adelaide Street West	410	Under construction
Adelaide, Portland, King Block	650	Built
550 Wellington Street West	900	Built
517 Wellington Street West	405	Secured
400 Front Street West	30 plus 310 square metres of informal POPS. Total of 340 square metres.	Secured
217 Adelaide Street West	120	Secured

Address	Size (square metres)	Status
400 King Street West	120	Secured
102-118 Peter Street	380	Under construction
120-128 Peter Street	100	Secured
8-30 Widmer Street	170	Under construction
539 King Street West	1620	Under construction
224 King Street West	330	Built
117 Peter Street	615	Built
126 John Street	700	Under review
8 Charlotte Street	95	Built