

3 Policy and Planning Context

Introduction

- 3.1 This chapter of the ESR outlines the local and regional planning and policy context which has shaped the EA Study. It outlines the relevant local and regional policy context in which yongeTOMorrow’s objectives have been developed, consistent with policy and planning directions outlined in provincial and municipal plans.

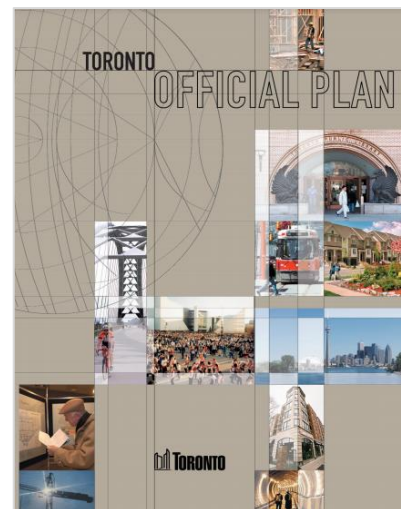
Policy & Planning Context

- 3.2 Yonge Street is widely recognized as an iconic street within the City of Toronto and a route of significant civic importance and cultural identity. In recent years there has been growing recognition of the importance and potential of Yonge Street in response to its evolving context as a major destination for commerce, leisure and recreation, and housing.
- 3.3 Strategic policies for Yonge Street outlined in relevant municipal policy documents provide the necessary objectives, vision, and framework for the development of the EA Study to ensure it is progressed in line with broader objectives.

The EA Study builds on a strong foundation of adopted planning policies, plans, guidelines, and initiatives by the City of Toronto, which collectively aim to support the development of Yonge Street and maximize its role at the centre of vitality in Toronto. A review of strategic policies and plans at the municipal and provincial level informed the development of objectives for the EA Study, the definition of the Problem and Opportunity Statement and identification and evaluation of Alternative Design Concepts. The specific policies and plans which inform yongeTOMorrow are outlined as follows.

City of Toronto’s Official Plan (2019)

- 3.4 The City of Toronto’s Official Plan, February 2019 Office Consolidation, seeks to ensure that Toronto evolves, improves, and realizes its full potential in areas such as transit, land use development, and the environment. It provides a clear direction for Toronto, a road map for its future and the basis for building a city-wide consensus around change.
- 3.5 The vision of the Official Plan involves creating an attractive and safe city with vibrant neighbourhoods that are complete communities, with attractive, tree-lined streets with shops and housing that are made for walking. At the heart of this vision is a strong and competitive economy with a vital downtown that creates and sustains well-paid, stable, safe, and fulfilling employment opportunities for all Torontonians. It promotes green spaces of all sizes and public squares that bring people together.
- 3.6 The policies and plans outlined in the City of Toronto’s Official Plan directly contributed to the development of objectives for the yongeTOMorrow EA Study. Specifically, the following policies relating to land use and transportation planning, outlined in Chapter 2 of the Official Plan, were considered:



- Policy 2.2.2: Growth will be directed to...*Downtown*...in order to:
 - a. concentrate jobs and people in areas well served by surface transit and rapid transit stations
 - d. promote mixed-use development to increase opportunities for living close to work and to encourage walking and cycling for local trips
- Policy 2.2.3: The City’s transportation network will be maintained and developed to support the growth management objectives of this Plan by:
 - a) ii. extending and altering the widths of pavement, sidewalk, and other facilities as necessary within the designated rights-of-way
 - f) ensuring that streets are not closed to public use and stay within the public realm where they provide present and future access for vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles, space for utilities and services, building address, view corridors and sight lines
 - g) ensuring that laneways are not closed to public use and stay within the public realm where they provide present and future access and servicing to adjacent development(s)
 - h) ensuring that new streets will be provided in consideration of surrounding land uses and will contribute to the development of a connected network which provides direct and clearly understood travel routes for all transportation modes and users throughout the City and acts as a fundamental organizing element of the City’s physical structure
 - j) implementing transit services in exclusive rights-of-way in the corridors identified on Map 4 as priorities are established, funding becomes available and the Environmental Assessment review processes are completed
 - l) increasing transit priority throughout the City by giving buses and streetcars priority at signalized intersections and by introducing other priority measures on selected bus and streetcar routes, including those identified on Map 5, such as:
 - i. reserved or dedicated lanes for buses and streetcars
 - ii. limiting or removing on-street parking during part or all of the day
- Policy 2.2.4: New development on lands adjacent to existing or planned transportation corridors and facilities is required to be compatible with, and supportive of, the long-term purposes of the corridors and facilities and be designed to avoid, mitigate or minimize negative impacts on and from the transportation corridors and facilities.

3.7 The Official Plan highlights the importance of streetscape planning in downtown Toronto, recognizing that many downtown activities are interdependent. The most obvious way these activities are linked is through the downtown spaces: its streets, parks, plazas, and special districts, where people experience downtown life most directly. This is particularly important in the context of the yongeTOmorrow Study Area, which is a true mixed-use neighbourhood that is centred on Yonge Street. The development objectives for yongeTOmorrow took account of policies specific to downtown Toronto in Section 2.2.1, in particular:

- Policy 2.2.1.2: Investment in the downtown environment on the part of the City, other levels of government and public/private partnerships will be sought to:
 - maintain and improve the public realm, especially linkages among downtown streets, parks, accessible open spaces, and the water’s edge.

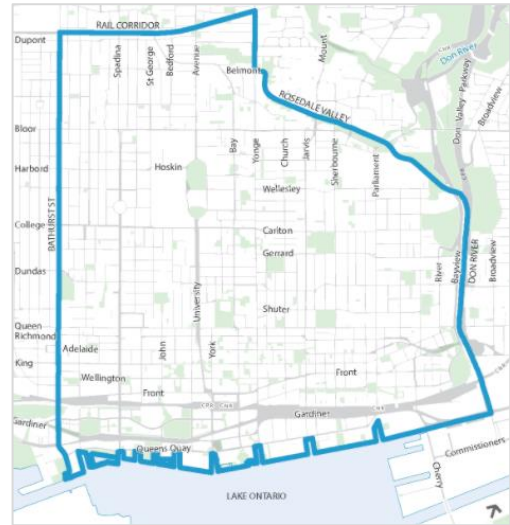
- Policy 2.2.1.8: Priority will be given to improving transit (TTC and GO) access to the downtown while the expansion of automobile commuting and all-day parking will be discouraged.
- Policy 2.2.1.10: Priority will be given to surface transit vehicles on key downtown streets, particularly those with streetcars.
- Policy 2.2.1.11: A program of street improvements will be developed to enhance the pedestrian environment and measures undertaken to make it safer to walk and cycle in the Downtown.
- Policy 2.2.1.12: Without compromising the role of the street as the main place for pedestrian activity, expansion and redevelopment of the PATH network will be supported by encouraging new development to connect to the system. The City may request additional information including a PATH feasibility study, to address PATH network expansion and/or secure new PATH connections for major new development in areas on or near the PATH network.
- Policy 2.2.1.14: The City will work with property owners, developers, and other stakeholders to ensure the PATH network develops in a consistent, connected, and coherent manner.

3.8 In addition, Chapter 3 of the Official Plan, which outlines the policies to build a successful city, were considered and are relevant to this study, specifically:

- Policy 3.1.1.2: The public realm will foster complete, well-connected walkable communities and employment areas that meet the daily needs of people and support a mix of activities, support active transportation and public transit use. It will provide a comfortable, attractive and vibrant, safe and accessible setting for civic life and daily social interaction and contribute to the identity and physical character of the City and its neighbourhoods.
- Policy 3.1.1.6: New and existing City streets will incorporate a Complete Streets approach and be designed to perform their diverse roles by:
 - balancing the needs and priorities of the various users and uses within the right-of-way, including provision for:
 - i. the safe and efficient movement of pedestrians of all ages and abilities, cyclists, transit vehicles and users, goods and services vehicles, emergency vehicles, and motorists across the network
 - ii. space for trees, landscaping and green infrastructure
 - iii. space for other street elements, such as utilities and services, snow and stormwater management, wayfinding, boulevard cafes, marketing and vending, and street furniture
 - iv. ensuring the safety of users of all ages and abilities
 - b) improving the quality and convenience of active transportation options within all communities by giving full consideration to the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transit users
 - c) reflecting differences in local context and character
 - d) providing building access and address, as well as amenities such as view corridors, sky view and sunlight
 - e) serving as community destinations and public gathering places.

City of Toronto’s Downtown Plan (TOcore) (2018)

3.9 In 2018, City Council adopted the Downtown Plan (also known as TOcore), the most comprehensive update to downtown planning policy since the 1970s. It recognizes that growth in the downtown has been outpacing the City’s abilities to secure the necessary supporting infrastructure for success. While the downtown covers just 3% of Toronto’s overall area, it is home to more than half a million jobs, more than 240,000 residents and its population is anticipated to almost double by 2041.



3.10 TOcore articulates a series of planning objectives that aim to support commercial and population growth in the downtown area while encouraging a walkable downtown. Built form objectives have been set based on the principles of comfort, vibrancy, diversity, safety, and beauty. Objectives for the yongeTOmorrow EA Study have been developed consistently with the policies outlined in TOcore, including policy directions that ensure:

- All streets will be safe, comfortable, functional, and accessible in all seasons for pedestrians of all ages and abilities
- Pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit will be prioritized relative to private automobiles, informed by the application of design guidelines for Complete Streets as adopted by Council
- Improving the street to enhance the pedestrian environment and applying measures to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists
- Extending and altering the widths of sidewalks and other facilities as necessary within the designated rights-of-way
- Ensuring that streets are not closed to public use and stay within the public realm where they provide present and future access for vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles, space for utilities and services, buildings, view corridors and sight lines
- Limiting or removing on-street parking during part or all of the day

3.11 TOcore highlights the importance of streetscape planning in downtown Toronto, stressing how public downtown spaces, including streets, parks, plazas, and special districts have a direct impact on how people experience the city and can contribute to sustainable growth. It specifically recognizes that, in much of downtown, sidewalks are narrow and often crowded with minimal space for pedestrian amenities. It recognizes that an expanded public realm is necessary to provide comfort and safety for all users.

3.12 Yonge Street is identified as one of the 12 Great Streets in TOcore. These Great Streets are identified as streets which “hold cultural and historical significance” and are considered to be destinations in and of themselves. These Great Streets have citywide and civic importance with a diverse character that conveys Toronto’s public image to the world and sets the stage for festivals, parades and civic life”. TOcore identifies the Great Streets as a network which will be prioritized for public realm improvements which:

- Enhance their civic role and setting for public life
- Promote economic vitality
- Improve mobility and the role of the streets as connectors between neighbourhoods, parks [...] and the waterfront

Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan (2017)

- 3.13 The City of Toronto’s Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan (2017) is a 25-year integrated plan for parks, streets, and other open spaces. The Plan acts as an implementation tool for these specific urban realm elements for the TOcore. The Parks and Public Realm Plan is one of five infrastructure-related strategies that have been developed to implement the Downtown Plan, the others being plans for Community Services and Facilities, Energy, Mobility and Water.
- 3.14 Yonge Street is identified as one of Toronto’s *Great Streets* as part of the Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan and is acknowledged as a significant civic corridor and retail street in the City. The Plan seeks to achieve the following goals for Yonge Street:

- Create a significant pedestrian destination supporting public life and retail vitality
- Celebrate the cultural aspects of Yonge Street and enhance it as a place for regional festivals and parades as well as a place for day to day use by residents, visitors, and workers
- Design a unified streetscape that responds to the various neighbourhood character areas
- Improve the streetscape for walking, transit stops, social gathering, public outdoor seating, café seating and landscaping
- Improve the cycling experience
- Create a significant public space where Yonge Street meets the shoreline

The Plan contains a specific policy action to advance the Yonge Street Planning Framework and EA process to implement the future vision for Yonge Street. Together with the Downtown Plan, these Plans provide a policy framework and vision for parks and the public realm in the core, recognizing the role of Yonge Street as one of Toronto’s Great Streets, a Cultural Corridor, and a Priority Retail Street.

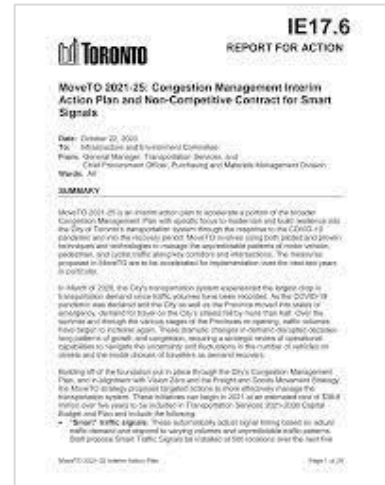


City of Toronto Congestion Management Plan (MoveTO) (2020)

3.15 In 2020, the City of Toronto published MoveTO, the City’s action plan to help manage congestion and build a more resilient and safer transportation system. This plan focuses on enacting key measures to help make the City’s transportation system more resilient and includes actions on smart traffic systems, intelligent intersections, and Advanced Transit Signal Priority (ATSP).

3.16 MoveTO also includes the implementation of a Transportation Demand Management Strategy and delivery of the Construction Hub Pilot Program, which seeks to reduce, and manage traffic and congestion caused by construction.

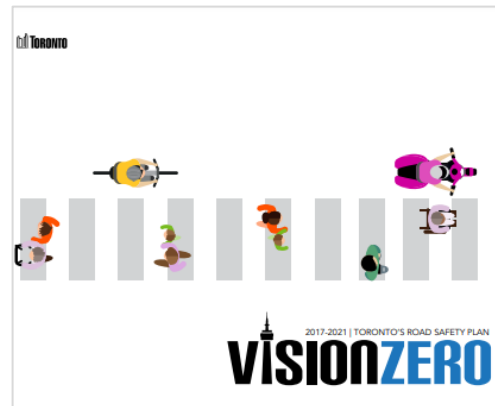
3.17 The MoveTO plan builds on the work the City of Toronto has done to positively impact congestion, while also considering safer streets, improved equity, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions as they relate to Toronto’s larger transportation network. This policy seeks to ensure that safe streets with improved environmental and equity benefits, can be developed in association with other municipal plans, such as the Vision Zero Road Safety Plan.



City of Toronto Vision Zero Road Safety Plan (2017)

3.18 In June 2018, City Council authorized funding to achieve a higher level of road safety along the city’s designated cultural corridors, including Yonge Street between Queens Quay and Davenport Road. The Vision Zero Road Safety Plan is a comprehensive five-year (2017-2021) action plan focused on reducing traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries on Toronto’s streets, including a commission on road safety audit for Yonge Street.

3.19 The Vision Zero Road Safety Plan addresses safety for the most vulnerable users of the transportation system—pedestrians, school children, older adults, and cyclists. The road safety audit for Yonge Street studied existing road facilities to identify safety issues and deficiencies for all road users, based upon traffic and collision data and field visits, identifying short and long-term mitigating countermeasures.



Metrolinx 2041 Regional Transportation Plan (2018)

3.20 The 2041 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) was adopted in March 2018 as the second RTP developed for the GTHA. The purpose of this document is to continue the development of a fully integrated transportation system through inter-agency collaboration across the region, following on from the previous The Big Move guidance. The 2041 RTP includes a number of actions (actions 4.1 – 4.10) to significantly increase walking and cycling trips in the region. Investments to support active transportation are relatively small compared to those for rapid transit and highways, but their congestion, health and safety impacts can be significant. This applies to long-standing ambitions for Yonge Street to add safe and efficient walking and cycling facilities that support active transportation. The RTP’s vision includes:



- Better all-season maintenance of sidewalks near rapid transit stations can make walking a more viable option for transit users living nearby and reduce the need for costly station parking
- A complete streets approach that prioritizes walking and cycling in the design and operation of roads and new surface transit corridors will promote healthier and safer forms of travel. Complete streets principles are intended to make pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users of all ages safe and comfortable. Supporting measures include traffic calming, safe and convenient pedestrian linkages to transit, and improved bicycle amenities
- Adoption of key principles of the Regional Cycling Network, like paved riding surfaces, bike lanes, separated bike lanes or cycle tracks where speeds or traffic volumes are higher, clear and consistent wayfinding signage, and routes that are direct and help users cross physical barriers such as waterways and 400-series highways
- Expansion and promotion of bike-share in locations where there is an opportunity to meet and increase the demand for cycling

A Place to Grow: A Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2019)

3.21 A Place to Grow is the Ontario government’s plan for growth and development in a way that supports economic prosperity, protects the environment, and helps communities achieve a high quality of life. Overall, A Place to Grow aims to support the development of urban centres which are vibrant and characterized by more compact development patterns that support climate change mitigation and adaptation, and provide a diversity of opportunities for living, working, and enjoying culture.



3.22 The policies outlined in this plan, approved in 2019, provide a framework for how land in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) is developed, managed, and protected. The specific guiding principles of this plan which together align with objectives for the yongeTOMorrow EA Study, recognizing its importance within the highly urbanized and concentrated downtown Toronto context, are:

- 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
- Protect and enhance natural heritage, hydrologic, and landform systems, features, and functions
- Conserve and promote cultural heritage resources to support the social, economic, and cultural well-being of all communities, including First Nations and Métis communities
- Integrate climate change considerations into planning and managing growth such as planning for more resilient communities and infrastructure – that are adaptive to the impacts of a changing climate – and moving towards environmentally sustainable communities by incorporating approaches to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Ontario Provincial Policy Statement (2020)

3.23 The Ontario Provincial Policy Statement (PPS)⁶ is a consolidated statement of the government’s policies on land use planning across the whole province. It gives provincial policy direction on key land use planning issues that affect communities, such as:

- efficient use and management of land and infrastructure
- the provision of sufficient housing to meet changing needs, including affordable housing
- the protection of the environment and resources including farmland, natural resources (for example, wetlands and woodlands) and water
- opportunities for economic development and job creation

⁶ Ontario Government, Provincial Policy Statement, 2020, accessed 16 April 2020

- the appropriate transportation, water, sewer, and other infrastructure needed to accommodate current and future needs
- the protection of people, property, and community resources by directing development away from natural or human-made hazards, such as flood prone areas

3.24 The PPS is issued under section 3 of the Planning Act and according to the act, all decisions affecting planning matters shall be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement. Municipalities are the primary decision-makers for local communities. They implement provincial policies through municipal official plans and planning related decisions. Policy changes to the previous 2014 PPS were made in 2020, with the goals to:

- encourage an increase in the mix and supply of housing
- protect the environment and public safety
- reduce barriers and costs for development and provide greater certainty
- support rural, northern, and Indigenous communities
- support the economy and job creation

Supporting Stakeholder Studies

3.25 Beyond the in-force municipal and provincial policy and plans mentioned above, a range of additional studies and initiatives have already been undertaken to improve and enhance the vitality of Yonge Street by a range of stakeholders recognizing the key role Yonge Street plays within the downtown economy.

3.26 For many years, community stakeholders such as the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area (Downtown Yonge BIA) have advocated for public realm improvements on Yonge Street to support the increasing residential and commercial growth, the number of special events taking place in and around Yonge-Dundas Square, and to properly accommodate the volume of pedestrians using the street daily.

3.27 Yonge Street has been identified as a street in need of revitalization and key for the public realm to support its role in the city as an economic and cultural hub. These stakeholder-led initiatives have informed the development of objectives for the EA Study, outlined in the Problem and Opportunity Statement.

Yonge Street Planning Study (2011)

3.28 This initial planning study⁷, conducted in 2011 by KPMB Architects and Greenberg Consultants Inc., identified four key themes to guide the City & community in moving forward with design proposals for the revitalization of Yonge Street. These themes were:

1. Public Realm & Transportation
2. Built Form
3. Program & Land-use
4. Implementation

3.29 The planning study identified key recommendations for Yonge Street, including:

⁷ KPMB Architects, Greenberg Consultants Inc., Yonge Street Planning Study (2011), accessed 16 April 2020

- Widen sidewalks and reduce traffic to two-lanes
- Develop flexible street conditions to allow for a variety of functions adaptable to seasonal changes and supportive of temporary events
- Enhance fine-grained pedestrian networks by redeveloping laneways and build-in public realm initiatives
- Introduce more seating areas and spaces for congregation
- Expand access to the TTC subway to support movement

Celebrate Yonge – Post Event Review (2013)⁸

- 3.30 The "Celebrate Yonge" event, organized by the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area (DYBIA), consisted of 11 themed event areas including patios, lounges, art installations and street furniture that expanded the pedestrian space into the roadway. 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. The lane closures allowed for approximately 4.0 to 4.5 metres of additional pedestrian space within the roadway on Yonge Street. The pedestrian space was separated from vehicular traffic by the placement of decorative planters and other protective barricades.
- 3.31 To assess the impact of the event on vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians, a broad study area was identified, based on input from staff, which would be reviewed pre and post event. This area was bounded by University Avenue to the west, Gerrard Street to the north, Jarvis Street to the east and Queen Street to the south. The specific corridors that were considered included Yonge Street.
- 3.32 Based on the successful operation and lessons learned from the 2012 Street Event, the Downtown Yonge BIA wishes to develop a permanent installation similar in scale and impact to the event. This should be considered as part of the Yonge Street development proposals.

Yonge Love Report (2015)

- 3.33 The 2015 Yonge Love Campaign Findings Report⁹, led by the Downtown Yonge BIA, was published as a culmination of a robust, community-driven visioning exercise for Yonge Street and the surrounding neighbourhood. With a campaign rooted in accessibility and inclusivity, the methodology used to identify a vision for Yonge Street set a benchmark for engaging with diverse people, voices, and challenges. Consultation undertaken to shape the planning & development strategy for Downtown Yonge identified the following key findings:
- People want human-scale, walkable neighbourhoods that connect them to their community. That means wider sidewalks, more trees, and a vibrant street experience to invite residents, employees, and visitors into our neighbourhood's public realm.

⁸ City of Toronto (2013), Celebrate Yonge – Post Event Review, <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-59523.pdf>, accessed 16 April 2020

⁹ Yonge Love BIA (2015), The Yonge Love: Campaign Findings Report, http://www.yongelove.ca/YongeLove_Report.pdf, accessed 16 April 2020

- A vibrant street experience needs programming, events, and festivals. Those should come in different shapes and sizes to appeal to different audiences, and in a variety of locations throughout the neighbourhood.
- We need to be increasingly creative in our use of space, finding new and surprising uses for public realm assets in particular and leveraging the limited amount of green space for the community.
- Intensification poses significant challenges that could impede the neighbourhood's growth. But if crowding, congestion and log jams are managed now, those same challenges would turn into an opportunity to embrace growth.

Toronto's Great Street Report (2018)

3.34 A study undertaken by Ryerson University in collaboration with the Ryerson City Building Institute on designing great streets in Toronto identified Yonge Street as "Canada's Main Street" and identified that a vision to pedestrianize a busy foot traffic stretch of Yonge Street between Queen Street and College Street could revitalize the neighbourhood and boost business. The study identified that:

- In the Downtown Yonge area, pedestrians make up 72% of traffic while vehicles account for only 28%. Pedestrianization improvements are imperative for the success of the area
- The existing conditions on Yonge Street from Shuter Street to Gerrard Street support pedestrianization: there is no street parking, many turning restrictions, relatively few drivers when compared to other modes, and the subway runs underground – all making pedestrianization less complicated or adversarial than other streets in Toronto. Terminating at Shuter Street allows car access to the underground parking garage in the CF Toronto Eaton Centre
- Thoughtful development policy that enables density but preserves opportunities for independent business will be critical to retaining Yonge Street's character

City of Toronto Streetscape Manual User Guide (2019)

3.35 The City of Toronto's Streetscape Manual User Guide¹⁰, published in 2019, is a reference tool developed to guide the design, construction and maintenance of sidewalk and boulevard improvements on Toronto's arterial road network. The manual emphasizes design quality and amenity in the pedestrian realm and provides specifications for paving, trees, medians, lighting and street furniture.

3.36 Yonge Street forms a 'main street', within the subcategory of 'Special Streets':

...distinguished by their high level of importance for the city resulting from historical, cultural, physical and/or functional characteristics. These streets are often used as ceremonial routes and they are recognized provincially, nationally and even internationally as making significant contributions to the character of Toronto.

¹⁰ City of Toronto (2019), Streetscape Manual User Guide, <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/906c-city-planning-streetscape-manual-user-guide.pdf>, accessed 16 April 2020

- 3.37 Specific guidance is provided related to street trees, surface materials, medians and lightings, which should be considered as part of the Yonge Street proposals.
- 3.38 Together, the planning and policy approaches outlined above, together with the range of independent stakeholder-led studies published in recent years, provide the necessary objectives, vision and framework for the development of the EA Study to ensure it is developed in alignment with existing needs and opportunities.