

5 Problem and Opportunity Statement

Introduction

- 5.1 Phase 1 of the EA Study process requires the development of a Problem and Opportunity Statement that adequately addresses the critical issues and opportunities to be studied through the development of the EA.
- 5.2 The purpose of the EA Study is to evaluate potential improvements to the Yonge Street public right-of-way between Queen Street and College / Carlton Street consistent with the City's objectives, and to recommend improvements that best serve the needs of the street today and in the future.
- 5.3 The overall objective of this ESR is to improve the pedestrian experience by increasing pedestrian space through various means, including sidewalk widening, traffic lane reductions, and diverting commercial loading activity, where possible. A number of Alternative Solutions have been considered to increase pedestrian space and improve the way people move through and experience downtown Yonge Street and are outlined within this ESR. The Alternative Solutions must address the Problem and Opportunity Statement developed during Phase 1 of the MCEA process.
- 5.4 The Problem and Opportunity Statement for the EA Study was developed through an iterative period over several months based on a range of inputs, including:
 - A formal review of existing policies and plans enacted by the City of Toronto and Province of Ontario that guide major transportation project developments, particularly road and public realm enhancements
 - Themes and recommendations which have emerged through the range of extant studies undertaken by stakeholders and special interest groups to assess, define and create a vision for the future of downtown Yonge Street
 - An enhanced, extensive consultation process, through which the Problem and Opportunity Statement was tested and refined through considerable inputs and collaboration with stakeholders and the general public.
- 5.5 The full Public Consultation Report is also provided in Appendix A of this ESR.

Problem & Opportunity Statement

Yonge Street is iconic – the street plays a significant role in the cultural and economic identity of Toronto and forms the spine of the city's transportation network. Dramatic growth is changing the character of the built form along the street and the needs of its users, placing increased demands on aging infrastructure. This provides an opportunity to re-examine how Yonge Street can best respond to our diverse and changing city. This presents the opportunity to elevate Yonge Street's physical form and the experience it brings to its users to reflect the significance it holds in both the city's landscape and in our minds.

yongeTOMorrow Project Objectives

- 5.6 The development of Project Objectives for the EA Study takes into account Yonge Street’s influential history within Toronto and its central role in the City’s vibrant economy, in the overall transportation network, and the diverse cultural landscape of Toronto.
- 5.7 The street has become an international, regional and local destination for retail, entertainment, education, residential living, and leisure – synonymous with Toronto in the minds of those who live in or visit the City. As the premier street in the City with internationally renowned tourist destinations, Yonge Street competes against destinations around the world. Therefore, it needs to continually enhance itself to preserve its desirability and to expand future opportunities. At the same time, the character of the street and local neighbourhoods is being challenged as new developments present dramatic growth – influencing the quality of life at street level.
- 5.8 Yonge Street has the potential to be a “great street” with a quality public realm that will support high intensity pedestrian movement and vital economic activity. Reconsidering the role of Yonge Street to accommodate today’s and tomorrow’s transformative demands that will serve all people – regardless of age, ability, income, and identity – and for all seasons, will require the balancing of priorities. Bold catalyst and inspiration will enable continued growth while strengthening the community and its unique cultural character, sustaining Yonge Street as a memorable, human-scaled, adaptable and safe destination.
- 5.9 The following Project Objectives will help create proposed solutions to help meet the needs of the future Yonge Street, as per the Problem and Opportunity Statement above.

1. Provide **Mobility** for a diverse and evolving city

- 5.10 An opportunity for transformative growth exists for improving the movement of people and goods in the Study Area through improved user choice, accessibility, and connectivity options. The key strategy will be to position walkability as a fundamental cornerstone of the network and reallocate space along the corridor to reflect this. Streetscape design improvements and the introduction of new destinations along the corridor will be crucial in cementing Yonge Street as a major centre for street life in Toronto. However, regardless of the solution, access to critical city services and emergency vehicles must not be compromised.

2. Celebrate and enhance **Liveability** by providing an enriching and adaptable urban destination

- 5.11 Yonge Street must continue to support existing urban form while ensuring flexibility in embracing future conditions. The corridor must provide a safe, enriching and layered streetscape that residents will embrace, while continuing to attract visitors and tourism from all walks of life.
- 5.12 Yonge Street must support a growing local community and strong visitor base that will allow for 24/7 living including shopping, dining and entertainment. Existing neighbourhoods must be reinforced, and new developments must be integrated to ensure a local and sustainable identity.

The corridor will be enhanced with distinct streetscape elements, active and animated linkages and open space which allow for these diverse and multi-generational communities.

3. Support **Prosperity** with a public realm that further develops Yonge Street as an economic and cultural hub

- 5.13 It must be recognized that downtown Yonge Street, as a regional activity centre, is an economic engine with hundreds of thousands of employees. Businesses on Yonge Street are diverse in character and size, ranging from small, local outlets to large multinational corporations. With a wide range of uses, the street acts as a premier retail district, office centre, cultural and entertainment hub, and has a developing educational and innovation focus as well.
- 5.14 In order to support and attract economic vitality, reliable access for people, goods and services to a connected community, city and region is paramount. Yonge Street's future developments must be compatible with adjacent business and residential districts, and consider not only today's construction, maintenance and operating costs, but tomorrow's as well.

4. Foster **Sustainability** with design that respond to our changing climate, protects our ecological assets, and benefits our well-being

- 5.15 By adopting Complete Streets and Vision Zero principles today and planning for tomorrow, Yonge Street can become a flexible and dynamic hub of innovation that can grow with changes in technology, rather than being hampered by them.
- 5.16 Through enhancing Yonge Street's existing natural and cultural assets by integrating the streetscape, street trees, open space and public art, an environment that promotes safe and healthy living can be developed.
- 5.17 In the face of a changing climate, environmental considerations are paramount. The planning, design and implementation of a transformative Yonge Street must focus heavily on sustainability and the environment. It must consider all seasons and the micro-climate (sunlight, snow, wind, weather, etc.) as well as air and noise pollution to ensure a healthy, resilient environment for current and future communities.