

1 Introduction and Background

Introduction

- 1.1 The City of Toronto has undertaken a Schedule 'C' Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) 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 policies for this area, and to recommend improvements that best serve the needs of the street today and in the future. This project is collectively referred to as the yongeTOMorrow EA Study (EA Study).
- 1.2 The overall objective of this EA Study is to improve the pedestrian experience on this stretch of Yonge Street by increasing pedestrian space through various means, including sidewalk widening and traffic lane reductions, where possible. A range of options has been considered to increase pedestrian space and improve the way people move through and experience downtown Yonge Street. These have been evaluated as part of the EA Study process and are outlined in this report.

Purpose of the Environmental Study Report

- 1.3 The purpose of this Environmental Study Report (ESR) is to document the results of **Phases 1 – 4 of the Schedule 'C' MCEA** for the EA Study. This ESR documents the need and justification for improvements to Yonge Street, explains the processes used to select a preferred solution and physical design and identifies commitments to be addressed during the detailed design, implementation, and operation phases of the project.
- 1.4 Specifically, this ESR evaluates and identifies a Preferred Design Concept for the Yonge Street public right-of-way between Queen Street and College / Carlton Street in line with its key Project Objectives. The overall purpose of this report is to outline:
 - The various Alternative Solutions developed for this section of Yonge Street to accommodate the various users of this iconic street – recreational, transit, bicycle, pedestrian, vehicular – while enhancing landscaping and the public realm within the corridor, consistent with the Problem and Opportunity Statement
 - Develop, examine, and evaluate several Alternative Solutions and Alternative Design Concepts for vehicular, transit and pedestrian routes along Yonge Street
 - Define and document the Preferred Design Concept for the yongeTOMorrow EA Study, considering the appropriate environmental effects, impacts and their mitigations, and commitments for future work
 - Outline the public and stakeholder engagement and consultation which has been undertaken throughout the yongeTOMorrow EA Study

Overview of the Municipal Class EA Process

- 1.5 The Ontario Environmental Assessment Act (EA Act)² identifies two types of environmental assessment planning and approval processes, as follows:
 - Individual Environmental Assessments (EAs) – those projects for which a Terms of Reference and an individual EA are carried out and submitted to the Minister of the Environment for review and approval

² Environmental Assessment Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.18

- Class Environmental Assessments – those projects which are approved subject to compliance with an approved Class EA process with respect to a class of undertakings

1.6 One of the approved Class EAs under the EA Act is the Municipal Class EA (MCEA)³, October 2000 (Amended 2007). This Class EA outlines the process by which municipal infrastructure projects (e.g., road, transit, water, and wastewater projects) are planned in accordance with the EA Act. Municipal projects, as defined in the MCEA process, can be planned, designed, constructed, operated, maintained, rehabilitated, and retired without having to obtain project specific approvals under the EA Act, provided the MCEA process is followed.

1.7 The EA Study involves the assessment of a municipal improvement project as defined in the MCEA under Schedule 'C' of the MCEA process. The EA Study has been undertaken in accordance with the MCEA process, where the project activities are subject to the full planning process of the MCEA. The MCEA enables the planning of municipal infrastructure projects in accordance with a proven procedure for protecting the environment.

1.8 This EA Study was undertaken in accordance with the first four phases of the MCEA process. The five phases of the MCEA planning and design process for Schedule "C" EAs are summarized as follows and illustrated in Figure 1-1. Phase 5 is anticipated to commence following the completion and approval of this ESR.

Phase 1: Identification of the Problem or Opportunity

1.9 Phase 1 of the MCEA process involves the identification of the problem(s) and opportunity(ies) in sufficient detail to lead to a clear Problem and Opportunity Statement for the EA Study. The Problem and Opportunity Statement is provided in Chapter 5 of this report.

1.10 Input from stakeholders and the public was solicited as part of describing the problem and opportunity. Chapter 2 of this ESR summarizes the comprehensive public and stakeholder consultation program undertaken as part of this work that informed the development of the Problem and Opportunity Statement. A full Public Consultation Report providing detailed information on the consultation process undertaken during this EA Study is provided as Appendix A of this ESR.

Phase 2: Identification and Evaluation of Alternative Solutions to the Problem and Opportunity

1.11 Phase 2 identifies Alternative Solutions to address the Problem and Opportunity Statement, taking into consideration a detailed analysis of the existing environment within the Study Area, and selects a preferred solution based on a thorough evaluation process and consultation with the public, agencies, and other stakeholders. This Phase involves the following six steps:

- Identifying all reasonable Alternative Solutions to the Problem and Opportunity Statement
1. Preparing a general inventory of the existing natural, social, and economic environments in which the project is to occur (Existing Conditions)
2. Identifying the net positive and negative effects of each Alternative Solution including mitigating measures

³ Class EA for Municipal Infrastructure Projects, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/class-ea-municipal-infrastructure-projects>, accessed 16 April 2020

3. Evaluating the Alternative Solutions
4. Consulting with review agencies, stakeholders, and the public to solicit comments and input
5. Selecting and/or confirming the Preferred Solution

1.12 Chapter 6 of this report describes the identification and evaluation of the Alternative Solutions developed for this study. It then outlines the Preferred Solution, which is evaluated in Phase 3.

Phase 3: Identification and Evaluation of Alternative Design Concepts for the Recommended Design Concept

1.13 Phase 3 of the MCEA process examines a range of Alternative Design Concepts for implementing the Preferred Solution outlined in Phase 2, based on existing constraints, public and review agency input, potential environmental impacts, and methods of mitigating any negative environmental effects. Phase 3 addresses Alternative Design Concepts that fulfill the Preferred Solution.

1.14 Chapter 7 of this ESR describes the identification and evaluation of the Alternative Design Concepts developed for yongeTOmorrow and identifies the Recommended Design Concept (thereafter referred to as the Preferred Design Concept) for delivering the project. This Chapter also outlines the refinements made to the Recommended Design Concept based on Design Team recommendations and input from stakeholders through public consultation.

1.15 Chapter 8 of this ESR then provides a detailed description of the Preferred Design Concept, as adopted by Toronto City Council.

Phase 4: Preparation of the Environmental Study Report (ESR)

1.16 Phase 4 of the MCEA process requires the preparation of an ESR. The ESR (this document) outlines the rationale for the Preferred Design Concept, based on the planning, design and consultation process established through Phases 1 to 3. It articulates the Preferred Design Concept of Yonge Street between Queen Street and College / Carlton Street. It also outlines the public and stakeholder consultation process undertaken during the study and how this has informed the project's development.

1.17 As part of Phase 4, documentation of the preceding phases is also prepared. Once the ESR is completed, it is placed on the public record for 30 calendar days to allow review agencies and interested parties an opportunity to review and provide comments.

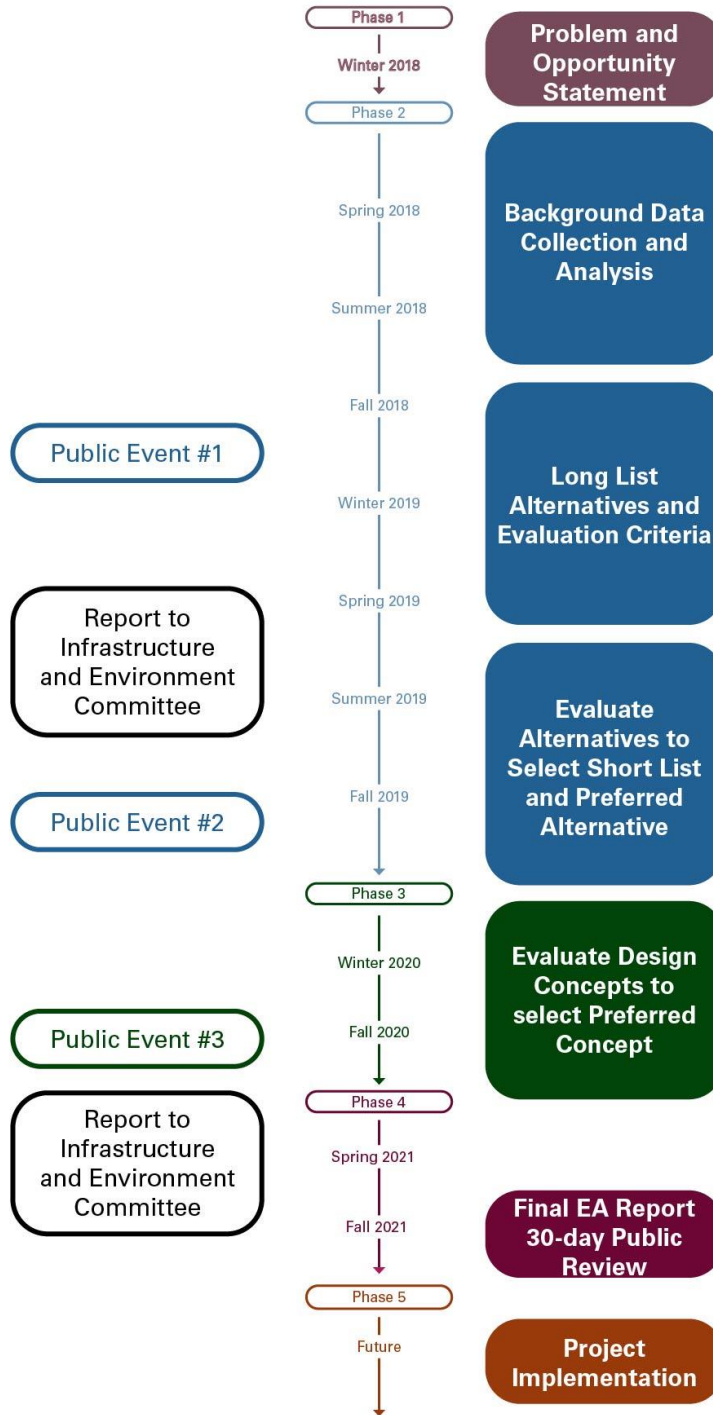
1.18 During the review period, if there are outstanding concerns or comments they can be provided directly to the proponent (City of Toronto). In addition, a request may be made to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) for an order requiring a higher level of study or that conditions be imposed, only on the grounds that the requested order may prevent, mitigate or remedy adverse impacts on constitutionally protected Aboriginal and treaty rights. This request is referred to as a formal s.16 order.

1.19 Once the public review period has expired and providing there are no outstanding orders under section 16 of the EA Act, or if the Minister refuses an order request, the proponent may proceed to the final phase of the planning and design process.

Phase 5: Completion of Contract Drawings and Documents and Initiation of Project Construction, Operations, and Monitoring

- 1.20 Phase 5 involves completing the detailed design of the preferred design, incorporating any mitigating measures documented in the ESR and defining the operational aspects of the project. Permits will be obtained and tender documents prepared.
- 1.21 Once contracts are awarded, construction can take place and the project will be implemented. Any monitoring programs identified during the Class EA will be undertaken to ensure that the environmental provisions and commitments made during the process are fulfilled and effective.

Figure 1-1: yongeTOmorrow EA Study Timeline



Municipal Class Environmental Assessment Schedules

- 1.22 Since projects undertaken by municipalities vary in their potential environmental effects, the Municipal Class EA classifies the projects into four schedules according to their potential environmental significance.
- 1.23 The City of Toronto has undertaken a Schedule “C” Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) to evaluate potential improvements to the Yonge Street public right-of-way between Queen Street and College / Carlton Street. The Schedule “C” Class EA process is required to complete all four phases of the Municipal Class EA that includes public and review agency consultation, an evaluation of Alternative Solutions, an evaluation of Alternative Design Concepts, an assessment of the effects on the environment, and identification of reasonable measures to mitigate any adverse effects, as outlined above.

Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA)

- 1.24 The Canadian Environment Assessment Act (CEAA), 2012⁴ set out responsibilities and procedures for the environmental assessment of projects involving the federal government. CEAA applied to the federal government when they are taking an action in support of a project including where the federal government:
- is the proponent
 - makes or authorizes payment or any other form of financial assistance to the proponent
 - leases, sells, or otherwise disposes of lands
 - issues a permit, license or other form of approval identified in the federal Law List Regulations
- 1.25 The CEAA was repealed on August 28, 2019 and replaced with the Impact Assessment Act, 2019. The EA Study was initiated prior to the repeal of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act on August 28, 2019; however, the project did not trigger a CEAA and as a result, no CEAA assessment was required for this study.

City of Toronto Council and Executive Committee

- 1.26 The EA Study has been undertaken in line with the City of Toronto’s procedures for developing, evaluating and approving capital investment projects including consideration and decision through formal processes through the City’s Infrastructure & Environment Committee reporting to Council, as well as Toronto City Council.
- 1.27 Toronto City Council is the main governing and legislative body of the City of Toronto. Council is composed of the Mayor and 25 Councillors. Toronto City Council has direct responsibility for the City's services. Council also indirectly oversees other major services (such as police, transit, public health, libraries, public housing) through the appointment of Council members to the boards of directors of the City Council's agencies and corporations.

⁴ Government of Canada (March 2020), Canadian Environmental Assessment Act 2012; <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/PDF/C-15.21.pdf>, accessed 16 April 2020

- 1.28 The Infrastructure and Environment Committee’s mandate is to monitor and make recommendations to City Council on Toronto’s infrastructure needs and services, parks and forestry, and the sustainable use of Toronto's environment.
- 1.29 The EA Study was considered formally by Council at the following decision points:
- Consideration of the yongeTOmorrow project at the City of Toronto’s Infrastructure and Environment Committee reporting to Council on 17 October 2019
 - Consideration and recommendations to City Council on the yongeTOmorrow project at the City of Toronto’s Infrastructure and Environment Committee reporting to Council on 11 January 2021
 - Consideration and decision on the yongeTOmorrow project at Toronto City Council on 3 February 2021
- 1.30 At the 3 February 2021 Toronto City Council meeting, Council endorsed the Recommended Design Concept of the yongeTOmorrow MCEA, therein becoming the Preferred Design Concept as described in Chapters 8 and 9 of this report. In addition, City Council authorized the General Manager, Transportation Services, City of Toronto to publish a Notice of Completion and file the ESR for the EA Study on the public record for a minimum of 30 days in accordance with the requirements of the MCEA.

Project Study Area

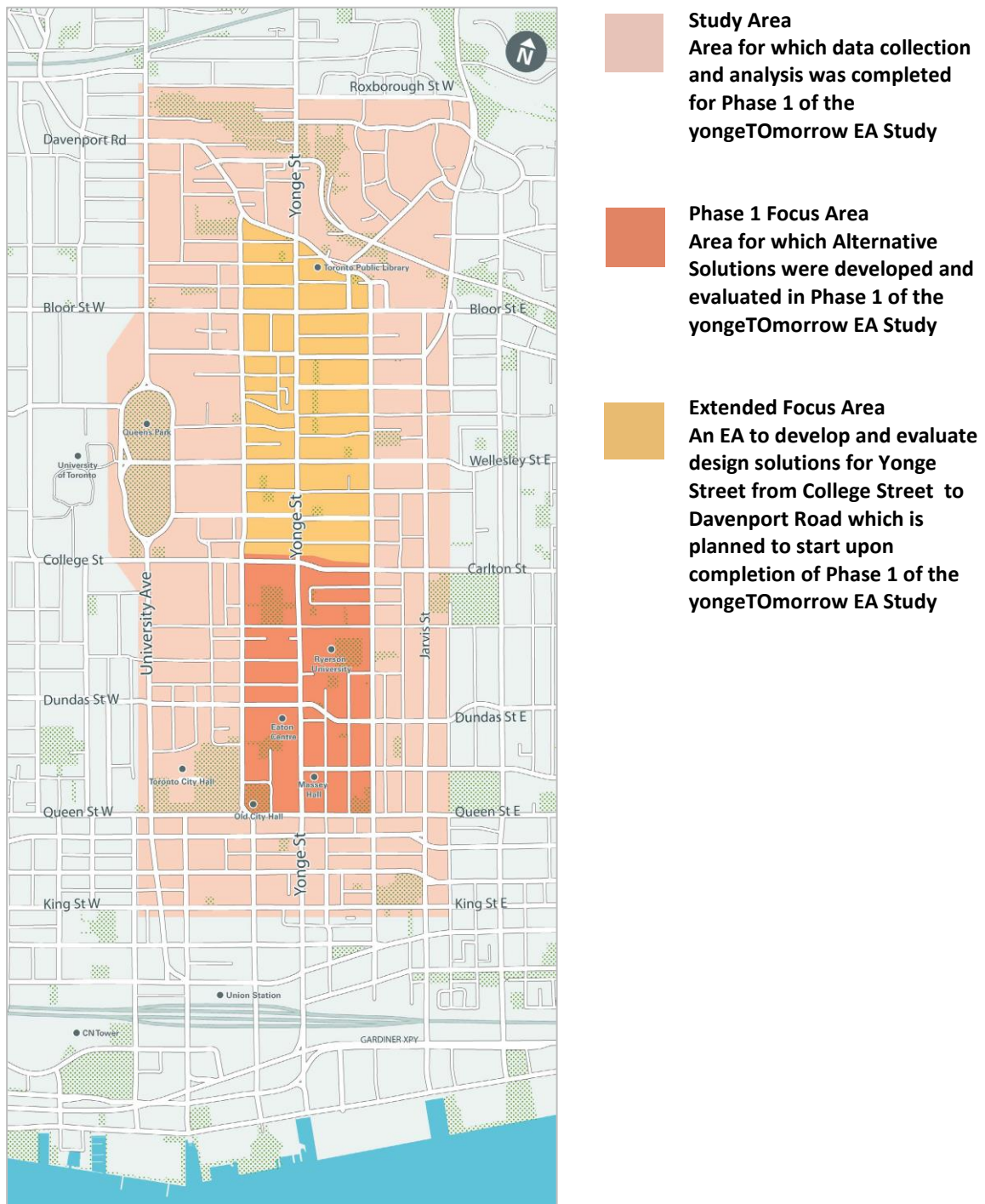
Study Area

- 1.31 The EA Study Area (Study Area) covers the geographic limit of design work for the Study and is bound by University Avenue to the west, Jarvis Street to the east, Roxborough Avenue to the north and King Street to the south. This Study Area correlates with the geographic limits of data collection and public consultation for the project.
- 1.32 The Study Area extends north to Roxborough Street in anticipation of a future EA study (Extended Focus Area / Phase 2 EA, outlined in Figure 1-2) that will focus on the design of Yonge Street from College / Carlton Street to Davenport Road. This extended Study Area is bound to the east and west by the same streets as Phase 1, however, this section is bound to the south by College / Carlton Street and the north just beyond Scollard Street. For the existing EA Study, data collection has taken place for the whole Study Area to expedite delivery of the future Phase 2 EA Study.

Focus Areas

- 1.33 The Focus Area for the EA Study, outlined in Figure 1-2 as the Phase 1 Focus Area, is bounded by Bay Street to the west, Church Street to the east, College / Carlton Street to the north and Queen Street to the south. The majority of the Focus Area is designated *Mixed Use Areas*, with some *Parks and Open Space Areas* and *Institutional* land use designations. The City of Toronto’s Official Plan recognizes downtown Yonge Street as a prominent area in the City, an important retail street and a major shopping focus within the Greater Toronto Area. These existing conditions of the Focus Area are described in further detail in Chapter 4 of this report. The Extended Focus Area to Davenport Road will be the subject of the future Phase 2 EA Study.

Figure 1-2: YongeTOmorrow EA Study Area and Phase 1 / Phase 2 EA Focus Area Boundaries



1.34 For the purposes of where Dundas Street and Yonge-Dundas Square are referenced in the yongeTOmorrow Environmental Study Report, it is important to acknowledge that on July 14,

2021 City Council approved that staff move forward with the City's Recognition Review⁵ and the renaming of Dundas Street and other City properties bearing the Dundas name, including Yonge-Dundas Square. This furthers the City's commitment to confronting anti-Black racism, advancing truth, reconciliation and justice, and building a more inclusive and equitable Toronto.

Adjacent and Related Studies

- 1.35 There are two other Environmental Assessments within the City of Toronto that have been conducted and which are relevant to this EA Study, with the common theme being Environmental Assessments to transform portions of Yonge Street north and south of the yongeTOMorrow EA Study Area. Neither of these Environmental Assessment Study Areas overlap with the yongeTOMorrow EA Study Area or Focus Area but are presented in this report as they relate to the overall development of the Yonge Street corridor within the City of Toronto.
- 1.36 The *Lower Yonge Precinct Municipal Class Environmental Assessment* began in 2016 and evaluated options to transform lands at the heart of Toronto's transforming waterfront area within a 12 hectare Study Area including Harbour Street, from York Street to Yonge Street; Yonge Street, from Lake Shore Boulevard to Front Street; and, Church Street, from its southerly terminus to Lake Shore Boulevard East. The Study Area is approximately 0.6km south of the southern border of the yongeTOMorrow Focus Area. The recommended final design for the Study Area included facilitating the reconnection of the City to its waterfront, create a more fine-grained road network, improvements to pedestrian and cycling conditions, and changes to the vehicular circulation through the precinct that will better balance regional and local traffic demands. The EA was approved in 2017.
- 1.37 The *REimagining Yonge Street Environmental Assessment* evaluates opportunities to improve the streetscape and public realm for all users (pedestrians, cyclists, transit, and vehicles) along Yonge Street from Sheppard Avenue to the Finch Hydro Corridor, roughly 15km north of the yongeTOMorrow Focus Area. The recommended final design for the reconstruction of Yonge Street within the Reimagining Yonge Street EA Focus Area includes a cross-section reduction from six to four lanes, wider sidewalks and boulevards, new and enhanced pedestrian crossings and traffic signals and turn restrictions at some intersections. It also features a centre landscaped median protected bicycle lanes (cycle tracks), on-street lay-bys for parking, loading and deliveries, where right-of-way width permits, the removal of both northbound and southbound left-turn lanes at the intersection of Yonge Street and Sheppard Avenue and modifications in the section of Finch Avenue and Hendon Avenue/Bishop Avenue to improve TTC bus travel. This EA was presented to the Infrastructure & Environment Committee for consideration in December 2020 and subsequently adopted by Toronto City Council.

Study Commencement and Completion

Notice of Study Commencement

- 1.38 In accordance with the guidelines for a Schedule "C" Municipal Class EA, a Notice of Commencement for the EA Study was issued on April 15, 2019. The Notice of Commencement

⁵ City of Toronto [Recognition Review](#), 14 July 2021

formally announced the project start-up, described the purpose of the study, and provided information on how to learn more and participate in the process.

Notice of Study Completion

- 1.39 At the end of the planning and decision-making process, the ESR will be placed on the public record for a 30-day review period. During the review period, if there are outstanding concerns that the project may adversely impact constitutionally protected Aboriginal and treaty rights which cannot be resolved in discussion with the municipality then a person or party may request that the Minister of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks (MECP) make an Order under section 16 of the Environmental Assessment Act.
- 1.40 A Notice of Study Completion, advising of the start of the 30-day public review period and the location(s) where the ESR can be reviewed, is to be mailed to all agencies, stakeholders, and property owners on the project mailing list and published on the City’s website for the project. For the purposes of this Class EA, a published notice shall mean a notice published in a local newspaper having general circulation in the area of the project, on two occasions.