

ONES TO WATCH



Rob Jowett

As Toronto grows, the city continually faces challenges about how it can improve its roadways to enhance the livability of its neighbourhoods and create destinations. This requires creating a balance between placemaking, mobility, economic vitality, and safety.

A new report from the **Ryerson City Building Institute** not only highlights five streets in Toronto that have been redesigned to turn them into great streets, but also another five with the potential to become great. The latter are all in the midst of some kind of redevelopment process, which offers a specific attribute to facilitate change along each street.

“We... wanted to reflect some of the contextual diversity of the streets that are undergoing redesigns in Toronto, and also represent streets from a range of different locations within the city,” City Building Institute project manager **Claire Nelischer** told *NRU*. “These were selected as just outstanding examples and situations that reflected a diversity of context, as well as a diversity of solutions.”

Great streets are great for different reasons, but all five streets—Bloor, King, Downtown Yonge, North Yonge and Eglinton—create a sense of place within their neighbourhoods.

“What we’ve seen... is that you need Toronto-based solutions to improve our streets, improve their safety, and improve the quality of life on our streets,” says Nelischer. “Those solutions are possible here. So with that next set of the ones to watch, I think they present really amazing opportunities to continue that

work to transform our streets, and to increasingly see... streets as both places for movement as well as for creating a sense of place and neighbourhood identity.”

The report recommends that the city be proactive in its street redesigns and take advantage of major planned reconstruction. In doing this a balance needs

to be struck among a variety of road uses and user needs. Local, specific solutions backed up by data are needed to create great streets and pilots initiated to test and measure success.

How the city leverages the initiatives underway on all five streets will determine their future contribution to the city’s livability.

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Clockwise from bottom left:

Bloor Street: the Bloor Bike Lane Pilot Project brought a 56 per cent annual increase in ridership to the area and raised businesses sales along the pilot corridor.

King Street: the King Street Pilot Project that banned through-traffic on King Street between Jarvis and Bathurst streets has led to a 13 per cent increase in streetcar ridership without no impact on car travel times on adjacent streets.

Downtown Yonge Street:

Pedestrians represent 72 per cent of traffic in the area, while vehicles represent 28 per cent.

North Yonge Street: a proposal to reduce Yonge Street from six lanes to four between Sheppard and Finch avenues would provide a new mainstreet for the Willowdale community.

Eglinton Avenue: the Eglinton East LRT will spearhead massive redevelopment of the mostly

low-rise, low-density retail buildings that currently line the street.

ALL PHOTOS SOURCE: DOMINIC ALI, COURTESY OF RYERSON CITY BUILDING INSTITUTE



IMIT REFOCUS

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The city has provided over \$57-million in grants since the program began in 2008, and it has committed to a

further \$618-million to the 27 developments currently in the program. Council approved an additional two projects

this week under the former program.

“The grant goes back to the building owner, but the building owner... always assign it to the tenant or tenants,” says Williams. “So in fact the tenants get money back on the property taxes they pay.”

The new citywide community improvement plan replaces the former citywide CIP, South of Eastern CIP, and the Waterfront CIP. **Hemson Consulting** was retained to undertake the four-year review of the program. 🌱

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Bloor Street

The Bloor Street Bike Pilot Project has increased cycling safety and business sales along its corridor from Avenue Road to Shaw Street, where segregated bike lanes were installed in August 2016. The lanes, made permanent in November 2017, led to far fewer collisions and conflicts between road users. Studies for expanding the lanes along Bloor Street and connecting them to other cycling routes are expected to be completed 2019.

King Street

The King Street Pilot was launched to improve transit service through downtown. It has led to an increase in ridership and a decrease in travel time, especially at peak hours on the King streetcar. Despite concerns from local businesses, there has been no decrease in customers or sales. The pilot will finish by the end of the year at which point council will make a decision about the street's future.

Downtown Yonge Street

A vision has been advancing to turn led by The **Downtown Yonge BIA** and Ward 27 Toronto Centre-Rosedale counsellor **Kristyn Wong-Tam** are advocating the pedestalization of Yonge Street between Queen and College. Currently, pedestrians represent 72 per cent of traffic in the area. Downtown Yonge BIA executive director **Mark Garner** told *NRU* that he expects the first stages of the formal process to turn this vision into a reality would begin in 2019.

Yonge Street North

The planned reconstruction of Yonge Street north of Sheppard provides a rare opportunity to make major changes. A rebuilding at this scale only comes every 50 to 75 years. The staff recommendation is to turn Yonge Street from Sheppard to Finch into a mainstreet for the Willowdale neighbourhood. The six lanes of traffic would be reduced to four, and bike lanes, pedestrian infrastructure,

and greenery would be added. In March, council deferred its decision to 2019 to allow staff to further study the impacts of reduced lanes of traffic on bus service.

Eglinton Avenue East

The LRT being built along Eglinton Avenue East will lead the way for a redevelopment of The Golden Mile. Expected

to be completed in 2021, the LRT will be the first new rapid transit line in Scarborough in more than 30 years. The Golden Mile section stretches from Pharmacy Avenue to Birchmount Road, and is envisioned as a greenway with plants growing along the track. The area is mostly big box development and is ready for intensification. 🌱

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