

# TORONTO STAFF REPORT

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June 6, 2003

To: Planning and Transportation Committee  
Economic Development and Parks Committee

From: Commissioner of Urban Development Services  
Commissioner of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism

Subject: Planning and Future Development of the Village of Yorkville  
Toronto Centre-Rosedale, Ward 27

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to review the planning framework in place to protect the architectural and heritage fabric of Yorkville and to recommend a further report respecting additional safeguards.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

The Commissioner of Urban Development Services be requested to report to the Planning and Transportation Committee in March 2004, on the harmonization of the North Midtown Design Guidelines and the Bloor-Yorkville Urban Design Guidelines, as contained in the study prepared by Brook McIlroy Planning and Urban Design Consultants.

Comments:

1.0 Background

At its meeting of April 14, 15 and 16, 2003, City Council adopted a motion respecting the planning and future development of the Village of Yorkville directing that:

“the Commissioners of Urban Development Services and Economic Development Culture and Tourism be requested to report jointly to both the Planning and Transportation Committee and the Economic Development and Parks Committee at their meetings scheduled to be held on June 3, 2003, and June 9, 2003, respectively, on the planning framework in place to protect the future architectural, urban, and heritage fabric of Yorkville, and on the role that Yorkville plays in the economic and tourism development of the City and the impact that changes in the character of Yorkville may have on the area’s viability, and recommend which actions, if any, should be taken to safeguard the future of the Village of Yorkville;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Commissioner of Urban Development Services be requested to submit a report to the Planning and Transportation Committee for its meeting scheduled to be held on June 3, 2003, on the implementation of the Bloor-Yorkville Urban Design guidelines, as contained in the study prepared by Brook McIlroy Planning & Urban Design Consultants.”

## 2.0 The Bloor-Yorkville Area

The Bloor/Yorkville area generally corresponds with the Bloor/Yorkville Business Improvement Area (BIA). Its boundary extends to Church Street to the east, slightly beyond Avenue Road to the west, and is loosely aligned with Davenport Road and Scollard Street to the north, with an uneven boundary to the south, extending as far south to St. Mary’s Street.

The Bloor/Yorkville area is a key district within the City’s Downtown area. It holds an international reputation as a focus of high quality shopping, services, business, residences and hotels. Located at the cross-roads of the City’s subway system, and in close proximity to the City’s key cultural institutions, Yorkville is a destination for both residents and tourists of the City. For Toronto residents, the area has become a year-round destination for shopping, dining and entertainment. Bloor-Yorkville is also one of Toronto’s top tourist destinations.

## 3.0 Existing Planning Framework

### 3.1 Former City of Toronto Official Plan

The Official Plan of the former City of Toronto primarily designates the Bloor Yorkville area as Mixed Commercial-Residential Area. Within this designation, a range of residential and commercial uses are encouraged. The Plan also identifies the area as being within the North Midtown (Part II) Secondary Plan Area. Three "Areas of Special Identify" are included within the Bloor-Yorkville area; "Scollard/Hazelton", "Village of Yorkville" and "Yonge/Yorkville", the policies of which encourage development which is compatible with the existing built form and uses in the area and, where possible, the retention of existing clusters of house form buildings.

The North Midtown Area Plan (Part II -Section 19.34 of the Official Plan of the former City of Toronto) has been repealed concurrent with the Minister's approval of the new Toronto Official Plan. However, the relevant policies of the North Midtown Area Plan have been retained and incorporated in the new Plan as Site and Area Specific Policies.

### 3.2 Design Guidelines for North Midtown

The North Midtown Design Guidelines were adopted by City Council in May, 1983 and pertain to an area generally bounded by the Canadian Pacific Railway line and Rosedale Valley Road to the north, Bloor Street to the south; Mount Pleasant Road and Yonge Street to the east and Avenue Road to the west. The Bloor-Yorkville area is included in the area subject to the North Midtown Design Guidelines. The North Midtown Design Guidelines recently have been reviewed by staff and, similar to other area-specific design guidelines within the amalgamated City, will soon be recommended to City Council for adoption.

### 3.3 New Toronto Official Plan

At its meeting of November 26-28, 2002 City Council adopted the new Official Plan for the City of Toronto. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing approved the new plan, in part, with modifications. The Minister's decision has been appealed in its entirety. The Official Plan is now before the Ontario Municipal Board. No hearing date has been set.

The new Official Plan for the City of Toronto identifies the Bloor-Yorkville area within the "Downtown" and designates the area primarily "Mixed Use". Within this designation, a full range of mixed use opportunities are encouraged through intensification. While the Downtown and Mixed Use areas are primary areas for intensification, the policies of the new Plan direct that new development should: create a balance of land uses with the potential to reduce auto dependency and meet the needs of the community; provide additional employment and housing in the Downtown area; locate/mass new buildings to provide a transition between areas of different development intensity/scale (particularly to lower scale "Neighbourhoods" designations); locate/mass new buildings to minimize shadow impacts on "Neighbourhoods" designations in the spring/fall seasons; locate/mass new buildings to frame streets and parks with good proportion and maintain sunlight and comfortable wind conditions; provide attractive pedestrian environments; provide good site access/circulation; provide adequate parking; screen service areas from adjacent streets and residential uses; be compatible with the existing character of the area and, provide indoor/outdoor recreation space.

### 3.4 Existing Zoning

The Bloor-Yorkville area is subject to the City's general Zoning By-law No. 438-86, as amended which established various development standards respecting land use, height, builtform and building setback requirements. The majority of lands within the Bloor-Yorkville area are zoned Commercial Residential (CR) which permit a mix of commercial and residential uses.

### 3.5 Bloor Yorkville Urban Design Guidelines

While the North Midtown Design Guidelines apply to a large area, the Bloor-Yorkville Urban Design Guidelines apply to a specific area within North Midtown and as such provide detailed design guidelines for the Bloor-Yorkville area.

The Bloor-Yorkville Urban Design Guidelines were developed by the planning and urban design firm of Brooke-McIlroy, in association with the Yonge Bloor Bay Association (YBB), Greater Yorkville Residents' Association (GYRA) and the Avenue Bay Cottingham Residents' Association (ABC), collectively know as the Bloor Yorkville Community (BYC). Staff of Urban Development Services assisted with the development of the guidelines through participation in BYC urban design steering committee.

The Bloor-Yorkville Urban Design Guidelines focus on providing a desired urban structure including the public and private realms specifically for the Bloor/Yorkville area. It provides guidance to applicants and staff alike for revitalization of lands and a framework for development. The document provides guidance for achieving appropriate relationships between buildings and public realms including streets, open spaces and parks, suggests appropriate built form envelopes addressing such matters as height, massing setbacks and quality of design, and identifies opportunities to enhance, improve or add to the public realm including new public spaces, landmarks, streetscapes and gateways.

### 4.0 Existing Heritage Fabric and Protections

Following an intensive program of community consultation City Council, on August 1, 2002, adopted By-law No. 622-2002 establishing a Heritage Conservation District for a portion of the Yorkville Area generally north of Scollard Street, between Avenue Road, Davenport Road and Bay Street. This area maintains a consistent house-form heritage character. At the same meeting, Council endorsed a District Plan that includes guidelines for alterations, additions, demolitions and new construction in the designated area. The intent of the guidelines is to ensure that development in the District is in keeping with heritage character of the area. Five property owners within the District have appealed the By-law to the Ontario Municipal Board. A hearing date has not been established. As a result of the appeal, the By-law requires OMB approval. Once the By-law comes into force, alterations consistent with the guidelines may be approved by City staff, while alterations contrary to the guidelines or proposals for demolition require Council approval.

Beyond the Heritage Conservation District, other properties within the Yorkville area have heritage protection either as properties listed in the City's Inventory of Heritage Properties, or as properties designated under the Ontario Heritage Act. There are three designated properties – the Church of the Redeemer (162 Bloor Street West), the University Theatre (100 Bloor Street West) and the Mount Sinai Hospital (100 Yorkville Aveune). There are twenty-four listed properties that include the Yorkville Library and Firehall and groups of buildings on:

- the south side of Yorkville Avenue, west of Bellair Street;
- the north side of Scollard Street, east of Bay Street; and
- the west side of Yonge Street, south of Yorkville Avenue.

The City has been advised by the Community History Project that there are 28 additional properties in the Yorkville area that may merit inclusion in the City's Inventory of Heritage Properties. In a report to the Toronto Preservation Board at its meeting held on January 9, 2003, staff requested the assistance of the Community History Project and the Community Preservation Panel to do the research these properties. This research would assist in determining whether the requested properties meet the criteria for inclusion in the City's Inventory. The Community History Project requested that ten additional properties on the north side of Yorkville Avenue, west of Hazelton Avenue, be included in the Inventory. City staff previously evaluated these properties and advised that they do not merit inclusion in the Inventory.

## 5.0 Business Improvement Area

Commercial activity in the Bloor-Yorkville area has undergone a number of transformations over the years. Most recently the area has evolved from a hippie hangout where some of Canada's most famous musical talent was nurtured to one of the City's most fashionable shopping districts.

Today the area is home to more than 700 shops, occupying over 1 million square feet of retail space and housing many of the City's most exclusive stores. The area also contains many art galleries, museums, hotels and restaurants. The area is also plays host to a number of festivals and events including the Toronto International Film Festival.

The area is one of Toronto's top tourist destinations. Over 500,000 people a year stay in the areas seven hotels making it the second largest hotel node in the City. The Royal Ontario Museum and the Gardiner Museum of Art attract hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.

In response to the tremendous commercial, retail and tourist growth, the Bloor-Yorkville Business Improvement Area (BIA) was created in 1985. The BIA's role is to develop, implement, and maintain streetscape beautification and promotional programs with a view to increasing business revenue. The Bloor-Yorkville BIA spends over \$1,000,000 per year in promoting and beautifying their area. Their most recent, and perhaps most ambitious, initiative is a \$30 million streetscape enhancement of Bloor Street which is currently being reviewed by the BIA and City staff.

Bloor-Yorkville is not a homogeneous shopping district but rather offers a variety of shopping experiences including small boutiques and restaurants in house form buildings along Yorkville Avenue, Scollard Street and Hazelton Avenue and high-end chain stores in modern mixed-use buildings or retail malls along Bay Street, Yonge Street, Bloor Street and Avenue Road. The contrast in experiences is a key component of the appeal of the Bloor-Yorkville BIA and a factor that distinguishes the shopping experience in Bloor-Yorkville from that experienced in other areas.

New development offers opportunities for the provision of modern retail space, streetscape improvements, and in cases of new residential development, additional shoppers. However, it is important in considering new development proposals that the City preserve the village-like setting and Victorian character where it is logical to do so. New developments should be of high architectural quality, fit with the built form and architectural context of the area, and contribute to the overall shopping experience.

In order to ensure that this happens, the Bloor-Yorkville BIA commissioned a study of the area, which has led to a comprehensive set of design guidelines to be used when evaluating new development applications. The Bloor-Yorkville Design Guidelines and Development Framework Manual offer clear, concise and practical advice on how to accommodate new development in a manner that safeguards the architectural and historical qualities that make Bloor-Yorkville a successful shopping and tourist destination.

## 6.0 Development Opportunity Issues

There have been several recent development projects within the Bloor-Yorkville Area, predominantly mixed commercial/residential buildings located on Bay and Bloor Streets and Avenue Road. These projects include the recently constructed residential condominiums at 38 Avenue Road (the Prince Arthur); 2 Bloor Street East (8 Park Road); 1250 Bay Street (The Maxis); 110 Charles Street; and residential buildings under construction at 1252 Bay Street (Minto-BYG); 85 Bloor Street East; 85 Bloor Street East; 817 Yonge Street and 100 Bloor Street (10 Bellair Street); In addition, Council has approved residential development for 100 Yorkville Avenue (Mount Sinai); 837 Yonge Street (Canadian Tire); 76-80 St. Charles Street; 18 Yorkville Avenue (Great Gulf); 1280 Bay Street (Provo Developments) and 1 St Thomas. Further, applications have been received for development proposals for 8-10 Scollard Street; 116-134 Yorkville Avenue (York Row); 35 Balmuto Street (Uptown Theatre) and 1 Bloor Street East (Bloor and Yonge).

## 7.0 Conclusion: Safeguarding the Future of the Bloor-Yorkville Area

The existing planning, urban design and heritage controls provide appropriate and adequate policies to safeguard the future of this area. However, it would be desirable to review the existing and in-force North Midtown Design Guidelines and the recently completed Bloor-Yorkville Urban Design Guidelines and to recommend a single document for adoption by City Council as a companion document to the Official Plan. Therefore, we have recommended that Planning staff be directed to undertake this review and to report back to the Planning and Transportation Committee early in the new term of City Council.

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