

Living Yonge



Robert
Fabian

in support of the
**North
Downtown
Yonge
Street
Planning
Framework**

LIVING YONGE MOTIVATION

Many of us carry in our hearts and minds the memory of a Yonge Street that no longer exists. We remember walking down the street. We remember the special places that were important to us. We remember the excitement. We remember the vitality. But times change. Fashions change. There are new retail winners, and losers. The current reality of downtown Yonge Street is not so inspiring.

There are some positive signs. Old theaters have been reborn. Dundas Square at the north end of The Eaton Centre is a social success. Ryerson University has built an award winning Student Learning Centre that is an important new presence on Yonge Street. There are ambitious existing and planned towers at Gerrard and Yonge. But Yonge Street north of College is still an open question.

Yes, there are remaining blocks of 19th century retail buildings north of College. Yes, there are a few distinguished heritage buildings north of College, prominent among them being the Odd Fellows Hall, the Masonic Temple and the old remaining fire hall clock tower. But when the subway cut down the east side of Yonge Street, entire blocks were demolished with completely undistinguished replacements taking their place.

For decades, Yonge Street between College and Bloor languished. It was ignored in planning documents. There was virtually no developer interest. In the 21st century all of this began to change. The established neighbourhoods to the west, north and east became attractive as the locations for new condo towers. And then in the second decade, Yonge Street became an attractive location for proposed new condo towers.

There was energy building along the street. If this commercial energy could be harnessed, a fitting replacement for the Yonge Street of memory might develop. A planning framework was developed and approved. A Heritage Conservation District study is nearing completion. But there's a challenge at the Ontario Municipal Board.

What should be said in support of the city's plans for this section of Yonge Street? We propose to borrow an idea from London's Roads Task Force. They judge the degree to which each of their streets is a place for living and a place for moving. The Yonge Street of memory was clearly a place for living. Yes, cars and trucks went up and down the street, but the focus of the street was its living people, its pedestrians.

The focus on living should return. Yonge Street should again be a place that is mostly about living and only secondarily about moving. The implications are multiple.

Pedestrians walk at 5 km/hr; cars drive at 60 km/hr. The scale of everything from street-wall details to signage should be designed to meet the needs of the 5 km/hr pedestrian. Human scale should be prominent in everything that is allowed along Yonge Street.

Yonge Street between College and Bloor can be rebuilt to respect our 19th century heritage. The street and the street-wall can be focused on meeting the needs of the 5 km/hr pedestrian. We can encourage development of public and private Third Places where people informally interact in multiple and positive ways.

The street is due to be re-engineered in the near future. We can re-balance our use of the public realm. Some moving will remain, if nothing else to support what should be thriving street-level retail. But more of that precious space in the public realm should be for the use of 5 km/hr pedestrians.

There is a tantalizing prospect of a Great Yonge Street, running from the successful Dundas Square to the commercial and public success that will be the Yorkville of tomorrow. The commercial energy is there to make it happen. We owe it to ourselves and our successors to make sure that it happens. This paper is offered in support of that vision.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Yonge Street is arguably the most storied street in Ontario. It was the first street in the province. It can be described as the longest street in the world. It defines the centre of Toronto, being the dividing line between West and East. But for many years it was a “white zone” in planning documents. No plans were developed for the key portion of Yonge between College and Bloor. Then the development industry discovered the attractiveness of condos located in that “white zone”, i.e. in the stretch of Yonge Street between College and Bloor.

The “white zone” is special. It contains entire blocks of 19th century retail buildings. It contains the distinctive Odd Fellows hall, the old imposing Masonic Temple and the oldest remaining fire hall clock tower in Toronto. The special character of this stretch of Yonge Street and the thriving neighbourhoods to the west, east and north are some of the reasons why it's commercially attractive to erect condo towers on or near the street. The challenge is that unrestricted new developments could destroy key aspects of that special character, and make it practically impossible to revitalize Yonge Street and make it again a special place for Torontonians and visitors alike.

There is an alternative. Properly guided new development can and should respect history and encourage development of the street as a place for living as well as for moving. “Living Yonge” follows in the footsteps of “Yonge Love”, a recent initiative of the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area. The planning “white zone” has changed. There is now a North Downtown Yonge Street Planning Framework covering that stretch of the street. It has been translated into an Official Plan Amendment. The amendment has been challenged at the Ontario Municipal Board.

This paper, Living Yonge, builds support for key sections of the Official Plan Amendment and suggests ways in which a Living Yonge can develop into a Great Yonge Street. That Great Yonge Street should be a place that respectfully echoes the rich history of the street and provides the public and private places that support and enrich living, ... for the growing body of local residents and for all of those pedestrians who come from near and far to participate in our Great Yonge Street.

2. METHODOLOGY

"Our everyday life-world consists of ... people, of animals, of flowers, trees and forests, of stone, earth, wood and water, of towns, streets and houses, doors, windows and furniture. And it consists of sun, moon and stars, of drifting clouds, of night and day and changing seasons. But it also comprises more intangible phenomena such as feelings. ... Everything else, such as atoms and molecules, numbers and all kinds of "data" are abstractions or tools which are constructed to serve other purposes than those of everyday life. Today it is common to mistake the tools for reality."

- Christian Norberg-Schulz [NOR1976]

A Yonge Street planning argument built on previous planning cases would be standing on a weak foundation. Young Street is different from virtually any other street in Ontario. It was the first street in Upper Canada. It can lay claim to being the longest street in the world. It has entire blocks of 19th century fine-grained retail buildings remaining between College and Bloor. It connects the established and still rapidly growing neighbourhoods to the east, the west and the north. It is the downtown street of memory for virtually everyone who has a history of living in Toronto. No other street in Ontario has such a rich past, varied present, or future potential.

With very limited directly relevant planning cases that can be reasonably applied to Yonge Street, the approach to planning must be driven back to planning fundamentals. Bill Hillier, a distinguished English urban theorist, has written an insightful comparison of what he calls the social physics and the phenomenology approaches to understanding urban reality [HIL2005]. Social physics focuses on built forms at both the micro and macro levels. It seeks to measure and quantify everything of importance. This quantifiable physical base is used to predict human behavior, and then to understand what happens to urban reality if the numbers are changed. Phenomenology on the other hand starts with lived experience and attempts to understand the physical context - the place and the connections - that can give rise to different kinds of lived experience.

Hillier argues that the space syntax approach (see [HIL2007]) which he helped to invent is a way to bridge the gap between these two approaches. With space syntax, the network is the focus, with attention paid to both the connections and the nature of those connections. There's considerable merit in what he has to say, but it primarily applies at the network level, focusing on the spacial network within an area and between other areas both near and far. In the case of Yonge Street between College and Bloor, the space syntax lens is too wide, certainly too wide for planning rules that are to be applied within that short stretch of one urban street. Space syntax would be better applied at the level of a planning approach being followed by TOcore, a current city initiative to develop an overall plan for Toronto's downtown core [TOC2015].

There is little option but to take a fundamentally phenomenological approach. Start with lived experience, now and projected under possible planning requirements. David Seamon, a Professor in the School of Architecture at the University of Kansas, makes the case for this approach in his newsletter and in many of his publications (see [SEA1990] and [SEA2000]). It must come down to the (projected) lived experience under different possible planning regimes. It's not the quantified social physics, but it doesn't fall into the trap of assuming that only a quantified picture of reality can be true. What's true and what's important will be our human experience with the future we allow or encourage to be developed.

Ernest Sternberg, a professor with the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning in the University of Buffalo, developed an interesting and useful “Integrative Theory of Urban Design”. His article [STE2000] with that title makes a number of relevant points. He observes that the market can be used to reasonably regulate anything that can be treated as a commodity. The challenge in urban design (and urban planning) is that there are aspects of the city and of living in the city that cannot be reasonably treated as commodities. He asserts that “urban design has as its special concern the non-commodifiability of the human experience of the city.” That's something of a mouthful, but does capture an essential aspect of urban design (and urban planning).

Sternberg goes on to identify four key aspects of the lived urban experience:

- Urban Form, pointing to the work of Camillo Sitte (see [COL1986]),
- Legibility, pointing to the work of Kevin Lynch (see [LYN1981]),
- Vitality, pointing to the work of Jane Jacobs (see [JAC1961]) &
- Meaning, pointing to the work of Christian Norberg-Schulz (see [NOR1979])

In each of these aspects of lived urban experience, the urbanist's concern necessarily extends beyond any single property line. The approach is not explicitly phenomenological, but his four key aspects do provide a way to productively guide our thinking about the current and possible lived urban experience.

3. PLANNING CONTEXT

In Ontario there is a supreme land use planning oversight body, the Ontario Municipal Board. Any land use planning matter decided by a local body can be appealed to the OMB. The OMB can overrule any local land use planning decision, and can install whatever land use planning rules that it deems fit and proper. In coming to its decisions, the OMB follows a quasi-legal process in which “facts”, “cases” and the judgments of recognized “experts” are given primary weight. It practically follows the rules of casuistry (see [JON1988]), though it does not so describe its procedures.

In the case of Yonge Street between College and Bloor, the city of Toronto has passed Official Plan Amendment 183 (which is a translation into Official Plan terms of the North Downtown Yonge Street Planning Framework). Both the building industry trade association (BILD) and a baker's dozen of developers have challenged OPA 183 before the OMB. The challenge has been divided into two phases. Phase I will consider those matters in OPA 183 which have not been mutually accepted and which do not have to do directly with Yonge Street. Phase II will consider the matters in OPA 183 having to do with Yonge Street. It is anticipated that by the time Phase II is considered (in the second half of 2016) there will be an Historic Yonge Heritage Conservation District in place and also likely to be challenged by BILD and some of the same baker's dozen of developers who are challenging OPA 183. It would be reasonable to expect that Phase II would elect to consider a consolidated OPA 183, specifically Section 5.3, and Historic Yonge HCD.

Non-experts however concerned or impacted have but little direct opportunity to influence decisions by the OMB. This is potentially quite unfortunate. OPA 183 and the expected Historic Yonge HCD will have a profound impact on the social fabric on and adjacent to Yonge Street. But “social fabric” while evidently important does not fall within the domain of any of the normally recognized “experts” whose views the OMB normally credits. This paper is an effort to build a defensible and documented “social fabric” argument in favor of the Yonge Street portions of OP 183 and of what is expected to be in an Historic Yonge HCD.

4. LIVING & MOVING

The Lord Mayor of London, working with Transport for London, established a Roads Task Force in 2012. The Roads Task Force report of April 2015 [RTF2015] introduced an important two-dimensional view of London roads. They recognized that every road has a role to play as a place for living and as a way to move about within the city. *Living* and *moving* are the two key dimensions against which to assess a road and its design.

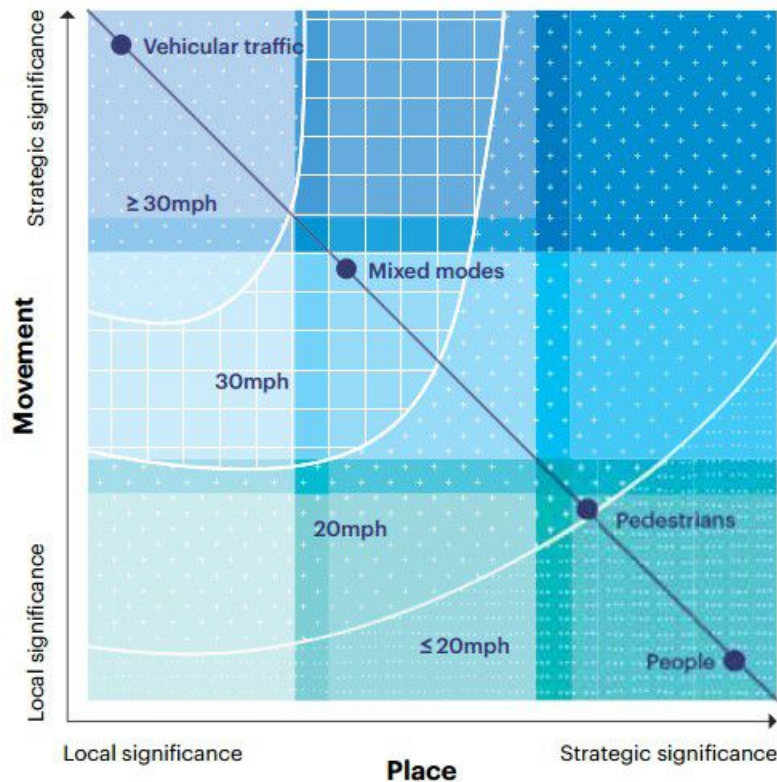
Freeways are almost only about moving. Pedestrian ways are almost only about living. But most roads have a dual role to play, they must provide some support for living and some support for moving. The challenge is to identify the mix of living and moving that is appropriate for each specific road. London is well on the way towards identifying the mix that should characterize its roads, with over 80% of its roads located within one of the nine cells of the following chart (from [RTF2015]):



The names given to the nine cells would need to be modified were this framework to be widely applied within Toronto. In this paper, we are primarily concerned here about Yonge Street between College and Bloor. On the face of it, we argue that Yonge Street is something more than a local street and less than

an arterial road. In a similar way, we argue that Yonge Street is a place of strategic significance. Yonge Street falls somewhere in the middle of the movement axis and sharply to the right of the place axis. Using the London labels, Yonge Street should be viewed as a City Street.

Granting that characterization, the question becomes one of the features which should be applied to that stretch of Yonge Street. As one small example of what could be inferred, London developed desirable speed limits for the roads in the nine cells (from [RTF2015]):



This is in line with the distinction drawn by the renowned urban planner Jan Gehl (see [GEH2010]). He insightfully distinguishes between a 5 km/hr pedestrian street intended as a place for living and a 60 kh/hr road that is really only designed for moving (cars and trucks). This is in line with the Roads Task Force. Adjusting for somewhat different North American expectations, this would argue for a speed limit on Yonge Street of no more than 30 km/hr. Traffic would still flow along Yonge Street, but everyone would be (strongly) encouraged to recognize that living is more important than moving, at least along the stretch of Yonge Street between College and Bloor.

Note that no effort has been made here to characterize other sections of Yonge Street. The general approach developed by the Roads Task Force would seem a promising way to characterize urban streets, and in particular the streets of Toronto. Though promising, any such broader use of the

framework is well outside the scope of this paper. We do, however, in a concluding section of this paper comment on possible changes to the use of the public realm along this stretch of Yonge Street. Changes can be expected and should be encouraged to address both congestion and the growing use of the Yonge Street for living. Important though such changes could be, they would fall outside the scope of OPA 183, or indeed of any traditional planning framework.

4.1. Road Design

The design philosophy behind urban roads has shifted dramatically in the last 20 years. In the days of almost unthinking car ascendancy, roads were to have lanes that were as wide as possible with the largest possible clear zone on each side of the road. This was taken to be self-evidently the way to the safest road. Wide lanes would reduce the chance of side impact collisions. Wide clear zones would reduce the chance of collision with a stationary object if the driver, for whatever reason, went off the road.

What was ignored was the impact of road design on driver behavior. There is now a growing body of evidence (see [DUN2005] and [STE2015] for some of that evidence) that in North America narrow lanes with trees at the street edge lead to the safest roads - fewer accidents and much fewer fatal accidents. There is a minor cost in terms slightly increased travel time for those in automobiles and trucks (which avoid accidents), but speed of driving through a dense urban area should never have been a primary concern.

This new view of road safety dovetails nicely with London's recognition that urban roads are both for living and for moving. Paying more attention to the requirements for living in the public realm that contains an urban road will have the positive side effect of improving the safety of those using the road for moving.

4.2. Human Scale

“For decades the human dimension has been an overlooked and haphazardly addressed urban planning topic, while many other issues, such as accommodating the rocketing rise in car traffic, have come more strongly into focus. In addition, dominant planning ideologies – modernism in particular – have specifically put a low priority on public space, pedestrianism and the role of city space as a meeting place for urban dwelling.”

- Jan Gehl, *Cities for Living* [GEH2010]

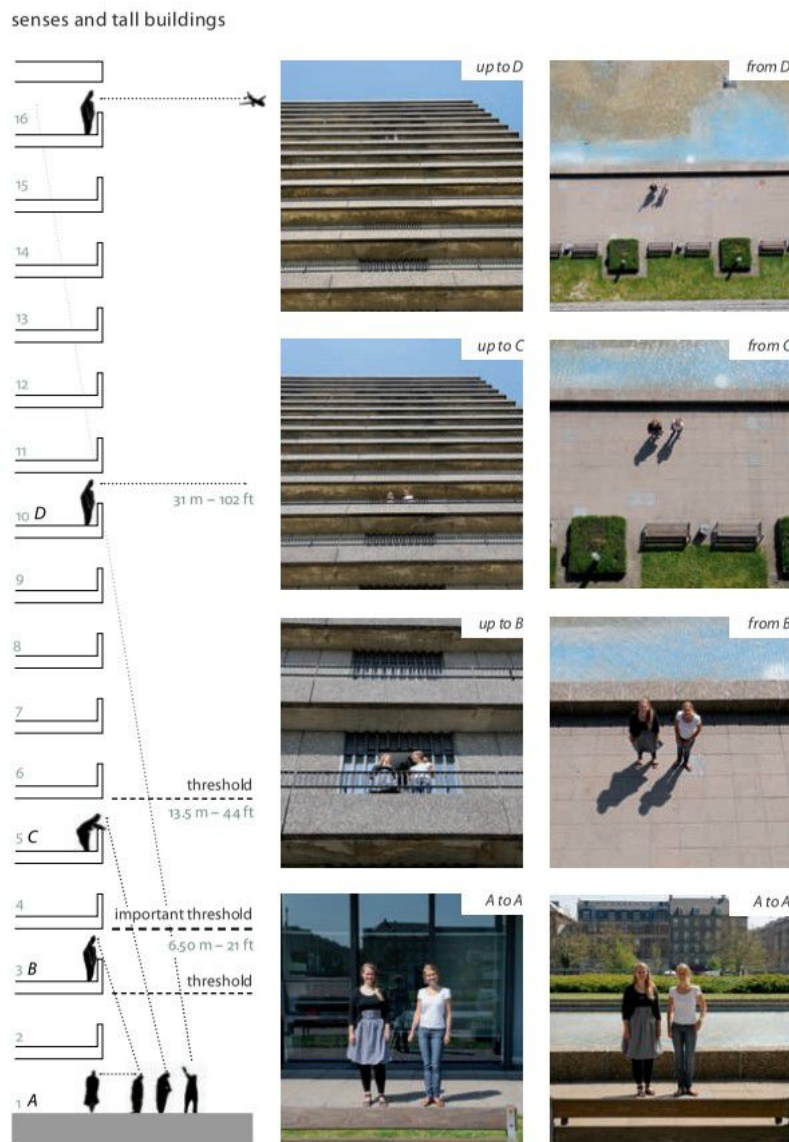
We may stand in awe of a monumental edifice. Appreciation happens, if at all, at a distance. There may be appreciation for the art, but the scale makes it almost impossible to connect in a human way with the monumental. The monumental rarely provides a place for living. Living requires human interactions. But no meaningful visual human connection happens at a distance. Gehl tellingly illustrates [GEH2010] this by showing what can be seen at 0.5 meters, 2 meters, 5 meters, 7.5 meters, 10 meters, ... and beyond.

social field of vision



At .5 meters, human interaction is distinctly personal. People separated by 2 meters can carry on a comfortable conversation. At 5 meters and somewhat above, people can talk, but it's not nearly as comfortable – it's not really a conversation distance. Beyond something like 10 meters, a lecture may be possible, or a performance in a theater, but human conversation is quite difficult. And beyond 20 meters, a shout or hand signal may be possible, but that's about the only practical human interaction.

Projected upwards, Gehl illustrates possible human connections at a building's edge [GEH2010]. At 6 to 8 meters up, it's possible for people to talk, albeit not to carry on a comfortable conversation. But the human connection grows thin at something like 14 meters and up – conversation isn't practical (and necks would get quite stiff).



The implications for street-wall definition are clear. There is a natural human connection up to

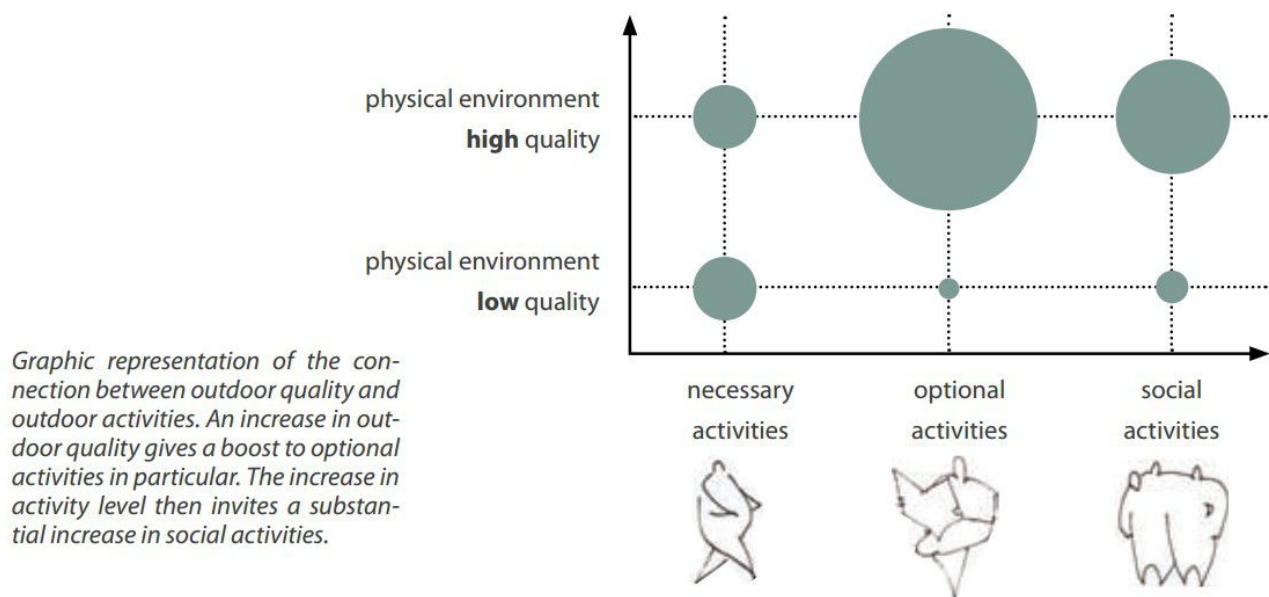
something like 14 meters, which would be the natural height of a 4 storey building. It's all about the human connection. A street for living will be a street for human connections. Such a street will have a human scale street-wall, it will rise no more than 4 storeys.

Toronto has a widely applied 18 meter as-of-right height at the lot line for new or replacement buildings. Ken Greenberg explains in *Walking Home* [GEN2011] the logic behind that rule. It was expected that virtually all new downtown buildings would want to rise more than 18 meters. Setting 18 meters as the as-of-right height practically ensured that all new building proposals would be subject to planning review. One somewhat unfortunate vestige of that as-of-right is that OPA 183 now talks about “18 meters or 4 storeys”, when it should really be talking about “14 meters or 4 storeys”. Unfortunately, the time isn't right to push for a change.

5. THIRD PLACES

We need more than a private place to live and a private place to work. We need places where we can informally interact with other human beings. The front yards of the archetypal small town played that role as did the front steps of older dense urban tenements. But we no longer build such places into our urban environment. The coffee shop, the local restaurant or bar are alternative informal meeting places. Public spaces if properly designed can also be such alternative informal meeting places. Toronto needs to pay careful attention to providing appropriate, human-scale third places, especially along such a popular living place as Yonge Street.

Jan Gehl offers a compelling argument about the human importance of such informal-interaction places. Gehl focuses on the nature and importance of the right kind of publicly accessible space. His recent book [GEH2010] summarizes it with the following chart:



Ray Oldenburg, a pioneering urban sociologist, identified the importance of Third Places for a healthy urban social fabric (see [OLD1981]). These are the “cafes, coffee shops, restaurants, bars, hair salons, and other hangouts at the heart of a community.” This fits well with Gehl's observations about the importance of encouraging what he calls “optional activities”. When engaged in such activities, we are free to engage or withdraw from encounters with others. One of the very serious deficiencies of too much of the modern urban landscape is that we have far too few places where the initial contact with others is comfortable. The archetypal condo tower has hundreds of private residential spaces and considerable public space, but far too few intermediate places where non-threatening engagement with others comes naturally.

As Yonge Street is being redeveloped, we owe to ourselves and to our future, to pay attention to the public-private spaces that Oldenburg called Third Places and that Gehl characterized as ideal for optional, discretionary activities. If we are to have the option to break free of the imposed anonymity of much of the modern urban landscape, we critically need such in-between spaces. New public places should be encouraged. New public use of private spaces should be encouraged. New features of our shared space should encourage in-between interaction. And we should support the inclusion of Third Place retail establishments in the Yonge Street that is to emerge.

6. LIVED HERITAGE

Yonge Street between College and Bloor could and should be special. It has some of the few remaining 19th century blocks of retail buildings in Toronto. Preserving a sense of the historical lived experience represented by those 19th century blocks is one important way we can remember our past. This stretch of Yonge Street should have a clear and clearly recognized *genius loci*. This *genius loci* or spirit of place should speak to those on the street about the street's history and provide a “place” of living that is attractive and meaningful to the wide range of people using the street.

Norberg-Schulz, the distinguished Scandinavian architect, observes that the Romans invented the idea of a *genius loci* (see [NOR1979]). He writes, “ancient man experienced his environment as consisting of definite characters. In the past, survival depended on a “good” relationship to the place in a physical as well as a psychic sense.” There is ample evidence that “place” still matters, even in our increasingly virtual world. We and our valued communities are grounded in places of importance. It has been widely noted that we shape our built environment only to be shaped, in turn, by that physical presence which we created. Being positively grounded is one of the important ways in which we and our communities are shaped in healthy directions.

If Yonge Street is to have a recognized *genius loci*, there is no doubt that the remaining 19th century retail buildings that fill entire blocks (between College and Bloor) should be an important element in that spirit of place. We should demand that, to the extent practical, the remaining 19th century retail blocks remain a featured presence along the street. But providing a lived heritage place along the street is more than just preserving the external skeleton of the remaining 19th century buildings. It's of critical importance that the social and commercial reality along the street support living and provide an appropriate echo and reflection of the street's 19th century commercial history.

Fine grained, and fine doored (to coin a phrase), street reality should be encouraged. The number of stores (store fronts) on the street and the number of doors onto the street should not be significantly reduced by any new development. We may not have the tools under the Planning Act to control the nature of the retail that is allowed along the street, but a building's physical connections to the street could be controlled. Beyond that, developers should be encourage to find ways to provide homes for new, innovative and different retail establishments, and especially for Third Places.

Something positive would happen were we allowed to demand the preservation, in number and kind, of rental retail units along the street. We already do just that for rental residential units. Developers should be encouraged to bring forward proposals which also preserved, in number and kind, rental retail units. This might reasonably be accomplished by offering “equivalent” rental retail units on the side streets off Yonge or along the laneways that parallel Yonge. We may not have the tools to demand such

replacement retail rental units, but it should be possible to relax the application of some of the other rules for those developers which promise retail rental unit replacement.

The primary goal in this should be a positive lived street-level experience. Some creativity will clearly be required – today's retail is radically different from 19th century urban street retail. We are able to sell different things and in different ways. The items that can be successfully offered for sale in street level retail establishments are undergoing rapid change. But there will be thousands of new local residential units brought on-stream in the near future. And these new residential units will not all be high-end. Most of these thousands of new residential units will be mid-priced, at least mid-priced for the downtown Toronto market. Creative retail will find ways to deliver valued goods and services to this growing market if there are commercially viable rental retail units in those new condo towers.

The opportunity is enticing. With the will and the driving force of a hot downtown residential market, we should be able to create a great lived experience along the stretch of Yonge Street between College and Bloor. The *genius loci* should be vibrant, engaging and take appropriate advantage of the remaining 19th century retail history of the street. It must be a new *genius loci*, one that is fit for the time and place, but there is every reason to aspire for a real lived heritage experience that can underlie a Great Yonge Street (see [JAC1993] for a discussion of Great Streets).

7. STREET WALL

The street wall is critical to determining the pedestrian lived experience. To engage the pedestrian the street wall needs to be at a human scale. Elsewhere in this paper we sketched the human scale developed by Jan Gehl – the street wall should be no more than 14 meters high (or 4 storeys). That should not be a problem on Yonge Street – any developments that are respectful of the many 19th century heritage buildings found on the street will necessarily limit street wall height to a maximum of 4 storeys.

It's not just a question of no single new building defining (their part) of a street wall as no more than 4 storeys. The street wall along entire blocks needs to be consistent and harmonious. Consistent height is important, but it's only one of the necessary important features. The pedestrian's eye should be drawn along the street by both the variety found up ahead and by the fine details within the immediate local field of view. Variety can be supported, even encouraged, by a requirement that the number of retail doors should not be reduced.

In line with a concern for the pedestrian lived experience along the street, signage should be at the pedestrian scale, and not designed for the motorist who would like to speed by at 60 km/hr (or greater). Walking by at 5 km/hr, fine signage details naturally reveal themselves. The actual signage should be designed with the 5 km/hr viewer in mind. Too often it seems that national brands can have a national signage policy designed for 60 km/hr viewing, and apply that policy even where it is singularly inappropriate.

This concern for street wall should not be confined to only an heritage facade plastered on the face of massive, new, tall buildings. The street wall needs to have its own existence. All towers need to set back a significant distance from the line defining that street wall. The design goal of a recognizable human scale street-wall is clear. It happens that the 75° angular plane requirement in OPA 183 goes some distance towards “encouraging” any new towers to set back a reasonable distance from the lower street wall. Each additional meter a tower sets back from the street wall it's allowed to go up an additional 4 meters. The chance that new towers will define an inhuman scale secondary street-wall is significantly reduced.

8. RETAIL

Retail on Yonge Street between College and Bloor today is a disorganized hodgepodge of stores, too many of which are short-term opportunistic tenants of the space they happen to occupy. Yonge Street is not a *pedestrian retail destination*. In contrast, customers go to Bloor Street and the adjacent Yorkville for a distinctive higher end retail experience. The granite sidewalks along Bloor provide an appropriate context for the high-end international brands found along the street. That's a recognizable pedestrian retail destination.

In a similar way, the managed retail experience at The Eaton Centre south of College on Yonge is another pedestrian retail destination. It's not the high-end retail experience of Bloor and Yorkville, but it does offer an attractive 21st century alternative to the old-fashioned department store. The old Eaton's department stores may be out of business, but The Eaton Centre continues to offer the all-in-one-place convenience of the old department store, plus the vitality and engaging experience of a constantly changing array of retail tenants.

There are other pedestrian retail destinations scattered throughout Toronto, from Kensington Market, to Bloor West Village, to the Danforth. The challenge for Yonge Street retail is to identify and deliver the features expected in a pedestrian retail destination. Clearly, an important part of what should be provided are “Third Places”, ones that serve a distinctive mix of today's and tomorrow's customers. Something promising seems to be happening around electronic gaming. Not only are there retail outlets that offer a mix of games for sale, but there are also a few gaming lounges available above grade.

In all of this, it may be important to offer the kind of management services typically provided to tenants of a shopping mall. The retail experience needs to be guided and directed towards a recognized pedestrian retail destination, a retail *genius loci* if you will. There are some basic physical design constraints that should be met. Keeping retail fine-grained can contribute in a number of positive ways. Fine-grained retail presents the pedestrian with a stimulating and engaging visual experience. It encourages and supports more innovative retail experiments. There can and should be a place for the urban version of big box stores, but not at grade along Yonge Street.

Preserving the number of retail doors on the street is one possible step that could be taken. The increasing building owner concentration on Yonge Street may open an interesting “retail management” opportunity. If the retail experience on Yonge Street improves this will be to the benefit of both retail establishments on the street and to the benefit of those who would use Yonge Street as a place for informal, semi-public contact with others. With a now drastically reduced number of building owners, a coordinated approach may be possible.

It's even possible to imagine something like an integrated Living Yonge retail smart phone app. Walk along Yonge Street and the app would tell the pedestrian what's available in the immediate area, including any very local “specials” that happen to be on offer. Such an app could go some distance towards improving the retail attractiveness of stores located on side streets and along lanes. It wouldn't be the closely managed retail experience of a shopping mall, but might just add the little extra that turns Yonge Street into an attractive, vibrant and prosperous pedestrian retail destination.

Yonge Street is today some distance from an attractive, vibrant and prosperous pedestrian retail destination, but there are enough promising prospects that it's not beyond the wit of women and men to imagine and then realize that kind of retail future of Yonge between College and Bloor. Vibrant retail is one necessary element in a Yonge Street that works as a place for living.

9. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has developed “social fabric” arguments in favor of virtually all parts of Section 5.3 of OPA 183, i.e. those portions of OPA 183 having to do directly with Yonge Street. In what follows, Section 5.3 (drawn directly from OPA 183) is notated with the arguments presented above in favor of each point, and sometimes even stronger versions of the points are argued.

Following the defense of Section 5.3 there are additional remarks about some of the other ways in which Yonge Street could be made more appropriate for living. These remarks go beyond the scope of a planning framework (which is primarily concerned with built forms); they include comments about the re-balanced use of the public realm of the street.

This section concludes with an expression of a fervent hope that Living Yonge will become the Great Yonge Street, from Dundas Square to Yorkville.

9.1 Section 5.3 of OPA 183

5.3.1 Create a consistent street wall along Yonge Street to a maximum height of 18 metres or 4 storeys.

Support: The Human Scale argument presented above justifies a 14 meter or 4 storey high street-wall. Given the as-of-right to 18 meters, the “18” may be justified by reference to established cases, but should really be reduced, in practice, to 14 meters along Yonge Street.

5.3.2 Require store frontage widths at grade along Yonge Street to be consistent with the average width of at grade retail that is currently found within 2 blocks to the north and south of a given site along either side of Yonge Street in the North Downtown Yonge Area.

Support: The Retail section above justifies retention of the fine-grained character of retail along Yonge Street. A modest improvement in this point would be to also require the same number of retail doors onto the street so as to be consistent with the average number of doors onto the street found within 2 blocks to the north and south of a given site. A more radical improvement would require the retention of equivalent rental retail units in any replacement building, perhaps taking advantage of retail opportunities on side streets or laneways.

5.3.3 Provide building setbacks to secure a sidewalk zone (measured curb to building face) at least 6 metres wide, or greater where established by the existing context or at corners, transit nodes, PATH access points, or other locations with significant pedestrian use. The sidewalk zone may be entirely public property or a combination of public and private property.

Support: The density of pedestrian traffic along Yonge Street already exceeds what could be comfortably tolerated on a street with an important living place role. Providing additional space

for pedestrians is important if Yonge Street is to meet its obligations to provide a place for living. Ideally, the space for pedestrians especially in warmer weather would be expanded by making use of more private and more public realm land.

5.3.4 Where commercial uses are planned at grade, provide building setbacks to secure a sidewalk zone on private property to support adequate space for cafe patios, outdoor displays and other marketing activities.

Support: This can be viewed as a Third Place argument. It needs to be appropriately balanced against the value of a recognizable, human scale street-wall. But commercial Third Places can be important to the social fabric of the street and of the adjacent communities. Patios and outdoor merchant display areas can contribute in important ways to making attractive Third Places, but should not destroy a clear, recognizable street-wall.

5.3.5 As the linear park system to the east of Yonge Street between Charles Street East and Dundonald Street is utilized by the community during all hours of the day, require all development and redevelopment within or immediately adjacent to the Yonge Street Character Area to demonstrate as part of the development approval process that best efforts have been made to not cast any new net shadow on these linear parks during the day for all seasons of the year.

Support: The importance of sun and sky view has already been argued (for a more detailed argument, see [BOU2008], Mohamed Boubekri's *Daylighting, Architecture and Health*). Here it suffices to point out that the linear parks represent a significant portion of the lands used for parks on the east side of Yonge Street. The population is growing. The land dedicated to park use has not expanded in a commensurate way. The remaining park lands will see increased use. Protecting sun and sky view will protect the social value of those parks.

5.3.6 Require a minimum setback of 20 metres from the Yonge Street frontage property line to the tower portion of any tall building development where heritage properties are present on site and a minimum setback of 10 metres from the Yonge Street frontage property line to the tower portion of any tall building development where there is no on-site heritage.

Support: The 10 meter setback is really an argument in favor of a lived street-wall that is to human scale. Given the 75° angular plan rule in 5.3.9, the 10 meter rule need not be an absolute, but must always be large enough to never challenge the experience of the visible lower scale street-wall. The 20 meter rule for heritage sites is really an argument that heritage properties should be given enough “breathing room” that they can be experienced in ways that are respectful of the lived heritage experience.

5.3.7 Require the tower portion of any tall building development to be set back a minimum of 20 metres (excluding balconies) from property lines which abut a lower scale character area, including any area designated Neighbourhoods in the Official Plan.

Support: This is really a question of how to abut areas that accept different building typologies,

specifically how to abut towers to low-rise neighbourhood buildings. A harmonious transition would naturally be the responsibility of the new tower. The 20 meter set back is one practical way to effect such a transition – the new tower would set back enough that it doesn't immediately loom over a low-rise neighbourhood.

5.3.8 The maximum height within areas identified as "Height Transition Area" in the Yonge Street Character Area will be in the range of 45 storeys or 170 meters in height. Maximum height in the transition areas may only be considered if the following potential impacts of height have been addressed, as part of any development/redevelopment approvals process, on:

- a) heritage properties located on or adjacent to the development site;
- b) sunlight in parks and open spaces adjacent to the development site;
- c) views of prominent and heritage properties, structures and landscapes on or adjacent to the development site; and
- d) the given site(s) accommodating satisfactory separation and setback distance requirements.

Support: Ideally, there would be a real transition from the Height Peak areas to the Height Core area. This is really a compromise rule. It would allow consistently taller buildings in the Height Transition area, but only if the impact of any such buildings have been properly addressed.

5.3.9 The maximum height within the "Height Core Area" of the Yonge Street Character Area will be in the range of 4 stories or 18 metres in height. Any development/redevelopment in this core area will conserve, maintain and enhance the existing character, cultural heritage value, attributes and scale of the existing heritage properties and their context. On development/redevelopment sites without a heritage property or where the heritage property can be retained in its entirety and appropriately incorporated into the development/redevelopment in keeping with Section 6 of the North Downtown Yonge Site and Area Specific Policy, tall buildings may be permitted subject to a 75 degree angular plane taken at a height of 18 metres as measured from the Yonge Street property line.

Support One: While the planning framework was being developed some tall buildings had already been approved and one was under construction. Those buildings all conform to this 75° angular plan requirement. Given the nature of the decisions often rendered by the OMB it would seem imprudent to attempt to establish a more strict angular plane.

Support Two: Assume that the immediately visible street-wall is 14 meters high. Consider a 2 meter high observer standing at the curb (3 meters from the property line). Looking up, that observer will see everything above the 75.96° angular plane. The 75° angular plan requirement protects the sky-view for such an observer. Admittedly, the sky-view is only on that side of the street, but at least there is a clear sky-view or that observer on one side of the street.

9.2 The Street Itself

This planning framework concerned itself with built form and the space that is to be reserved for public use, e.g. wider sidewalks and patios both on Yonge Street and on adjacent side streets. What should happen to the roadway was not addressed in the planning framework. One simple step would be to reduce the speed limit to 30 km/hr, a limit that's consistent with the combined living and moving roles most appropriate for this stretch of the street.

On a somewhat more ambitious level, the street could be repaved without curbs. During warmer weather, more than the current meager 6 meters (3 on each side of the street) could be used for pedestrians. As a first step, only 6 of the remaining 13 meters would need to be dedicated to vehicle use (with occasional lay-byes available for taxis and delivery). That simple step would more than double the space available for pedestrians. With a curb-free pavement, it would be relatively easy to provide greater space for vehicles in cold weather.

This could result in a Yonge Street that resembles what has been done to Market Street further downtown – see the photograph to the right (from the website for the designers of Market Street – <http://dtah.com>). Admittedly, this is a much less traveled street, but the same design inspiration could be applied to Yonge Street, ideally all the way between the lake and Yorkville. Less ambitiously, this design could be applied to the street between College and Bloor where Yonge Street is of consistent width.



Yonge & Gerrard
The gateway into the 300-block of Yonge Street, with vehicular traffic reduced to 2 miles per hour and sidewalks widened to provide outdoor seating for local businesses, additional space for the area's high volume of pedestrians, and lay-bye for service vehicles.

A plan for Yonge Street between Dundas and Gerrard was developed by KPMB Architects + Greenberg Consultants. One of their imagined futures for the street was two traffic lanes with wide pedestrian sidewalks and occasional lay-byes for delivery and taxis. This would not be quite as radical as what was implemented on Market Street, but would certainly be moving in the right direction. See:

http://www.thestar.com/business/2011/07/05/bold_new_plan_calls_for_long_overdue_facelift_for_toros_yonge_st.html



An interesting third alternative might be to implement something like what has been done on Queen's Quay. On this waterfront street, traffic has been moved to one side of the public way. Pedestrian, cyclists and the streetcar share the space closest to the water. There may not be enough width to the public realm along Yonge Street to accommodate all three. That would be a pity because the reintroduction of a streetcar along Yonge Street from the lake to Yorkville would do something to alleviate the overcrowding of the subway during rush hours. See: <http://urbantoronto.ca/database/projects/queens-quay-waters-edge-revitalization>

A different kind of approach could be to give pedestrians priority on Yonge Street. That has been successful in a number of places in England and on the continent. And that was largely how it was when the 19th century retail buildings were being erected. Old photographs clearly show the very mixed use that was being made of the street, with people, carts, bicycles, animals, wagons and carriages all sharing use of the road.

If no significant reallocation of the use of the public realm is possible, the natural step would be to introduce some form of vehicle congestion pricing. A number of observers have concluded that vehicle congestion pricing will be required if we are to have any hope of eventually controlling the vehicle congestion in dense urban areas (see [WIK2016]). Singapore led the way, imposing its form of congestion pricing back in 1975. More recently, central London has implemented such a scheme to considerable success. It's also implemented in Stockholm, Milan, Gothenburg, Durham, Znojmo, Riga, and Valletta. It hasn't yet happened in any significant way in North America, but it's almost inevitable. Toronto could lead rather than just struggle to follow.

9.3 A Great Yonge Street

Yonge Street has the history. Yonge Street has the mind-share. Yonge Street is the centre of Canada's largest city. Yonge Street connects established and growing downtown neighbourhoods to each other and to the larger downtown. The modest development rules imposed by OPA 183, and Section 5.3 in particular, would allow Yonge Street to develop into the Great Street (see [JAC1993]) it can and should become.

Specifically, there is already a natural southern anchor to a Great Yonge Street at Dundas Square. Ryerson University has expanded out to the street just north of Dundas Square with its award winning Student Learning Centre. Immediately north are very ambitious developments planned for both sides of Yonge Street. Aura, currently Canada's tallest condo and the historic Eaton's College Park share the next block. From just north of College Park up to just south of Bloor, OPA 183 will be guiding development. The Bloor-Yonge intersection already has Canada's second tallest condo, with a proposed taller condo tower on the opposite side of the street. And north of Bloor, Yorkville is a growing presence with ambitious pedestrian plans.

Dundas Square to Yorkville – it can and should be transformed into a Great Street that all will recognize. A Living Yonge between College and Bloor will be an important step towards a Great Yonge Street between Dundas Square and Yorkville. argument

10. AUTHOR BACKGROUND

It may help the reader to understand a bit about how I came to write this paper. My academic training was in mathematics. Indeed, my first job was as an Assistant Professor of Mathematics. The move over to Computer Science was a natural step - my mathematics research was about computational complexity. Within Computer Science, the architecture of systems was always a topic of great interest to me. That interest remained even as I shifted toward the actual use of computing by real organizations.

In retirement, I was confronted by a proposed 55 storey tower just outside the downtown condo to which my wife and I had moved. I involved myself in the planning review of that condo, and in the planning for the stretch of Yonge Street on which the proposed new building was to be located. The North Downtown Yonge Street Planning Framework emerged, incorporating some of the words I had written describing the street that I hoped would be developed.

That planning framework was translated into an Official Plan Amendment and adopted by Toronto City Council. That OP amendment was promptly challenged by the building industry trade association and by a baker's dozen of developers all of whom had proposed or were about to propose new developments in the area covered by the amendment. The defense of a plan under attack at the Ontario Municipal Board proceeds almost as a court case - casuistry applied (or mis-applied) as a planning methodology.

While I don't have the credentials to appear as an "expert" before the OMB, my hope that this paper will be accepted as presenting a documented, rational argument in favor of some of the key sections of the Official Plan amendment, specifically those having to do with Yonge Street and its immediate environment. The paper, necessarily, has a somewhat academic cast.

Bob Fabian

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