



INTRODUCTION



1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

The need for a detailed streetscape plan for the Yonge Street corridor north of Steeles Avenue has been identified by York Region and was supported by the local municipalities including the City of Vaughan, the City of Markham and the City of Richmond Hill. Subsequently, EDA Collaborative Inc., having responded to an open RFP process, was engaged to prepare a Master Plan for the South Yonge Street Corridor Streetscape Master Plan (hereafter refers to as Master Plan). The Master Plan, completed in 2012 was well received and approved by Councils of York Region and the three participating municipalities. It was also awarded with a Regional Citation Award by the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects in 2012.

Since the completion of the 2012 Master Plan, the Region has implemented on-street cycling facility along some regional roads including Highway 7, Bathurst Street, Dufferin Street, Jane Street and Centre Street. Recent feedback was provided by local residents through a behavioural survey completed in 2015 indicating that on-boulevard cycling facilities are more preferable as they were perceived to be safer with buffer protecting cyclist from vehicular traffic. Moreover, current studies undertaken by the Region such as Pedestrian and Cycling Planning and

Design Guidelines and Designing Great Streets Guidelines do not recommend on-street cycling facilities resulting in the evolution of support of on boulevard cycling facilities by York Region's active transportation standards. Being keenly aware of this new direction on implementing future cycling facilities, York Region has taken a bold initiative in issuing an RFP on November 20, 2019 for Updating the 2012 South Yonge Street Streetscape Master Plan to integrate harmoniously cycling facilities within with other pedestrian and streetscapes facilities within the boulevard. EDA Collaborative Inc. was selected to undertake this assignment.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE MASTER PLAN UPDATE

The preparation of a consolidated streetscape master plan update for the southern segment of Yonge Street within York Region, from Steeles Avenue to Garden Avenue was the basis of Phase 3 work. The Updated Master Plan is intended to guide the updating of streetscape design in a coordinated manner that enhances this significant Regional Corridor. As well, the Master Plan will embody the highest order of streetscape treatment in accordance with the Region's support of on boulevard cycling facilities while supporting local municipal design visions and character along its length.

More importantly, this Updated Master Plan shall respond to the Yonge North Yonge Subway Extension project, one of four priority transit projects announced by the Province in 2019 for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. Metrolinx has been charged to project manage the design and implementation of this ambitious project.

With numerous new subway stations being planned within this major infrastructure project, ultimate implementation of the streetscape treatment as proposed in this Updated Master Plan needs to be carefully considered. However, one cannot lose sight that the primary purpose of this study is to relocate the previously proposed on-road cycling facilities within boulevards on both sides of Yonge Street, while strengthening the Vision and Goals as established in the 2012 Master Plan Report.

1.3 VISION AND GOALS

1.3.1 VISION

In Phase 2 of the work program, a Stakeholder Consultation meeting was conducted with the Region's Core Team. The Vision Statement and Goals which were established and approved by Council for the 2012 Master Plan were further re-endorsed

for the updating of the 2020 Master Plan. Within the context of the Purpose of this assignment as stated above, this included principles and objectives for a number of elements imperative to the overall success of the streetscape; these include access and wayfinding, architectural built form, place making and public art, fundamentals of street design, green streets and sustainable design, and implementation strategy and maintenance.

The vision statement developed for South Yonge Street which was re-endorsed by the Region's Core Team is:

“The South Yonge Street Corridor Streetscape Master Plan will result in a main street for York Region that is Bold and Vibrant; Green and Sustainable; Practical and Achievable.”

1.3.2 GOALS

BOLD - The Master Plan will establish a new standard in streetscape design that others will regard as “an urban design masterpiece”;

SUSTAINABLE - Yonge Street Corridor will showcase sustainable design innovation and green infrastructure making it a “people place” that supports community identity, human health, human comfort and social interaction.

ACHIEVABLE - The Master Plan establishes an urban design implementation strategy focused on achieving the long-term design intent for the streetscape and the adjacent development sites, encouraging participation from local municipalities and other stakeholders.

1.4 PRELIMINARY MASTER PLAN PROCESS

Following Phase 1: Research, Inventory and Analysis and Phase 2: Stakeholder Consultation to reconfirm previous established Vision Statement, Principles and Objectives, Phase 3 work delineates the Preliminary Streetscape Master Plan Update, which is comprised of functional street design considerations in the integration of cycling facilities within the boulevard, built form and place making strategies, streetscape features and elements, as well as the corresponding implementation and servicing implications.

Also included in Phase 3 is an update of Pre-Subway Streetscape Design Plan to identify elements of the design that can be implemented before full build-out and expected implementation of the Yonge Street Subway Extension.

After the completion of Phase 1 Report on Research, Inventory and Analysis, Phase 2 Report was prepared with a series of workshop sessions with Region's Core Team members were

planned to obtain their perspectives on issues and opportunities involved in the work. Staff representing management, planning, and operations functions were involved.

A major focus of the workshops was to identify the trade-offs involved from a capital cost and operational standpoint, of the ‘on boulevard approach’ to the development of a cycling facilities on both sides of Yonge Street within the study corridor as opposed to the ‘on-road approach’ which has a cycle track adjacent to and on the same level as vehicular traffic. Generally, it is felt that the major benefit of the boulevard approach is safety, while the main drawbacks would be additional capital and operating costs. This input was incorporated in the preparation of this Phase 3 Report.

The draft Streetscape Master Plan presented here, and subsequent Phase 4: Detailed Design Guidelines and Standards, will ultimately facilitate the implementation of the South Yonge Street Corridor Streetscapes and vision from present day to the full build-out. This will provide direction and guidance to Regional and municipal staff, landowners and developers as they collectively move through the site plan approval and development process to achieve a bold and sustainable Yonge Street within York Region.