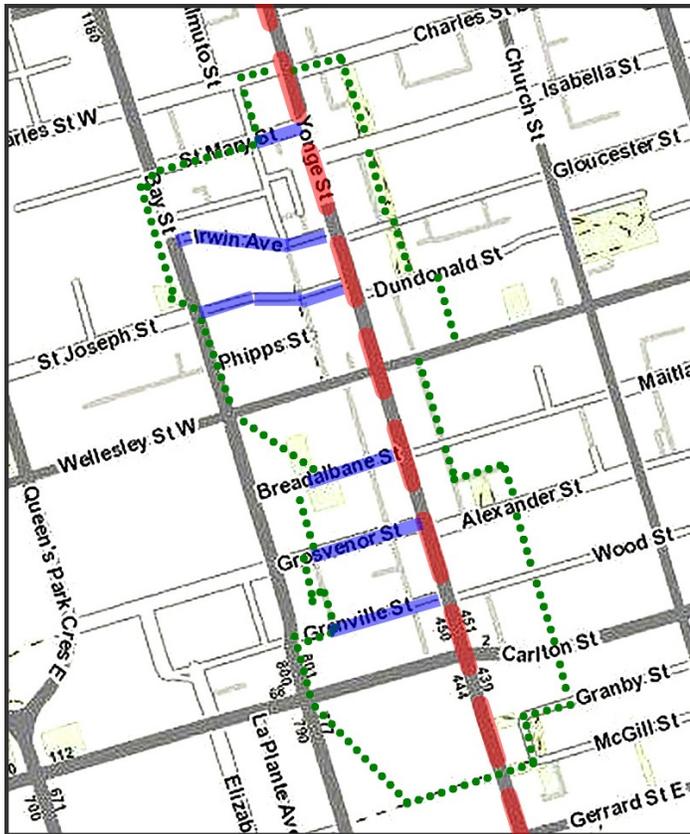


# A Promising Neighbourhood Future

## Three Different, Related Opportunities

*Toronto has always been people-friendly. Given all of the new people encouraged to live downtown, the city has a responsibility to provide the places that will make downtown a home. The three steps sketched here deserve to be a basic part of planning for the future of downtown.*



### Yonge Street Revitalization

Yonge Street has been variously described as “Canada’s longest street” and “Toronto’s main street”. It’s the place of musical and commercial legends. It’s also a place of massive new developments, especially in downtown Toronto. And it’s a place with crumbling infrastructure in downtown. A revitalization is in the works. In the next phase of that effort, the stretch of Yonge Street from College / Carlton Streets to north of Bloor Street is to be revitalized. (Shown on the map in **dashed red**.)

### Downtown Pedestrian Green Loop

The narrow linear parks between Charles Street and Dundonald Street inspired the communities on both sides of Yonge (BCCA & CWNA) to advocate for recognition of a new pedestrian loop (shown in **dotted green**)

All the sections either exist or are under construction or are being actively discussed. Work remains, but there seems no good reason why a Downtown Pedestrian Green Loop cannot become a respected and valued feature of this part of downtown.

### Living Urban Blocks

In addition to these initiatives there is an active proposal to make the western side streets off Yonge Street into pedestrian priority public places (shown in **solid blue**). The intended result will be an enhanced experience for all those who live, study, work, shop or just relax in the area. The residents living in the area will have the opportunity for places to anchor their neighbourhood. The anonymity of a tall residential tower may appeal to some, but Toronto needs to offer all of its residents neighbourhood places they can call their own. (A more detailed explanation of Living Urban Blocks follows on the next page.)

### Desired Outcomes

Today, all the active construction sites and steadily increasing density have made this part of downtown less attractive for people living in the area. The steps briefly sketched in this note could go far towards changing how and what people experience in this part of Toronto. We need to take full advantage of possible pedestrian oriented improvements. Let’s start by making one (or more) Living Urban Blocks using the side streets found along this stretch of Yonge Street. The BCCA proposes that during the current heavy construction phase, temporary pedestrian friendly changes be made to Broadalbane Street or Grosvenor Street, or both. Based on the experience with those temporary changes, informed decisions can be made about permanent pedestrian priority changes to side streets in the area.

In the “Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan” section of the TOcore Secondary Plan, the Bay Cloverhill Loop (aka Downtown Pedestrian Green Loop) is identified as Park District 8. Living Urban Blocks will enhance the Pedestrian Loop, as well as building on previous and ongoing greening projects. These steps will change how residents and visitors connect to our neighbourhood.

## Living Urban Blocks

Toronto and many other cities have started to experiment with pedestrian priority streets and lanes. Many of these are designed to enhance the retail experience or to enrich the local nature of an existing low-rise neighbourhood. The need in Toronto Core is different. Downtown Toronto needs to make new recognizable places for people living in all of the new high-rise buildings, where positive connections could be established between people and the places that they can use in the definition of themselves.

Multiple names have been given to the idea: pedestrian priority, shared space, naked streets or simply the Dutch *woonerf*. Vehicles are typically allowed, as are bicycles, but all traffic is encouraged to move at walking speed. Everything along the street can be accessed by vehicles, but the street ceases to be a short-cut that motorists use to reduce their travel time across the downtown core. This new role for the public realm can be suggested by design clues or enforced by traffic rules, or both.

The side streets (and lanes) on the west side of Yonge Street between Charles Street and College Streets would be a natural place to apply this thinking. The area has a rapidly expanding residential population. Through a historical accident, none of these side streets connect directly across Yonge Street. Today, the streets are frequently used as short-cuts across downtown. Local residents should be given priority. These side streets warrant elevation to defining downtown residential neighbourhood places. Given all of the new residential buildings that Toronto has approved and the very limited new green space, the city owes it to its old and new downtown residents to consider giving priority to pedestrians on as many downtown side streets as possible.



## Greening Other Streets

There are an endless number of ways our neighbourhood could be improved. Past efforts have added an important “green” element along portions of Bay Street. In addition, numerous laneway gardens and smaller greening projects have been undertaken. The work on Bay Street must continue and extend to the other streets and lanes in our area. Specifically, College Street, Wellesley Street West and Charles Street West would all gain from a similar greening effort. And it’s not just the block immediately west of Yonge Street that’s important. New opportunities for greening and pedestrian priority should be carefully evaluated for all the streets and lanes in BCCA’s catchment area. The goal is for the entire BCCA area to be a place where people want to live, study, shop, dine, play or just hang out. It’s the job of all residents to work to make it so.

