

JOHN STREET CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT STUDY

Executive Summary – January 2012



toronto
entertainment
district

Consultant Team:
The **Planning** Partnership
URS

Executive Summary

Introduction

In recent years, there has been growing recognition of John Street's potential for the City including its designation as one of four streets that are 'Cultural Corridors' (City of Toronto, 'Canada's Urban Waterfront: Waterfront Culture and Heritage Infrastructure Plan', 2001) and within an area identified as the 'Avenue of the Arts' (City of Toronto, 'Culture Plan for the Creative City', 2003). In designating the John Street corridor as a 'Cultural Corridor', the City's report states that:

"John Street, as a central urban street, can be understood as a cultural new media link to the central waterfront, linking the city's cultural activities with the water's edge.

A revitalized John Street could become Canada's premier street of arts, entertainment and culture. Promoted as part of a global tourism strategy, John Street would become a must-see destination and the place to celebrate the convergence of art, design and the new media that is rapidly transforming Canada's cultural landscape."

In an effort to enhance the public realm setting around major cultural institutions, the City commissioned a study (City of Toronto, Cultural Institutions in the Public Realm, 2008) that recognized the importance of the John Street corridor as a connective spine between major cultural institutional clusters. Accordingly, the study made the following recommendation:

"John Street is a cultural corridor connecting to the waterfront. Recognize this street as a pedestrian priority route, to be maintained in a state of good repair and marked as a priority for improvements."

The study further recommends the following action:

"Develop a streetscape improvement plan for John Street, including an audit of existing conditions and detailed design proposal for implementation. Enhance the pedestrian realm along John Street with a unique streetscape character illustrating the route's cultural significance. Increase sidewalk width and narrow the roadway whenever possible to create a more comfortable pedestrian promenade."

In response to the above, a Class Environmental Assessment Study was undertaken in association with the Toronto Entertainment District Business Improvement Area (TEDBIA) to evaluate potential improvements to the public realm along the John Street Corridor between Stephanie Street and Front Street West. The evaluation of a full range of alternative solutions, which is described in detail in this report, resulted in the following Recommended Design for John Street:

Significantly Widened Sidewalks: This will be achieved by reducing the vehicular realm in the following areas to:

- Three lanes (currently four lanes) between Front Street and Wellington Street
- Two lanes (currently four lanes) between Wellington Street and Adelaide Street
- Two lanes (currently three lanes) between Adelaide Street and Queen Street
- Two lanes (currently two lanes) between Queen Street and Stephanie Street

The preferred design best enhances the public realm and its cultural objectives while at the same time accommodating other modes of transportation including cycling, auto traffic, and loading requirements.

A Traffic-Calmed Environment: Calming vehicular traffic is vital in creating an inviting, safe and appealing pedestrian-priority and cycling corridor and destination. The recommended design concept achieves this in the following ways:

- Vehicles and cyclists share a two-lane roadway of a width more typical of downtown local streets, which will encourage drivers to reduce their speeds.
- Special provisions for turning movements are provided only at key locations where current peak hour traffic demands warrant. This includes right turning lanes northbound at Adelaide Street West and at Wellington Street West and a southbound right turn lane at Wellington Street West.
- Mountable curbs and interlocking paving across the roadway reinforces that John Street is not a typical street and a unique context, encouraging drivers and cyclists to become more aware of their surroundings and to move more cautiously through this space.

A Grand Promenade: A key objective for John Street is to create a strong pedestrian spine that reinforces the visual and physical connections to key destinations across the corridor. The recommended design concept enables the creation of a broad pedestrian promenade along the sunnier east side of the street. This plan is reinforced by:

- A continuous double row of trees along most of the corridor, this promenade can be a key distinguishing feature of the street that also provides for tremendous programming opportunities and green amenity to pedestrians.
- A 2.5 metre wide flexible space (defined by bollards) to accommodate deliveries, pedestrians, and other temporary uses.

The following illustrations compare existing conditions (upper left photograph) with the final design features.