

## **Wellington Street Revitalization**

A Report Prepared for the  
Wellington Place Neighbourhood Association

By: The Planning Partnership Limited  
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The Wellington Place Neighborhood Association is pleased to present a revitalization strategy for Wellington Street West, between Portland Street and Spadina Avenue. The community is taking the initiative as it did on Victoria Memorial Square to improve the quality of the public realm within the neighborhood. This initiative is considered Phase Two of a neighbourhood revitalization strategy – the renewal of Victoria Square was Phase One. Work on Victoria Memorial Square is scheduled to begin this fall and be completed by 2006.

### **Purpose**

This report sets out public space guidelines for the revitalization of Wellington Street West between Spadina Avenue and Portland Street. These guidelines have been prepared by the community with the active participation of the local Councilor and City staff in order to inform and assist the review of development applications in the area.

### **Financial implications**

It is intended that the implementation of the street improvements according to the proposed guidelines be implemented through a combination of private work in areas adjacent to individual buildings, and improvements in the public R.O.W. with funds coming from area redevelopment (as was the case for Victoria Memorial Square) and through the annual capital budgets of the City departments involved.

It is recommended that:

1. That City Council support in principle the community concept for the revitalization of Wellington Street West as set out in this report, and;
2. That City staff be requested to review the details of this proposal and report back to City Council with recommendations for implementation.

### **Acknowledgements**

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Wellington Place Neighbourhood Association

Steering Committee:

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### **WE INVITE YOU TO HELP SHARE IN AN EXCITING COMMUNITY ENDEAVOUR, THE REVITALIZATION OF WELLINGTON STREET AND THE WELLINGTON PLACE NEIGHBOURHOOD**

Wellington Street West is a tarnished gem - an important historic site as well as a unique urban space of beautiful proportions in the midst of a mixed residential and commercial neighbourhood. Located between Portland Street and Spadina Avenue, this section of Wellington Street is one of the oldest planned urban spaces in Toronto going back to the 1830's and has been a focal point for the part of the city known as Wellington Place.

Wellington Place is a growing and vibrant residential, business and cultural community. As more residents and businesses move into the area - in both renovated industrial spaces or newly constructed residential buildings the users are expanding. From early morning dog walkers to lunchtime cafes, the street is filled with activity and people. This means that there are increasing demands with the need for:

- Improved lighting to guarantee a safe environment for residents and workers;
- more seating areas for users throughout the day;
- New planting and garden areas;
- Maintenance and care of existing trees;
- Reconstruction of deteriorating walkways to prevent accidents;
- Planting street trees to form a shaded allée down both sides of the street, and;
- Signs and way-finding elements that highlight the historic importance and features on the street.

This effort to improve Wellington Street is part of a larger initiative by the Wellington Place Neighbourhood Association to conserve its unique heritage for the future. In this document we have included schematic plans for the historically sensitive renovation of the street addressing the needs of local residents and businesses; information about the community process and participation, our mission and vision, and; information about the fascinating history of the street since its beginnings. We invite you to join us in realizing a truly exciting and historic opportunity – restoring and revitalizing part of Toronto's history and urban landscape for use by all of its citizens.

## 2.0 WELLINGTON STREET REVITALIZATION

### 2.1 Guiding Principles

- Create a Park Street that connects Clarence Square with Victoria Square;
- Create safe crossings at Spadina Avenue that connects Wellington Street to Clarence Square and at Wellington Street on Bathurst Street linking to the Niagara Neighbourhood
- Strengthen the pedestrian crosswalk at Portland Street between Wellington Street and Victoria Square;
- Reestablish the historic tree lined promenade along Wellington Street;
- Gradually eliminate boulevard parking along the street;
- Reduce the number of parking lot and laneway entrances along the street;
- Provide a flexible space adjacent to the buildings along the street for cafes and gardens;
- Provide bicycle parking;

- Develop a family of street furniture for the street that relates to the elements used in Victoria Memorial Square;
- Provide pedestrian scale lighting along the sidewalks;
- Create wide sidewalks on the north and south sides of the street that are lined with seating, lights, and trees;
- Create a defined area for on-street metered parking on both sides of the street;
- Add bicycle lanes to the street cross section;
- Develop an historic interpretation plan for the street that is integrated with the street design;
- Create and reinforce a series of north-south pedestrian connections through Wellington Place between Front Street and King Street, and;
- Make visible short term improvements to the street as a first step signaling a change in attitude by both the City and neighborhood;

## 2.2 Goals

- Ensure that all new development on the street contributes to the Vision Plan for Wellington Street and compliments the form and character of the street;
- Create a dialogue between the City, business owners and the WPNA to ensure the realization of the plan;
- Work with the City to establish a management strategy for the street under the direction of the parks department ie. University Avenue model;
- Develop and maintain a successful linear 'Park Street' that serves the multiple needs of the community and functions as a destination for cultural tourists, and;
- Secure funds from the intensive re-development activity in the area for the early implementation of detailed design and refurbishment of the street.

## 2.3 Plan Description

### Existing Conditions

Like many of the City's downtown streets the public realm of Wellington Street has been taken over by cars that have consumed much of the pedestrian space. This is the consequence of a wide street profile coupled with boulevard parking that extends from the curb to the building face. The result of the proliferation of parking has been a decline in the health and numbers of street trees and porous surfaces and a dramatic increase in hard surface paving. Now most of the sidewalk is lined with cars parked along the curb on one side and a parking lot on the other, leaving no space for trees, furniture, or pedestrian scale lighting. The public realm is inhospitable with the exception of a few areas where the original structure of the street remains intact. In those areas large street trees line both sides of the walkway and cafes and gardens animate the street edge, creating a foreground for the row of historic buildings that provide a handsome and consistent street wall.

### Vision for Wellington Street

Wellington Street could and should be one of the City's most beautiful streets. With its wide right of way and handsome rows of late 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings the street has the potential to be a great street in one of City's oldest and most interesting neighborhoods. With the implementation of the plan the once tree lined promenade lining the street edges will be reinstated. The walkways will be lined with benches and the street lighting will focus on the sidewalks where people are walking and sitting. The edge of the street will be lined with cafes and gardens that change throughout the seasons. It has the potential to be a highly valued and well-used public space and key link in the city's pedestrian network supporting the Mayor's Clean and Beautiful City initiative.

## **Streetscape Elements**

The revitalization plan for Wellington Street West is a bold and simple concept that reinstates much of what was originally there and strips away the elements that detract from its character.

### **Tree Lined Promenade**

The most important element of the Wellington Street streetscape is the canopy formed by street trees. These are large oak, elm maple, and chestnut that arch over the sidewalks and street reaching heights of 60 to 70 feet. They mature in 25 to 30 years and live often over 100 years. In order for them to survive and thrive they must have access to large volumes of soil, water and air. For this reason the plan emphasizes reinstating planted boulevards along both sides of the walkways with enough space for trees down either side. The pattern is replicated on both the north and south sides of the street.

A second option was explored for the south side of the street that provided a curbside sidewalk and a double row of trees along the south edge of the sidewalk. The symmetry of the street was preferred in the first option, however the curbside sidewalk is more conducive to curb side parking.

### **Parking**

Over time parking can be entirely eliminated from the boulevards through the enforcement of a parking regulation that will not renew permits for boulevard parking on Wellington Street. Parallel parking will be permitted along the street edges on both the north and south sides of the street. Angled parking will continue to be investigated as an option to increase the number of parking spaces on the south side of the street. Laneway and parking lot entrances along the street will be eliminated and consolidated wherever possible to increase the available on street parking area. Future parking expansion will occur in association with new developments such as the Globe and Mail site.

### **Lighting**

Pedestrian scale lighting will line the walkways on both the north and south sides of the street. The fixtures will be part of the family of elements designed for Victoria Square. The intent is not to create an historical replica but rather to select a handsome fixture that is contemporary while being sympathetic with the industrial heritage elements of the street and neighborhood. The lights should be staggered on either side of the sidewalk spaced at regular intervals between eight and ten metres apart. The luminaire should be a colour corrected metal halide that meets the night sky requirements. The street lights will remain along the curb edge on the south side of the street.

### **Street Furniture**

The furniture on the street will be part of the family of elements chosen for Victoria Square and Clarence Square in the future. The benches will have a wood seat and back with a wood or metal frame. They will line the sidewalk along the south side of the north walkway and north side of the south walkway (providing there is a planted boulevard between the curb and sidewalk). All of the benches along the promenade will be the same uniform design. Waste receptacles will be chosen to be complimentary with the bench design. Bicycle racks will be provided by the City and be the City standard ring.

## Cross Walks

Connecting Wellington Street with the surrounding neighborhoods requires a strategy and commitment by the City to provide crosswalks to support significant and currently dangerous pedestrian movements. One of the most challenging and necessary is the obvious need for a crossing at Spadina between King and Front Streets at Wellington. This is a busy and dangerous intersection that crosses streetcar tracks and heavy fast moving traffic. The signal will be used by pedestrian traffic only. The plan also emphasizes the need for designated pedestrian crossings at Portland reinforcing the historic connection between the revitalized Victoria Square and Wellington Street. A third critical location is the crossing of Bathurst at Wellington, connecting to the Niagara Neighborhood and serving users of Victoria Memorial Square and its playground.

## 3.0 WELLINGTON PLACE NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION

### WPNA MISSION

**The Wellington Place Neighbourhood Association (WPNA)** was formed in 1999 to represent the interests of our vibrant and growing residential and business community. The boundaries of this community are formed by Bathurst Street on the west, King Street on the north, Front Street on the south and Clarence Square on the east. Our focus is to work with the City to improve urban design and public amenities such as parks, lighting, City services and traffic planning that support the special identity of our neighbourhood.

### WPNA VISION

Wellington Place was laid out in the 1830's as a grand residential street with a square, on the English model, at each end. This fashionable westward extension of the City was, however, thwarted by mid-century by the coming of the railways and the subsequent incursions of industrial activity. While the generous street layout and the two squares survive to this day, they are badly neglected and in need of refurbishing.

The most significant historical survivor is **Victoria Memorial Square**, which contains the City's first European cemetery, opened in 1794 as the garrison cemetery for Fort York. Its first occupant was Katherine, infant daughter of Lt. Gov. John Graves Simcoe. The last burial was in 1863 and it is now operated as a park.

Since the City changed the development rules for King-Spadina in the mid 1990's, this area has boomed. It is the vibrant home to many businesses in new media, architecture, technology, communications, fashion and entertainment. With established residential areas like Draper Street and new developments at 20 Niagara, the Monarch Building and Portland Park Village, this is a model mixed-use neighbourhood. The City's King-Spadina Community Improvement Plan (June 1998) recognizes this and calls for public and private initiatives in support of continuing investment in the area.

The Conservancy's vision is for the community to work in partnership with the City to revitalize the entire Historic Wellington Place district. Special attention will be given to the two historic parks (Victoria Memorial Square and Clarence Square), the Wellington Street West streetscape between Spadina and Portlands Streets and the historic precinct of Draper Street.

**Phase Two** is the improvement of Wellington Street. Here WPNA intends to build on the historical character and natural beauty of the original design and conduct a program of rehabilitation and interpretation that will provide a priceless amenity for those who live and work in the area, and a cultural attraction for all citizens and visitors to the City and entertainment. With established residential areas like Draper Street and new developments at 20 Niagara, the Monarch Building and Portland Park Village, this is a model mixed-use neighbourhood. The

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## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

The Wellington Place Neighborhood Association has spearheaded a number of initiatives in order to improve the quality of the public realm in the neighborhood and to inform the quality of new development in an area of rapid change. To date the association has:

- Led the design process for the revitalization of Victoria Square;
- Led the community facilitation process for Wellington Street and Victoria Square;
- Assisted in the fundraising for Victoria Memorial Square;
- Worked with the City in the pre construction phase of Victoria Square, and;
- Worked with the City in commenting on development applications in order to improve the quality of new building development in the area.