



Ontario Association of Architects

Mayor John Tory and Toronto Councillors
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario, M5H 2N2
March 19, 2018

Sent by email

RE: REimagining Yonge Street

Dear Mayor Tory and Toronto City Councillors,

I am writing to you for the second time in the past few weeks to again support the advocacy of the Toronto Society of Architects (TSA) for REimagining Yonge Street, Option 1 – Transform Yonge. As you will remember, this was also the choice recommended by the City of Toronto Planning Staff as well as by most of the groups and individuals who presented to the recent Public Works and Infrastructure Committee (PWIC) meeting.

The most recent letter to you from the TSA on this subject clearly outlines the shortcomings of the committee's process leading to the current recommendation as well as the strengths of the Option 1 proposal in comparison to the option recommended by the PWIC. The TSA's characterization of the choice in front of Council as a "referendum on what kind of city we want to build in the future" accurately captures the importance and significance of this decision. However, it is not our intent in this letter to reiterate TSA's compelling arguments. (Our detailed reasons for supporting this option have already been outlined in my previous letter to you which is attached for ease of reference.)

As a regulator of architects in this province, the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) has a role and responsibility in this discussion to advocate clearly for the design of buildings and cities that are safe and healthy, and which lift the human spirit. With almost half of its members located and practicing in Toronto, the OAA understands the importance of making this city's neighborhoods great places in which people can live, work and play. As well, the OAA is itself doing its part by making a major new investment in our own headquarters building located in Toronto to refresh and update it to achieve net zero carbon and net zero energy, and to improve the work environment for staff and members.

We strongly encourage you and your Council colleagues to support Option 1 – Transform Yonge. This is the only choice that will achieve the important goals of making this part of the city a better place for people. We also believe the City of Toronto must seize both the opportunity and the responsibility for leadership, by supporting a choice for Yonge Street that embraces the importance of the street as a truly complete civic place that is safe, healthy and uplifting for people. In doing so you will set an example for cities and towns across Ontario that reinforces and supports established "best practices" and evidence-based approaches for city building that will continue to solidify Toronto's reputation as one of the great cities in the world.

Yours very sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John K. Stephenson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "S".

John K. Stephenson, OAA, MRAIC
President, Ontario Association of Architects





Ontario Association of Architects

His Worship Mayor John Tory and Toronto Councillors
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario, M5H 2N2
February 26, 2018

RE: REimagining Yonge Street

Dear Mayor Tory and Toronto City Councillors,

As a self-regulating body, the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) is dedicated to promoting and increasing the knowledge, skill and proficiency of its members, and to administering the *Architects Act*, in order that the public interest may be served and protected. The OAA comprises approximately 4,000 licensed architects, 1,500 architectural interns and more than 1,750 practices. As part of its regulatory mandate, the Association provides a wide range of services to its members and the public. We enjoy a longstanding, collaborative relationship with all levels of government and look forward to continuing our work with you on important issues that affect the City of Toronto.

Through the leadership of the Toronto Society of Architects (TSA), the OAA has been made aware of the REimagining Yonge Street initiative. This letter is to confirm that the OAA has reviewed the initiative and echoes the TSA's strong support for Option 1: "Transform Yonge."

The choices for REimagining Yonge Street should be made carefully with an eye to how the built environment can help create the kind of city we wish to have now and in the future. The "second downtown" on Yonge Street between Sheppard and Finch is a vibrant, mixed-use community; however, it is divided by six lanes of traffic that obstruct community enjoyment of this neighbourhood focal point and prevent it from reaching its full potential.

Option 1 is a cost-effective option that focuses on narrowing the divide between the east and west sides of Yonge Street in favour of wider sidewalks that enhance pedestrian use and enjoyment of the public space of the street. It also creates space for active transportation options that are suitable now and in the future. This serves to make this important section of Yonge Street into more of a 'Complete Street,' fostering a healthier, more engaged community.

As we REimagine Yonge Street, consideration should be given to the current realities of how the urban environment is used, as well as long-term trends and the evolution of how we use our public streets, where and how we work and how we live in our neighbourhoods.

Yonge Street cannot reach its full potential to support and enhance the community life depending on it until it has been REimagined as a street that is lived in and on, rather than as a highway whose primary purpose is increasing traffic flow.

I encourage the City to continue to discuss the REimagining Yonge Street project with the Toronto Society of Architects, and would be happy to participate if it might be helpful. This is an important initiative of great public interest and benefit that clearly intersects with the practice of Architecture and Urban Design. It is a great example of where listening to the voice of architects and others passionate about the quality of the urban environment can help make better cities for people.

As always, we look forward to continued collaboration with the City of Toronto on this and other important issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Stephenson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "S".

John Stephenson, Architect
OAA, MRAIC
President

