york boulevard streetscape master plan:
bay street north to james street north

Council Adopted Street Master Plan. January 27, 2010
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note: this document is best viewed when printed in colour or viewed on-screen.
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1.0 Introduction

The York Boulevard Streetscape Master Plan is one of several design initiatives by the City of Hamilton for public realm improvements with implementation scheduled over the next 10 years. The streetscape master plan provides a broad design strategy and context for future physical improvements in the above ground public realm (i.e., the public road right-of-way and other publicly owned spaces). The master plan also provides guidance and design principles for a number of key areas that, while not within the public realm, may have great impact on the public realm and the overall success of the initiative.

The master plan contributes urban design principles and guidance on design intent that together provide a bridge between the general policy provisions of the Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan and specific detailed design drawings and specifications necessary for implementation.

Today, York Boulevard is an unassuming one-way street functioning as an important vehicular thoroughfare and a designated truck route through the Downtown. However, as a boulevard, it is not an inviting place for pedestrians. Few buildings properly address the street in the manner that other buildings along other Downtown Streets address those streets. York Boulevard is missing the usual pedestrian amenities and streetscape elements found in typical boulevards such as trees and greenery, benches, bike racks, enhanced lighting, and directional or information kiosks. For instance, the remaining street trees could not create a desired overhead canopy since they receive little water and do not survive well in compacted soils - they could not visually soften the streetscape as their growth is stunted. The “creation of better pedestrian spaces” is important in the Downtown and there is a need for a wide range of improvements of the streetscape.

The Streetscape Master Plan will help create a new ‘Market Precinct’ and provide the setting for the impressive renovations to the Farmers'
Market and Central Public Library, and potential initiatives on the underdeveloped sites along the street. Streetscaping initiatives are recognized by the Downtown Secondary Plan as important catalysts to revitalization.

The Council approved Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan provides for the completion of “street master plans” for the entire length of all ‘Mobility Streets’, including York Boulevard.

The York Boulevard Streetscape Master Plan implements the Council approved Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan and Downtown Transportation Master Plan (2001) along with the 2008 Five Year EA Review of the Downtown Transportation Master Plan and their associated goals and objectives by:

- Articulating a long-term vision for enhancing the pedestrian amenity and civic image of the street;
- Establishing a safe pedestrian environment with appropriate separation from vehicles;
- Better balancing pedestrian, cycle, and transit needs with motor vehicular needs;
- Strengthening linkages to the Downtown;
- Promoting and enhancing the presence of Copps Coliseum, the Hamilton Farmers’ Market, and Hamilton Public Library;
- Identifying key civic spaces and priority areas for specific streetscape treatment in order to enhance the character and sense of place within the Downtown; and
- Establishing a high standard of design within public spaces as a model for private sector initiatives.

**MOBILITY STREETS**

Mobility Streets provide mobility through traffic, freight and goods. They connect major activity centres within and to points outside of the region, with sufficient connections to neighbourhoods. Cyclists are permitted and are accommodated with wider curb lanes. On-street parking is limited to non-peak hours. (6.2.7.2.1 Streets)

The Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan (2001)
Consultation featured significantly in the preparation of the York Boulevard Streetscape Master Plan and included meetings with internal City stakeholders, external stakeholders and property owners, published articles, and public open houses that featured a broad cross-section of the public interested in the revitalization of this area of the Downtown.

The responses received were favourable and supportive of comfort and safety in the pedestrian realm, greening of the streets, balancing the needs of motorists with cyclists, and public art initiatives.

A key administrative principle that drives the York Boulevard Streetscape Master Plan is that streetscape improvements (above-ground work) are to be co-ordinated and implemented at the same time as major infrastructural improvements (under-ground work) or when other major public development occurs on this boulevard. These coordinated works result in an economy of scale that will assist in reducing implementation costs, and unnecessary disruptions to adjacent property owners, business operations, vehicular traffic and pedestrian space. As an example, the streetscape design has been closely co-ordinated with the renovations to the Farmers’ Market and Public Library. Co-ordination of these activities will be accommodated as part of the annual Hamilton Downtown 10-year Capital Improvement Budget process.

1.1 Background

The York Boulevard Streetscape Master Plan was initiated in 2007 and undertaken by the Community Planning and Design Section of the Planning Division. To accomplish the master plan, a multidisciplinary team of City staff was created to provide input and direction on all technical aspects. Early on, key strategies were worked out and information gathered. City staff was guided by the Streetscape Master Plan and Implementation Process which spans from project initiation, design, and through to construction.

The work comprised three key phases:

- Information gathering, SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis, streetscape program, and first principles,
- Preliminary design and public consultation; and
- Final Streetscape Master Plan preparation.

In August of 2008, Council approved the Downtown Transportation Master Plan Five Year EA Review. The Five Year Review recommended the two-way conversion of a number of streets in the Downtown including York Boulevard from Bay Street North to James Street North, and Wilson Street from James Street North to Wellington Street. The rationale for two-way conversion was that:

- Conversion of York Boulevard/Wilson Street to two-way traffic will reduce traffic speeds on York Boulevard/Wilson Street through the study area with benefits in terms of an improved pedestrian environment;
- Conversion of York Boulevard/Wilson Street to two-way traffic will reduce circuitous travel to and from properties in the downtown; and,

- Conversion of York Boulevard/Wilson Street to two-way traffic provides for greater flexibility for changing King Street (i.e. provision of additional westbound capacity through the core of the study area could offset any potential loss of westbound traffic capacity on King Street).

The Five Year EA Review recommended that two eastbound vehicular travel lanes would be required from Bay Street to MacNab Street, along with an eastbound left turn lane between MacNab Street to James Street North, and one westbound lane from James Street North to Bay Street.

Public consultation for the Streetscape Master Plan occurred through two public open houses which included the public, stakeholders and special interest groups. The first public open house was held on November 6th, 2008 and comprised a presentation by City staff of three streetscape master plan concepts. City staff also presented numerous panels for the public to review and covered the history of York Boulevard, background and public process, new ideas, streetscape principles, a voting panel, and contact information.

Following the first public open house, City staff received a wealth of positive feedback from the public. The feedback stressed the importance of including bike lanes and bicycling facilities such as bike racks. The public showed interest in the potential for temporary closings of York Boulevard for large special events, seeing this as an important initiative for the Downtown. Responses from the public, stakeholders and special interest groups were generally supportive of the York Boulevard Streetscape Master Plan and its guidance and design vision for improved comfort and safety in the pedestrian realm, greening of the streets, public art initiatives, and place-making.

Separate meetings with key stakeholders such as Coppley Apparel Group, and Yale Properties were held to investigate and address specific issues of design and function. Staff met with the ward Councillor Bob Bratina on two occasions, taking back the Councillor's concerns and keeping the Councillor briefed on the project. The content of the Open House panels was also made publicly available on the City of Hamilton web site.

Guided by the Streetscape Master Plan and Implementation Process, City staff held another public Open House to present a final concept that considered input from the public and others. At the February 12, 2009 Open House, City staff gave an overview of the previous three master plan concepts and then the final concept was presented.

The streetscape master plan process timeline for York Boulevard was compressed and the work of the design team was co-ordinated with initiatives of the renovations to the Farmers’ Market and Public Library. The intent of the compressed schedule was to allow this project to integrate with a number of major public works comprising the two-way conversion of York Boulevard, streetscape design of York Boulevard, water main upgrades, other subsurface enhancements, and the renovation to the Farmers’ Market and Public Library.
In essence, the streetscape design promotes walking through widened sidewalks that will provide room for Urban Braille markings, street furniture, enhanced lighting, and landscaping. The widened sidewalks on the south side along the Farmers’ Market and Library provide further opportunities for the market to spill onto the street providing room for temporary stalls where vendors, such as farmers, can sell their goods to the public.

Overall, the streetscape design will improve the condition, civic image, and the quality of the streetscape and enhance the presence of the Farmers’ Market and Library, Copps Coliseum, and Jackson Square.

The streetscape design recognizes York Boulevard as an opportunity for place-making through the careful placement of precinct markers, public art, and street closures for large special events.
York Boulevard Streetscape Master Plan Concept

Design Opportunity:
Under developed site - Development potential. Access from Park Street North.

Streetscape design for York Boulevard:
- Illustrated in Chapter 5 and 6 of this Master Plan.
- Promotes walking along widened sidewalks for urban braille markings, street furniture, enhanced lighting, and landscaping.
- Opportunities for the market to spill onto the street providing space for temporary stalls.
- Enhances the presence of the Farmers’ Market and Library, Copps Coliseum, and Jackson Square.

Overall, the streetscape design improves the condition, civic image, and the quality of the streetscape.

The streetscape design respects York Boulevard as an opportunity for place-making.

Bay Street to James Street Streetscape:
- The full concept is shown with east and west bound bicycle lanes.
- The left bound cycling lane in front of the Farmers’ Market and Library is shown as shared.
- Road pavement should be decorative or coloured to denote the ‘Market Precinct’.
- Side elevation should be enhanced so as to provide enhanced heritage on this prominent corner.
- Tree planting opportunity and Market Precinct identifier.

Wide sidewalks above for additional retail stalls to be installed seasonally.

On-street parking with lay-by for events.

Parallel on-street parking / HSR Transit stop.

The application of colour to the roadway highlights this portion of York Boulevard as the ‘Market Precinct’. Pedestrian crossings at intersections can also incorporate special treatment.

Design Opportunity:
- The vacant ‘GoodLife’ building is an opportunity along York Boulevard to connect the roof place above Jackson Square to the street with grand steps.

Drop-off / pick-up for Library and Clerks.

The proposed Streetscape Master Plan concept shown here is illustrated in detail in Chapter 5 and 6 of this Master Plan.