

PARTICIPANT STATEMENT

DOWNTOWN YONGE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA

**RE: ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD FILE - PL060973,
444 YONGE STREET, TORONTO**

The following is the participant statement of the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area (B.I.A.) regarding the development proposal for 444 Yonge Street, specifically the parking lot site located on the North West corner of Yonge & Gerrard.

Mr. James Robinson, Executive Director of the Downtown Yonge B.I.A. has been authorized by the B.I.A. Board to serve as the B.I.A.'s participant at the OMB hearing.

ABOUT THE DOWNTOWN YONGE B.I.A.

The Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area is a non-profit organization committed to improving and promoting a specific area of Toronto's downtown core. It was formed in 2001 for the purpose of re-asserting the district as a viable commercial destination.

The Downtown Yonge B.I.A. is centered on Yonge Street, and bounded by Grosvenor/Alexander Streets to the north, Bay Street to the west, Richmond Street to the south, and Church and Bond Streets to the east.

The Downtown Yonge B.I.A.'s members are the approximately 2,000 businesses and property owners. Funding for the organization comes from a supplementary municipal tax levied on all commercial buildings within the boundaries. The City of Toronto collects this money and returns it to the community to fund local services and improvements.

The B.I.A. is governed by a volunteer Board of businesses and property owners and administered by a small staff responsible for the day to day operations.

The mission statement of the organization is as follows: "The Downtown Yonge B.I.A. is the voice of the business community. It is committed to improving and promoting Downtown Yonge through investment and advocacy to maintain its position as Toronto's premier shopping, business and entertainment destination."

Key areas of focus for the B.I.A. include the key areas of: Safe Streets, Clean Streets, Streetscape Improvements, Social Improvement, Marketing, and Member Services.

B.I.A.'S APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT GENERALLY

The Downtown Yonge B.I.A. recognizes the importance of development to the revitalization of the area.

Development represents investment in the area, which had been sorely lacking when Yonge Street was in decline through to the mid 1990s.

Quality and well planned developments can serve to provide commercial space and land-uses that contribute to the district as a competitive location for business, shopping, and entertainment.

Poorly planned development can contribute negatively to the district's commercial vitality.

Through the development approvals process, there is an opportunity for the B.I.A. to demand quality, well-planned development that reinforces the district as a business, shopping, and entertainment destination. Further, there is often an opportunity to advocate for streetscape improvements from the general developer, both adjacent to the development site and in the general vicinity.

POSITION ON THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Downtown Yonge B.I.A., through its Board, has taken the position of supporting the proposed development in principle.

The project is viewed as an important catalyst for the revitalization of the Yonge & Gerrard area.

While our position is that of support in principal, there are specific issues and items that require the Board's attention so as to ensure that the implementation of the development proposal, most particularly in respect of the pedestrian realm and streetscape, continues to advance the goals of the B.I.A. so as to ensure the remains a vital business, shopping and entertainment district.

ISSUES LIST

The following are the issues identified by the Downtown Yonge B.I.A. A brief commentary on Downtown Yonge's position follows most issues.

1. Does the proposed development ensure appropriate animation and activity on the Hayter St. frontage? More specifically, is there sufficient access and egress provided to the proposed development from Hayter Street so as to assist in the animation of the park entrance?

-Safety has been a long standing concern in the Downtown Yonge area and specifically in the vicinity of Barbara Ann Scott Park and the College Park block. Drug dealing, gang activity, and loitering are cause for concern for area businesses, property owners, residents, and visitors. This proposed development represents an opportunity to animate the walkway to the park and improve safety along the walkway through new retail space on Hayter Street.

-One of the key ways of reestablishing the Downtown Yonge area as a viable retail destination is by establishing quality retail space in the district. The north side of Hayter Street currently has two retailers in the south façade of Toronto College Park. New retail space that has access and egress on the opposite side of Hayter Street will serve to improve the retail viability in a part of the district that has struggled as a retail destination.

-From the B.I.A.'s perspective, the proposed development should be encouraged to maximize retail opportunities and general activity along Hayter Street through the placement of doors, windows and shops in this area.

2. Does the proposed development ensure appropriate animation and diversity of both the type and level of retail/commercial activity so as to support and promote a pedestrian environment on Yonge and Gerrard Streets?

-One of the main business challenges in the Downtown Yonge area is the lack of retail space that is conducive to the needs of contemporary retailers. The long and narrow retail spaces provided by small Yonge Street frontages in the B.I.A. are not suited to many mainstream retailers who demand larger and squarer retail space.

-The proposed development provides an opportunity for sizeable retail anchors to establish a presence on Yonge Street and Gerrard Street. The execution of this space is critical, as vibrant retail streets are evident by having many storefront entrances and window displays. The intent is to advocate that the retailers in this property provide for a welcoming pedestrian environment as opposed to blank walls or unused window displays that would have the opposite effect.

3. Does the proposed design of the building podium, especially with respect to the height of the podium, appropriately reflect the existing retail environment and, more specifically, the scale and massing of the College Park podium?

-The B.I.A. recognizes that College Park continues to serve as an important heritage attribute in the area, while serving as an exciting new retail destination. The B.I.A. places great importance on ensuring the introduction of a new podium south of College Park does not detract from this key location but rather serves to enhance the already established streetscape and building wall.

4. Is the tower portion of the proposed development appropriately setback from Yonge Street so as to ensure an acceptable pedestrian realm including, but not limited to, issues of shadow, sunlight and the creation of a pedestrian scale streetscape?

-As noted above, the maintenance of a welcoming, safe and enjoyable pedestrian realm is important to the success of the area and the B.I.A.'s constituents. Introduction of this substantial development must occur in a manner so as to ensure this environment and the area is enhanced.

5. Will the increased traffic from the proposed development be accommodated on the existing road network so as to not constrain appropriate traffic movement such that other area businesses and properties along Gerrard Street will not be negatively affected?

6. Does the existing sidewalk width of Gerrard Street provide a comfortable environment for pedestrian movement or, given the anticipated increases in both pedestrian and vehicular traffic as a result of the proposed development, should the Gerrard Street sidewalk be expanded and otherwise enhanced so as to ensure an appropriate and safe pedestrian environment?

7. Should the Board approve the proposed development, which would permit increases in height and density from the approved City policies, what appropriate public benefits can be secured through the section 37 process? More specifically, will the proposed development ensure appropriate contributions to the completion of the "College Park Block" pedestrian realm including, but not limited to: streetscape improvements, pedestrian scale lighting, street trees and associated tree grates, and street furniture on College, Yonge, Gerrard and Bay Streets?

-As note in the outset, a key focus for the B.I.A. is the creation, enhancement and maintenance of a consistent and enjoyable pedestrian realm so as to ensure the area remains a viable business, shopping and entertainment district. The B.I.A. feels strongly that the proposed development must become a partner in these efforts and that the Board should secure appropriate contributions from the proposed development to ensure that the pedestrian realm along Yonge and Gerrard especially is enhanced.

8. Should the Board approve the proposed development, what contributions to the B.I.A.'s streetscape program - including but not limited to enhancements to the pedestrian realm via appropriate lighting and streetscape improvements in accordance with the B.I.A.'s Streetscape Master Plan should be required?

-The B.I.A.s list of streetscape priorities is currently being finalized and will be provided to the OMB and the parties within a week.

2007-06-27 JR