

Can Ryerson Benefit from a Better Yonge Street?

A case study analysis of the impact of street redesigns on university campuses

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Executive Summary

The Context

Ryerson is a unique, lively campus set in downtown Toronto. This urban campus is an integral part of the Downtown Yonge Street corridor, which is the backbone of Toronto and provides critical economic and transportation infrastructures to the core and beyond.

In Spring 2017, the City of Toronto started a Schedule C Environmental Assessment Study to consider a potential redesign of Downtown Yonge Street between Queen Street and Carlton/College Street. As a major stakeholder in the area, Ryerson University will be greatly impacted by, and will also have the opportunity to make a great impact on, the future of Downtown Yonge Street. **It is of paramount importance that Ryerson demonstrates leadership in city building, contributes to urban revitalization, and imprints its identity on the public realm.**

This report looks at the potential impacts of the Downtown Yonge Street revitalization on the quality of life on campus for students, faculty, staff and myriad visitors every day, by examining how public realm revitalization projects have impacted campus communities across North America.

Case Studies

A case study review of public realm improvement projects adjacent to university campuses examines the impacts of specific design, planning and implementation strategies. These case studies highlight how public realm improvements – and potential pedestrianization – along Downtown Yonge Street might resonate with Ryerson University’s key policies, plans, and principles. Selected cases include:

- Montgomery Street and the Portland Transit Mall, Portland State University campus
- The Porch at 30th Street Station, Philadelphia’s University City District



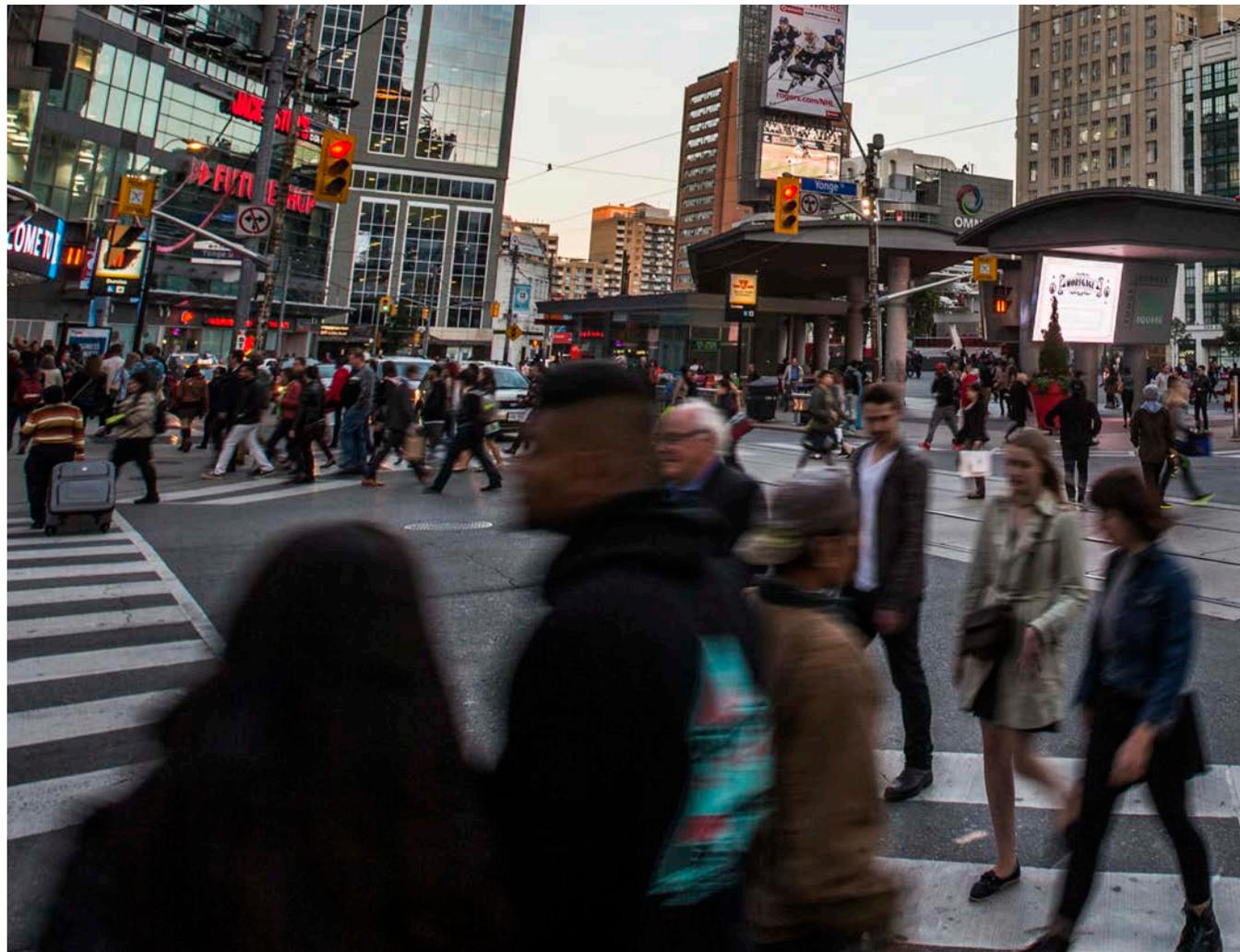
- McTavish Street Pedestrianization, McGill University campus
- Willcocks Common, University of Toronto campus
- Robson Street in Robson Square, downtown Vancouver
- Gould Street, Ryerson University

Key Findings

The case studies examined in this report demonstrate that campuses adjacent to pedestrian-oriented street redesigns may benefit in the following ways:

- Improved safety and street life
- A healthier and more sustainable environment, including improved local air quality and greater walkability
- Increased opportunities for equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Deepened campus-city integration
- Stronger institutional identity
- Opportunities for year-round design and programming

The findings from these case studies demonstrate how a pedestrian-priority revitalization of the Downtown Yonge Street corridor could benefit Ryerson's campus and public life, and the neighbourhood as a whole. By recognizing and responding to these findings, Downtown Yonge Street and Ryerson University will be well positioned for success.



Setting the Context

As public realm improvements and pedestrianization are being explored for Downtown Yonge Street, it is important to understand how this iconic main street of the city has evolved over time, and what its future could look like.

Downtown Yonge Street in Transformation

The Early 1970s

The idea of improving the public realm of Downtown Yonge Street is not new. The early 1970s gave rise to an initiative that closed Downtown Yonge Street for a temporary pedestrian mall during summer time in which tourists and the locals could stroll, play and enjoy out-

door life. The summer pedestrianization pilot ended in 1974 when Queens Park did not support permanent implementation.

Four Decades Later

In the following decades, rapid renewal along the Downtown Yonge Street corridor had many members of the public and council questioning what the next phase of Yonge Street's life would entail. Ultimately, it was the torching of the historic Empress Hotel in 2011 that ignited a serious discussion, led by Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, about how best to improve Downtown Yonge Street and make it Toronto's most pedestrian friendly public right-of-way.



2011: Downtown Yonge Street Planning Framework

Co-authored by Ken Greenberg and Marianne McKenna, this framework illustrated a new vision for Downtown Yonge Street advocating for wider sidewalks, street-level activities, and more pedestrian-friendly spaces.

2012: Celebrate Downtown Yonge Pilot

Continued advocacy and consultation with the Downtown Yonge BIA led to the "Celebrate Yonge" pilot, which converted curb lanes along Downtown Yonge Street from Gerrard to Queen into places for performances and patios for four weeks in August 2012.





2014: Yonge Love Community Consultation

The Downtown Yonge BIA led this initiative to set a vision for the future of Downtown Yonge Street and the surrounding neighbourhood. The consultation took place over a period of seven months to gather feedback to gauge support for widened sidewalks, pedestrian events, and public art. Outputs included the *Yonge Love Campaign Findings Report*, which detailed the findings of the community consultations. The report emphasized Walkable, Clean, Pedestrian Friendly and Safe as the highest priorities for what “Yonge Street Should Be...,” which translated into pedestrian-only weekends and wider sidewalks as two of the top actionable response items from the community.

2016 to now: Yonge Street Environmental Assessment

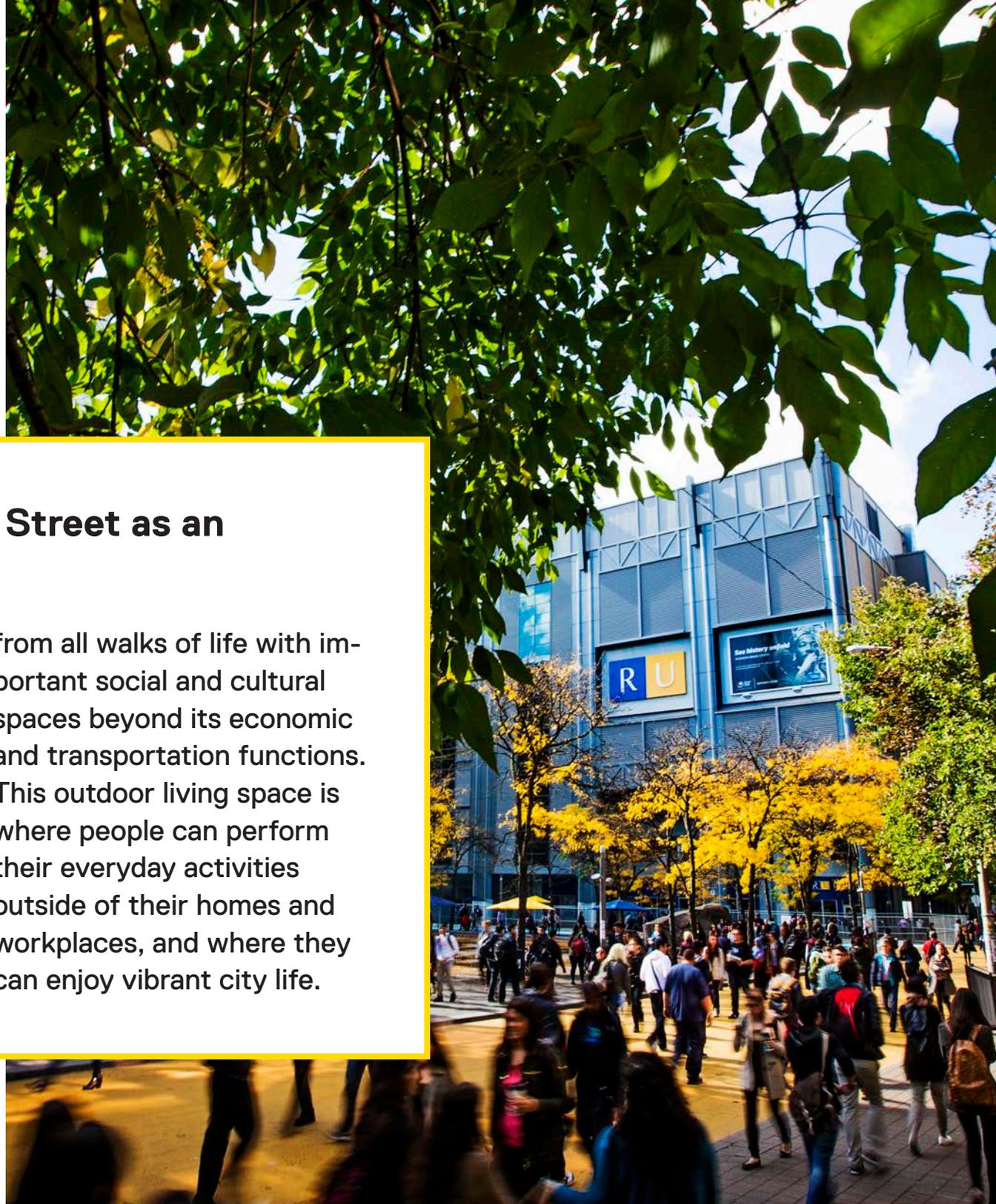
Cumulatively, advocacy work performed by councillors, professionals and the Downtown Yonge community resulted in a press conference on July 13th, 2016 held by Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, to announce that the City of Toronto would be initiating a Schedule ‘C’ Municipal

Environmental Assessment (EA) to study Downtown Yonge Street. The ongoing EA study will consider design options for street improvements, pedestrianization, and shared public spaces. Not since the excavation for the subway has Downtown Yonge Street been presented with a such an important, once-in-a-generation opportunity to redesign the street.

Future Downtown Yonge Street as an Outdoor Living Room

The Downtown Yonge Street corridor is undoubtedly the most iconic main street landmark of Toronto, fuelled by intense commercial activities and traffic flows. What should not be overlooked is its promising potential to serve as an "outdoor living room" of the city that will provide people

from all walks of life with important social and cultural spaces beyond its economic and transportation functions. This outdoor living space is where people can perform their everyday activities outside of their homes and workplaces, and where they can enjoy vibrant city life.



Ryerson as Stakeholder

Ryerson's decisions regarding campus planning are guided by plans and principles to ensure a cohesive Ryerson vision, and to sustain the campus as a distinct urban institution and landmark.

Policies, Plans, Principles, and Practices

Ryerson is uniquely positioned as a downtown campus. Improvements to the adjacent Downtown Yonge Street public realm – including pedestrian safety, access, and environment – have great potential to also benefit Ryerson's campus.

The redesign of Downtown Yonge Street offers a unique opportunity for Ryerson to support its plans and principles and advance its vision overall. The best interests for Downtown Yonge Street should also

be in the best interest of Ryerson. Working together could expedite and bolster plans and build public and political support.



Ryerson's Academic Plan: Our Time to Lead 2014-2019

Ryerson University's Academic Plan outlines four principles:

1. Enable greater student engagement and success through exceptional experiences
2. Increase Scholarship, Research, Creative Work excellence, intensity and impact
3. Foster an innovation ecosystem
4. Expand community engagement and city building

The Downtown Yonge Street public realm improvements present opportunities to support these four principles by creating space for faculty and students to engage communities outside of the classroom. Improvements to the public realm could invite citizens, alumni and students to be involved in campus stewardship creating a sense of ownership and belonging. Pedestrianization is key to bringing life to the streets around Ryerson's campus, and a pedestrian-friendly Yonge Street provides opportunities for showcasing faculty and students' work, research and engagement.

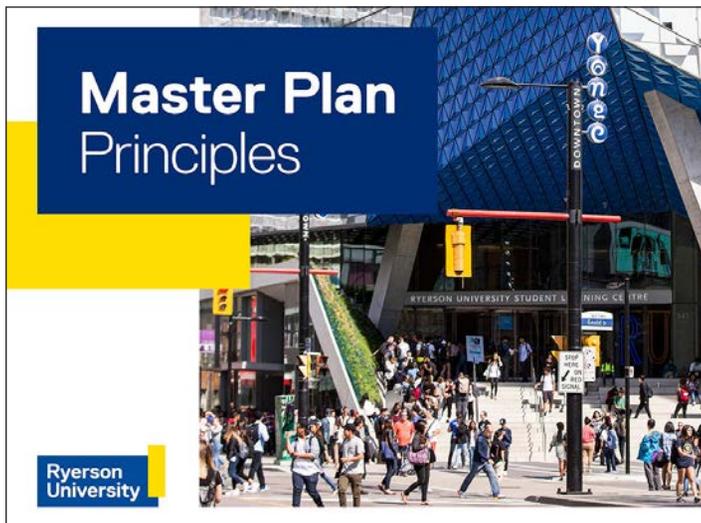
Ryerson's Master Plan

Three Master Plan principles guide development on Ryerson's campus, but the same principles can be applied to Downtown Yonge Street as an extension of the campus:

1. Urban Intensification
2. People first – pedestrianization of urban environment
3. Design excellence

Ryerson strives to create both a strong sense of collegiality on campus and a multi-dimensional space for more than just its faculty, staff and students. As

Ryerson expands its holdings, Downtown Yonge Street is a central seam, as it lies at the centre of the academic precinct. With Downtown Yonge Street expecting major public realm improvements in the near future, Ryerson will have the chance to demonstrate its leadership as a city builder by applying its own Master Plan principles to Downtown Yonge Street.



Ryerson's Campus Public Realm Plan

Ryerson is currently undertaking a redesign plan for its immediate public realm, including improving the pedestrian experience on Victoria and Gould

streets, which connect to Yonge Street. Ryerson's Public Realm Plan specifically points out the intersection of Downtown Yonge and Gould as a gateway to the publicly accessible street-level of the campus.

The principles of the Campus Public Realm Plan outline the need for a custom, consistent, signature public realm landscape with defined boundaries. The design must connect pedestrians and public transit to create an enjoyable walking experience in a flexible, accessible, active space.

The design must also create a safe environment – a foundational principle and basic requirement for an inclusive and welcoming campus. Safety is promoted by physically separating vehicle, cyclist and pedestrian movement, ensuring universal design principles of accessibility and wayfinding, and selecting design elements that improve the experience of all users, regardless of their level of mobility. Pedestrian-priority space incorporates



safety by design, and recognizes the value of welcoming a diversity of people into the public realm.

The Public Realm Plan gives Ryerson an opportunity to highlight its brand identity as a recognizable and reputable institution. A distinctive campus public realm could be a world-class example of urban campus design and set the benchmark for inclusivity and safety. It could bring to life the commitments and values that Ryerson outlines on paper.

As the campus implements its Public Realm Plan with funding and support from the City of Toronto, surrounding streets – like Downtown Yonge Street –

require attention as well, to ensure the plans and designs inform and support one another.

Pedestrian Public Realm Development at Ryerson

Ryerson has long been a leader in urban design for the pedestrian realm. The 2012 permanent pedestrianization of Gould Street at the centre of campus is a success story, with benefits not only for Ryerson students, but for the downtown core as a whole. Driven by student demand, safety reports and best practices in urban campus public realm, the revitalization of Gould Street serves as an example of how pedestrianization can benefit all downtown citizens.

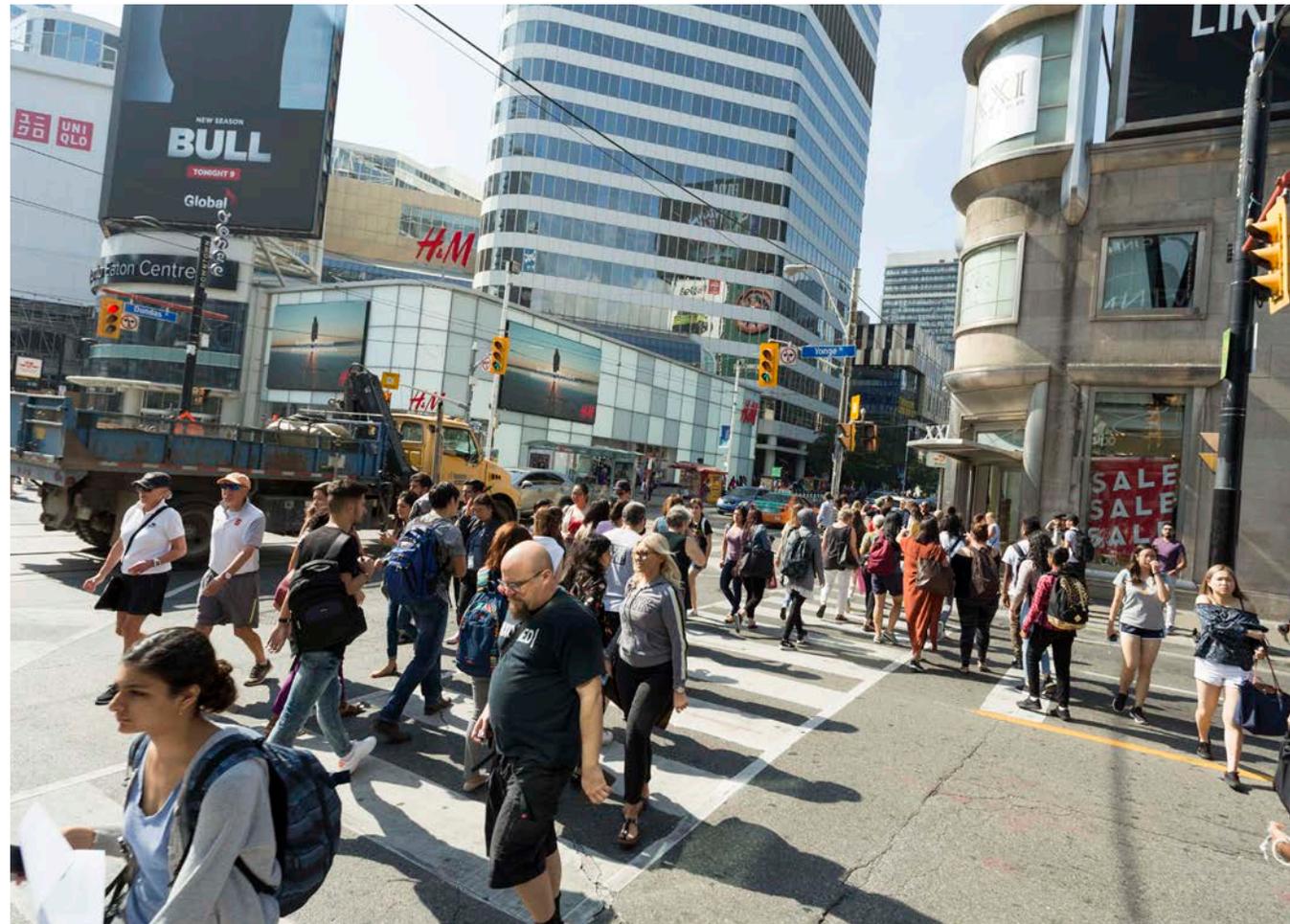
The project has received support from Campus Facilities Management, City Council, local businesses and the Ryerson Students Association. This indicates that collaboration can provide the momentum needed for such major changes.

The project is considered successful because of its major impacts on students and neighbours' lives: providing a safe place to cut across campus; a wide street for social interactions, performances,

parades, demonstrations, art and project installations; and a connected, cohesive pedestrian landscape. Today, the pedestrianized Gould Street hosts outdoor programs and events year-round, from Frosh Week info fairs to student design exhibitions to weekly summer farmers markets.

Ryerson Campus as a Marketplace of Ideas

Ryerson has over 800 full-time faculty and 43,000 students enrolled in over 100 programs. The institution is unique in its extensive applied research, projects, and initiatives such as the Social Ventures



Zone (SVZ) and the Digital Media Zone (DMZ), which are recognized globally. These spaces expand Ryerson's scope from conventional university functions to include a diverse mix of land uses and users, playing an important role in engaging the community.

It is important to communicate the full breadth of Ryerson's institutional brand, resources and creative energies to the rest of Toronto. The campus grounds and edges have the potential to showcase faculty and students' work and outreach to a larger community. For example, the award-winning Student Learning Centre (SLC), located on the corner of Gould and Yonge streets, is an inviting gateway to campus, with its inviting public realm and entryway and its interior public atrium and amphitheater space with windows to Yonge Street. The Ryerson City Building Institute, for example, hosts issue-based public "Meet-Ups" in this space that bring together hundreds of interested students, faculty and city builders to connect about urban issues and ideas.

Like the SLC, the Downtown Yonge Street corridor can help to establish a canvas to broaden the audience of Ryerson's research outputs and extend community outreach. A revitalized Downtown Yonge Street could invite contributions and collaborations with community partners by locating public-facing Ryerson activities, such as the DMZ, Student Centre, Visitors Centre, Career Centre and campus coffee shop, facing out onto Yonge Street.

In contrast to the commercial anchors along the street, the public realm shared by Downtown Yonge Street and Ryerson can become an ever-changing marketplace for innovative ideas, community engagement and research demonstrations and applications.

Case Studies

By looking to other examples where public realm transformations have improved campus life, Ryerson can gain insight into the potential benefits of a redesigned Downtown Yonge Street.

These case studies explore successful street designs on – or adjacent to – university campuses; identify key champions, stakeholders and design strategies that contributed to their success; and highlight positive outcomes for both campus and community. Lessons gleaned from these case studies can be applied to the specific context of Ryerson and Downtown Yonge Street to address the innate needs and challenges of creating an environment for high quality campus life.

Portland State University, Oregon

A leader in green infrastructure, active transportation, and campus life

Located in the heart of downtown, Portland State University (PSU) has developed a strong partnership with the City of Portland and other community stakeholders to improve campus life and the public realm. The City has been a proactive force in designing a University District in which the PSU campus is the anchor institution, urban innovation lab, and leader in sustainable development. The examples below highlight successful city-university integration and partnership.

Montgomery Green Street Redesign

The Montgomery Green Street project represents best practice for pedestrianization, neighbourhood activation, improved safety embedded in the built form, and increased flexibility of uses. Through a collaborative effort with PSU and other stakeholders, the redesign completed in 2009 features green infrastructure,

stormwater management, and integrated pedestrian spaces.



The redesign employs the successful model of a "Festival Street," already in use in Portland's Chinatown. This combines the benefits of wide streets with the flexibility to close the street to cars (and open up the space to pedestrians) with moveable furnishings, capacity to bring in food trucks and more. Prescribed design is limited in order to respond to specific needs of each block. The project also demonstrates that green infrastructure and low-impact development measures such as permeable surfaces and street trees can create hands-on opportunities for university students to become involved with stewardship and sustainability education.



and pedestrian needs reflect a microcosm of the city. The University District urban room emphasizes PSU's institutional identity, specifically by highlighting specific gateways, intersections and materials to mark connections with the campus.

Since the transit corridor has been extended to the campus, the light rail stations have become central gathering places that serve the student population and the surrounding neighbourhood.

Functional projects such as the Montgomery Green Street have attracted attention from community builders, and doubled as opportunities for rethinking the public realm.

Portland Transit Mall

The original Portland transit mall functioned for three decades as an important link through downtown, but was in need of renovation in order to address persistent issues related to pedestrianization, economic vitality and physical quality in the public realm. Through partnerships between governmental agencies, PSU, local citizen groups and business

associations, a redesign was completed in 2009, integrating the needs of pedestrians and street life with the transit infrastructure. An equity lens has been applied to support universal design, transit uses and accessibility.

Seven diverse neighbourhoods along the mall are redesigned as a series of vibrant sections or "urban rooms." Each room's unique character, history, sense of place



Impacts

- Cohesive design, architecture and details employed in the redesign of the public realm within the University District have strengthened a sense of place on campus and in the surrounding neighbourhood.
- Increased pedestrian safety and comfort furthers campus pride and creates a sense of belonging.
- The redesigned University District plays an important role as a place-maker, anchor and catalyst for sustainable development, showcasing PSU as a leader in green infrastructure, active transportation and public life.



McTavish Street Pedestrianization, McGill University, Montreal

Going car-free to green the campus

In early 2010, Montreal's Ville-Marie borough officially transferred management of McTavish Street to McGill University as part of McGill's Lower Campus Greening project. It was a milestone for the university, as McGill had been negotiating with the City for decades to enhance the pedestrian realm on McTavish. As a joint initiative of the municipal government and McGill University, auto traffic and parking was eliminated on McTavish Street and the space was transformed into a pedestrian zone. The project successfully integrates the campus into the larger-scale, city-wide pedestrian network, and achieves mutually supportive sustainability and public realm goals for both the University and the City.

The implementation of McGill's lower campus pedestrian zone – including the fully pedestrianized McTavish Street –

involved removing 150 parking spots and all bike lanes; building new city bike paths to divert cyclists around the campus; restricting vehicle access by limiting deliveries from between 7 and 11 AM; greening the area with plants, trees, flowerpots and community gardens; and transforming existing brutalist architecture with more pedestrian-friendly features, such as seating and landscaping.

The McTavish Street project involved retrofitting this public space for pedestrians, and replacing concrete and impermeable materials with green infrastructure. The natural landscaping was selected to be low-maintenance and park-like, greening the campus for pedestrians walking through and offering opportunities to stop and enjoy.





Impacts

- Pedestrians are now able to enjoy a virtually car-free lower campus, including McTavish Street.
- The pedestrian zone now attracts diverse users, and the improvements in campus livability have added value for students, faculty, staff and neighbours.
- Campus greening reduces carbon footprint and advances wellness initiatives for students, staff, faculty and visitors.
- Pairing changes to the pedestrian experience with green infrastructure and stormwater management improvements helps mitigate urban heat island effect.

Philadelphia's University City District & The Porch

Elevating infrastructure, building a place for people

Philadelphia's University City District is an urban innovation, education and culture district that is home to universities, hospitals, businesses, offices and a diverse population. The District is made possible through a collaboration with stakeholders, with all parties are working towards the same goal. It leads multiple ongoing public realm revitalization projects that aim to shape the physical and social character of University City and Philadelphia as a whole, including urban street life improvement projects identified by the education institutes.

The Porch

The Porch at 30th Street Station is a successful new pedestrian plaza, serving as an "outdoor living room" for nearby UPenn, Drexel University and University of the Sciences. The opportunity arose out of the PennDOT's bridge rehabilita-

tion project, which presented an opportunity to reimagine the surrounding physical environment at a more human scale. Mundane infrastructure maintenance was elevated by viewing the exercise through a social, public realm lens.

Opened in 2011, the Porch is a 30,000 square foot outdoor plaza, formerly occupied by 33 parking spots. To bring delight, whimsy and inclusive activity to the plaza, enhancements included moveable furniture and landscaping, bright colours and lights, and space for triangulated social interactions. Incremental change and ongoing data collection allowed multiple programming experiments to be piloted, with variations implemented regularly to meet the needs and responses of people using the site.

After the success of the small-scale roll-out came more investment and interest to incrementally build out a long-term plan. Programming at the Porch now runs annually from May until September, ranging from a farmers' market to food trucks, free concerts and performances to a set of beloved custom-built swings. Instead of allowing the cost of maintenance and landscaping to become a burden on Uni-

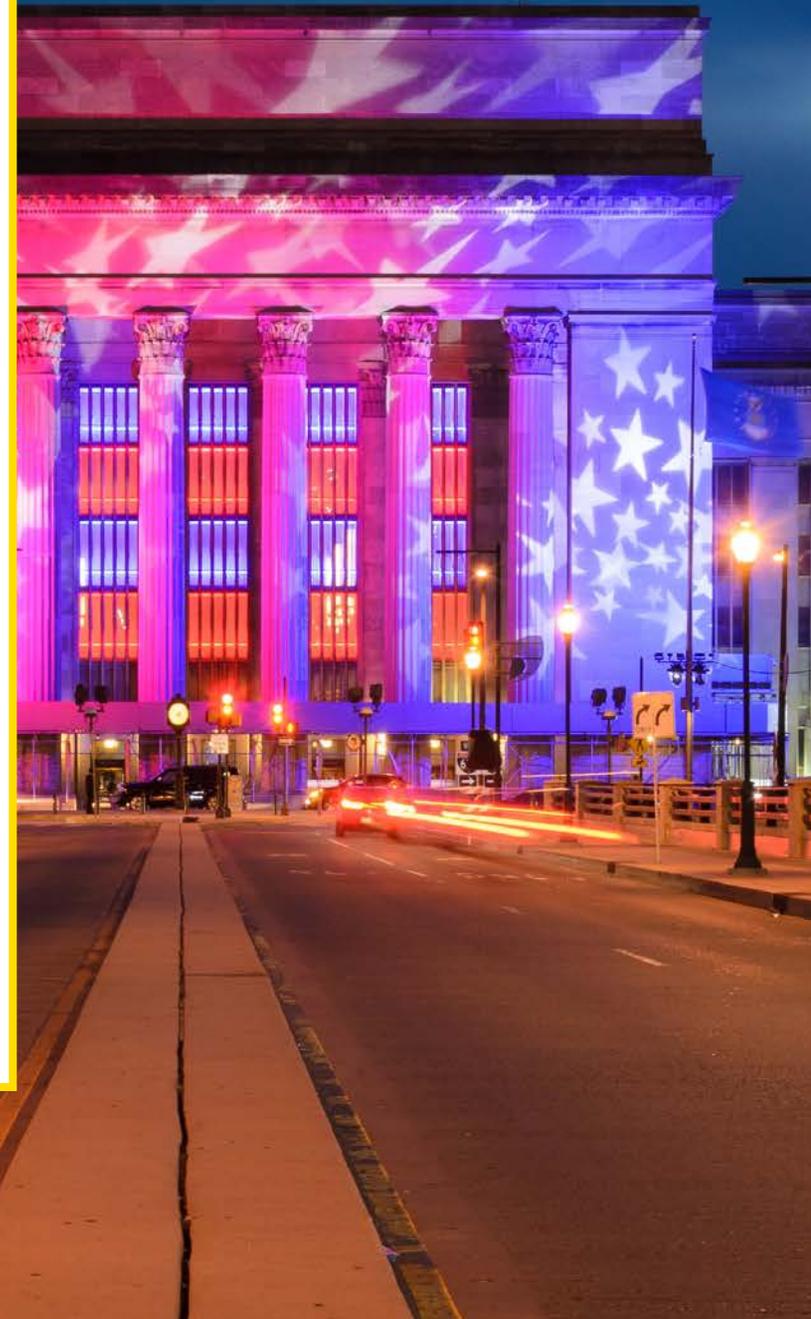
versity City, creative solutions leveraged local community leaders to tend to the space.

Each year, thousands of visitors stop by to enjoy the space, whether on their commute through the 30th Street Station or as a short rest on a walk between University City and downtown Philadelphia.



Impacts

- The Porch successfully attracts more and more people each year to enjoy the revitalized public realm. In 2015, over 150,000 visitors stopped to enjoy the Porch.
- By improving already busy gateways, plazas and pathways in the area, safety and enjoyment was improved for the area's 16,000 workers.
- Changes in the plaza have led to a 130% increase in usage during off-peak hours.
- The success of the Porch led to demand for improved public realm spaces in other parts of University City; projects are now underway to improve streets and public spaces at the nearby University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University campuses.
- Multi-stakeholder projects, including The Porch, have helped to strengthen partnerships between the City, Universities and communities.
- Ongoing stewardship from the community led to the creation of entirely new social enterprises, including a landscaping social venture that creates jobs and trains underemployed people in landscaping, helping them to build a career path.



Willcocks Common, University of Toronto

Pedestrian commons linking classrooms to the city

With a renewed interest in the pedestrian realm, the University of Toronto transformed Willcocks Street into the pedestrianized Willcocks Common in 2012. The redesign introduced new space to create welcome, vibrant campus access points, and to efficiently accommodate foot traffic on the pedestrian-dominated campus.

Physically, the street was transformed with a table-topping treatment, removing the curbs to create full accessibility. Moveable chairs and tables were added, as well as a series of walkways and grassy islands, half a basketball court and distinct exterior “rooms.” The space incorporates places to sit and rest, or to be active and play. Willcocks Common contributes to the public life of the campus and the surrounding neighbourhood, whereas previously the street parking and vehicle thoroughfare did not. Due to the project’s success, there is now a study to



look at feasibility of extending the pedestrianization further west to Spadina Avenue.

Similar to Ryerson’s Gould Street pedestrianization, the University of Toronto worked closely with the City of Toronto, which provided parking amendments, road closure and a small budget to kick off the project. The university looked to architecture students for designs that would transform the space. They came up

with large-scale pavement stencils of oak leaves, astroturf and moveable furniture.

The space satisfies the university’s desire to provide outdoor space for students spending time on campus. The enhanced pedestrian commons, and features for play and greenery are all elements which have been shown to provide mental and physical health benefits for students. The idyllic location is a heavily-used node connecting classrooms and residences with the city.

Impacts

- The pedestrianization of this campus space has improved safety, comfort and public life in the public realm on the university campus and city street.
- Elements of play, walkability and greenery in the space contribute to health and well-being for people all ages.
- The student-led design process to animate the space demonstrated successful student engagement. Built designs put practice-based learning on display.
- The success of the first phase has sparked discussion around a future expansion of Willcocks Common west to Spadina Avenue.



Gould Street Pedestrianization, Ryerson University

The heart of campus, freed from traffic

The permanent pedestrianization of Gould Street in 2012 was the result of campaigning by the student union at Ryerson University, former City Councillor for Ward 27 Kyle Rae and continued efforts by Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam.

The street was pedestrianized primarily due to concern for pedestrian safety caused by high-speed traffic cutting directly through the middle of Ryerson's campus. After seeing the benefits provided by closing Gould Street for fall orientation week, the Ryerson Students' Union (RSU) campaigned to have the street permanently closed to traffic. The initiative was added to Ryerson's Campus Master Plan in 2008. After an 18-month pilot program to study the impact of such an action, Toronto City Council approved the permanent closure of the street in 2012.



An assortment of moveable tables, chairs and umbrellas can now be found throughout Gould Plaza, providing students, faculty, staff and visitors a place to sit, eat, rest, study and socialize, creating a true outdoor living room in the heart of the campus. The plaza is now a central gathering place and features seasonal activities such as a summer farmers' market and ice skating on the adjacent Lake Devo. Parades, events, pop-up art installations and student work demonstrations animate the space from time to time. Today, Gould Plaza has become the focal point of the campus and the surrounding neighbourhood, a cherished place that connects people and the community.

Ongoing improvement of the space has been the focus of Ryerson's Public Realm

Plan. Specifically, key issues regarding public safety were emphasized in the Plan's themes of visibility, accessibility and physical safety. Through the Plan, Ryerson is exploring the installation of a "table-top" design on Gould that would raise the existing road surface to be level with the sidewalk. This would create a uniform pedestrian plane to increase accessibility and promote pedestrian use of the entire street space – not just the sidewalks.

As a successful public realm design exercise in close proximity to Yonge Street, Gould Plaza provides a unique framework for how to test, phase-in and refine street transformations for pedestrians.



Impacts

- Safety increased dramatically by eliminating fast-moving vehicles travelling through the heart of campus, where there is a high volume of students and other pedestrians .
- Gould Plaza provides much-needed space for a large variety of events and pedestrian activities to meet the diverse needs of students, faculty, staff and visitors.
- Significant increase of pedestrian traffic has been observed since the pedestrianization of the Gould Street.
- A greater connection between campus and the city has been achieved through the creation of a central gathering place and a gateway to the campus.

Robson Square, Vancouver

Connecting campus, community and civic spaces

Vancouver's Robson Square was built in the early 1970s as a pedestrianized space. The square connects the provincial law courts, Vancouver Art Gallery, the Robson shopping district and the UBC downtown campus, incorporating multiple public/civic/educational functions in one precinct. But despite its original intentions, Robson Street, which cuts right through the heart of the Square, had been open to vehicle traffic for decades.

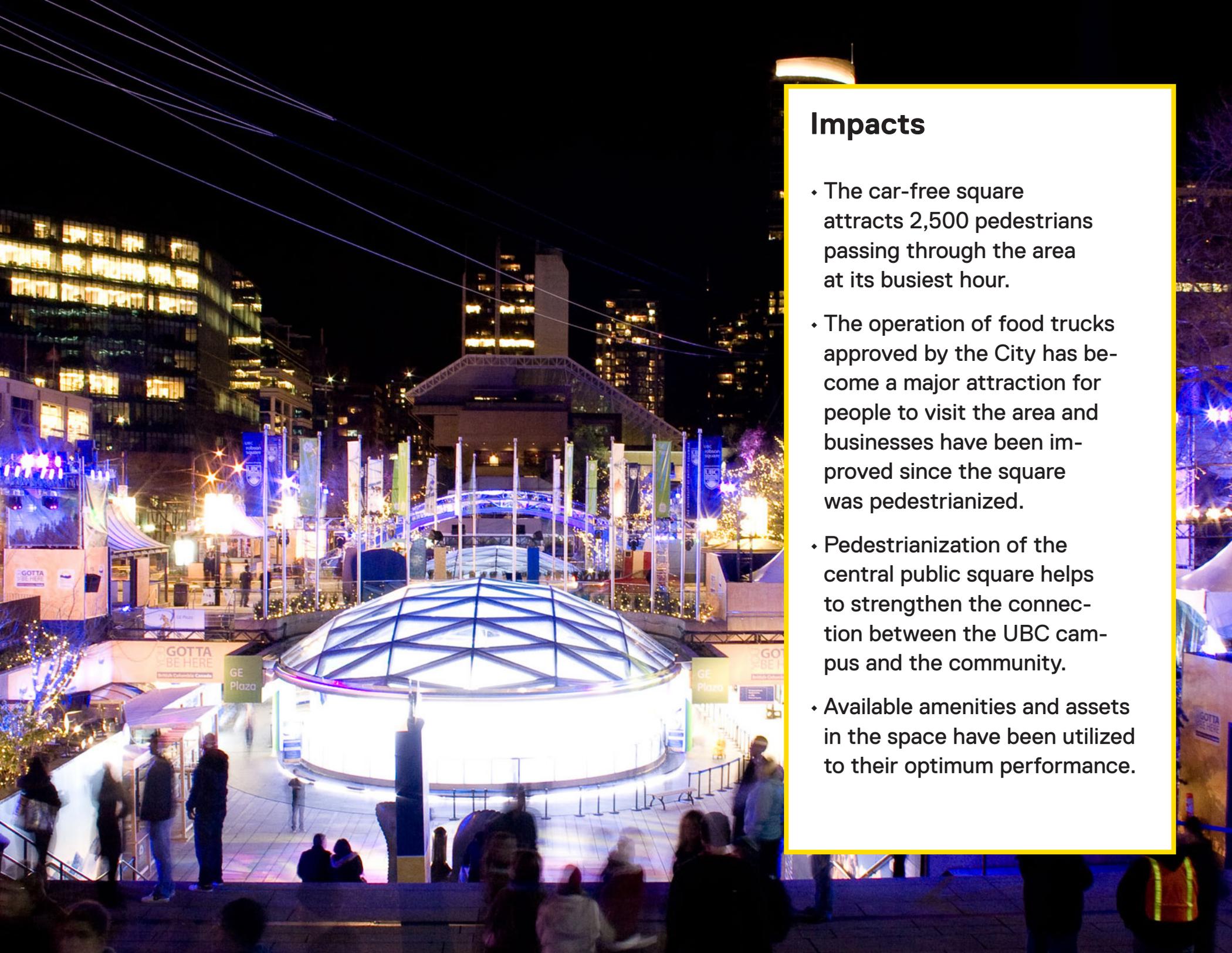
Beginning in summer 2009, the City introduced seasonal summer closures of Robson Street. Robson Street was an ideal target for pedestrianization, as the Square already contained many amenities of a successful outdoor square: an ice rink, water features, trees and landscaping, steps that double as seating, outdoor vendors and food carts and more. The nearby UBC campus also presented great potential for pedestrian realm improvement and better campus-city integration.

The seasonal summer closures of Robson Street ran successfully between 2009 and 2016, with City Council approving a motion for permanent closure in 2016. The City is in support of keeping the square car-free in an effort to uphold its goals of promoting connection, active transportation and pedestrian gathering spaces.

By 2019, Robson Street and Square are set to undergo a transformation to enhance

public realm amenities and connections to the UBC campus and surrounding businesses. Plans include installing a level surface with unique pavers, clearly marked block ends and gateways, and flexible seating features. The City plans to monitor the use of the space to ensure it continues to be safe and public-oriented.





Impacts

- The car-free square attracts 2,500 pedestrians passing through the area at its busiest hour.
- The operation of food trucks approved by the City has become a major attraction for people to visit the area and businesses have been improved since the square was pedestrianized.
- Pedestrianization of the central public square helps to strengthen the connection between the UBC campus and the community.
- Available amenities and assets in the space have been utilized to their optimum performance.

Findings

Impact of public realm investment on urban campus and city building

As these case studies demonstrate, a pedestrian-oriented street redesign can have far-reaching benefits for an adjacent campus and the surrounding community. They collectively illustrate an optimistic vision for how Ryerson can not only benefit from the revitalization of Downtown Yonge Street, but also further its own leadership in city building.

Gleaned from the case studies, the following findings outline how Ryerson and the neighbourhood stand to benefit from a pedestrian-priority public realm transformation of Downtown Yonge Street. By recognizing and responding to these findings, Ryerson and Downtown Yonge Street will be well-positioned for success.

People First: Improved safety and street life

A pedestrian-friendly environment entices vibrant street life, and well-used public spaces create a sense of safety and community. Safety is a strong rationale for pedestrianization in public realm design and planning, and a strategic priority for Ryerson – to reduce crimes of opportunity, to address underutilized dead zones in alleys and walkways, and to enhance nighttime insecurity. Improving pedestrian safety along Yonge Street could create a sense of pride and belonging, and enhance public life in the neighbourhood and campus as a whole.

Downtown Yonge Street can become a great street by putting pedestrians first and redesigning its infrastructure and amenities accordingly. A pedestrian-friendly Downtown Yonge Street could support a shift towards active transportation (walking, cycling, transit) for those travelling to the neighbourhood or to campus.

Going Green: A healthier and more sustainable environment

By sharing responsibility for the environmental impacts of the redesign, Downtown Yonge Street stakeholders – including Ryerson – have an opportunity to make impactful changes and reduce the carbon footprint of the entire neighbourhood. The redesign process also offers opportunities for Ryerson students and community members to participate in sustainable education and stewardship.

If Ryerson were to engage in the Downtown Yonge Street improvements, it could open opportunities to partner with the City of Toronto and the Downtown Yonge BIA on longer-term sustainability initiatives in the neighbourhood. For example, promoting green infrastructure and pedestrian-focused environmental design encourages carbon footprint reduction and advances wellness initiatives. Utilizing pedestrian-priority pathways as linear parks or green streets can further the benefits to the city. Pedestrian-friendly urban spaces also help diversify mobility options and promote active transportation.

Space for All: Increased opportunities for equity, diversity and inclusion

Situated in one of the most diverse and multicultural cities in the world, Ryerson takes the job of community engagement, collaboration and accommodation of diverse needs seriously, and has championed the values of equity, diversity and inclusion in its Academic Plan. Public spaces in and around campus must reflect these values and be physically accessible to suit the diverse needs of students, staff, faculty and the surrounding community. Equal and inclusive access to the campus space is an indicator of equal and inclusive access to the city, a right that Ryerson should promote for all urban dwellers.

Inscribing diversity and inclusion into public realm design along Yonge Street could create spaces to be enjoyed by all, and support Ryerson's goal to advance equity. Applying an equity lens to support universal design and accessibility can create an inclusive and welcoming environment. Throughout the redesign process, recognition of colonial past and active efforts for Indigenous truth and reconciliation will advance both the City and the University's vision and values.

Community Canvas: Deepened campus-city integration

Ryerson must take advantage of its downtown location and proximity to Downtown Yonge Street and seize the opportunity presented by the public realm surrounding campus: as a place for students to learn from real world issues and for the public to engage in and contribute to Ryerson's learning environment. Healthy, active, inclusive and sustainable public realm design adjacent to campus can help bring faculty, students and staff into contact with the broader community and encourage the public to use Ryerson as a downtown resource for lifelong learning. This is a two-fold opportunity for Ryerson to showcase its institutional distinctiveness to the city and to benefit from all that Toronto has to offer.

University campuses are changing in attitude and design; the once inward-looking institutions have turned to look outward to the communities that surround them. Successful city-campus planning can create knowledge districts that promote idea exchange and partnership, share resources and interests, engage the public, improve neighbourhoods and shape

a shared public realm. Downtown Yonge Street holds opportunities to design intentional, built-in features (e.g., activated street space with programming, transparent building facades) that blend institutional uses with city space.

The Downtown Yonge Street public realm improvement provides opportunities for Ryerson to communicate its core values and unique identity in a consistent and unified way.

The City Building Brand: Stronger institutional identity

Ryerson is a leader in education enhanced by real-world knowledge and experience. The campus is rich in innovation zones, social hubs and creative uses of new and existing buildings. A consistent, signature brand identity across the campus helps convey Ryerson's story.

The Downtown Yonge Street public realm improvement provides opportunities for Ryerson to communicate its core values and unique identity in a consistent and

unified way. Integrating Ryerson's brand identity with the Downtown Yonge corridor could foster community connections between Ryerson and the neighbourhood, increase awareness for passers-by about Ryerson's work in the community and enhance the university's reputation as a city builder.

High quality urban design can reinforce institutional identity and core values. Specifically, public realm enhancements (e.g., cohesive design, architecture and details, transparency at-grade, uniform and branded wayfinding, explicit gateways) can promote a recognizable brand for Downtown Yonge Street and its local businesses.

A Four-Season Space: Opportunities for year-round design and programming

Ryerson's campus is active year-round and should provide outdoor spaces to reflect that. Through careful design of the public realm both on campus and at its edges, Ryerson can continue to activate sites of social activity despite cold or darkness, as was accomplished with Lake Devo as a site of year-round use.

Planning and designing the public realm to be comfortable even in the darkest and coldest months supports use of space in all seasons

Renewed focus on the pedestrian experience can support year-round opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. The Downtown Yonge Street public realm should enhance year-round enjoyment by considering sun, wind and shadow analysis in all seasons, providing flexible indoor and outdoor spaces and programming, and using of light and colour strategically. Including winter-specific design solutions as early as possible in the design process can help to reduce long term maintenance costs and promote all-season accessibility for ageing populations and populations with disabilities.

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Endnotes

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