



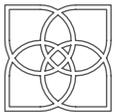
SOUTH YONGE STREET CORRIDOR

Streetscape Master Plan Study *Update*

Phase 6: Executive Summary



Consultant



EDA
Collaborative Inc.

August 2021

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Introduction

Our Vision...

Yonge Street is at the forefront of York Region's city building initiatives. Designated as a Regional Corridor, Yonge is envisioned to be a pedestrian and cyclist-friendly street, lined with a lively mix of housing, shops, offices and meeting places. The proposed Yonge North Subway Extension, linking Richmond Hill Centre to Finch Station, will serve to connect this vital corridor with other rapid transit initiatives including the proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) on Yonge Street, north of Bantroy Avenue to Major Mackenzie Drive, serving York Region's diverse communities, and providing linkages to the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area and beyond.

The need for a detailed streetscape master plan for the Yonge Street corridor north of Steeles Avenue was identified by York Region and supported by the local municipalities including the City of Vaughan, the City of Markham and the City of Richmond Hill. The local municipalities each passed Council resolutions requesting that York Region commit funding to undertake a comprehensive and detailed streetscape study including an implementation and funding strategy for the South Yonge Street corridor and to expedite initiation of the study to ensure its completion and implementation in coordination with the construction of subway related works in consultation with each of the other local municipalities. These resolutions are founded on several key factors:



Figure 1: Perspective of Yonge Steeles Gateway

Investment in Transit

- York Region has identified the Yonge Street corridor as a high priority for investment in higher-order transit (BRT and Yonge Street Subway);
- The cost effectiveness of public transit depends on high levels of transit ridership, and ridership levels are often supported by an urban environment which is attractive, pedestrian-friendly and complementary to transit service in terms of density, built form, roadway design and streetscape development;
- The detailed design of Yonge Street BRT facilities began early in 2009;
- The reconstruction of a significant part of the Yonge Street right-of-way will provide an opportunity to incorporate streetscape improvements during construction of the transit facilities;

Upcoming Development

- York Region has the authority to coordinate and implement a comprehensive streetscape improvement program for the Yonge Street corridor;
- Each of the area where municipalities have undertaken intensification and urban design studies for the Yonge Street corridor have been integrated into the streetscape master plan;
- Streetscape improvements will facilitate redevelopment and support the proposed transit initiatives.

Introduction



Figure 2: Streetscape Precedents

This study coordinates, integrates and updates the previous studies undertaken for areas adjacent to and along Yonge Street into a cohesive and unified streetscape design strategy for Yonge Street itself. Key objectives of the Master Plan Update include:

- A bold, sustainable and achievable plan for Yonge Street.
- A vision and approach that support and advances implementation of various planning and urban design visions consistent with approved on-going local municipal studies, taking into consideration the design standards adopted by Regional Council for the Viva system.
- A strong gateway at Yonge Street and Steeles Avenue.
- Safe and secured on boulevard cycling facilities linking a hierarchy of spaces along Yonge Street – gateways, transit plaza / nodes, public spaces, street level arcades, facades, landmark buildings, amenities to create a comfortable, sustainable and distinctive urban environment, setting the stage for transit-oriented development (TOD) surrounding each station.
- An implementation and phasing strategy including costs for Regional and Municipal Capital budgets.

Vision Statement

Vision for Yonge Street

The South Yonge Street Corridor Streetscape Master Update Plan Update will result in a “Main Street” for York Region that is Bold; Sustainable; and Achievable.

BOLD

The Master Plan Update will establish a new standard in streetscape design that others will regard as “an urban design masterpiece”.



SUSTAINABLE

Yonge Street Corridor will showcase sustainable design innovation and green infrastructure making it a “people place” that supports community identity, human health, human comfort and social interaction.



ACHIEVABLE

The Master Plan Update establishes an urban design implementation strategy focused on achieving the long term design intent for the streetscape and the adjacent development sites, encouraging participation from local municipalities and other stakeholders.



Design Philosophy

Access and Wayfinding

The access and wayfinding philosophy for the South Yonge Street Corridor Streetscape Master Plan Update emphasizes the need to balance the role of Yonge Street as a regional street with increased neighbourhood level access through provision of generous pedestrian spaces, integrated and safe cycling facilities and great service to all users - those who live, work, play and visit the Yonge Street corridor.



Built Form, Place-Making and Public Art

The “Place-Making” philosophy for the South Yonge Street Corridor Streetscape Master Plan Update will focus on establishing a strong and cohesive streetscape that supports a “hybrid” urban experience that authentically “samples” the series of existing and anticipated character areas along Yonge Street. These include the primary intensification centres at the Yonge-Steeles Centre and the Richmond Hill-Langstaff Centre, the historic Thornhill local centre intensification area and the Yonge Street primary intensification corridor segments that link the primary and local centres.



Fundamentals of Street Design

The street design for the South Yonge Street Corridor Streetscape Master Plan Update will become a place that people will “travel to” rather than “travel through” as the implementation of the subway becomes a reality. It will combine the functional requirements of street design in an urban setting with the qualitative elements that ensure the street is accessible, becomes a destination both day and night and creates vibrant social spaces that define community focus.



Design Philosophy

Green Streets and Sustainable Design

The sustainable design philosophy for the South Yonge Street Corridor Streetscape Master Plan Update encompasses the natural and physical environment, the social environment and the economic environment. Green infrastructure offers a number of benefits including mitigation of urban heat island effects, reduction of energy demands, reduction of stormwater flows, sequestration of carbon, filtration of air, and water pollutants as well as a range of aesthetic improvements, social, community and economic benefits.



Implementation and Maintenance

The implementation strategy for the South Yonge Street Corridor Streetscape Master Plan Update will focus on achieving the long term vision through a series of prospective steps. This will require a collaborative approach across the jurisdictions as well as enforcement of development standards to achieve the goals of the plan and create a consistent design expression for the streetscape. The approach to implementation is based on actual program and project schedules and financial forecasts for the subway construction that is integrated and supported by policy at all levels, establishes a clear time frame for development and is widely supported by the community.



Concept Plan

Linked District Approach

The concept plan is a Linked District Approach that is centered on one strong street that recognizes local character and features. The districts, or character areas, are linked with threshold zones that provide the appropriate transition between each area. Streetscape elements are generally consistent throughout the study corridor; however, variations in some elements may occur where special conditions are present, such as street tree planting, median location and parking. As Metrolinx is currently exploring subway locations with York Region and local municipalities, subway station locations from SYMP 2012 are used for this SYMP Update. The Streetscape Master Plan Update is designed in a manner that can evolve to wherever the subway station locations end up.

Figure 3: Precedent Imagery

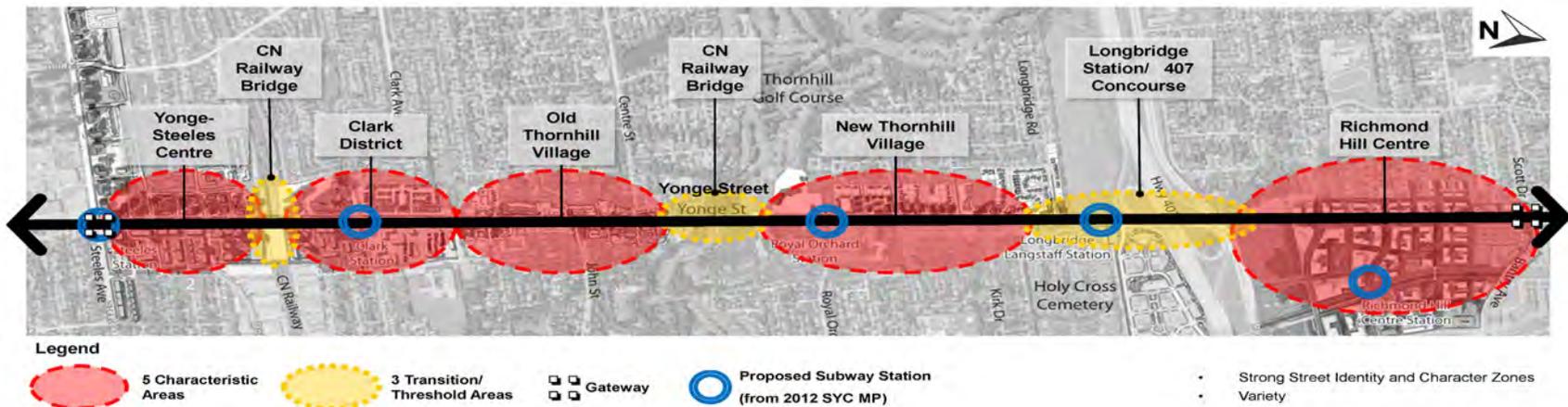


Figure 4: Linked Concept Diagram

Streetscape Master Plan

Linked Districts

The street design for the South Yonge Street Corridor Streetscape Master Plan Update will become a place that people will “travel to” rather than “travel through” as the implementation of the Yonge North Subway Extension becomes a reality. It combines the functional requirements of street design in an urban setting with the qualitative elements that ensure the street

is accessible, becomes a destination both day and night and creates vibrant social spaces that define community focus. The function and nature of Yonge Street will change substantially once the proposed Yonge North Subway Extension is completed. York Region’s “Transit-first” philosophy that the views the automobile as secondary is emphasized here.

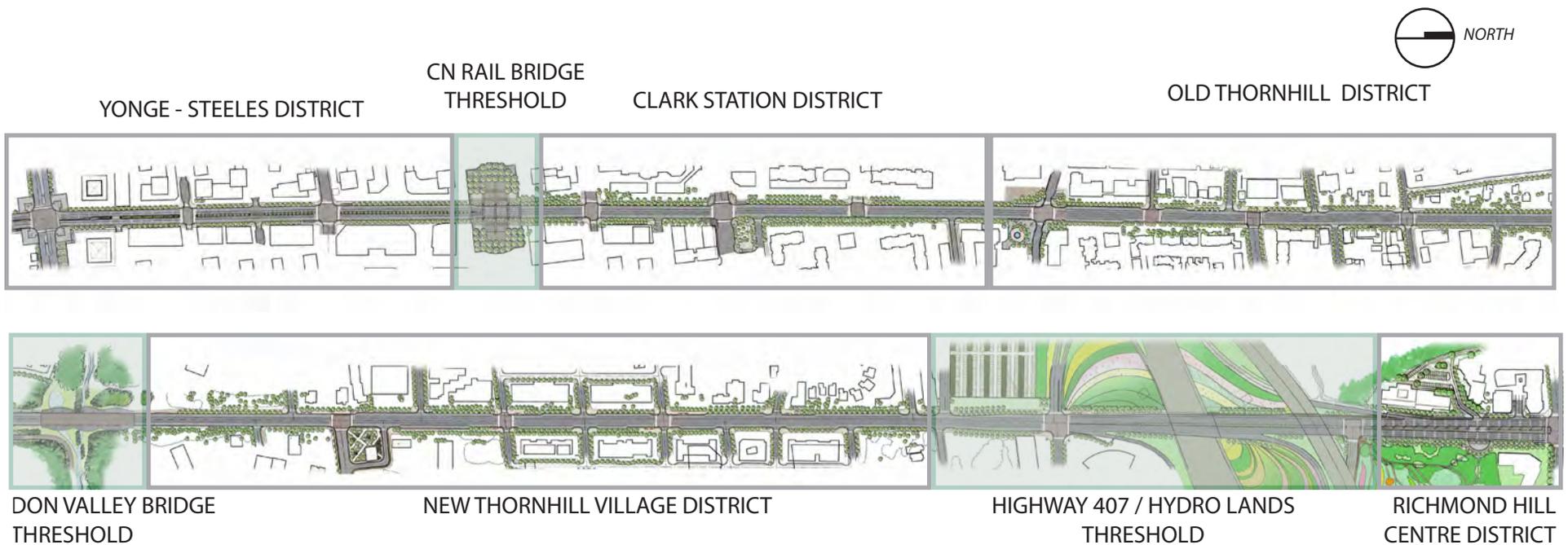


Figure 5: District Structural Plan

Master Plan Elements

Unifying Elements

Unifying streetscape elements will be located throughout the right-of-way zone along the length of Yonge Street, in both the street design of the roadway and the boulevard. The roadway is primarily the vehicular zone, while the boulevard is generally the pedestrian zone. These elements will provide continuity along the entire length of the streetscape, while providing certain variations within the special character areas.

Character Area Philosophy

Three strategies are required to create distinct identity for the character areas and thresholds along Yonge Street – one that builds on existing character in some districts, one that creates appropriate new character in other districts and one that leverages the opportunities inherent in the infrastructure thresholds.

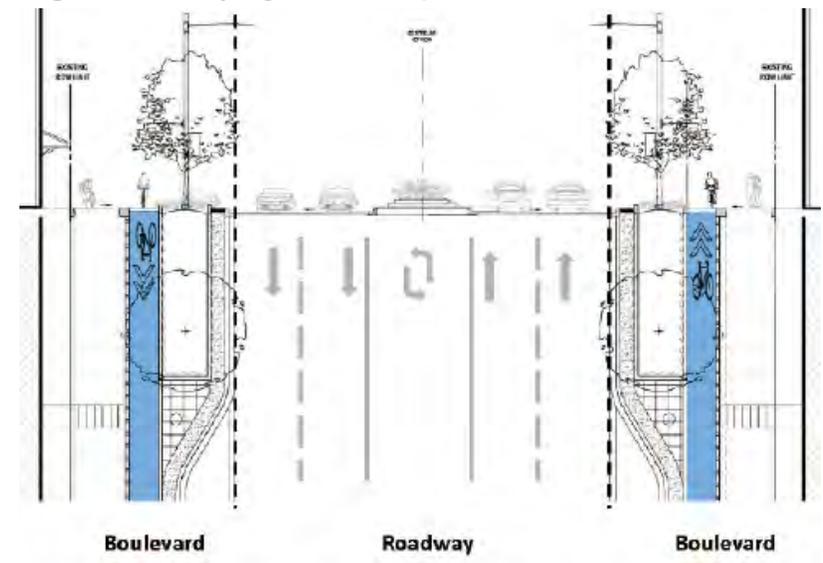
Strategy 1 - Protect and Enhance Existing Character

Further developing the existing character areas such as the Clark Station district, Old Thornhill and New Thornhill districts to enhance their distinct characters will advance the overall streetscape identity and provide variation and along the corridor.

Strategy 2 - Create New Character

Developing urban character treatments for places along Yonge Street that are currently slated for major re-development including the Steeles to CN Rail Bridge district, the Longbridge / Langstaff district

Figure 6: Unifying Streetscape Elements



and the Richmond Hill Centre will also be important to the overall continuity and success of the streetscape plan. Utilizing a range of consistent strategies and techniques for these challenging areas will help to unify Yonge Street throughout the study area.

Strategy 3 - Leverage Infrastructure

In addition, the ability to “leverage the opportunities” related to the major infrastructure threshold components represents the other important strategy. The CN Bridge offers the possibility of creating a much needed public space along Yonge Street. The Don River Bridge provides excellent viewing into the natural areas of the valley as well as opportunities for pedestrian access to the valley. The Highway 407/Hydro corridor presents the chance to create a large scale, bold landscape expression.

Distinct Character Areas

Yonge Steeles Gateway District

- Distinctive Urban Character
- 4 Corner Treatment
- Vibrant Streetscape and People Friendly Spaces

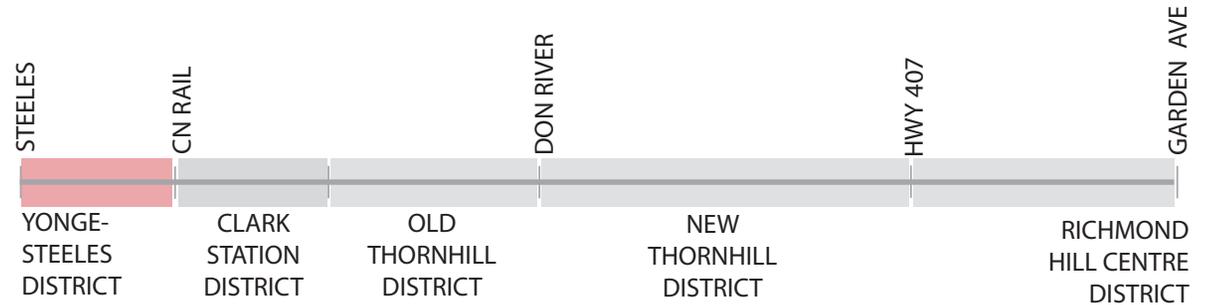


Figure 7, 8, 9, 10: Precedent Imagery



Median Treatment



Lighting Effects



Planted Median



Boulevard Tree Planting

Key Plan

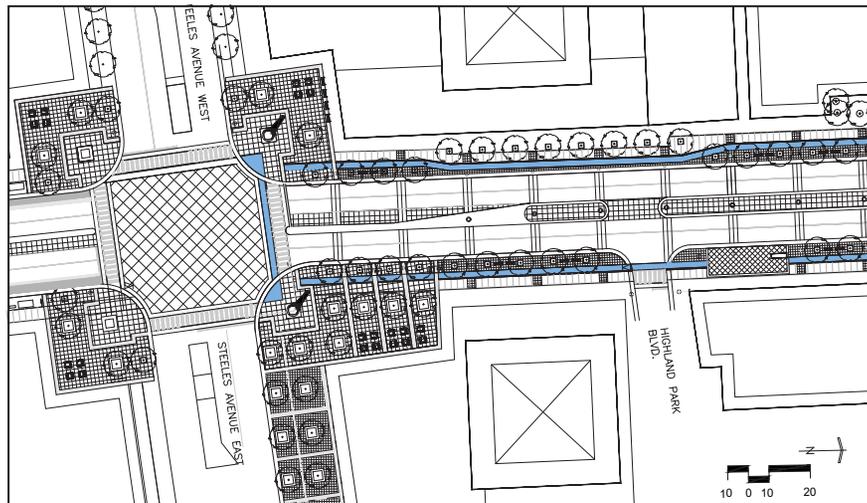


Figure 11: Plan View of Yonge Steeles Gateway

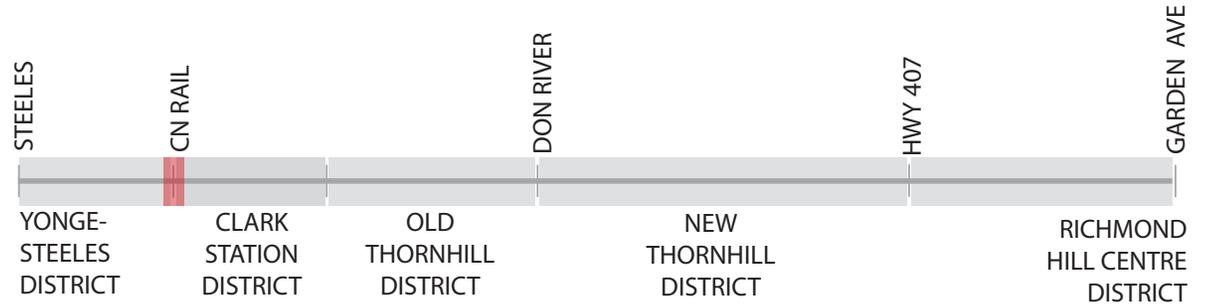


Figure 12: Perspective of Yonge Steeles Gateway

Distinct Character Areas

CN Rail Bridge Threshold

- Elevated Platform Park
- Pedestrian Viewing



Key Plan

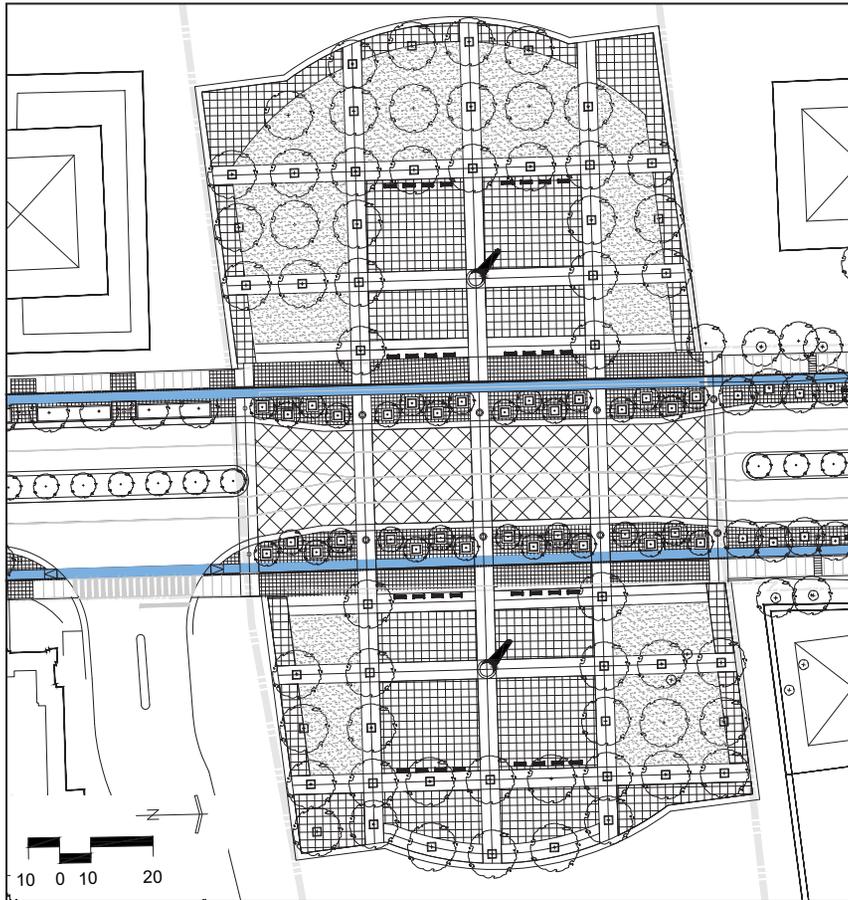
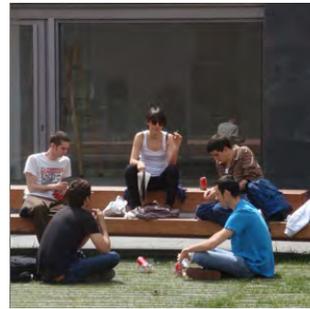
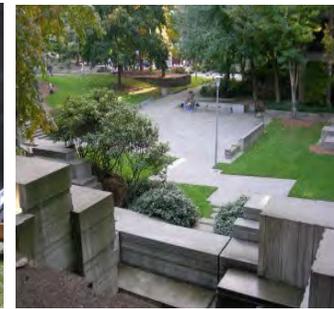


Figure 16: Plan View of CN Rail Bridge Threshold



Seating Areas



Architectural Features



Paving Palette



Finishes and Colour Palette



Specialty Lighting

Figures 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22: Precedent Imagery

Distinct Character Areas

Clark Station District

- Urban Transit Plaza

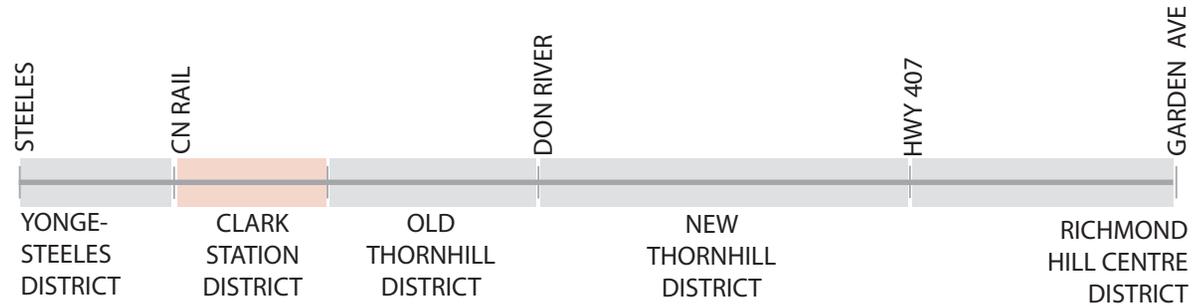


Figure 19, 20, 21: Precedent Imagery



Entrance Plaza



Street Trees



Specialty Lighting

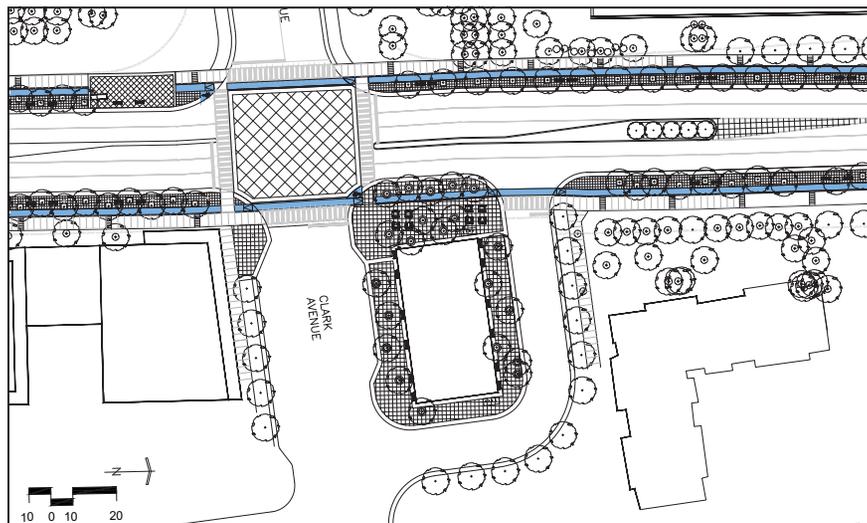


Figure 23: Plan View of Clark Station District

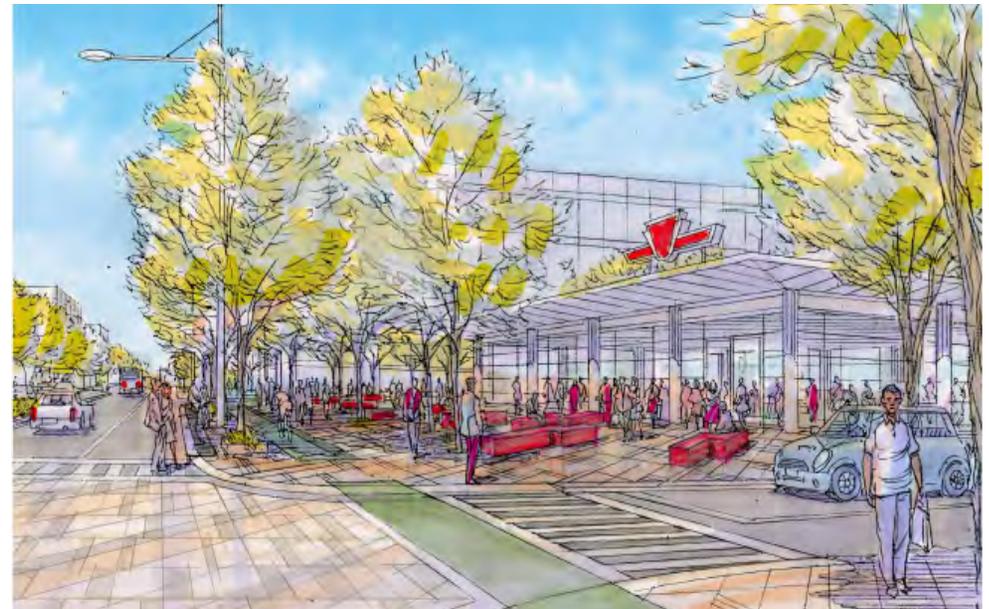


Figure 24: Perspective of Clark Station District

Distinct Character Areas

Old Thornhill Village District

- Heritage Community Character
- Streetscape as Integrator
- Old and New

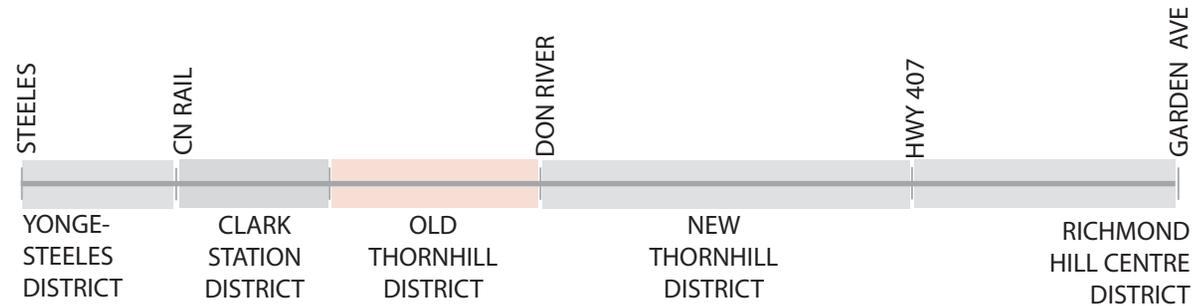


Figure 28, 29, 230: Precedent Imagery



Interpretive Signage



Specialty Planting



Paving Palette

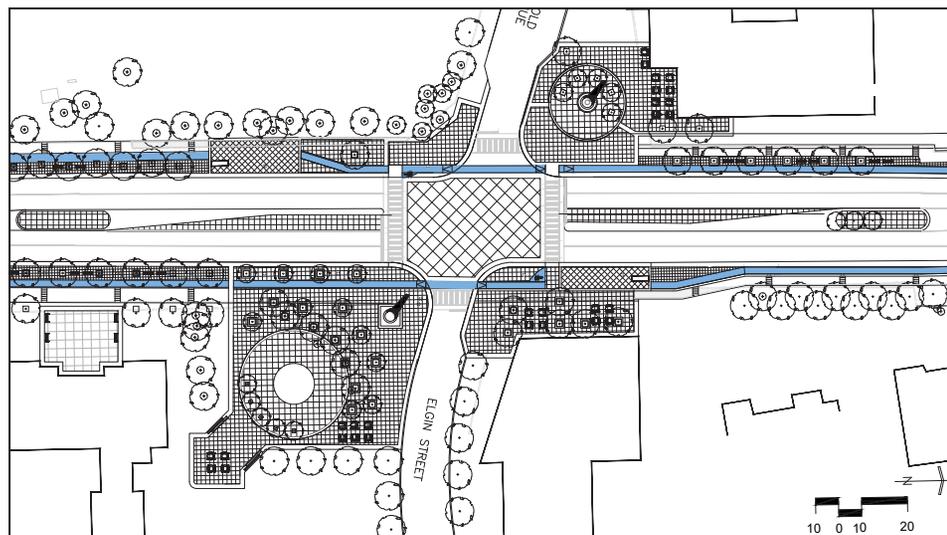


Figure 31: Plan View of Old Thornhill Village District



Figure 32: Perspective of Old Thornhill Village District

Distinct Character Areas

Streetscape Conditions

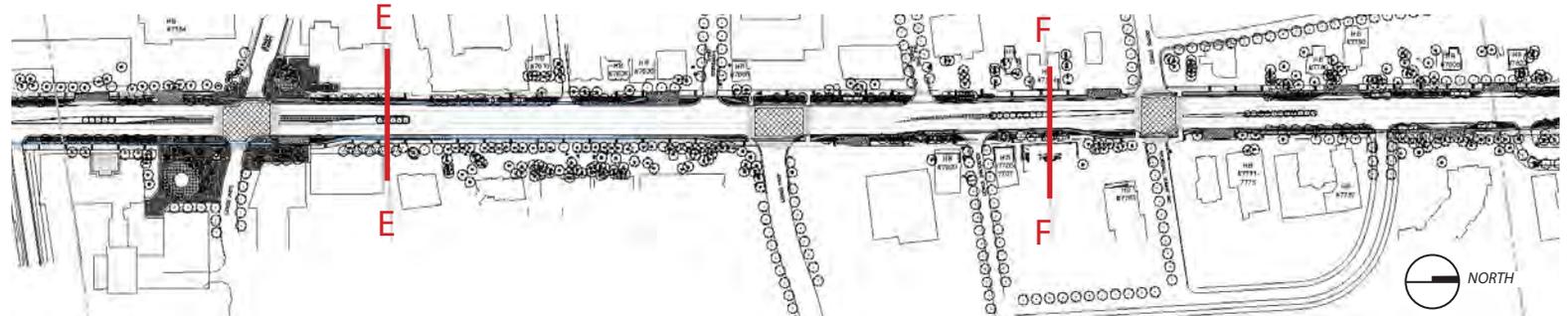


Figure 33: Key Plan - Sections

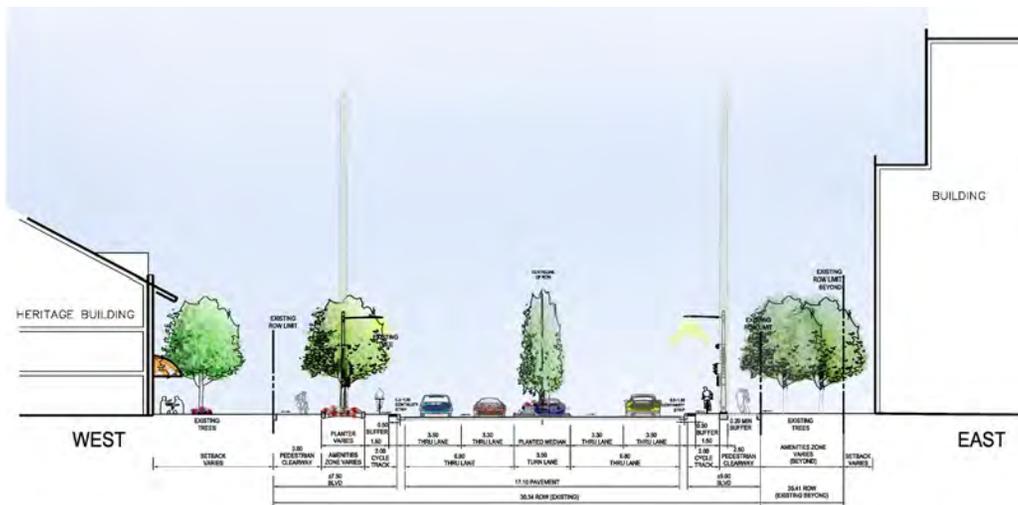


Figure 34: Section E-E
Old Thornhill- Approach to Intersection

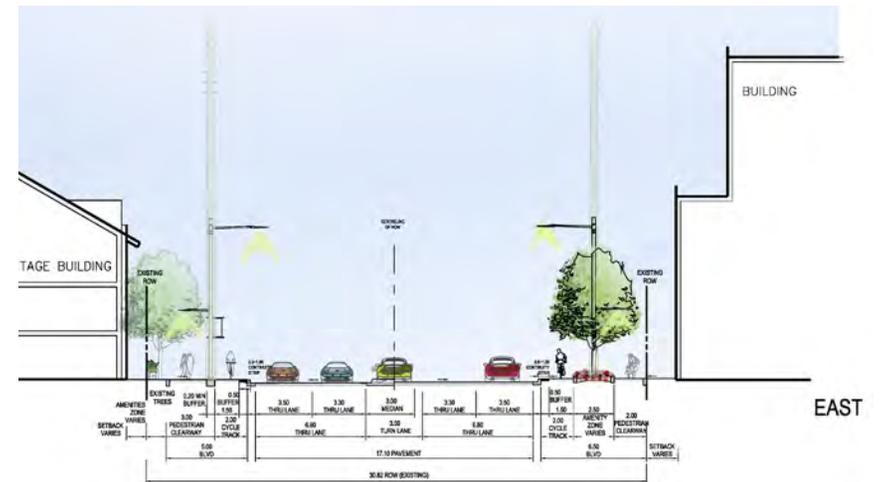


Figure 35: Section F-F
Old Thornhill (Heritage)

Distinct Character Areas

Don River Bridge Threshold

- Enhance Natural Valley Features
- Public Art as Infrastructure
- Pedestrian Connection and Viewing

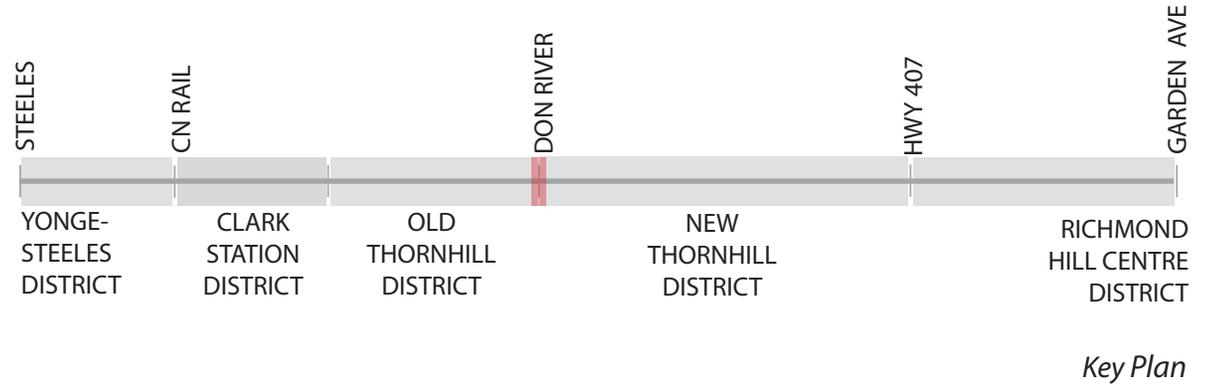
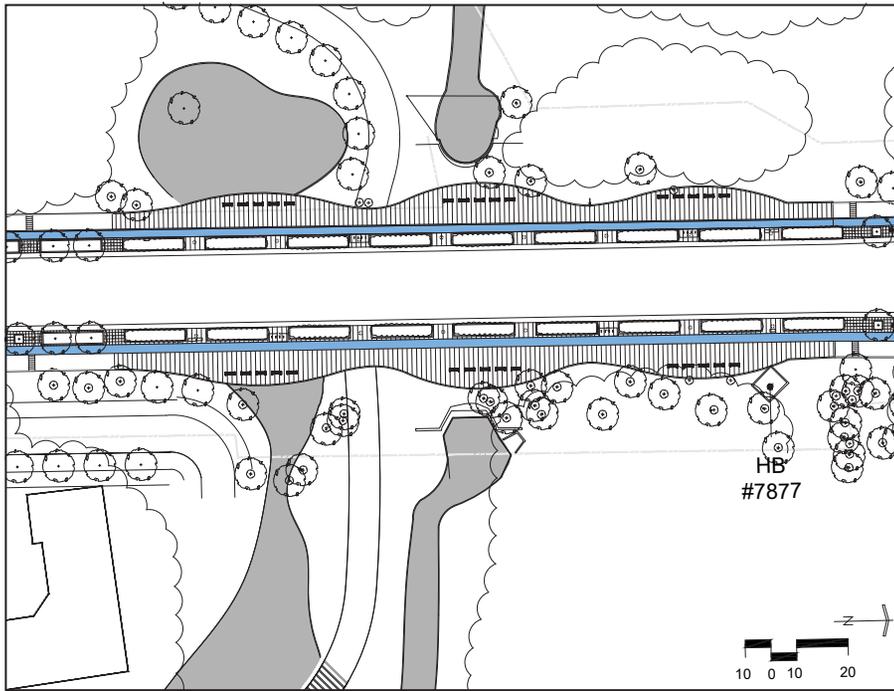


Figure 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42: Precedent Imagery



Specialty Lighting



Public Art Elements



Planting



Materials Palette



Materials Palette



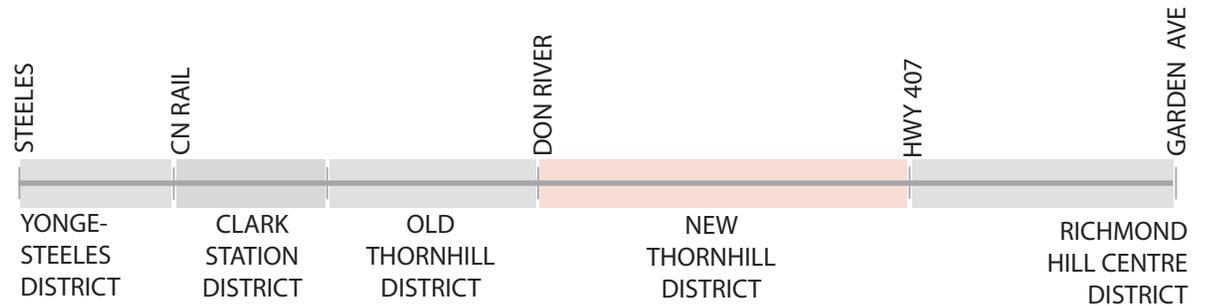
Viewing Areas

Figure 36: Plan View of Don River Bridge Threshold

Distinct Character Areas

New Thornhill District

- Transition from Don River
- Double Row of Street Trees
- Mid-block Links



Key Plan

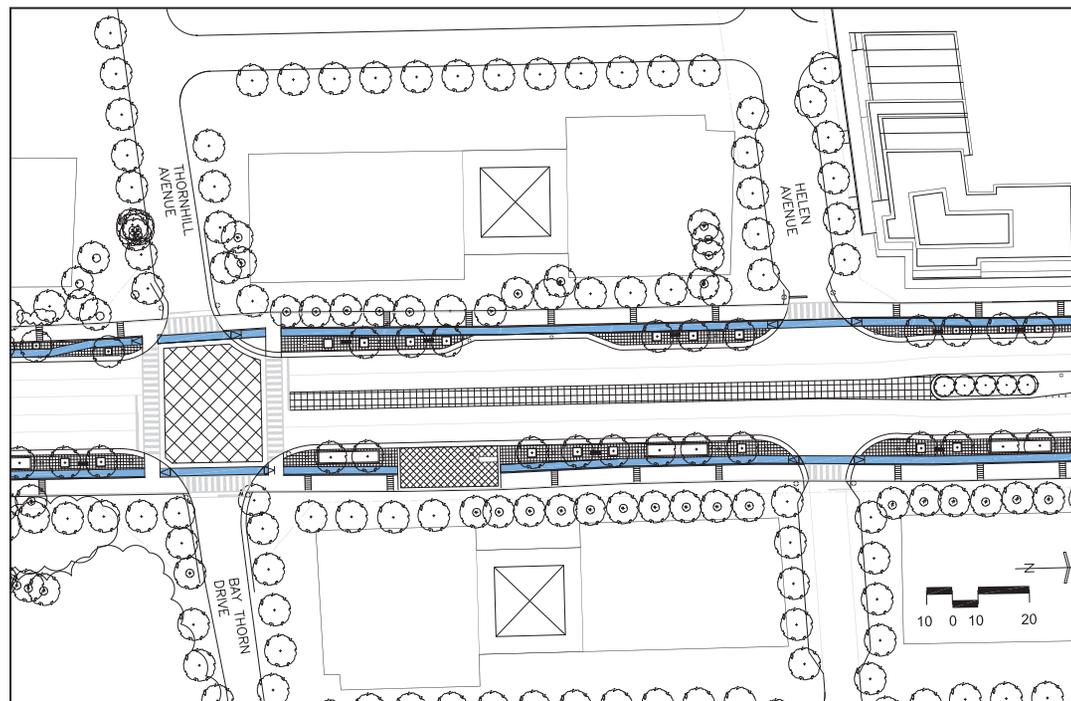


Figure 43: Plan View of New Thornhill District

Figure 44, 45, 46, 47: Precedent Imagery



Specialty Lighting



Street Tree Planting



Seating Areas



Specialty Paving

Distinct Character Areas

Streetscape Conditions

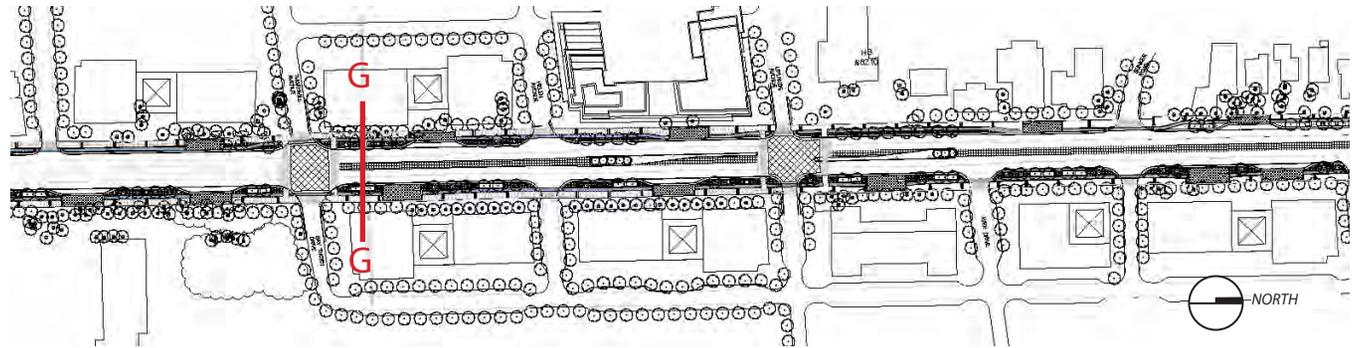


Figure 48: Key Plan - Sections



Figure 49: Section G-G New Thornhill

Distinct Character Areas

Highway 407 Threshold

- 407 Hydro Art Park
- Pedestrian and Open Space Connections

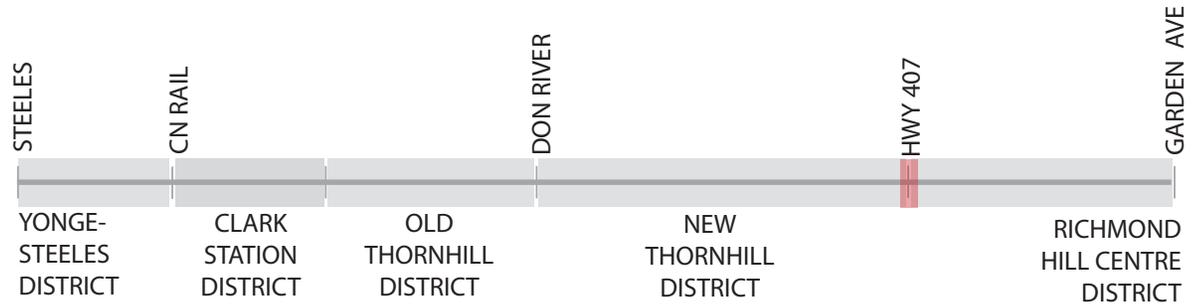


Figure 50, 51, 52, 53: Precedent Imagery

Key Plan



Public Art



Planting Walls



Planting



Specialty Lighting

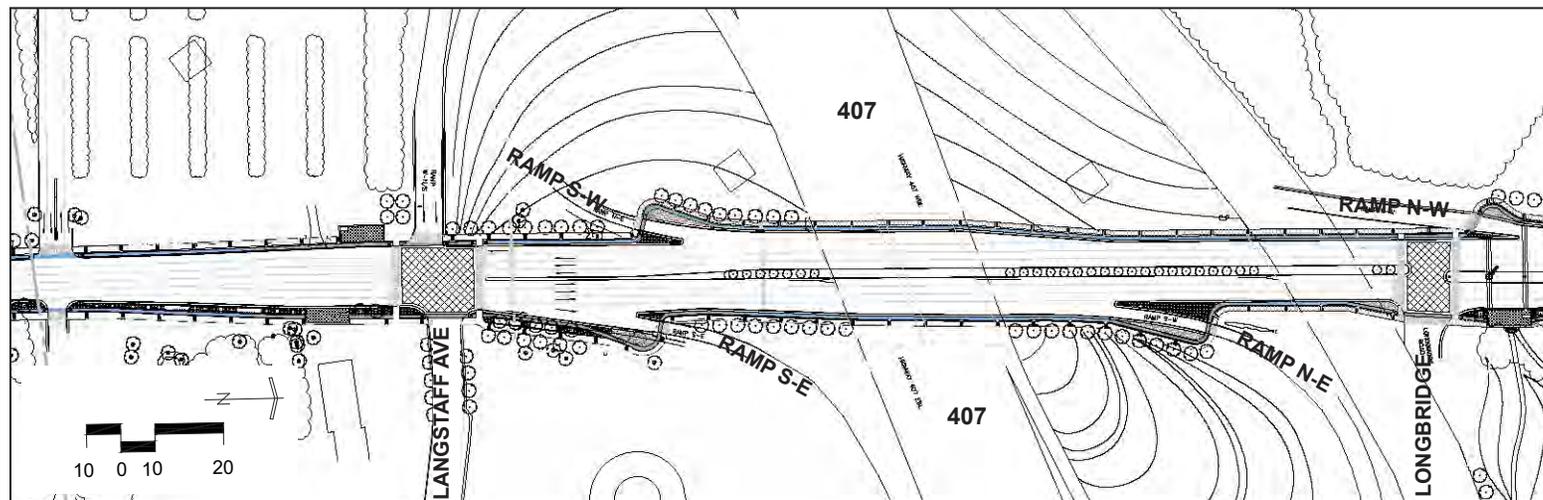


Figure 54: Plan View of Highway 407 Threshold

Distinct Character Areas

Richmond Hill Centre District

- Richmond Hill Centre/ Langstaff UGC
- Transit Integration

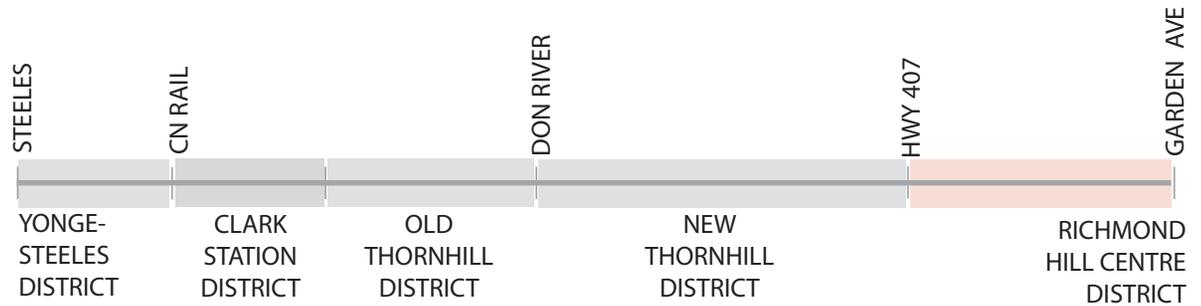


Figure 55, 56: Precedent Imagery



Paving Palette



Specialty Planting

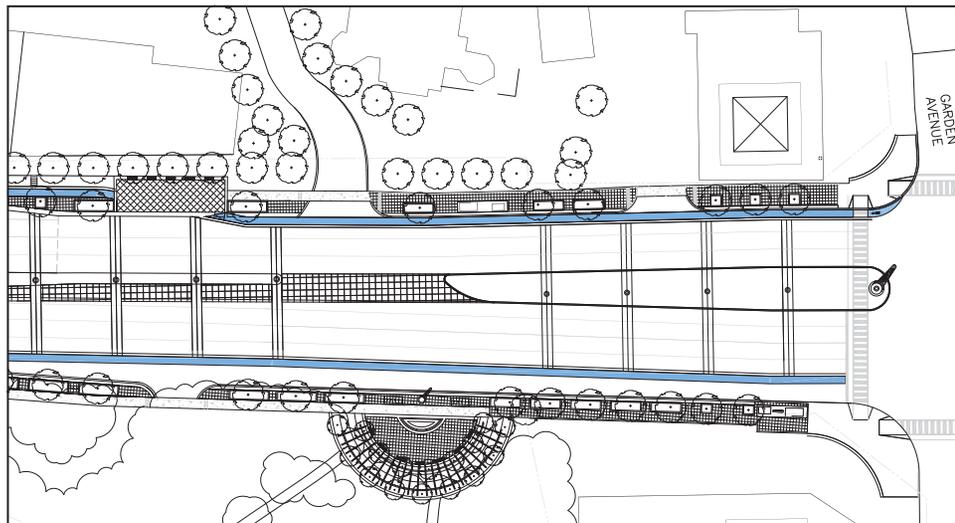


Figure 57: Plan View of Richmond Hill Centre District



Figure 58: Perspective of Richmond Hill Centre District

Phasing Plan

As Metrolinx is currently exploring subway locations with York Region and local municipalities, subway station locations from SYMP 2012 are used for this SYMP Update. The Streetscape Master Plan Update is designed in a manner that can evolve to wherever the subway station locations end up. The phasing of implementation of the South Yonge Street Corridor Streetscape Master Plan Update is contingent on a number of assumptions, funding and time-related factors. Without a clearly established construction schedule and also for ease of discussion, a reasonable three-phase program of implementation has been conceptually established that is related to construction of the Yonge Subway North Extension from Finch Station to Steeles in the City of Toronto and then from the Yonge-Steeles Station to Richmond Hill Centre in York Region. The three phases are:

- Phase 1 – Short Term: Pre-Subway
- Phase 2 – Mid-Term: Subway Construction
- Phase 3 – Long Term: Post Subway Construction

The three phases have been qualified with a time factor in years starting from project initiation based on the understanding that design and construction of the Yonge Subway North Extension will theoretically require up to ten years from start to finish based on the Subway Environmental Assessment. The actual time may differ from this assumption, but the relative phasing would remain relevant for implementation of the Streetscape Master Plan Update.

The Phasing Plan was prepared in response to the reality that no final decision on the timing and funding of the Yonge Subway North Extension is imminent. In the absence of any decision and accompanying funding, Yonge Street must continue to function as a major commuter route accommodating increasing traffic flow and functions for the foreseeable future.

The prime assumption upon which the Pre-Subway Plan is built is that it will continue to use existing roadway infrastructure including pavement width and curb lines. The Plan identifies areas of boulevard where implementation of the Streetscape Master Plan Update could potentially take place without compromising the roadway and traffic functions or that would require re-construction when the Yonge Subway North Extension is built. The Pre-Subway Plan represents the “early wins” in building the Streetscape Master Plan Update.



Figure 61: Bloor-Yorkville BIA Streetscape Revitalization funded in partnership with City of Toronto

Figure 62: Phasing Plan

Legend:



Condition A: Open-cut areas that cannot be developed until Yonge Subway North Extension construction is complete (Ultimate Plan).



Condition B: Areas where the Master Plan can be slightly modified using existing curbs (Pre-Subway Plan).



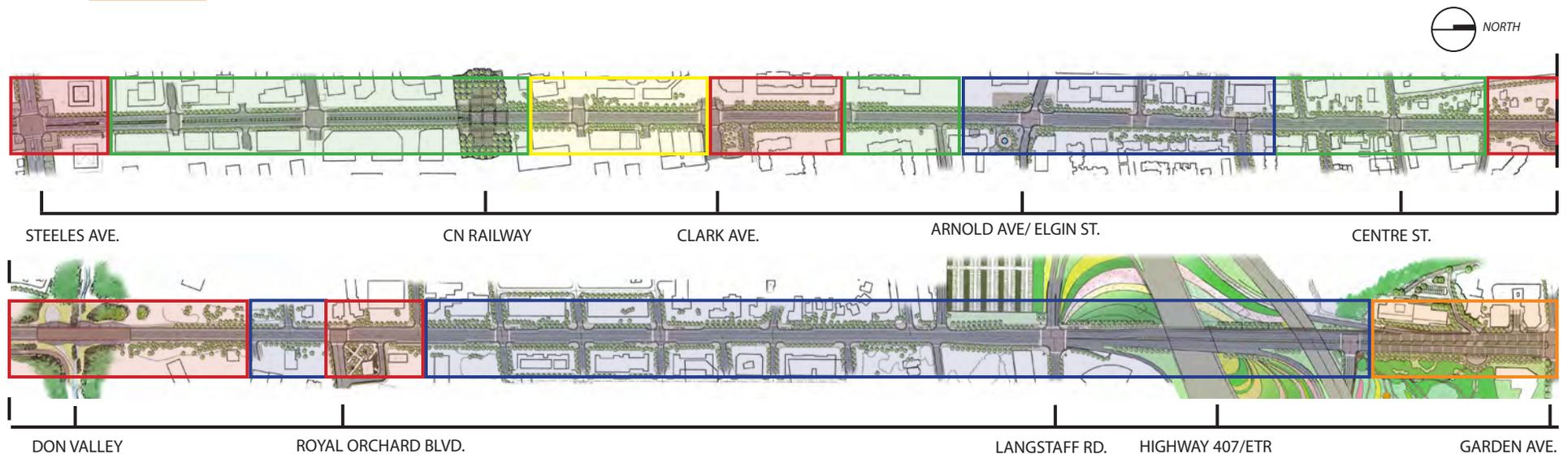
Condition C: Areas where roadway widths are narrower than the proposed design and can be expanded with no loss of transportation function (Pre-Subway Plan).



Condition D: Areas where the current roadway is wider by 1.5 to 2.5 metres than the proposed allocation and it would be preferable to wait until the road is narrowed to achieve a more spacious pedestrian zone (Ultimate Plan).



Condition E: vivaNext BRT (already installed north of Garden Ave.)



Funding Options

How the Funding Landscape Has Changed

The Provincial government passed Bill 197, the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, 2020, on July 21, 2020. This Act includes changes to various pieces of legislation and makes additional changes to those originally proposed in Bill 108 – More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019. Funding sources are summarized below. For detailed information of funding sources, refer to the Phase 5 Report.

Potential Funding Sources include...

- Development Charge Fund;
- Section 37 Benefits / Community Benefits Charges (CBCs);
- Site Plan Approval;
- Gas Tax Fund;
- Permanent Public Transit Fund;
- Business Improvement Area (BIA) Funding Models;
- York Region Municipal Streetscape Partnership Program;
- York Region Pedestrian and cycling Municipal Partnership Program;
- VivaNext

Other Funding Partners

While not directly applicable to the general or “usual” funding sources for streetscape implementation, there may be other “non-conventional” sources and / or partnerships with stakeholders that should be investigated, including:

- Highway 407/ETR;
- CN Rail;
- Alectra Utilities;
- Private Donors / Sponsors for public art;
- Environmental Partnership (e.g. TRCA, etc.)

Capital & Operations Costs

A Summary of Capital & Operations Costs Comparison was prepared and indicated below between the 2012 SMP and 2021 SMP Update. For detailed account of cost breakdowns, refer to Phase 5 Report.

Changes in costs are due to:

- Escalation of costs over nine years at CPI rates;
- Integration of cycling facilities within the boulevards on both sides of Yonge Street;
- Length of the corridor has been shortened to terminate at Garden Avenue, City of Richmond Hill.

Figure 63: 2012/2021 Capital & Operations Cost Comparison

| | 2012 SMP | 2021 SMP Update |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Hydro Undergrounding | \$15 million | \$18 million |
| Pre-Subway Plan | \$52 million | \$68 million |
| Ultimate Plan | \$58 million | \$79 million |
| Operations & Maintenance | Pre-Subway: \$213,000/km Ultimate Plan: \$300,000/km | Pre-Subway: \$210,000/km Ultimate Plan: \$304,000/km |

Key Recommendations

Leadership and Support for Implementing the Streetscape Master Plan

- COVID 19 has a significant positive impact upon the value of public space amenities and multi-mode mobility. This presents an opportunity for York Region to respond pro-actively to this impact and lead the implementation of the Streetscape Master Plan Update in collaboration with local municipalities and the private sector to achieve commitment towards creating an integrated and connected Active Transportation Corridor.
- Support for local policies that integrate the South Yonge Street Corridor Streetscape Master Plan Update and speak to the importance of this primary urban corridor.
- Continued communications with major stakeholders such as York Region Rapid Transit Company, Alectra Utilities, MTO / 407 ETR, CN Rail, and City of Toronto.

Major Focus on Funding the Streetscape Master Plan

- Actively pursue and secure the new Federal fund on building active transportation while leverage existing funding opportunities for streetscape design through the development process and various partnership programmes.

- Explore alternative funding sources for implementation to complement existing sources.
- Establish Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) for Vaughan, Markham, and Richmond Hill business owners.
- Explore harmonization of operations/maintenance practices in partnership with local municipalities.

Establish Implementation Teams that support and facilitate the Streetscape Master Plan

- Establish a **Streetscape Implementation Team** that will focus on the seeking and securing of funding resources, planning, monitoring, evaluating, and achieving efficiencies between local and Region operations/maintenance. The team will also be tasked to facilitate robust and proactive approach to the detailed design and implementation process along this corridor. This team would also leverage existing committees at the Regional and local level on various topics such as Public Utilities and Public Art.
- Establish a **Public Utilities Coordination Committee** dedicated to South Yonge Street in planning and coordinating utilities within right-of-way in support of the streetscape master plan. A major objective of this committee may be to develop implementation options in integrating utilities seamlessly into an urban context.

