

DOWNTOWN
Re-Imagining the Public Realm in the Toronto Financial District

Linda Dervishaj
A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and
Postdoctoral Affairs in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Architecture

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

2015
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for wonderers and city explorers



“Downtown”

When you're alone and life is making you lonely
You can always go downtown
When you've got worries, all the noise and the hurry
Seems to help, I know, downtown

Just listen to the music of the traffic in the cit
Linger on the sidewalk where the neon signs are pretty
How can you lose?
The lights are much brighter there
You can forget all your troubles, forget all your cares

So go downtown
Things will be great when you're downtown
No finer place for sure, downtow
Everything's waiting for you

Don't hang around and let your problems surround you
There are movie shows downtown
Maybe you know some little places to go to
Where they never close downtown

Just listen to the rhythm of a gentle bossa nova
You'll be dancing with 'em too before the night is over
Happy again
The lights are much brighter there
You can forget all your troubles, forget all your cares

So go downtown
Where all the lights are bright, downtown
Waiting for you tonight, downtown
You're gonna be alright now, downtown

Downtown
Downtown

And you may find somebody kind to help and understand yo
Someone who is just like you and needs a gentle hand to
Guide them along
So maybe I'll see you there
We can forget all our troubles, forget all our cares

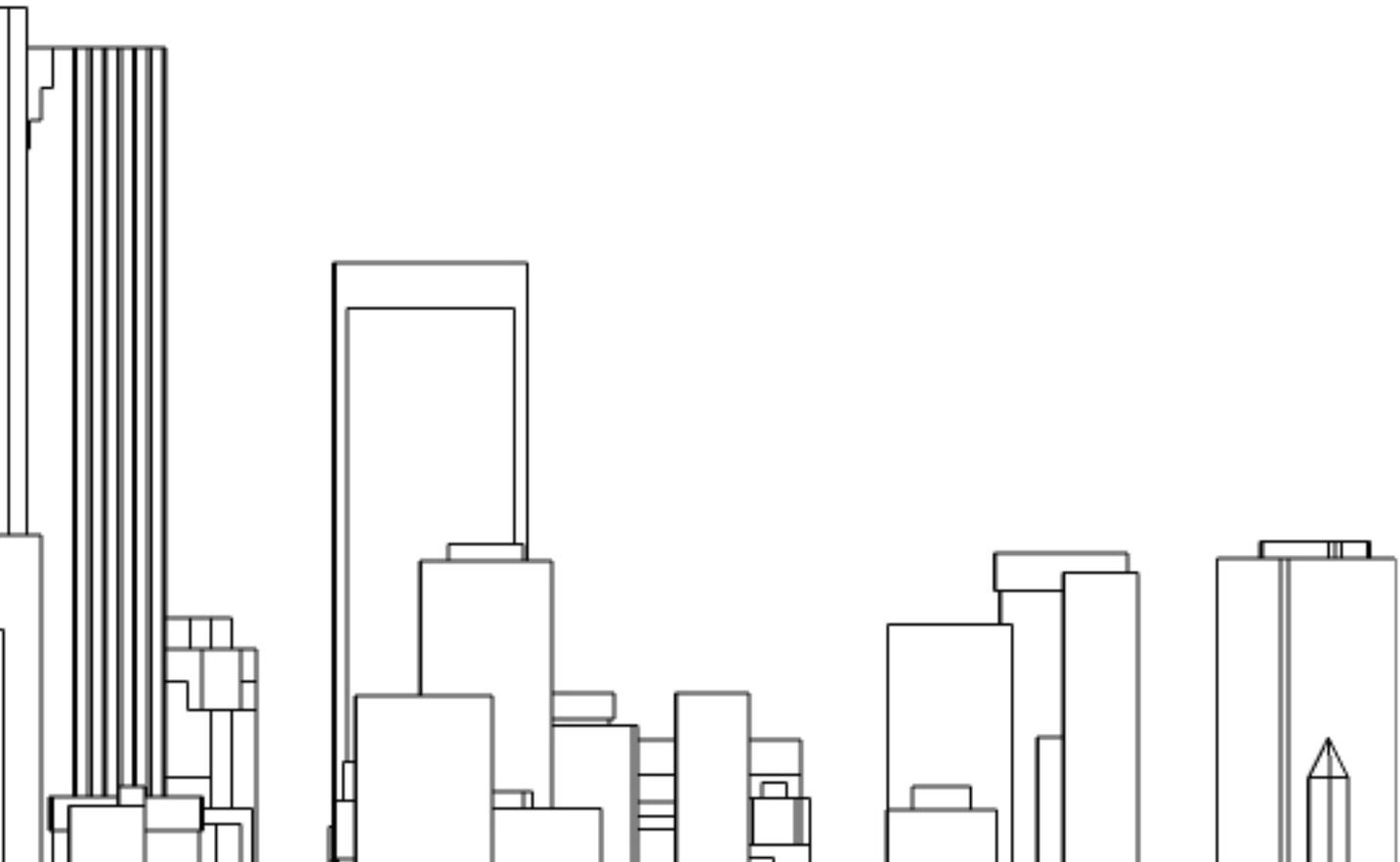
So go downtown
Things will be great when you're downtown
Don't wait a minute more, downtown
Everything is waiting for you, downtown

Downtown (downtown)
Downtown (downtown)
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Downtown (downtown)

abstract



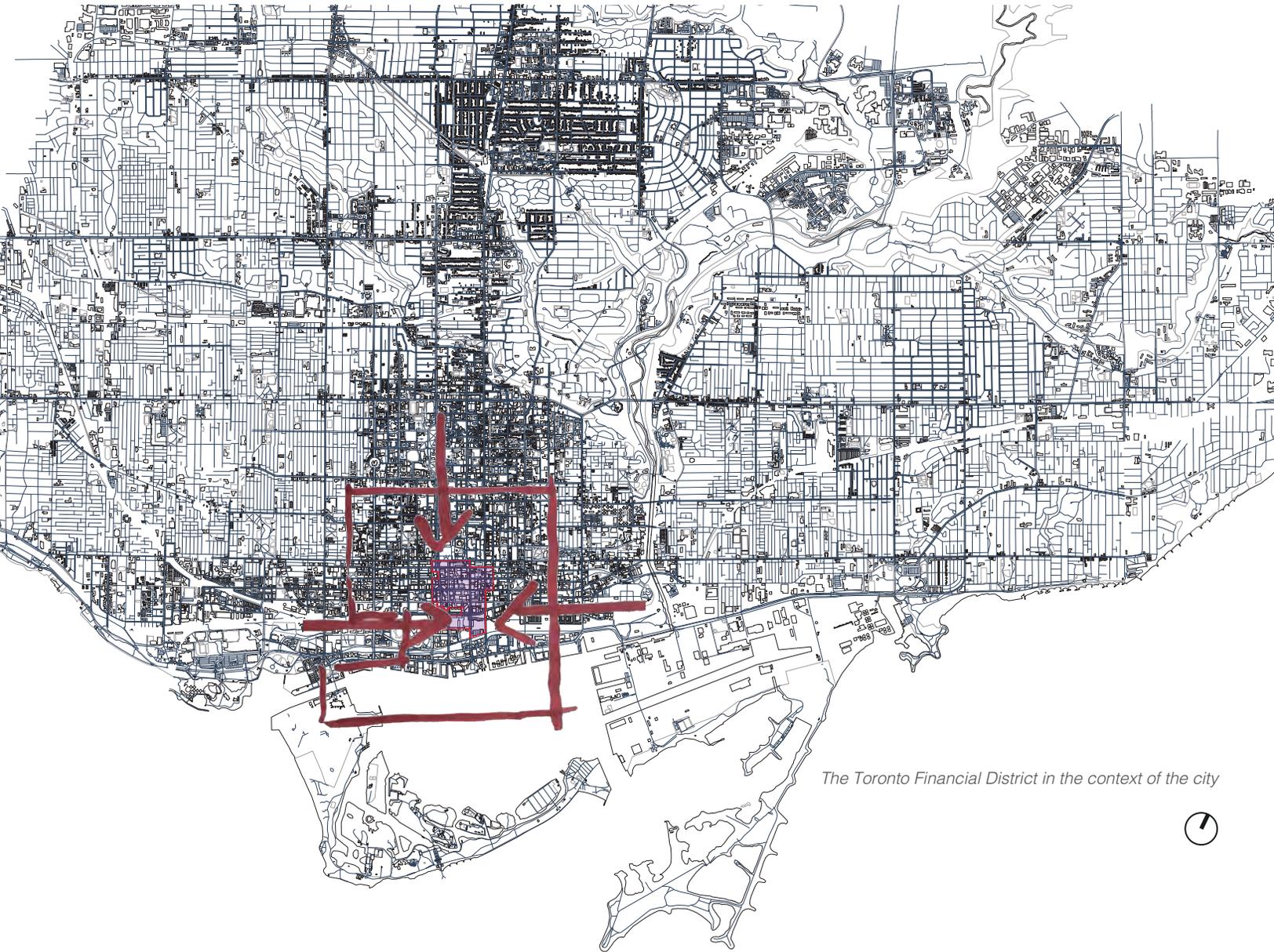
Many of the public spaces and sidewalks of the Toronto Central Business District remain empty and dormant after office hours. While during the Monday to Friday workday, when the business day is in full swing, the streets are overcrowded and difficult to navigate, after office hours, they are depopulated and severely underused. According to a report released by the Toronto Financial District BIA in 2013, In Toronto, about two hundred thousand people filter into the office towers, streets and plazas of the Financial District every day. At the end of the business day the vast majority of them leave. With a unique blend of open spaces tucked in between super high towers, elevated above ground and sunken below grade level, the CBD has the potential to offer a collection of public spaces that might not be found elsewhere in the city. *Part One* will focus on identifying this impoverishment, this lack of consistent social density in the CBD, making reference to ‘spatial practice’ and other similar ideas. *Part Two* will offer possible site-specific solutions for one particular area in the Toronto Financial District. By this we can hopefully re-imagine that part of the city with the public realm uppermost.





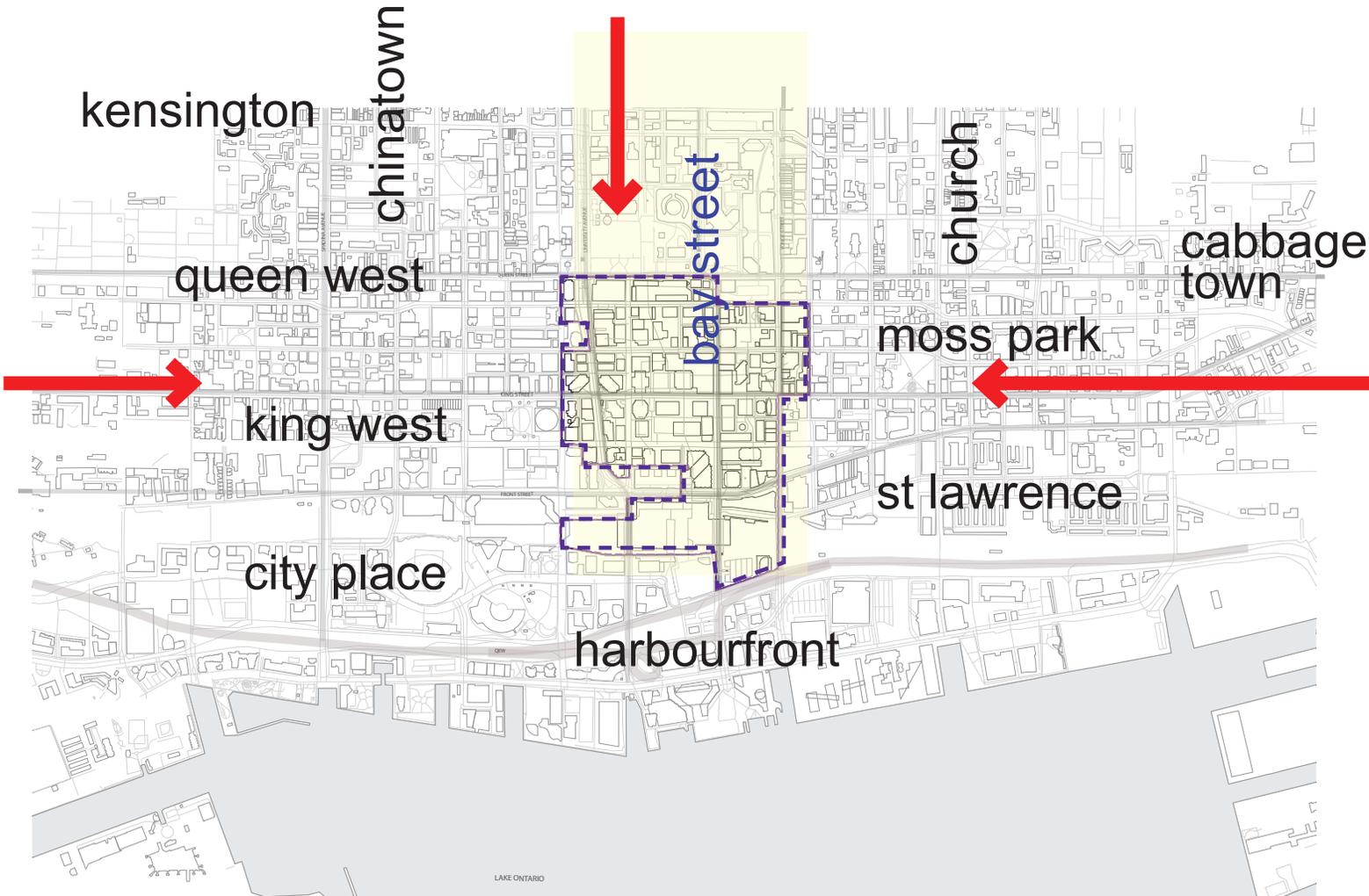
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The Toronto Financial District in the context of the city





Toronto neighbourhoods surrounding the Financial District



siting
the
thesis

INTRODUCTION

*When you're alone and life is making you lonely
You can always go downtown
When you've got worries, all the noise and the hurry
Seems to help, I know, downtown*

Contemporary Danish architect and urban designer Jan Gehl, who is an avid proponent of public space as a way to bring life to the downtown, was one of the driving forces behind the pedestrianization of downtown Copenhagen. In the early 1960's Copenhagen's downtown was typical of many developed urban centres; car friendly, wide streets, narrow sidewalks, wide swathes of intended city squares were being used as parking lots. Through a process of revitalization at this time, led by Gehl, vehicular circulation was restricted and prohibited in the downtown core. Public Squares were given back to people and surface parking lots eliminated from the centre. The result was a flourishing of pedestrian and cycling culture and public city life. This is the Copenhagen we have come to know.

COPENHAGEN



image: <http://www.feriepartner.dk/moen/Oplevelser-pa-Mon/Kobenhavn/>

In Melbourne, the solution to an empty, rotting core was found in its back alleys and narrow side streets. By making these pedestrian public spaces of interaction, with street furniture, public art, green space and at grade activities, Melbourne saw the city come back to life. While Melbourne did not pedestrianize large areas like Copenhagen, it was able to achieve a surge in city life by maximizing it's narrow spaces between buildings that before had only been used for servicing and utilities.

MELBOURNE



image: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/raael-len/5282220260/>

Most recently New York City has adopted Gehl's theories and pedestrianized several large areas, including Times Square and all the major intersections along Broadway Avenue. These intersections, once the setting of car horns and traffic jams, are now sites of human congregation. People gather here, city life becomes more vibrant, the car recedes ever so slightly to the background.*

NEW YORK



images: <http://gehlarchitects.com/cases/new-york-usa/>

* Ghel Architects, <http://gehlarchitects.com/>, Accessed December 3, 2013

TORONTO



Bay Street, looking north toward Old City Hall



The morning rush hour crowds at the corner of University Avenue and King Street (image urbantoronto.com)

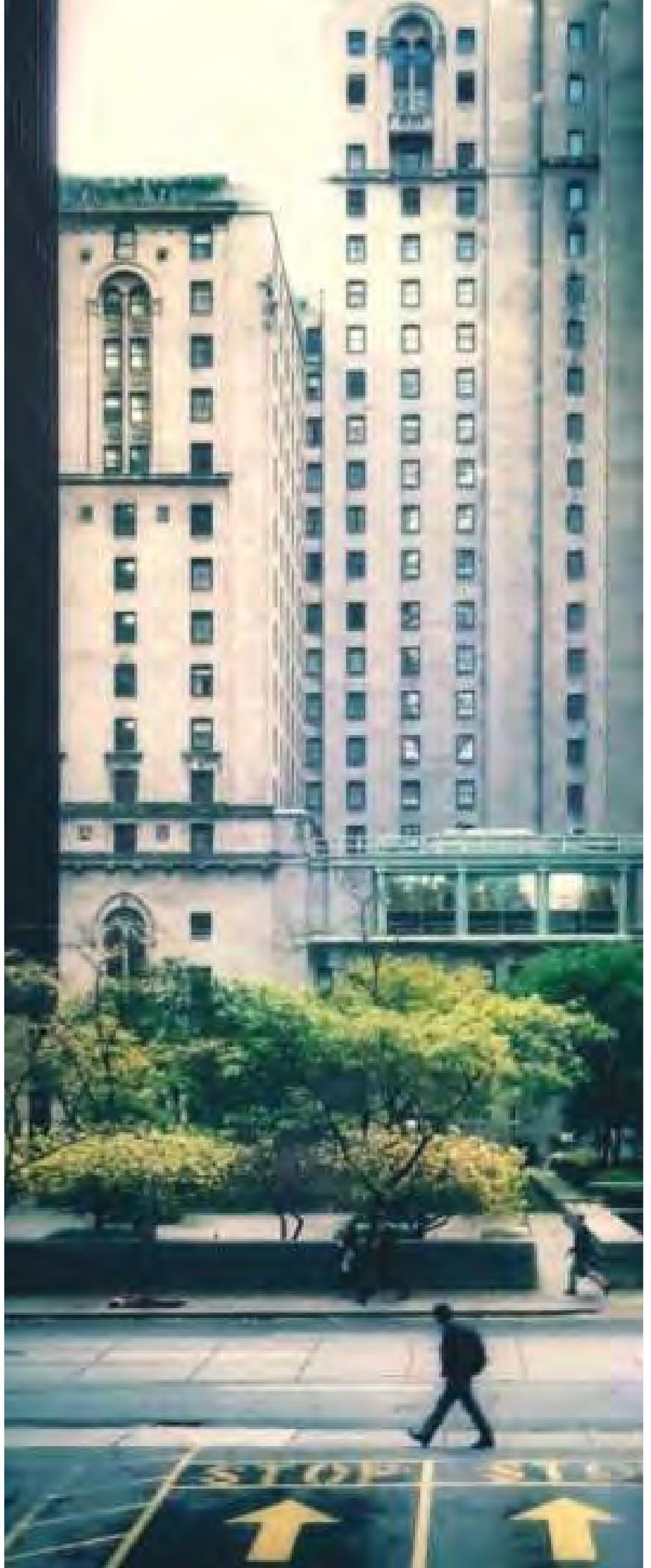
What shapes a neighbourhood in Toronto when it is part of, or so close to, the Central Business District? How can we approach the economic, political, social and environmental issues facing the inner city core when they often appear so formidable? How can we re-imagine and utilize the public realm to create social density in the CBD? And why would we want to do this? These are big questions. Solutions to the public realm in the downtown in other cities, such as Melbourne, Copenhagen, and most recently New York City, might be used as a starting point. What in fact are the economic, political, social and environmental issues facing the Toronto CBD and how would we set out to improve the public realm? Using existing data we need to identify the patterns and drivers of change, and consider how to propose a district wide strategy for the improvement of the public realm in this financial core.

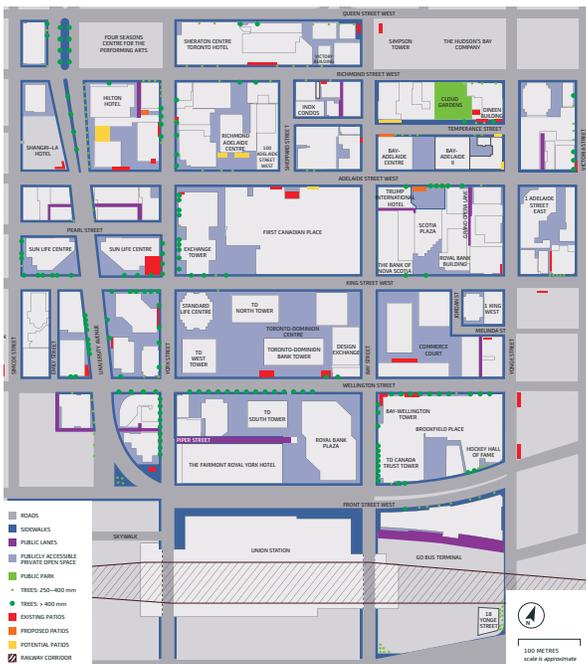
Walking down Bay Street during the Toronto morning rush hour one has to weave through heavily crowded sidewalks. All through the workday, the streets and sidewalks, even the open space between the bases of towers, are constantly in use. However something happens in the evening. As the business day closes and people leave their offices for their homes, the financial district turns into something of an abandoned area, a ghost zone.

Acknowledging the need for improved social space in the downtown the Toronto Financial District Business Improvement Area has proposed a Public Realm Strategy – a document outlining the shortcomings of public space in the Financial District, and a detailed strategy and urban design guidelines for the area.

“Despite these [City of Toronto] policies for supporting the City’s downtown, public infrastructure in the Financial District is in generally poor condition, especially in comparison to the privately owned property in the area. Recognizing the importance of the Financial District as an economic generator for the City of Toronto, it is paramount that the City invest in improving operations and the quality of the public realm in its premier business centre”¹

*toronto - financial district- current conditions after weekend.
(Photo www.urbantoronto.com)*



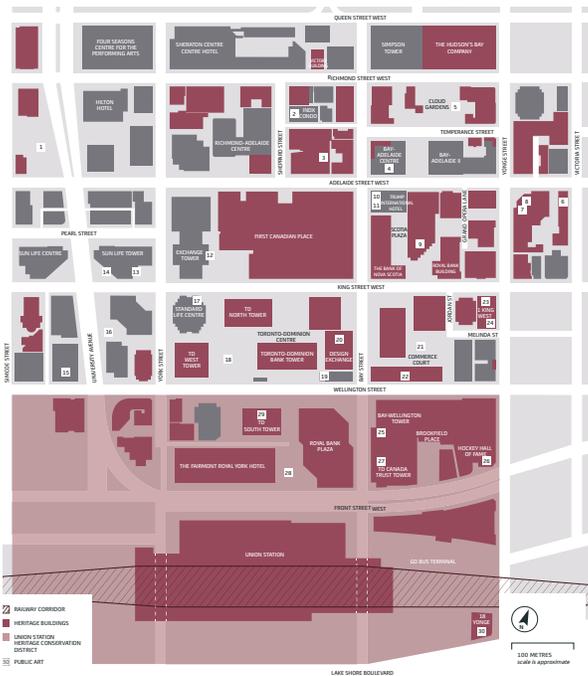


The public realm components of the financial district (image excerpt from Financial District BIA Public Realm Strategy)

Considering well established public space theories and the initiatives currently underway, is it then possible to rethink this downtown area in Toronto in order to re-establish and maintain a social density in these public spaces? We can shape urban landscapes through a process of a ‘reverse archeology’; a way of rebuilding, revealing meaning and negotiating the relationship between the relics of the past, nature and our current built environment. We can add in order to uncover; to uncover the meaning and potential of space we must engage it. We will begin by investigating ideas around the notion of spatial practice, and the impact of the public realm on the vibrancy of the city.

The Toronto Financial District is centrally located in downtown Toronto with Lakeshore Boulevard to the south, Simcoe Street to the west, Victoria Street to the east and Queen Street to the north. It is easily accessible by public transit, both local and regional, and close to major highways and arteries. Its economic impact is huge; it is home to the majority of Canada’s largest financial services companies, the five largest banks, four of the Canada’s largest investment management firms and is the third largest stock exchange in North America² Being Centrally located in downtown Toronto it is also home to numerous heritage sites, adding to it’s value as a cultural and architectural asset for the city of Toronto.

The Toronto financial district accounts for a total of 33 million square feet of Class A office space – the largest in the country.³ The area, however, is undergoing rapid change. More than just an office district, it is beginning to see a surge in high-rise residential construction. Between 2006 and 2011 the population in the Toronto Downtown core has increased by 16.2%⁴



*Heritage landmark components of the financial district
(image excerpt from Financial District BIA
Public Realm Strategy)*

Most notably, one of the most distinguishing features of the financial district is that it lies on top of a 30 km underground traffic and pedestrian path network and underground shopping, the PATH, providing unique opportunities for future interventions. The Financial District comprises only 0.1% of Toronto’s Land Area but accounts for 19% of office space in city. It is also responsible for 15% of Toronto jobs and the site of 29% of all new office space currently under construction in Toronto

The engagements of all levels in the increasingly taller and taller buildings will be crucial to an area of the city that is not only a symbol of commerce but houses essential communities and neighbourhoods that make up Toronto.

To be able to uncover the emerging potential of the downtown, specifically the central business district, we may need to engage the public realm in a different way; the sidewalks, the plazas, the alleyways - the spaces between buildings. The city-planning department has its own views and guidelines on this confirming the belief that the public realm is a crucial part of building healthy neighbourhoods. The City has made public several documents, including Public Realm Strategies for the Financial District and The Downtown Tall Building Guidelines outlining its vision for the Public Realm.

‘The Downtown Vision details where tall buildings should be located, how high they should be and the built form typology they should reflect and combines the Vision with a set of performance standards which seek to enhance the pedestrian environment; minimize shadowing sidewalks, parks and open spaces; protect prominent views and heritage properties; improve access to natural light, sky views, privacy and amenity for people living and working in the Downtown and promote environmental, economic and social sustainability in the placement and design of tall buildings’⁵

While all these documents will form a strong basis for the following study, let us first start by looking at this neighbourhood through the research lens of social theory, as a means of investigating the nature of the downtown.

part one

1.1

SPATIAL PRACTICE, URBAN STRATEGIES AND THE UNEXPECTED

*Just listen to the music of the traffic in the city
Linger on the sidewalk where the neon signs are pretty
How can you lose?
The lights are much brighter there
You can forget all your troubles, forget all your cares*

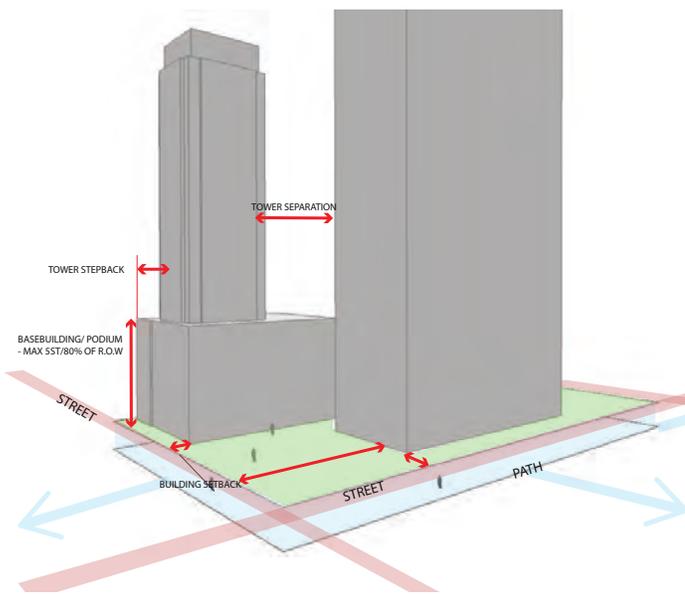


Diagram illustrating setback and stepback conditions

How can we research this selected area using the notion of ‘spatial practice’⁶ and use architectural strategies to offer solutions for the improvement of the public realm in this financial core? As Henri Lefebvre writes in *The Production of Space*, “Spatial Practice is the material dimension of social activity and interaction and stands for the aspect of simultaneity of activities...a system resulting from articulation and connection of elements or activities”⁷ If we bring attention to this, from where will solutions arise? As the population of our cities is rapidly increasing and space becomes a valuable commodity, does this not present us with an opportunity to rethink the way we design and the influence on the changing face of our cities? Is the city of Toronto correct when it concentrates on the first five stories, discusses set-backs as ‘part’ of the public realm?

Usually, we often think that what makes cities exciting is the sense of the unexpected. The thought that you could bump into a friend, interact with a stranger, discover a new place, get consumed by the hustle and bustle or find a moment of peace among the chaos. Perhaps the most exciting thing about cities is still their ability to always find a way to surprise us; the endless possibilities they offer at the same time are daunting and inviting. Be it love or hate, they have a way of inspiring a reaction, rarely indifference. As the novelist Dionne Brand writes:

“What floats in the air... is chance. People stand or sit with the thin magnetic film of their life wrapped around them. They think they’re safe, but they know they’re not. Any minute you can crash into someone else’s life, and if you’re lucky, it’s good, it’s like walking on light.”⁸

YONGE/DUNDAS SQUARE



The public spaces of Yonge/Dundas square in Toronto. Image: http://www.blogto.com/upload/2011/09/20080828_Scramble1.jpg

TD PLAZA



The TD Plaza during the lunch hour in the spring. Image: http://mimoa.eu/images/12045_1.jpg

In the novel *What we long For* (2005), Brand's heroine anticipates the unexpected turns that the city can offer on her commute into downtown Toronto. Once you're there, once you 'crash' into someone's life, into the city's life, it is difficult to know what could happen. The possibilities are many. As F G Paci writes of Toronto in his book *Sex and Character* (1993):

"The Yonge Street strip was my favourite haunt. I liked strolling up and down the garish neon emporiums and fast-food outlets, the leather shops and dirty books-stores with the movie booths in the back. There were jazz and rock bars jumping with music. There were triple bill theatres plastered with gaudy posters where derelicts and bums could sleep in the afternoons. There were strip bars advertising nude women by the breast-load. On any night I could catch the Hare Krishna devotees banging on their bongos and chanting. Scientology girls stood at the corners, ready to befriend and indoctrinate with their deceptively winsome smiles. Hawkers and peddlers set up shop beside the store fronts and clogged the sidewalks, selling their watches and leather goods. Street kids and panhandlers and prostitutes slunk in the doorways, ready to pounce."⁹

Paci renders an image of downtown Toronto and its immense variety of activity, both good and bad. Paci's downtown Toronto, isn't subtle, but rather imposing, a place that demands your attention – you must communicate with it, for better or for worse. And as the city transforms from day to night and to the next day and the next night, it constantly reveals some of its secrets while concealing others – providing inspiration and offering intrigue. Its life is intertwined with the life of its people, those that call it home and those just passing through. The city is stage and protagonist.

WILLIAM WHYTE



Sequence of sidewalk activity as illustrated in "The Social Life of Small Public Spaces",

Rosemary Aubert's heroine in the novel *Free Reign* (1997) remembers this intertwining of her life with that of Toronto.

"I loved the river even here. I loved how dark it was, how it held its secrets with the dignity of the damned. I loved how grass and even small trees managed to sprout out of the concrete that held it captive. [...] I loved the sounds, even if they were the sounds of man rather than the sounds of nature. I loved the rattle of old bridges as the streetcars went over them. I loved the lap of the water as it licked at concrete. I loved the wind in the slim weeds that grew between the railroad ties. I even loved the sound of rush hour trains, the buzzing traffic, the sound of my own feet on the asphalt path. I think what I really loved in those moments when I was cupped in the hand of the city, was life"¹⁰

Aubert's narration of evocative Toronto memories, paint a very personal picture of the city, particularly of that part of the city we all experience at the same time individually and as a collective. The public realm of the city - its streets, sidewalks and public spaces - hosts the breadth of social life. This is where city life happens.

This public realm came into the forefront of the city debate, when Jane Jacobs took a stance for city life in the very influential *The Death and Life of American Cities* (1959), bringing attention to streets, sidewalks and public spaces as those most important parts of the city; the parts where people interact with one-another. Jacobs writes:

"Public space is about sustaining tens and even hundreds of small relationships with a diverse group of people; relationships that are neither impersonal nor intimate, but ones that are part of what makes urban life special."¹¹

Jacobs emphasizes the importance of high-density, mixed use neighbourhoods where a wide range of activities can be sustained throughout the day, forming an ongoing relationship between personal interaction and public space. Public spaces, thus, can become the stage of this relationship and serve to strengthen or weaken it. She continues:

“Under the seeming disorder of the old city, wherever the old city is working successfully, is a marvelous order for maintaining the safety of the streets and the freedom of the city. It is a complex order. Its essence is intricacy of sidewalk use, bringing with it a constant succession of eyes. This order is all composed of movement and change, and although it is life, not art, we may fancifully call it the art form of the city and liken it to the dance — not to a simple-minded precision dance with everyone kicking up at the same time, twirling in unison and bowing off en masse, but to an intricate ballet in which the individual dancers and ensembles all have distinctive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole. The ballet of the good city sidewalk never repeats itself from place to place, and in any once place is always replete with new improvisations.”¹²

For Jacobs, cities need to be 24-hour places; places where people can feel safe. She makes a case for people as the most important ingredient of successful cities; cities that cannot sustain human interaction are simply not successful. No people means no city life, and no city life means no people. This idea of placing people at the forefront of cities also brings to the forefront public space as an integral part of city life; places where people can meet, sit, talk to strangers, and even avoid each other.

WILLIAM WHYTE



Life in public plazas, as illustrated in 'The Social Life of Small Public Spaces'

William Whyte in *The Social Life of Small Public Spaces (1980)* echoes Jacob's position on the importance of social life in public spaces. For Whyte this is fundamental to the quality of life of the individuals and society as a collective.¹³ Public spaces, and the social interaction that unfolds within them are vital to the city in delivering on its promise of diversity, vibrancy and excitement. How can this be connected to ways of building sustainable 'places' within our communities? How can architecture be a catalyst for that community and the people that live, work and play within it? We will argue here that architecture and urban design can be used to find ways to bring people into and to experience and enjoy public spaces. We will later begin to explore urban catalysts as a way to revitalize a part of the city that has lost its ability to sustain consistent social density, the Toronto Financial District.

Let us first look at public space under the definitions of social space. As Henri Lefebvre refers to it, "(social) space is a (social) product" and as a social product, space is both a precondition and a result of the production of society.¹⁴

"The form of social space is encounter, assembly, simultaneity... Social space implies actual or potential assembly at a single point, or around that point"¹⁵

Taking our cue from Lefebvre we can identify the public realm of the city as an important physical social space. Lefebvre continues to say that space is produced by social means where this spatial practice stands for the aspect of simultaneity of social activities, what he identifies as "Networks of interaction".¹⁶

If we accept this notion of spatial practice as the material perceptible activities by which individuals appropriate space and constitute themselves as subjects of their space, we can begin to look the public spaces of the city

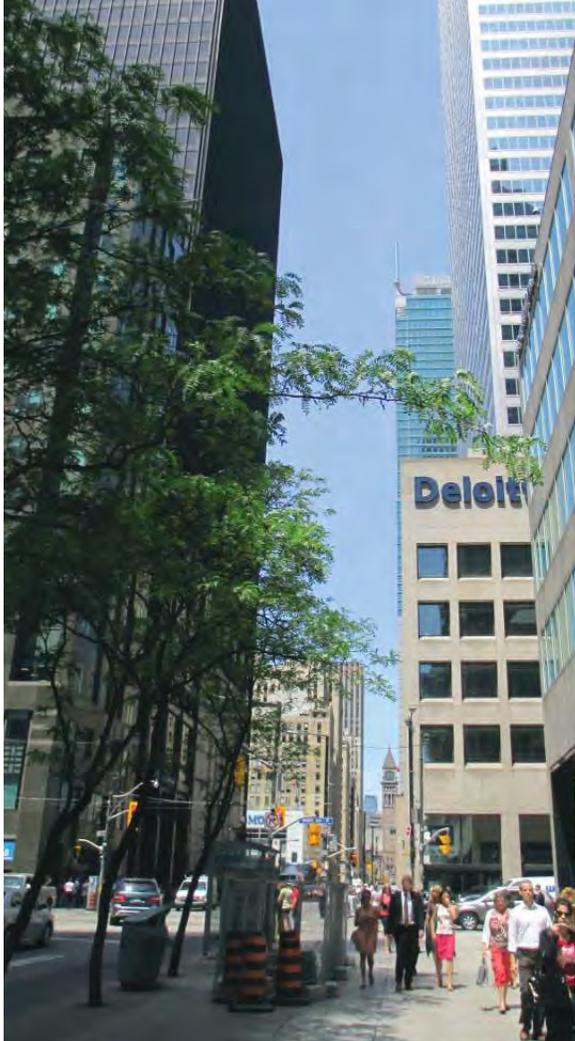
(here of course Toronto), as space produced by continuous re-engagement of users, designers, policies and the city itself.

Let us then agree that spatial practice is material. It is perceptible. What then does this mean for us in Toronto? What does this mean to the Financial District? The current conditions of the Toronto Financial District shape a public realm that supports a very specific activity, business, and engages, primarily, one particular demographic of people, the office worker. People outside this category rarely interact with the public space in this Toronto neighbourhood.

It is therefore the position taken in this thesis that the public realm of this financial district can be improved, in order to widen its 'scope' and produce spaces that invite the interaction of a broader section of Toronto citizens and visitors. As mentioned above, Henri Lefebvre's theories on the production of space can help us in framing these possible solutions for the amelioration of the Financial District public realm.

Lefebvre maintains that all space is social, and as such all space is a social product. He stresses the importance of all forms of social interactions as an integral part of everyday life:

“Social needs have an anthropological foundation. Opposed and complementary they include the need for security and opening, the need for certainty and adventure, that of organization of work and of play, the need for the predictable and the unpredictable, of similarity and difference, of isolation and encounter, exchange and investments, of independence (even solitude) and communication, of immediate and long-term prospects. The human being has the need to accumulate energies and to spend them, even waste them in play. He has the need to see, to hear, to touch, to taste and the need to gather these perceptions in a 'world' ¹⁷



BAY STREET

Looking North, (LD 2014)

In his book, *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre's argues for a theory of the production that all social interactions and experiences are 'understood through space'. Urban public space then, in our case the physical public realm of the downtown, is especially important in being an active part of the everyday social experience of city life.

French philosopher Michel de Certeau however goes on and argues that the routine everyday experiences are the way in which people, through their routine 'tactics'¹⁸ form the real 'city'. For de Certeau, the real story of the city is 'written' through the constant movement and interactions of the people that walk through it; a story that cannot be seen from above, but rather felt and experienced. Walking, as an everyday spatial practice, according to De Certeau forms an important foundation of social life.

"The ordinary practitioners of the city live down below, below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk – an elementary form of this experience of the city. They are walkers, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it...These practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen. The paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognized poem in which each body is an element signed by others, elude legibility. It is as though the practices organizing a bustling city were characterized by their blindness. The networks of these moving intersecting writing compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alteration of spaces."¹⁹

FINANCIAL DISTRICT



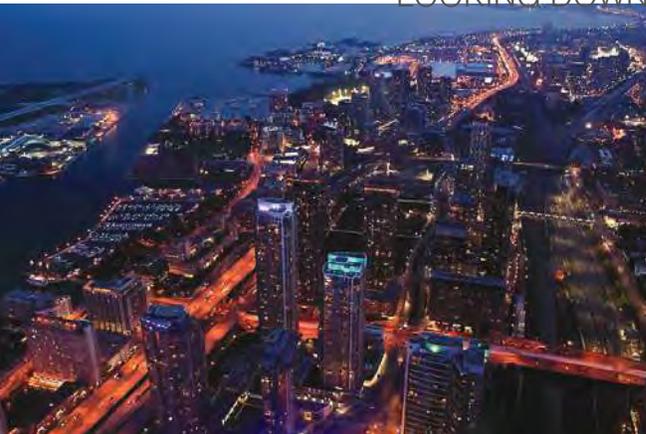
Views of the Financial District looking down, looking up and at street level
(LD 2014)

The story of the Toronto Financial District is not particularly interesting, exciting or even inviting. These everyday practitioners of this neighbourhood have written a repetitive story, whose action is confined to business hours. How then can we use ‘strategies’ to allow for people (practitioners) to engage ‘tactics’ that alter the spaces of this neighbourhood? De Certeau argues that the story is created by everyday practitioners using ‘tactics’ (walking, wandering –doing) to navigate the ‘strategies’ that have framed the physical space of the city. It must follow, then, that different strategies would warrant different tactics, which would generate a different story. As novelist Matt Cohen writes in *The Bookseller* (1993)

“The view from the window was unchanged. Two long white limousines were ranged on the sidewalks across the street. A tinted window came down. A man whose face was the colour of thick cream was looking straight at me. A developer dreaming of the day a wrecking convert the savoy hotel into a pile of broken bricks and plaster dust? Downtown you could make more money with a parking lot that a run-down hotel. [...] now the sky had a thin shell of cloud and the leaves seemed dimmer. I walked slowly north, zigzagging my way through the streets and alleyways I knew by heart, then turned west onto Bloor Street.”²⁰

Cohen’s protagonist recounts his intimate relationship with Toronto through his experience of walking the streets and back alleys of the downtown. Walking is a unique way of experiencing the city. It is personal, memorable. De Certeau, in *Walking in the City*, makes a strong case for it as a means of experiencing the city from within. Only by being IN the city can we participate in the act of shaping it.

LOOKING DOWN



Views of Toronto looking from the observation deck of the CN Tower (LD 2013)

We usually feel that the breathtaking vistas that we are able to see from the tops of skyscrapers, beautiful as they are, place us, the viewer far from the intricacies of the stories that happen down below. From above we are merely observers.

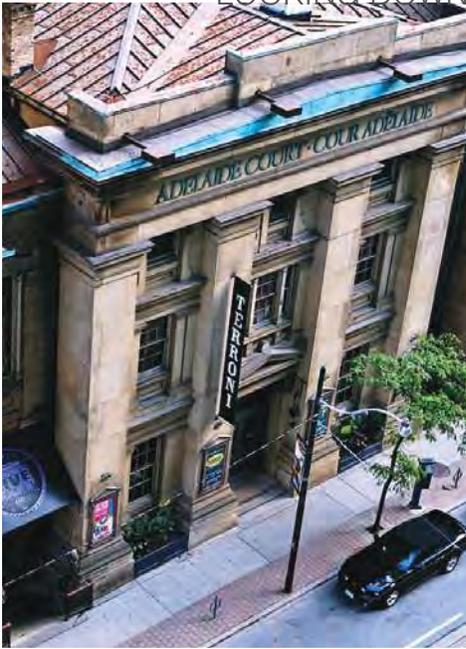
By looking at the city from above we are removed from it – from its life, its pulse. We, the ‘everyday practitioners’ are creators of the story of the city, and walking is our most primary ‘tactic’ in this. De Certeau’s distinction between walking the city and viewing it from above is an important one. In our context of the Toronto CBD, this dichotomy is clear. Filled with skyscrapers, offering a myriad of vantage points for viewing the city, there are so many opportunities to skip walking through the district and choose to view it from above. The idea of seeing the city from above is enticing enough, that the pedestrian activities confined to street level have become secondary. In the Financial district people are faced with the choice of rooftop patios atop skyscrapers and sky-bridges that connect buildings over those at street level.

Let us turn to a well-known writer, Margaret Atwood. In her novel *Cat’s Eye* (1988), she writes the following:

“We sit on the outside patio,” says Elaine, “drinking Manhattans and looking over the stone balustrade.... This is one of the tallest buildings around. Below us Toronto festers in the evening heat, the trees spreading like worn moss, the lake zinc in the distance.”²¹

Atwood writes of the Torontonians’ desire to dwell above the street as her heroine, Elaine describes the rooftop patio atop a hotel tower as her favorite place in Toronto. How common is this? How then can we find strategies

LOOKING DOWN



Looking down on the street from the rooftop patio of a downtown Toronto condominium (LD 2014)



to even the playing field between the ground and the rooftops when our desire to see the city seems to overwhelm or desire to be in it? ‘An Icarus flying above,’ de Certeau writes, “he can ignore the devices of Daedalus in mobile and endless labyrinths far below. His elevation transfigures him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance”²²

On the surface, it appears that to see that city (from above) is viewed as special, and to be in it, the everyday experience of it, is routine. But from above, we have no way of interacting with the city, no tactics to engage in altering its spaces. Doesn’t this mean that without the everyday, there would be no city life? Everyday, people drag their stories through the city streets and sidewalks where they walk, which daily collide with other people’s stories. We must stress: together, everyone’s everyday is not mundane, but rather what makes a city. Again let’s recall Dionne Brand:

“[O]n the sidewalks, after they’ve emerged from the stations, after being sandpapered by the jostling and scraping that a city like this does, all the lives they’ve hoarded, all the ghosts they’ve carried, all the inversions they’ve made for protection, all the scars and marks and records for recognition – the whole heterogeneous baggage falls out with each step on the pavement. There’s so much spillage.”²³

Brand renders an image of Toronto as a collection of the stories and lives of its people. This is an image shaped by the everyday. Daily practices, that no matter how ordinary, are able to render an image of the city in our memory. This daily practice is, for our purposes here, the essence of the city.

Everyday Toronto is the convergence of differences and similarities of cultures, nationalities, social classes and religions. Everyday Toronto is more

KENSINGTON



Toronto, LD 2013

CHINATOWN



Toronto (image, riverdaletoronto.com)

FINANCIAL DISTRICT



Toronto, LD 2014

than the idea for a city as the meeting point of diversity; it is the literal coming together and colliding of stories from all parts of the world.

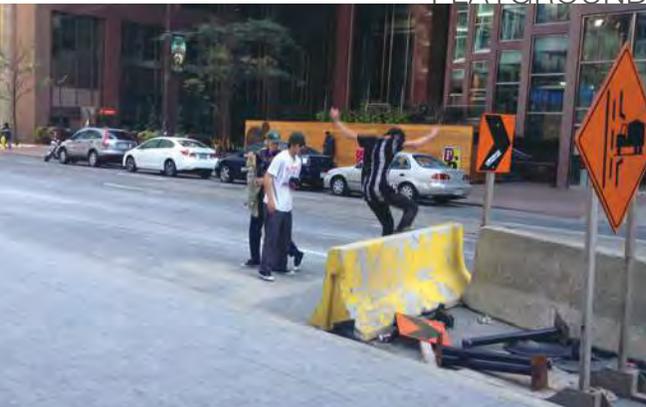
“They come from everywhere,” Patricia Pearson writes, “from Argentina, Nigeria, Russia, Pakistan, but rarely because they have an explicit vision of the place; they aren’t drawn by mythic images of riches and glamour like the immigrants arriving at the airports and harbours of New York. They are exiles, for the most part, who have thrown darts at a map of the world. Arriving, astonished by the cold, bewildered by hockey and our Nordic reserve, they nonetheless build their cities within our city: Chinatown, Little India, Portugal Town. Our city becomes a new city surprised by itself, double-taking at the profusion of culture: Brazilian dance clubs, Indian cricket matches, Polish delis, Chinese newspapers, Ecuadorian snack stands, somber Italian Easter parades.”²⁴

It is well-known that Toronto has long been seeking a unique identity amid the seemingly endless identities of the people that comprise it. But I would argue, it is precisely this that makes Toronto unique; a collection of neighbourhoods, 140 neighbourhoods to be precise, each with a unique identity, and each integral to the collective whole, Toronto. As Mark Kingwell writes in *Toronto: A City Becoming*: (2008)

“Toronto is not a city in the modern sense of a unified whole.....it is a series of towns held loosely together by the gravitational force of its downtown core.....it has no normative whole.....no single agora or narrative”²⁵

Toronto as a collection of narratives ,stories and backgrounds is one with which we, torontonians, can all identify. We thrive on the idea that we bring something new to this collection of differences, and in that we find our common ground. This ever expanding collection, however, is pulled together by the acceptance of an ever changing downtown, where all of the differences can come together and do more than co-exist, but rather grow and change together. The Financial District sits dominant at geographic centre of this core, but somewhat uncomfortable at its cultural centre.

PLAYGROUND



Young skateboarders find a perfect practice ground in the 'empty' streets and public spaces of the Financial District on weekends. (LD 2014)

The current Financial District, with its “9-5 suit” persona, hardly satisfies the responsibilities of the downtown as the centre of this ‘gravitational’ pull, to borrow from Kingwell. In this Toronto, this city of neighbourhoods, the role of the CBD needs to be redefined. Its pull needs to be greater in order to host this deeper concentration of vibrancy and diversity. In the collection of David Lynch works published in 1990 under the title “City Sense and City Design”, Lynch argues for the inner core as “the peak of activity and interest, which dominates the urban scene because of the frequency with which they are occupied and seen, is the meeting ground of the diverse population of the metropolis”²⁶

In Toronto, the epicenter of this inner core, The Financial District (The Bay Street Neighbourhood) is a growing, hyper-dense forest of towers crowding over fragmented public spaces at ground level. From the heavy hand of the industrial period to the current day hub of financial activity and symbolic economies*, the neighbourhood has grown taller, dwarfing surrounding as if to establish its power and superiority. It is somewhat ironic that it is precisely this that has become one the biggest issues facing the vibrancy of the financial district. Each new building currently under construction is taller than the last. The latest approval for a development of two side-by-side residential/office towers in this district designed to be 82 stories and 92 stories tall²⁷

**New Economy as coined by Thomas Hutton in *The New Economy of the Inner City, 2007* - is a term encompassing the rise of symbolic economies that operate on the exchange of capital. Examples of these economies are technological, creative consultation companies etc.
Thomas Hutton is a professor at UBCi in the School of Human Settlements and the School of Regional and Community Planning.*



King Street and Wellington Street intersection on a weekend afternoon (LD 2014)

WORK IN PROGRESS



above: The numerous high-rise buildings currently under construction in the Toronto downtown (www.thegridto.com)

Below: A look at the King and Wellington Intersection on Saturday afternoon

While on the one hand we can look at this as a feat of engineering, design and financial might, it is important that the social spaces below do not become overshadowed, uninviting and devoid of people. Despite all the economic power that it yields, starved of social density on the streets and open spaces, the Financial District fails to be a true setting of constant social activity.

In the following chapters we will take a closer look at the existing conditions of the Toronto Financial District with a particular focus on the public realm and explore possible strategies for its improvement. Having recognized this need, the Toronto Financial District BIA, has compiled a study for a Public Realm Strategy, a document which will form a basis for the investigations and proposals put forth by this thesis.



King Street and Wellington Street intersection on a weekend afternoon (LD 2014)

*So go downtown
Things will be great when you're downtown
No finer place for sure, downtown
Everything's waiting for you*



1.2

TORONTO AND THE ANTI-CITY

“Everybody, it would seem, is for the rebuilding of our cities...with a unity of approach that is remarkable...But this is not the same as liking cities...Most of the rebuilding underway, is being designed by people who don’t like cities. They do not merely dislike the noise and the dirt and the congestion, they dislike the city’s variety and concentration, its tension, its hustle and bustle... the results are not cities within cities, but anti-cities.” William Whyte²⁸





A view of the Gardiner Expressway in Toronto
 (image: www.perkinswill.com/sites/default/files/project-imagery/Gardiner_aerial%20exist_main1.jpg)

The middle of the 20th century is recognized as a period responsible for the expansion of cities in North America, and Toronto is no exception. One of the most influential figures of this period was Robert Moses, the highly influential planner that shaped New York's expressways. His goal was to create ways of moving car traffic quickly to all the boroughs through the inner city. One of the unfortunate side effects of this was the destruction and displacement of small neighbourhoods and the cutting-off of the city from the waterfront.²⁹

In following this approach, very little importance was placed on human interaction, as the segregation of all functions of life could only result in the alienation of people. This ideology can be seen in Toronto, where a series of expressways completely sever the downtown from the waterfront, creating a very difficult pedestrian transition between the two.

The *anti-city* idea that Whyte raises is one that tackles the issue of Urban vs. Sub-urban, identifying the factors for the growth (or lack of growth of both). The main issue raised here is that of the homogeneity of suburbia versus the complexity and variety that is often synonymous with the city. The Anti-City is an approach to redevelopment and 'urbanization' by segregating use (work here, shop here, live here, play here...drive everywhere). It is important to note that this anti-city (based on the mid-twentieth century American ideal of 'a peaceful life away from the congestion and dirt of the city') not only results in sterile development lacking vibrancy and variety, but also empties out life from the city itself.

Let's continue with Toronto as our example. The current financial core of the city (Old town Toronto) was once what housed all of what was considered Toronto - along with all the congestion and dirt that comes with it. As Toronto began spreading significantly outward, a 'strictly' employment core began to develop. A core that became increasingly homogeneous, congested and also less safe. It slowly became a place where people came only to work, with not much interest in what happens to it after they leave; because, after all, it is not home.

If we continue along this line of thinking, it is not surprising that so many inner city neighbourhoods in many big cities that followed this model, continued to degrade and rot – St. Louis, Detroit, Melbourne just to name a few. While the Toronto inner core didn't experience such severe effects, the city can learn many lessons from these cities, both the anti-city effect that robbed their vibrancy but also the efforts to revitalize and repopulate the downtown – the efforts, for example, that brought the Melbourne centre back to life.

Presently, the Toronto Financial District is still a very homogeneous district. While diversity of activities and vibrancy are slowly on the rise, it boasts more congestion than concentration. It is still characterized by the swarms of people and cars rushing every available inch of its streets and sidewalks during office hours, and by the sounds of metaphorical tumbleweed on weeknights and weekends. To go back to Whyte's thread of anti-city thinking, we find the issue of congestion and concentration at the centre of his argument.

POSTCARDS



<http://www.zazzle.ca/toronto+postcards>



<https://rememberingletters.wordpress.com/2012/04/22/toronto-canada/>

‘While we hear a great deal about traffic ‘strangulation’ and about overcrowding, we hear very little about the necessity for concentration. It should be acknowledged that congestion and concentration do not have to be synonymous...it is much simpler to do away with concentration and spread things out. But this is tackling the city, not on its own term, but on the alien ones of suburbia’³⁰

It is not my intention to say that parts of the city should not have a distinct identity, on the contrary, but it is important to recognize that, as Whyte puts it, ‘the areas which are most alive are not ones that are wholly given to one activity, like Wall Street.’³¹ It would be Bay Street Toronto in our case, but the argument still holds. This lack of vibrancy and depopulation plaguing the Financial District is primarily due to the lack of concentration of activities that it has to offer. How then, if this is the case, can we overcome the *anti-city* and find the city within it?

I would like to argue that this district can be the heart of the city, and as such it has to be the gravitational force that pulls together all the other small parts that make up Toronto. This is the geographic centre, it is the image of Toronto put on postcards and yet it is where tourists, having seen these postcards, spend their weekends walking the vacant streets looking up at the shiny towers, almost shell-shocked, as the only locals in sight are their tour guide and the occasional commuter sprinting toward Union Station to catch a train. There is a sort of primal pull to this heart - evidenced by the need to show it off to the world - it’s just one to which we, as Torontonians, seem to have developed an immunity.

SKYLINE

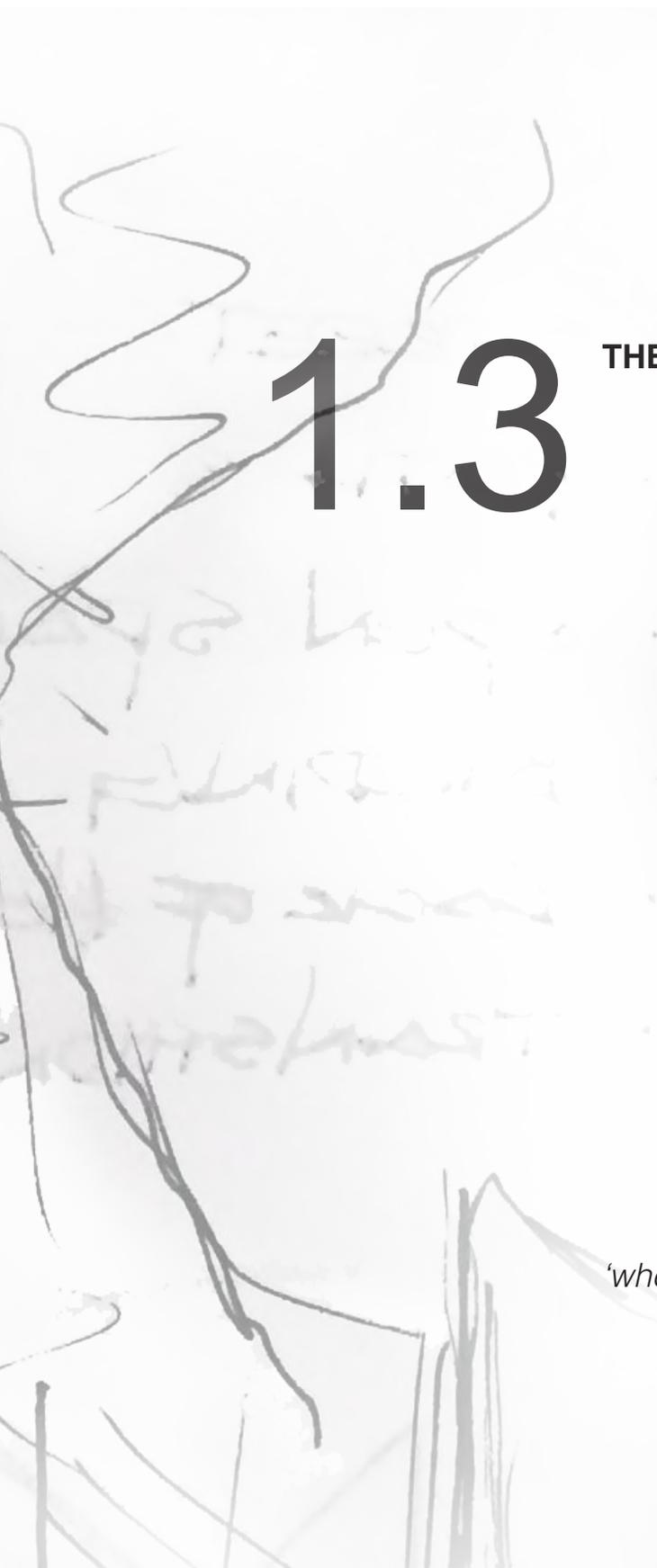


Downtown Toronto as viewed from the island Ferry (LD 2014)



*Don't hang around and let your problems surround you
There are movie shows downtown
Maybe you know some little places to go to
Where they never close downtown*

tkaronto



1.3

THE SPACE BETWEEN | interval

'where there are trees standing in the water'

TKARONTO



A Native North American fishing weir. (image: <http://kanat.jsc.vsc.edu/student/cuccinem/main.htm>)



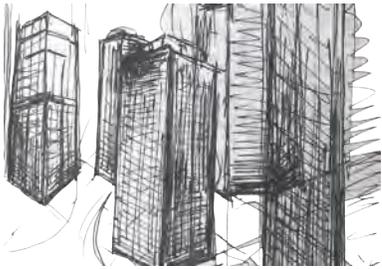
Downtown Toronto as seen from the city island. (LD 2013)

I recently learned the meaning of ‘Toronto’ - its linguistic meaning at least. The current consensus, according to Natural Resources Canada, is that it comes from the original Mohawk phrase *tkaronto*, translating “where there are trees standing in the water”.³² The Mohawks used it to describe The Narrows, where Hurons and other Natives made fish weirs by driving stakes into the water. They were structures created with small openings between the spikes, lined in quick succession, where nets would be used to catch fish. And as I look at the city from the water I still see tkaronto, though it is a different kind of stake trying to catch a different kind of fish.

The Downtown skyscrapers rise up from Lake Ontario, organized tightly together forming an elaborate structure at the edge of the water. Both the buildings and the openings between them serve different purposes but to the same end. I’d like to stop looking at the towers for a moment, to explore the void between them not as utilitarian space whose sole purpose is to get people from building A to building B, but rather a space which can be a destination, in addition to being a path to somewhere else.

The space between buildings, should be about more than making life tolerable – it should be about make life exciting. To paraphrase Jacobs, it should be about sustaining tens and even hundreds of small relationships with a diverse group of people; relationships that are neither impersonal nor intimate, but ones that are part of what makes urban life special.³³

Public spaces can transform claustrophobic density into liveliness, excitement, opportunity and pleasure. Public spaces are the setting of Jane Jacobs’ famous “sidewalk ballet” The plazas, the alleyways, the sidewalks, the back streets, the fronts and sides and backs of buildings, the hang-



Looking up at King St. and Front St. in the Financial District (LD 2013)

ing fire escapes and the building rooftops – for this thesis, these are the settings of human stories. It is important to think of these spaces as active participants in the dynamics of human interactions.

Let's see the spaces between buildings as opportunities for vibrancy and sustainability and not as a part of a city lot where to put a few rolls of sod to fulfill the requirements of the City's Green Standards Checklist.³⁴

Kevin Lynch, in his urban design principles, speaks of good public space as one that welcomes human interaction without excessive programming, and space that is open to possibilities, to change and spontaneity

“..the general concept of ‘openness’: open to choice, open to choice, open to active use and manipulation, open to view and understanding, open to access, open to new perceptions and experiences”³⁵

This sense of invitation and acceptance of the spontaneous is something that is notably missing from the public spaces of the Toronto Financial District. The open spaces, plazas and sidewalks are plentiful in this neighbourhood, and some of them even designed with care, taking into consideration sun path and the impact of the shadows falling from the surrounding tall buildings. But often they remain isolated between the towers, and appear sterile and cold. There is no invitation to stay, and certainly none to be spontaneous. Maybe this is why the Financial District has developed the reputation of ‘a ghost town’ on weeknights and weekends among Toronto residents.

According to Mark Hutter in *Experiencing Cities*, “The feelings that people have for cities impact how they perceive and act toward them.”³⁶ The

TD PLAZA, TORONTO



Financial District on a Saturday afternoon (LD 2014)

HIGH LINE, NEW YORK

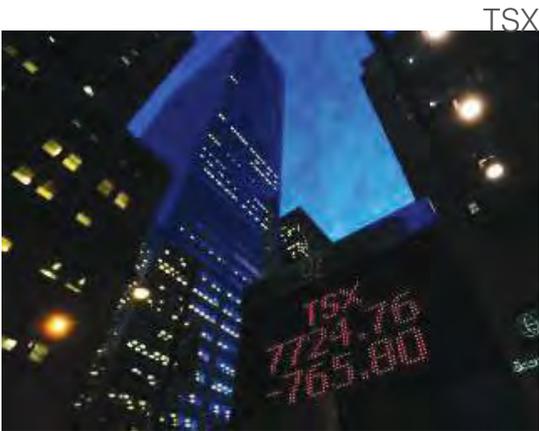


The open public spaces of the High-line in New York. (LD 2014)

streets, the parks, the buildings, they are all up to the interpretation of its inhabitants. Their participation and communication is what makes city life. At the present time, the feelings the people of Toronto have towards Bay Street seem to be only aversion. So, if these spaces have garnered this behaviour, can we then conclude that if 'modified' they might invite a different reaction? How can the spaces between buildings begin to renegotiate the relationship people have with the Financial District?

Urban sociologists Robert Park and George Simmel both wrote at length about the urban consciousness and the relationship between the city and its people. In the paper "The City: Suggestions for the Investigation of Human Behaviour", Park reinforces this idea of a behavioural relationship between city and citizen, defining the city as a state of mind: "a body of customs and traditions, and the organized attitudes and sentiments that inhere in these customs and are transmitted with the traditions. The city is not in other words, merely a physical mechanism and an artificial construction. It is involved in the vital processes of the people who compose it."

We can build on this relationship and attempt to change it, if we stop looking at the city as a 'physical mechanism' and start treating it as an active participant. This means, we cannot see our attempts to change it as merely physical either, but rather a physical manifestation of something that can trigger a human reaction. It seems to me that perfect avenue for a reaction is the public realm, the space between buildings. In his research



Looking up at the Toronto Stock Exchange.
(image: www.globalpost.com)

Simmel outlined the predominant conditions of city life as being ‘the nervous stimuli of the city and the pervasiveness of the economic market on people’s relationships’.

“urban life produces a unique form of consciousness, a distinct metropolitan personality that was caused by the conditions under which people lived. The two predominant conditions of city life were the intensity of the nervous stimuli in the city, and the pervasiveness of the economic market on people’s relationships. Urban consciousness was characterized by intellectuality, rationality, anonymity and ‘sophistication’.”³⁸

In the Financial District, more than anywhere else, these urban conditions are only heightened. In *Downtown: Part 2* we will go on to look at the possibilities that the space between the buildings of the Financial District can be the negotiating ground between the stressful work-life that this district has come to exemplify and the vibrant city centre that it might be. The public realm with its variety of spaces can offer a unique opportunity to change the feelings and thereby the way the people of Toronto act towards this neighbourhood.

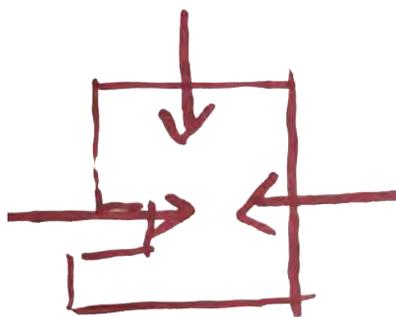
part two

'With a few words and the sweep of his hand Athos sliced a hill in half, drilled under the sidewalk, cleared a forest. He showed me Toronto cross sectioned; he ripped open the cliffs like fresh bread, revealing the ragged geological past. Athos stopped in the middle of busy city streets and pointed out fossils in the limestone ledges of the Park Plaza hotel or in the walls of a hydro substation. "Ah Limestone, accumulating one precious foot every twenty five thousand years!" Instantly the streets were flooded by a subtropical salt sea. I imagined front lawns crammed with treasure: crinoids, lamp shells, trilobites.' Ann Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces* ³⁹

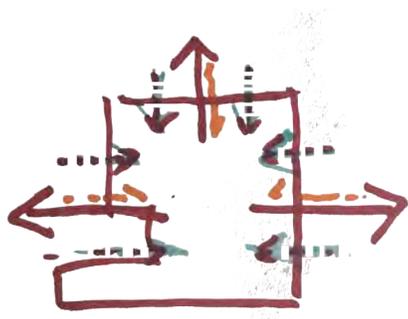
THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT PUBLIC NETWORK MASTER PLAN

With the stage already set, and most of the architecture already in place, the Toronto Financial District is as restricting as it is broad in terms of the level of intervention it can accept. But, one slow layer after the next, new stories are written in the streets, squares and buildings. These are stories of use, of progress and ultimately of life. These are the stories that form the foundations of future growth. They provide rich layers of history and tradition, reminding us of the past and providing inspiration for the potential of our future achievements. The public realm is the stage where these stories intersect. It is also the space where the day and night identities of the Financial District can collide. This proposal will examine this space of intersection to try and find solutions to the issues that these conditions present.

2.1 VISION



Taking cues from the existing conditions and the strong finance-focused identity of the Toronto Financial District, this public space proposal is centred on creating an inviting environment for the people that experience the neighbourhood on a daily basis as well as those that rarely do so. The purpose of this study is to identify the possibilities of a strengthened public space network in the Financial District and provide solutions that contribute a strengthened community identity and a unique architectural language, by creating a connected public network of open spaces, structures and pathways that are well integrated with the surrounding communities.



2.2

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

*Just listen to the rhythm of a gentle bossa nova
You'll be dancing with 'em too before the night is over
Happy again
The lights are much brighter there
You can forget all your troubles, forget all your cares*

1

Create a connected, welcoming and spontaneous public space network, offering both formal and informal social spaces and activity areas.

2

Emphasize connections to surrounding neighbourhoods and existing public realm infrastructure – such as the PATH – inviting the ‘external’ community into the daily life of the Financial District.

3

Create a multi-layered public space network by connecting the PATH, at-grade walkways and sidewalks, and above-grade connections between towers and low-rise building rooftops.

4

Provide spaces for a variety of ‘always publicly accessible’ activities through a series of Urban Catalysts ranging from architectural structures, connective walkways open spaces

5

Strengthen the role of the public space in the Financial District through a unique architectural language, common to the entirety of the public realm.

2.3

KEY FINDINGS

*So go downtown
Where all the lights are bright, downtown
Waiting for you tonight, downtown
You're gonna be alright now, downtown*

NUIT BLANCHE



From top to bottom: A midway ride on Bay Street, as part of the multimedia installation, "Wild Ride," by Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan during Nuit Blanche on October 3, 2009. The two rides set up in Toronto's financial district invite the public to reflect on the recent ups and downs of the economic crisis. (image: The Globe and Mail October 5, 2009); The Way Up is the Way Down was a balloon, floating high above Bay Street just north of King. It invited people to 647-247-4525, which would make the bell would light up and ring, as part of Nuit Blanche 2011 (image: thegridto.com)

In the City's and the BIA's attempts to draw people to the Financial District, Toronto has seen some success in employing large scale interventions in the neighbourhoods public spaces. Though often temporary, these public realm 'events', like the Luminato Festival or the annual Toronto Nuit Blanche festival are able to inject a high level of energy and interest to the FD.

Can this temporary success be used to find permanent solutions to bringing a consistent level of vitality to the Financial District? Both Luminato and Nuit Blanche take over a large part of the public space in this area – they promise a density of activity and opportunities that can only be seen in this neighbourhood once a year for a limited amount of time luring people to experience it not as a suit and tie district but as a playground.

We can use this temporary 'take-over' of the public realm, as a preliminary case study of what the potential of these spaces can be. We can also use it as a starting point to begin to develop a cohesive strategy for the utilization of the Public Realm to create a permanent solution in bettering the image of this neighbourhood in the eyes of the city at large.

We will also look at the Public Realm through a series of urban catalysts, which engage the existing conditions and invite human participation from both the residents of this neighbourhood and residents of the surrounding areas. Many of Toronto's neighbourhoods have become lively and thriving by appealing all of the inhabitants of the city, by the ability too draw people that live in the immediate surroundings, and by peaking the interest of those that will cross the city to experience a unique blend of culture and life.

CLOUD GARDENS



Cloud Gardens is the only city park in the Financial District (LD 2014)

How can we approach the Financial District as a destination where we (Torontoians) choose to spend our own time, not just our billable hours? To do this we have to look at the existing conditions of the district (what sets it apart from the rest of Toronto’s neighbourhoods and what makes it fit in), identify the forces that would drive the change needed to make it an urban destination and explore the catalysts that can convey this change.

As previously stated the site of this exploration is the public realm - that area of the neighbourhood that is always accessible by the public, as well as the public and semi-public transitions into private space – and the catalysts investigated are not isolated installations, but a network forming a cohesive whole.

This study intends to look at the public realm at the urban scale as it affects our area of focus (The Financial District) and the influence it can have on the surrounding neighbourhoods, as well as zooming into the details and evaluate their impact at the smaller scale. This document identifies the public realm as the aggregate of all publicly accessible layers - below grade, at grade, and above grade The components that make up this public realm are identified as follows:

Street: the connecting pedestrian and vehicular arteries to the rest of the city and the internal connectivity of the district itself (GRADE)

Below: the South lawn of the TD Plaza is one the largest publicly accessible open spaces in the Financial District. It sits completely vacant on evening and weekends



(LD 2014)

P A T H: one of the most unique features of the Financial District. This subterranean layer of publicly accessible space slithers below the buildings, streets and parks, intersecting with grade at more than 125 occasions, thus creating more than 125 transition points between the below and at grade layers of the public realm and making PATH a crucial component of our investigation.(BELOW GRADE)

Open Space: the parks, the plazas and any unprogrammed spaces meant for public use, whether privately or publicly owned (GRADE)

Buildings: The spaces including ground level publicly accessible lobbies, building facades, and publicly accessible rooftops (GRADE, ABOVE GRADE)

Transitions: The spaces that serve as the threshold between public and private, below, above and at grade.



Td Plaza South Courtyard (LD 2014)

2.4

NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT



*And you may find somebody kind to help and understand you
Someone who is just like you and needs a gentle hand to
Guide them along
So maybe I'll see you there
We can forget all our troubles, forget all our cares*



TD PLAZA COURTYARD

(LD 2014)

Toronto is in the midst of a construction surge in the core; one-third of the city's recent residential growth has been in the downtown; one-quarter of non-residential growth has also been in the downtown core. This means a surge in downtown population. The Financial District in particular, is now surrounded by an increasingly big number of residential towers, some of which are even within the district. What this neighbourhood lacks, however, is great public spaces, suffering as it does from a lack of vibrancy after office hours. While streets and buildings are overcrowded during the workday the CBD remains completely depopulated in the evenings, with unused public spaces and empty streets. The sidewalks and sterile public spaces stand empty, looking uncomfortably squeezed between super-tall towers, unable to sustain long-term human activity.

To mediate this disconnect between the day and night persona of the Financial District we have to focus more attention on adding public space layers to this neighbourhood, encouraging of the full range of city life. This is when the space between buildings becomes of high importance. This document will analyze the existing conditions of this neighbourhood and explore strategies to re-imagine the public realm a connected network of spaces and activities that contributes to a complete neighbourhood. We will look at this network as a series of urban catalysts, which take advantage of existing conditions to provide unique opportunities for social interaction. Together these catalysts, these elements of the public realm aim to form a complete network with a unique identity that is immediately recognizable and desirable for residents of the Financial District and those of the surrounding neighbourhoods. The proposed plan for revitalization will focus on three major areas of improvement, as follows:

4.1 *Consistent Social Density*

Creating a built and open space environment that is consistently conducive to social activity, interaction and exchange. By revitalizing the public realm we can attempt to improve the current conditions of the neighbourhood to be an inviting, welcoming and spontaneous destination within downtown Toronto.

4.2 *Variety of available activities and programmes*

The primary drivers of the desired change for the Financial District are tied to a range of publicly accessible activities that need to be introduced in the district, as a means of offering diverse opportunities for residents and visitors. These include, cultural activities such as galleries, film and music events, food and drink venues, and grade level retail.

4.3 *Pedestrian Connectivity within the Financial District and to surrounding neighbourhoods*

In realizing its potential as a Toronto destination the Financial District has to offer a connected and safe pedestrian network not only within the neighbourhood but also the surrounding areas. This study proposes an enhanced pedestrian network of paths, walkways, parks and plazas that facilitate movement through the district and encourage visitors and residents to stay and experience the neighbourhood.

(LD 2014)



2.5

SITE ANALYSIS

*So go downtown
Things will be great when you're downtown
Don't wait a minute more, downtown
Everything is waiting for you, downtown*

The Toronto Financial District is centrally located in downtown Toronto with Lakeshore Boulevard to the south, Simcoe Street to the west, Victoria Street to the east and Queen Street to the north. It is easily accessible by public transit, both local and regional, and close to major highways and arteries. Its economic impact is huge; it is home to the majority of Canada's largest financial services companies, the five largest banks, four of the Canada's largest investment management firms and is the third largest stock exchange in North America² Being Centrally located in downtown Toronto it is also home to numerous heritage sites, adding to its value as a cultural and architectural asset for the city of Toronto.

The Toronto financial district accounts for a total of 33 million square feet of Class A office space – the largest in the country.³ The area, however, is undergoing rapid change. More than just an office district, it is beginning to see a surge in high-rise residential construction. Between 2006 and 2011 the population in the Toronto Downtown core has increased by 16.2%⁴

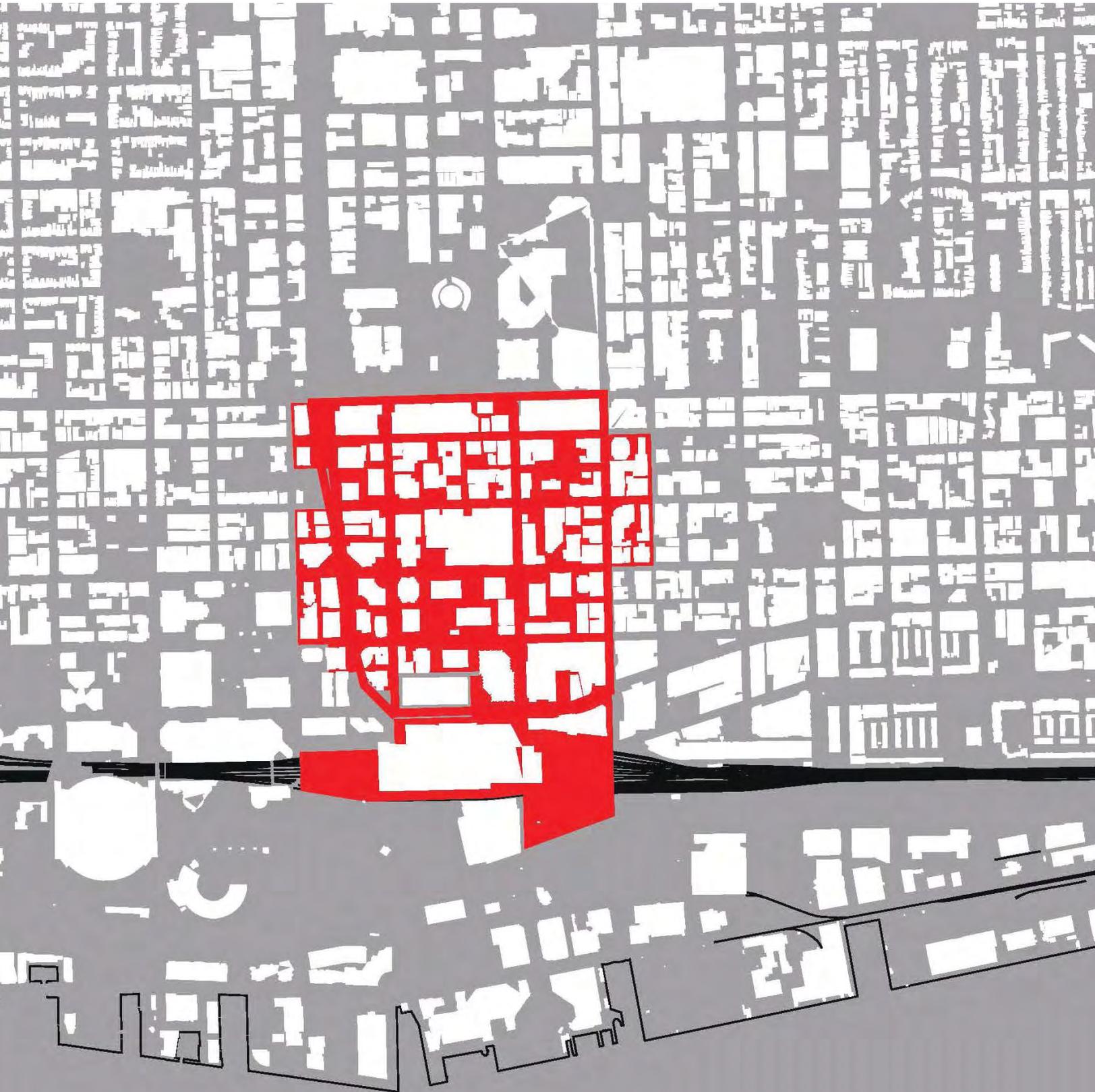
Most notably one of the most distinguishing features of the financial district is that it lies on top of a 30 km underground traffic and pedestrian path network and underground shopping, The PATH, providing unique opportunities for future interventions. The Financial District comprises only 0.1% of Toronto's Land Area but accounts for 19% of office space in city. It is also responsible for 15% of Toronto jobs and the site of 29% of all new office space currently under construction in Toronto.

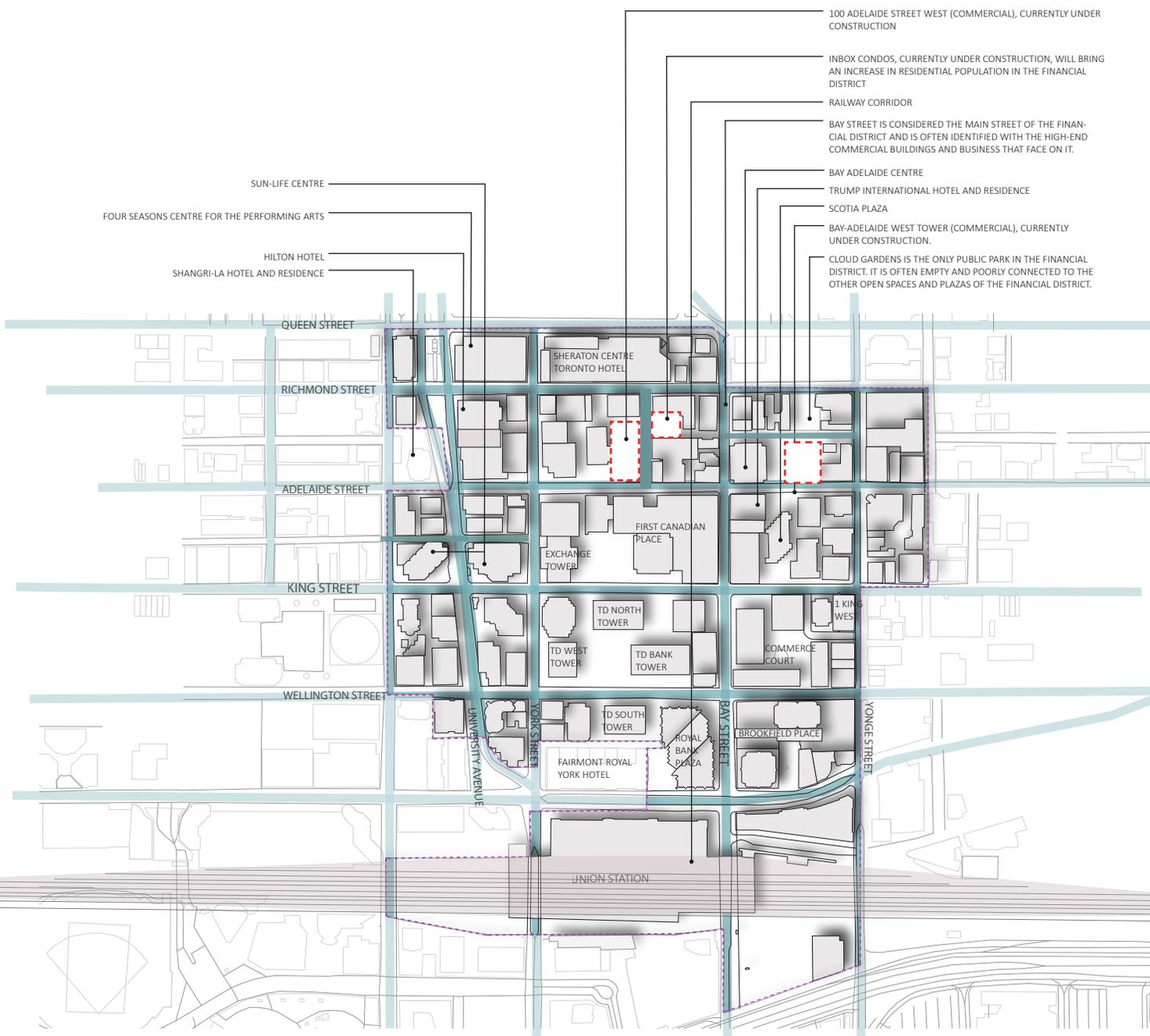
The City of Toronto has several policy documents in place that oversee the growth of the downtown and the Financial District in particular. In addition to the City of Toronto Official Plan and Zoning By-Law these documents include the Downtown Tall Buildings Guidelines, The Privately Owned Public Space Guidelines, and the recently completed Financial District Public Realm Strategy which was prepared by the Financial District Business Improvement Area.

Diagram illustrating building heights in the Toronto Financial District



Diagram illustrating primary area of interest





Diagrammatic plan of the Financial District boundaries and major streets



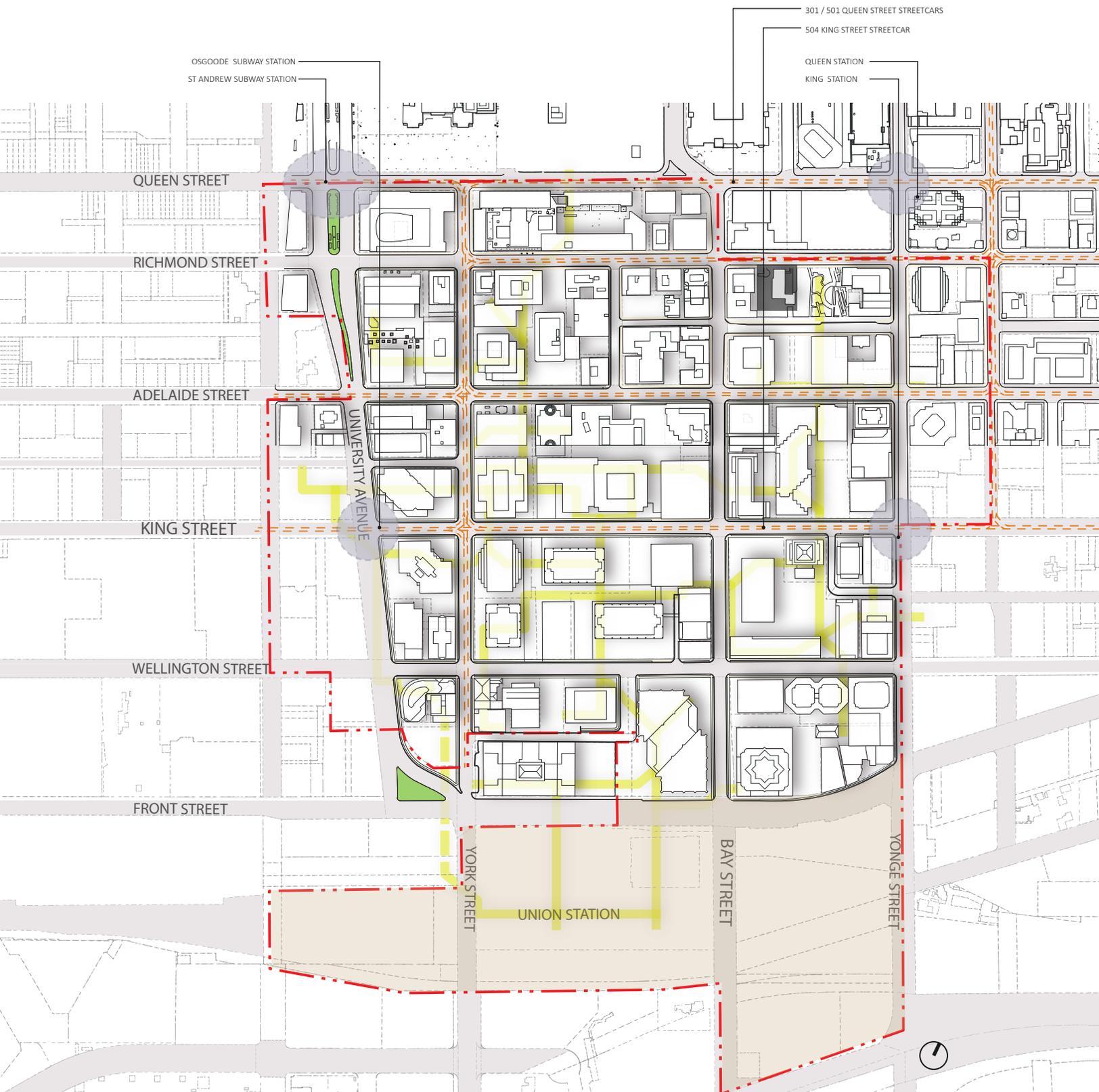
2.5.1 Site Circulation

As mentioned above, the most notable circulation network in the Financial District is the underground PATH. This path network is privately owned and maintained public space. It is approximately 30km in length and stretches from college street in the north to Union Station at it's southernmost point. It intersects with the Ground at approximately 125 locations, providing many opportunities at these transitional spaces. Above grade, the Financial District sees a variety of sidewalk widths at major streets and very few pedestrian-only paths. The major streets crossing the district are Queen street, Richmond Street, Adelaide Street, King Street, Wellington Street, Front Street, University Avenue, York Street, Bay Street and Yonge Street. The District has some mid-block connections near cloud gardens and TD Plaza, however mid-block circulation is presently very limiting and has been identified as an area of improvement.



Overall plan of the Financial District and below grade PATH which connects all major towers below grade with publicly accessible pathways.

- UNION STATION HERITAGE AREA (REVITALIZATION CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION)
- STREET
- PATH
- SIDEWALKS / PERIMETER BLOCK CIRCULATION
- STREETCAR TRACK LOCATION

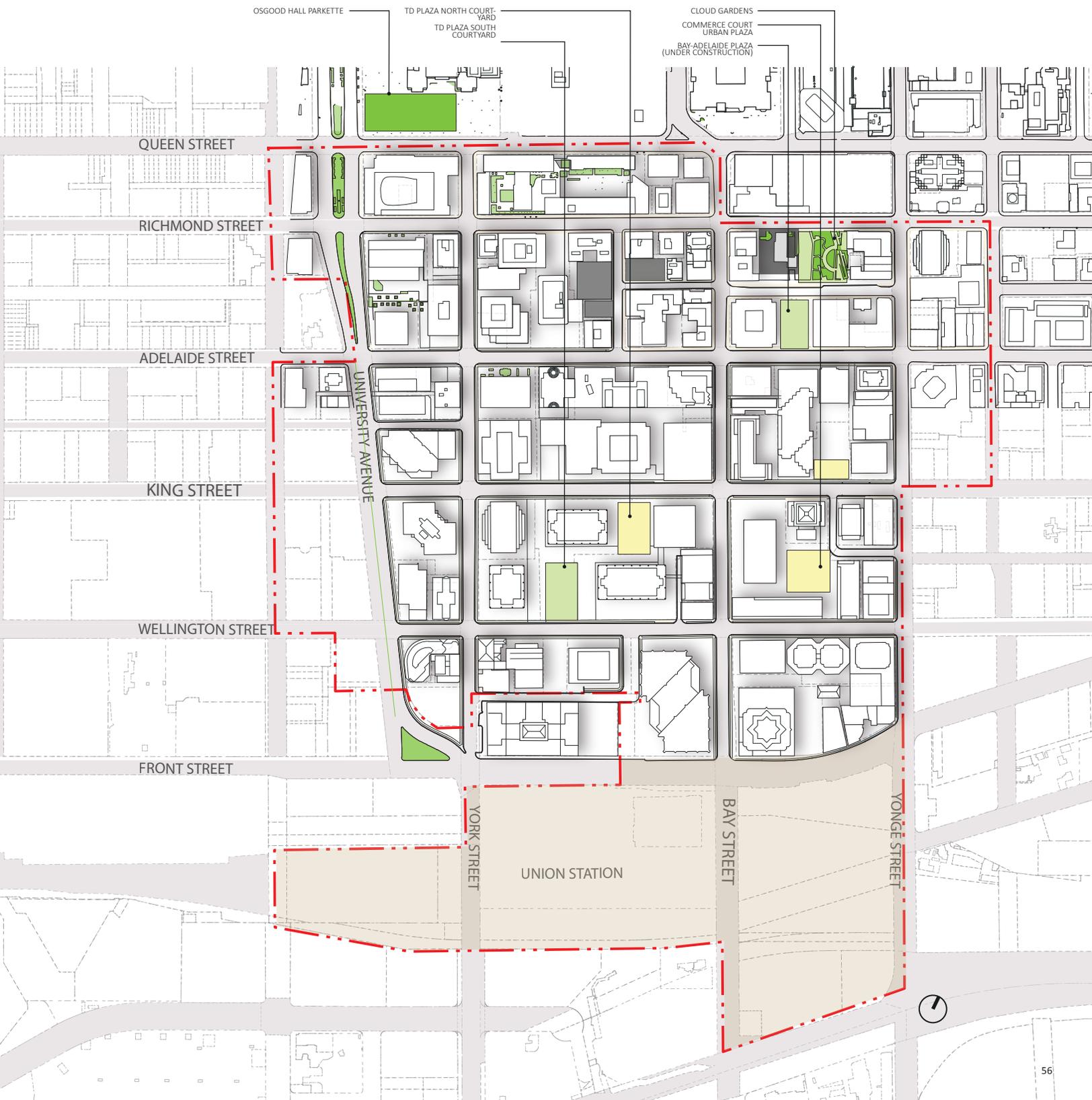


2.5.2 *Plazas and Destination Spaces*

The public realm in the Financial District is characterized in great part by the plazas that are framed by tall buildings. These spaces are in most cases hardscaped urban plazas, offering some seating spaces and at times public art. The materiality varies from concrete, to granite, to unit pavers and in most cases has limited street furniture. The only destination spaces featuring softscaping are Cloud Gardens and the south lawn of the TD plaza. These spaces are not presently used to take full advantage of the opportunities they present in addressing the issues of social density. In some cases, they are difficult to find without a map as they are only accessible through back lanes or buildings limiting the possibilities of stumbling upon them.

5.3 *Parks, Rooftops and other Softscaping*

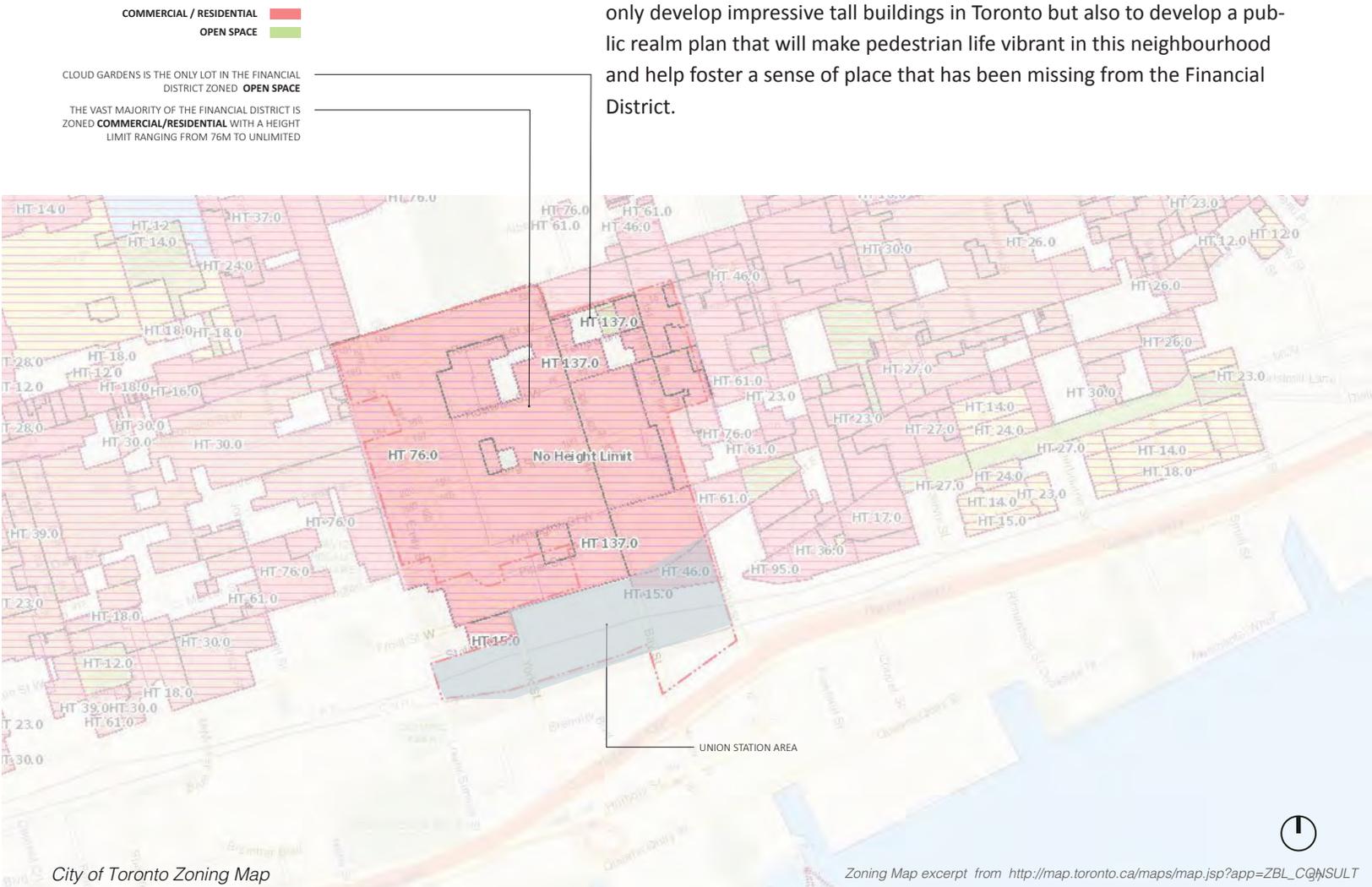
Currently the Financial District has a very limited number of green spaces. The most prominent is Cloud Gardens, located on the south side of Richmond Street, just west of Bay Street. Cloud Gardens is the only park in the district and has won several design awards. In addition to the park space and public art it houses a conservatory which is accessible Monday through Friday between 10 am and 2:30 pm. In addition to the green spaces at grade the TD Pavilion at the Northeast corner of King St and Bay Street has a planted green roof. This space, however, is not accessible to the public. The existing green spaces of the neighbourhood are illustrated in the plan on the following page.



5.4 Existing Zoning

Presently the entire area we refer to as the Financial District is zoned for Commercial Residential use, with only the lot presently occupied by Cloud Gardens zoned as open space under the Current City of Toronto Zoning By-Law.

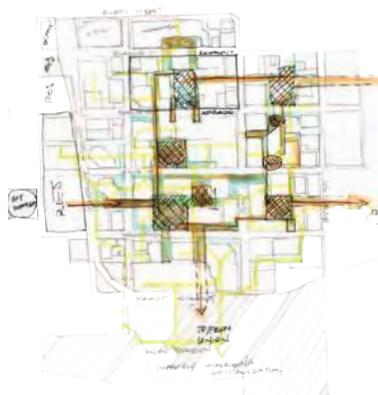
The Financial District is the only neighbourhood in Toronto where building heights are in the largest allowable bracket, 137 metres to unlimited. This recommendation is clearly outlined in the 2013 Downtown Tall Building Guidelines. This means continued vertical growth in the Financial District is going to continue, and presents us with a remarkable opportunity to not only develop impressive tall buildings in Toronto but also to develop a public realm plan that will make pedestrian life vibrant in this neighbourhood and help foster a sense of place that has been missing from the Financial District.



2.6

APPROACH

Urban Catalysts: Strategies for a Connected Public Space Network



2.6.1 *Site Strategy*

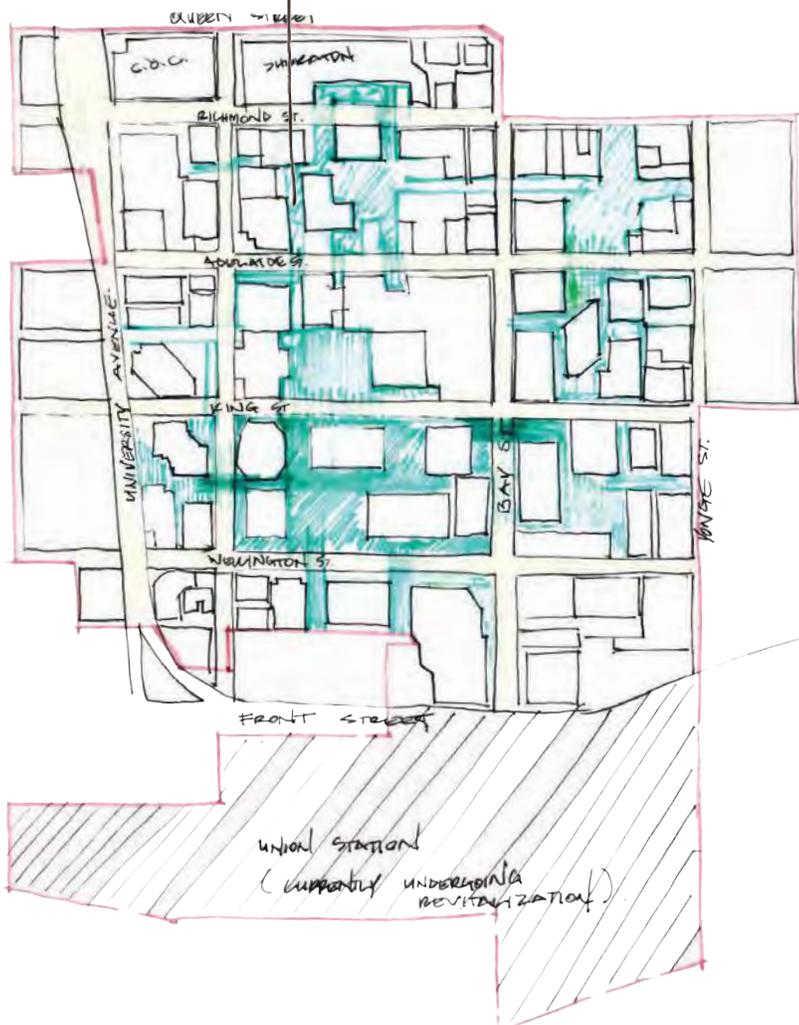
This master plan looks to improve the public realm of the Financial District through a series of urban catalysts that will look to introduce a layer of human activity in this neighbourhood and offer a sense of place in an area dominated by the high rise tower. The existing conditions in the Financial District allow for a series of open spaces between buildings. These spaces are partly due to the city's requirements for tower separations. In the Financial District, the current separations range from 18m (between the older buildings) to up to 85m in some cases. This condition, when viewed as its own element, creates several linked 'networks' that if treated as such can begin to form the foundation for a cohesive and connected public realm in the Financial District. Once this potential 'network' is established, major plazas should be identified. These spaces are viewed as primary sites for structures ranging from the temporary to the longer term. These structures should be similar in construction language and building method throughout the district and be connected through a smaller network of pathways, landscape and activities. We will look at this smaller network in more detail in the sections to follow.

It is important to view the complete 'public network' a singular entity, made up of smaller parts, paths and destinations, visual and physical connections that contribute to a single vision, a single identity that is unique to this place. The structures described above will house a variety of programs, ranging from cafes to galleries and would be accessible to the public at all times. They are to be viewed as an extension of the public realm. Taking our cues from the City of Toronto Downtown Tall Building Guidelines that describe the bottom 5 storeys of towers as 'relating to the pedestrian scale' none of the design components outlined in this thesis will be taller than 5 storeys.

THE FOLD / THE SPACE BETWEEN BUILDINGS IS A CONTINUOUS SPACE OF TRANSITION.
 THIS SPACE HAS 2 STORIES, 2 LAYERS, 2 IDENTITIES -
 DAY - NIGHT
 WORK - PLAY
 REAL - DREAM
 VISIBLE - INVISIBLE
 PRACTICAL - IMAGINED

- ① BUILDING HEIGHTS / SEPARATIONS.
- ② OPEN / PUBLIC SPACE (INCL. POPS).
- ③ PUBLIC SPACE NETWORK
- ④ PATH /
- ⑤ SECTION: SITE
 SHOWS WITH HEIGHTS.
- ⑥ FUN PALACE (PRICE).
- ⑦

Publicly accessible open space
 Union Station Heritage Area
 Streets



NO INTENTION TO CHANGE THE PERSONALITY OF THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT BUT RATHER TO TRY AND EXPLOIT ITS INHERENT DICHOTOMY



TAKING ADVANTAGE OF POSSIBLE MIDBLOCK CONNECTIONS TO CREATE A CONNECTED PEDESTRIAN PATH SYSTEM THROUGH THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT

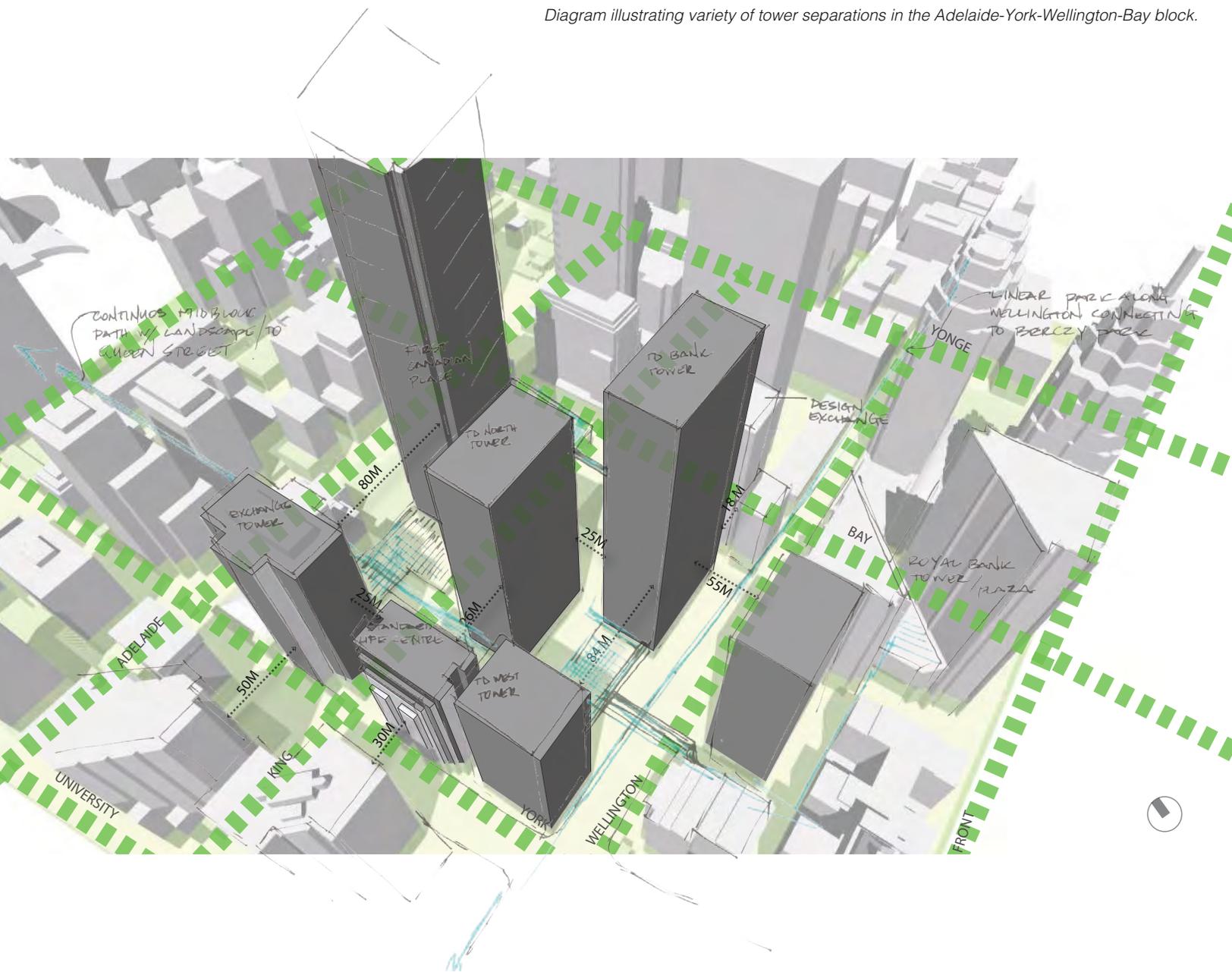
IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL POCKETS FOR PLAZAS AND URBAN DESTINATIONS.
- SPACES OF INTERSECTION

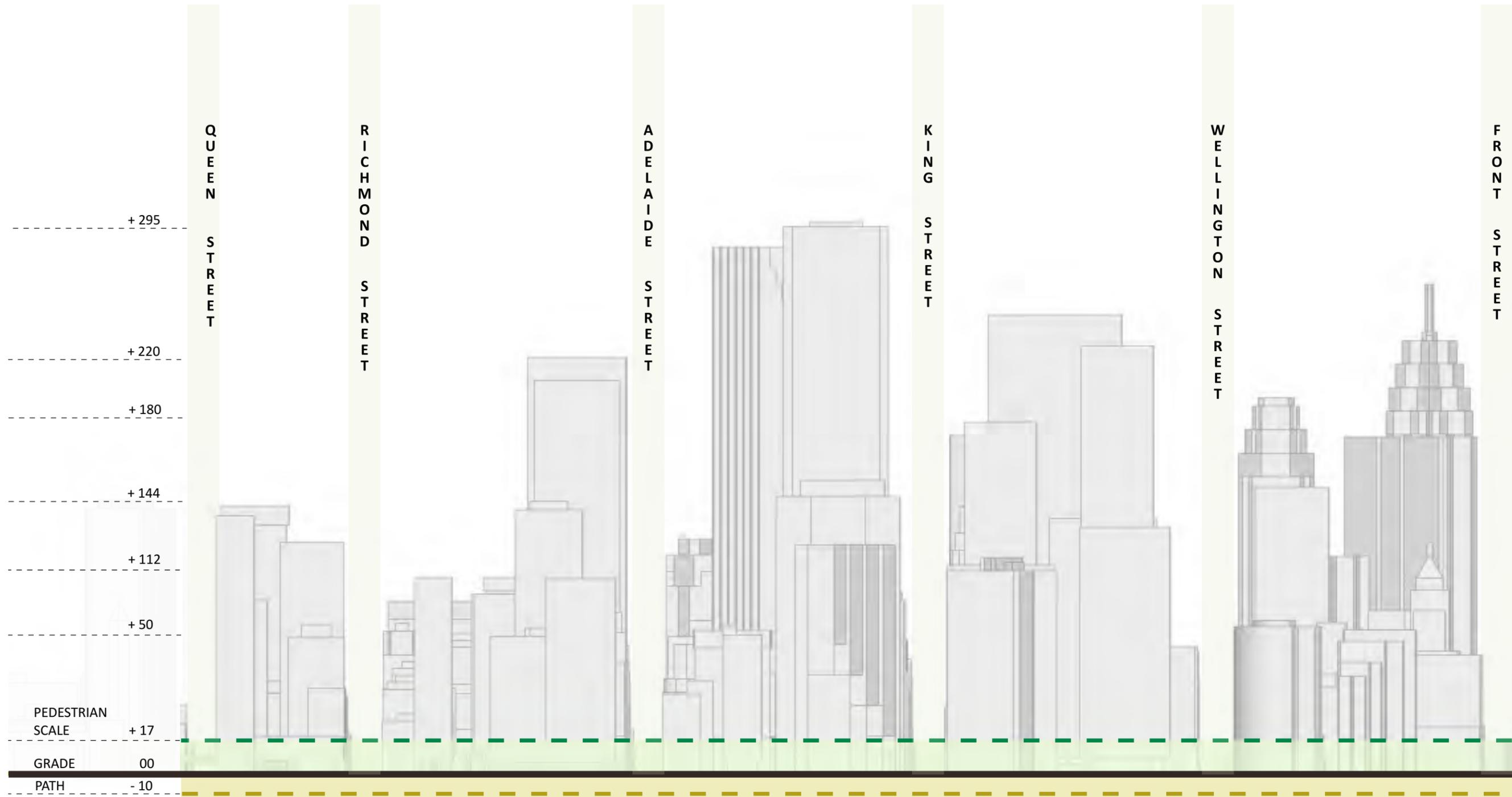


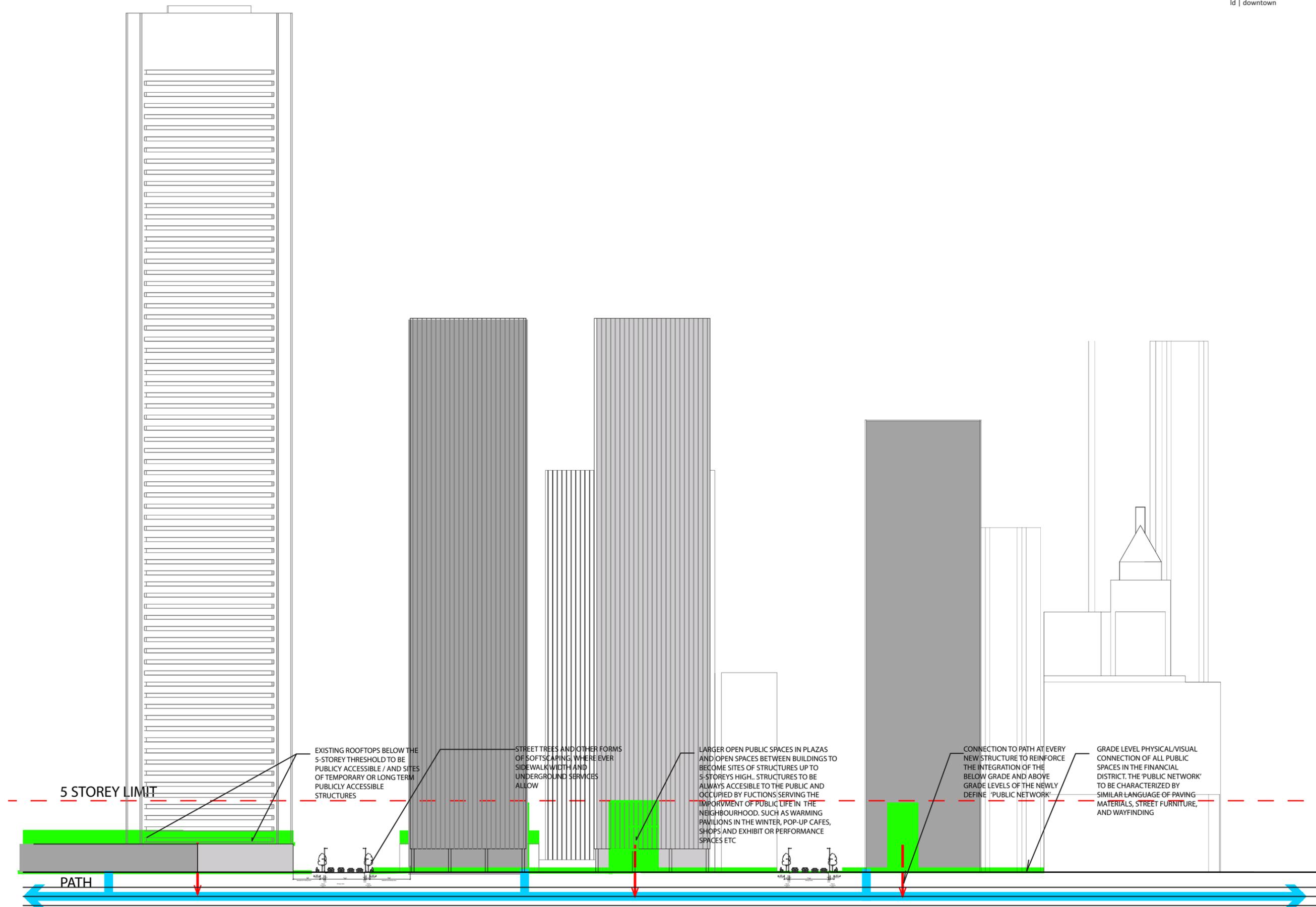
THESE SPACES CAN BE THE POSSIBLE SETTING FOR A POSSIBLE EXTENSION OF THE GROUND AND ABOVE GROUND PATHS
- A STAGE FOR SPECULATION

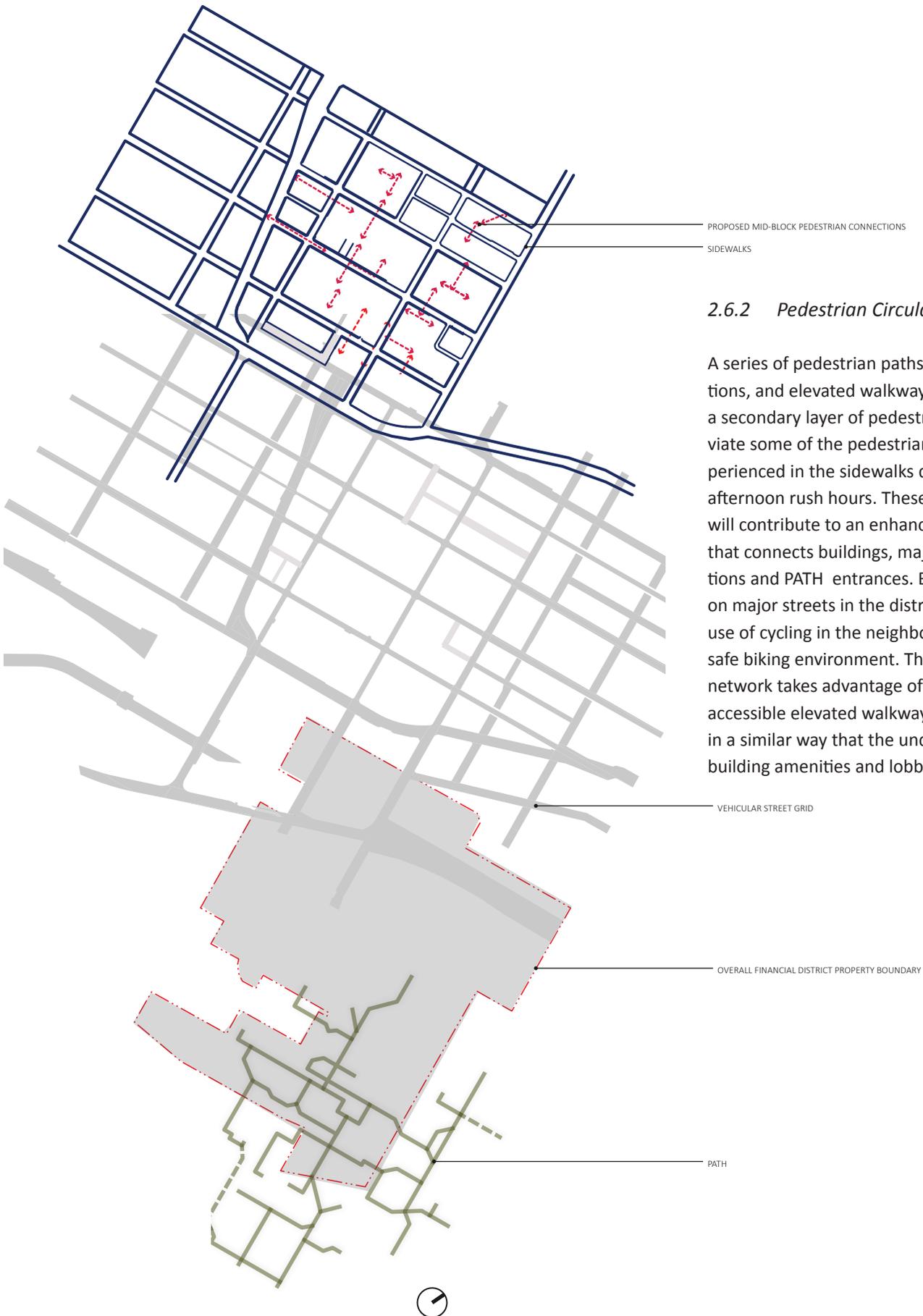


Diagram illustrating variety of tower separations in the Adelaide-York-Wellington-Bay block.





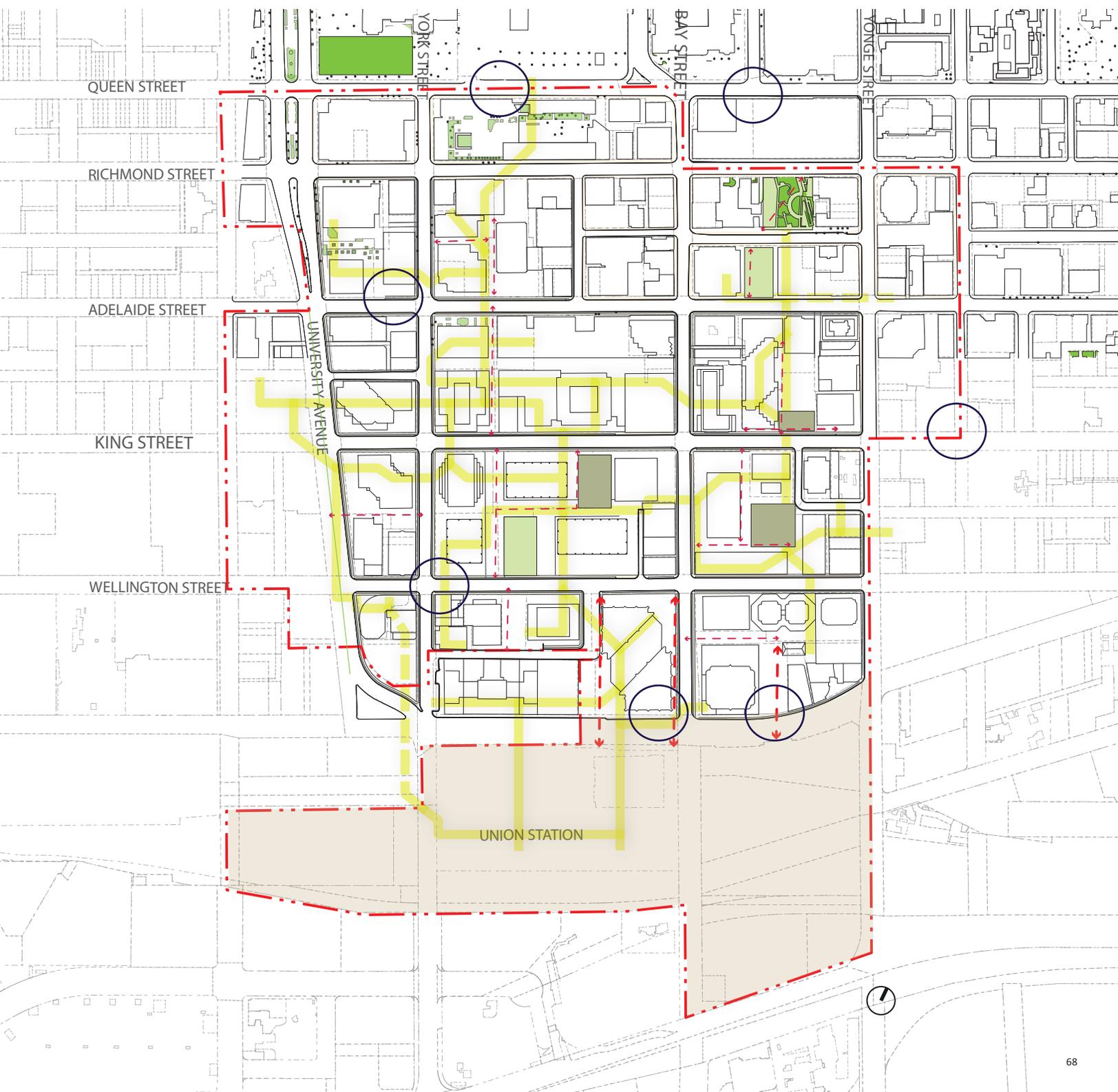




2.6.2 Pedestrian Circulation

A series of pedestrian paths, mid block connections, and elevated walkways are proposed to offer a secondary layer of pedestrian circulation, to alleviate some of the pedestrian congestion that is experienced in the sidewalks during the morning and afternoon rush hours. These paths and walkways will contribute to an enhanced circulation network that connects buildings, major streets, transit locations and PATH entrances. Bike lanes are proposed on major streets in the district to encourage the use of cycling in the neighbourhood and to create a safe biking environment. This proposed circulation network takes advantage of the existing plazas, and accessible elevated walkways, patios and rooftops in a similar way that the underground PATH uses building amenities and lobbies.

- UNION STATION HERITAGE AREA (REVITALIZATION CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION)
- STREET
- PATH
- SIDEWALKS / PERIMETER BLOCK CIRCULATION
- PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE GREEN OPEN SPACES
- PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE URBAN PLAZAS
- MID-BLOCK CONNECTIONS
- GATEWAY LOCATIONS



2.6.3 Street Identity

The streets and sidewalks play a major part in the public life of the Financial District. These spaces need to cope with the demands of morning and afternoon rush hour traffic - both vehicular and pedestrian - as well as act as a vital component in creating a sense of belonging in this neighbourhood. The streetscape treatment should be one that is easily identifiable with similar paving patterns, lighting and street furniture throughout the neighbourhood. All these components can create a rhythm of design and contribute to establish a sense of identity for the public realm. Furniture, lighting and paving should add to the contemporary and innovative design aesthetic and performance of the overall master plan and the district as a whole. Curb-less streets with retractable bollards are proposed throughout the neighbourhood to increase pedestrian appeal and to allow flexibility of uses at key locations in the district.

These outlined improvements will also address needs that are starting to arise from a sharp increase in residential population in and around the neighbourhood. These proposed design takes into consideration both winter and summer conditions considering the possibilities for street patios in locations where restaurants and cafes are becoming a permanent fixture.

The following streetscape plans and sections outline how this strategy can begin to establish a framework for the connectivity of the district, by looking at the existing character of each street and looking at ways to enhance it.



CorTen Bike rack by StreetLife (streetlife.nl)



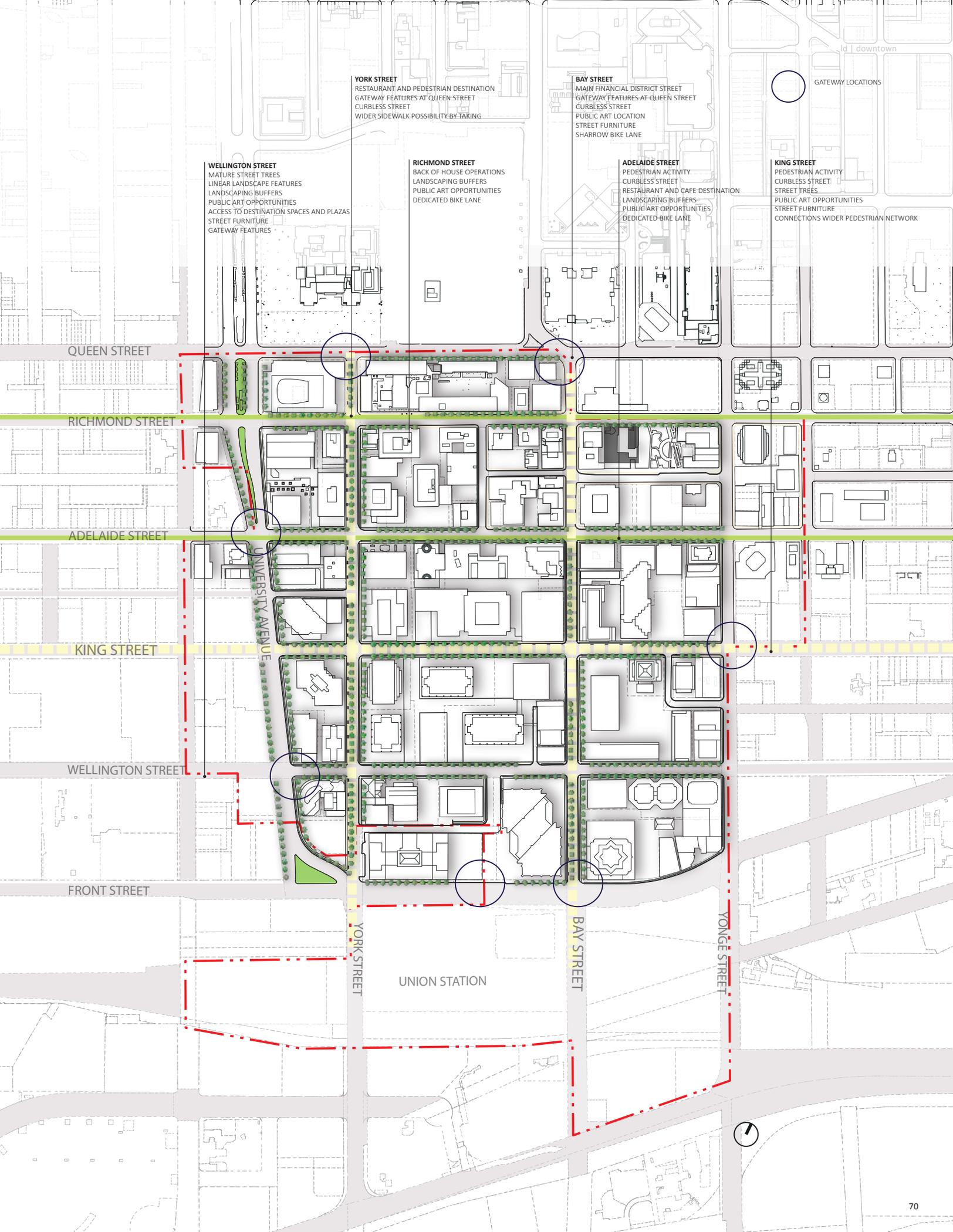
Curbless Street condition (janghai.com)



Sidewalk along Bay Street, Existing condition (LD 2015)



King Street, Existing condition (LD 2015)



GATEWAY LOCATIONS

YORK STREET
RESTAURANT AND PEDESTRIAN DESTINATION
GATEWAY FEATURES AT QUEEN STREET
CURBLESS STREET
WIDER SIDEWALK POSSIBILITY BY TAKING

BAY STREET
MAIN FINANCIAL DISTRICT STREET
GATEWAY FEATURES AT QUEEN STREET
CURBLESS STREET
PUBLIC ART LOCATION
STREET FURNITURE
SHARROW BIKE LANE

WELLINGTON STREET
MATURE STREET TREES
LINEAR LANDSCAPE FEATURES
LANDSCAPING BUFFERS
PUBLIC ART OPPORTUNITIES
ACCESS TO DESTINATION SPACES AND PLAZAS
STREET FURNITURE
GATEWAY FEATURES

RICHMOND STREET
BACK OF HOUSE OPERATIONS
LANDSCAPING BUFFERS
PUBLIC ART OPPORTUNITIES
DEDICATED BIKE LANE

ADELAIDE STREET
PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY
CURBLESS STREET
RESTAURANT AND CAFE DESTINATION
LANDSCAPING BUFFERS
PUBLIC ART OPPORTUNITIES
DEDICATED BIKE LANE

KING STREET
PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY
CURBLESS STREET
STREET TREES
PUBLIC ART OPPORTUNITIES
STREET FURNITURE
CONNECTIONS WIDER PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

QUEEN STREET

RICHMOND STREET

ADELAIDE STREET

KING STREET

WELLINGTON STREET

FRONT STREET

UNIVERSITY AVENUE

YORK STREET

BAY STREET

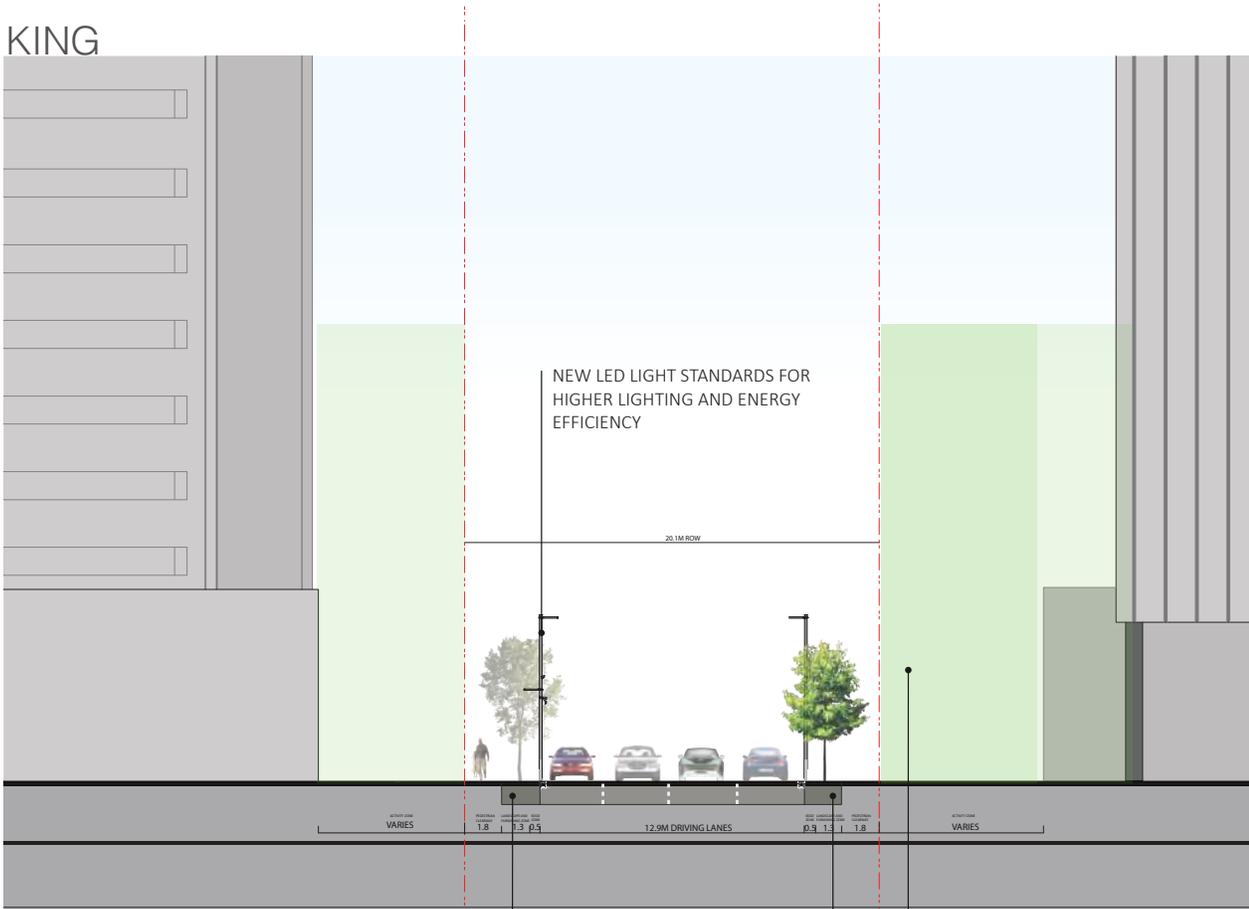
YONGE STREET

UNION STATION



KING STREET IS ONE OF THE PRIMARY ARTERIES THROUGH THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT. IT CURRENTLY HAS LIMITED STREET TREES AND VEGETATION. HIGH RISE COMMERCIAL AND SOME MID-RISE BUILDINGS FRONT ONTO IT WITH VARYING SETBACKS. A CURBLESS CONDITION ON KING STREET, WITH RETRACTABLE BOLLARDS AND STANDARDIZED STREETSCAPE ELEMENTS WOULD MAKE KING STREET MORE FRIENDLY TO THE HIGH PEDESTRIAN VOLUMES THAT IT EXPERIENCES, AND MULTIPLE STREET FESTIVALS THAT USE KING STREET AS THEIR VENUE

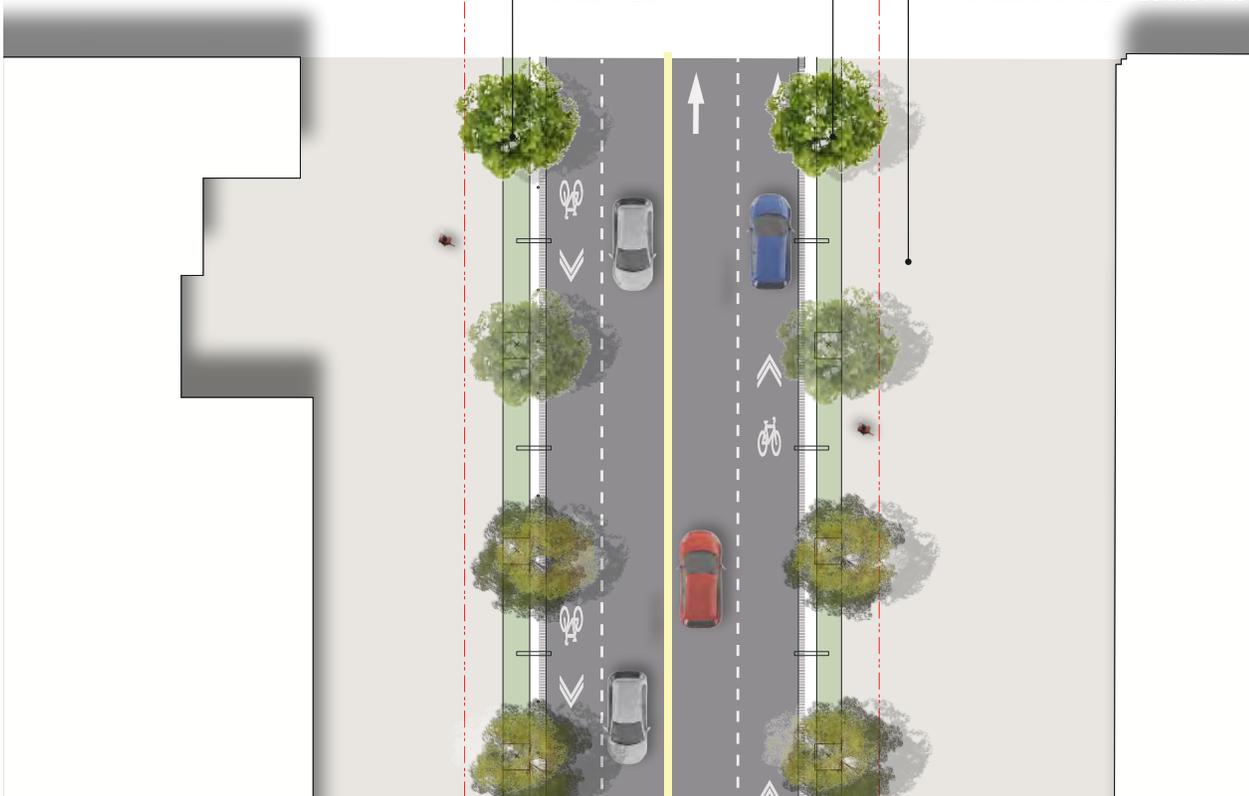
KING



King Street, Proposed Plan and Section

A TREE/LANDSCAPE ZONE SHOULD BE INCORPORATED WHEREVER POSSIBLE, WITH SILVA CELL SYSTEMS WHERE SOIL AND UNDERGROUND OPERATIONAL SERVICES DON'T PERMIT STREET TREES.

ACTIVITY ZONE. SPACE VARIES AS BUILDING SETBACKS VARY ALONG KING STREET. THIS ZONE WOULD BE USED FOR LANDSCAPING STREET SIDE POP-UP CAFES, PUBLIC ART OF GATEWAY FEATURES AT KEY INTERSECTIONS IN THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT. THE PAVING MATERIAL SHOULD BE SIMILAR TO THE SIDEWALK - PERMEABLE UNIT PAVERS. PATTERNS AND COLOURS TO BE THE SAME THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT

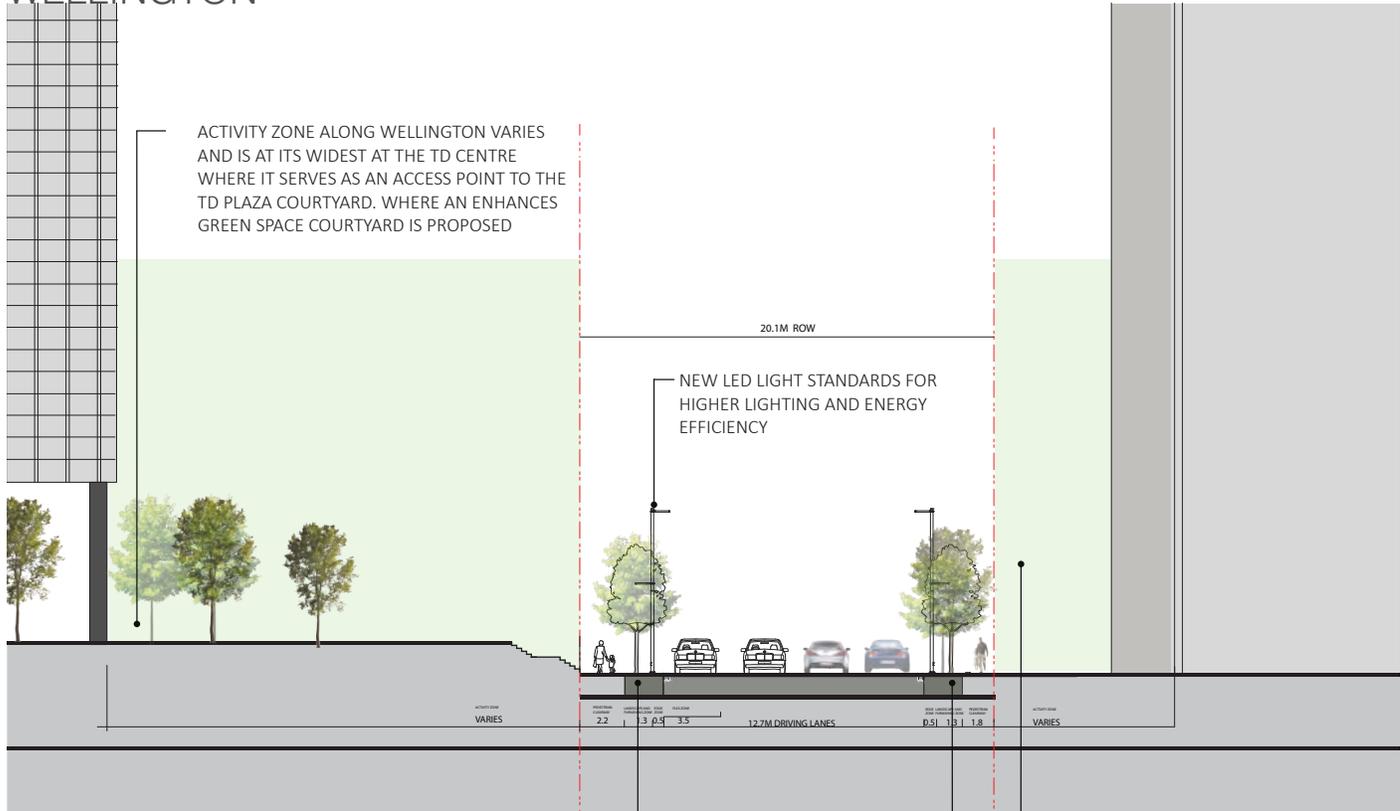




Visualization of proposed King Street streetscape revitalization

WELLINGTON IS A FOUR LANE, ONE WAY WESTBOUND STREET WITH MATURE STREET TREES AND SEVERAL PATIOS BOTH AT STREET LEVEL AND ELEVATED ABOVE GRADE. THE STREET IS FRONTED BY HIGH RISE COMMERCIAL STREETS WITH VARYING SETBACKS THAT OFFER A GENEROUS ACTIVITY ZONE. A CURBLESS CONDITION IS PROPOSED ON WELLING TO IMPROVE THE PEDESTRIAN AND STREETScape ACTIVITY CONDITIONS. ALSO OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD ON A RESTAURANT AND PEDESTRIAN CULTURE THAT IS BEGINNING TO DEVELOP ALONG THIS STREET. AS A HIGH PROFILE ARTERY THE PROPOSED WELLINGTON STREETScape WILL FEATURE GATEWAY CONDITIONS AT ITS INTERSECTION WITH FINANCIAL DISTRICT BOUNDARY.

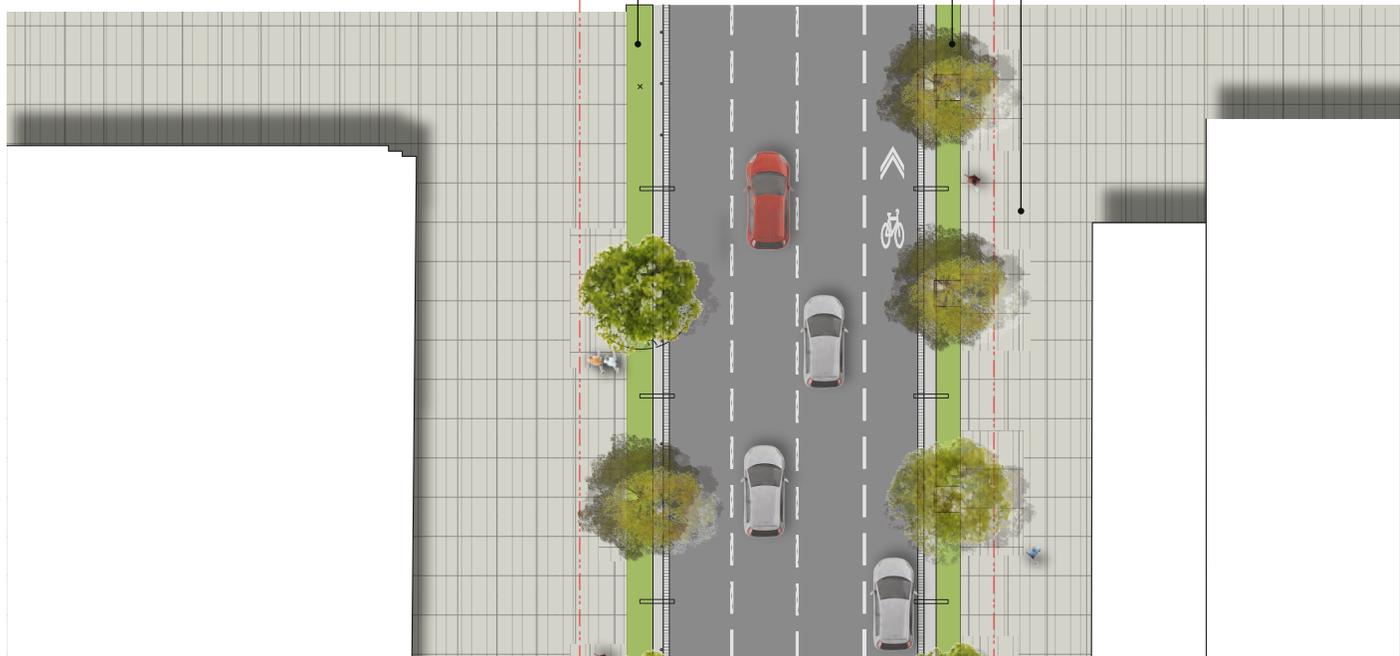
WELLINGTON



Wellington Street, Proposed Plan and Section

A TREE/LANDSCAPE ZONE SHOULD BE INCORPORATED WHEREVER POSSIBLE, WITH SILVA CELL SYSTEMS WHERE SOIL AND UNDERGROUND OPERATIONAL SERVICES DON'T PERMIT STREET TREES.

ACTIVITY ZONE. SPACE VARIES AS BUILDING SETBACKS VARY ALONG KING STREET. THIS ZONE WOULD BE USED FOR LANDSCAPING STREET SIDE POP-UP CAFES, PUBLIC ART OF GATEWAY FEATURES AT KEY INTERSECTIONS IN THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT. THE PAVING MATERIAL SHOULD BE SIMILAR TO THE SIDEWALK - PERMEABLE UNIT PAVERS. PATTERNS AND COLOURS TO BE THE SAME THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT

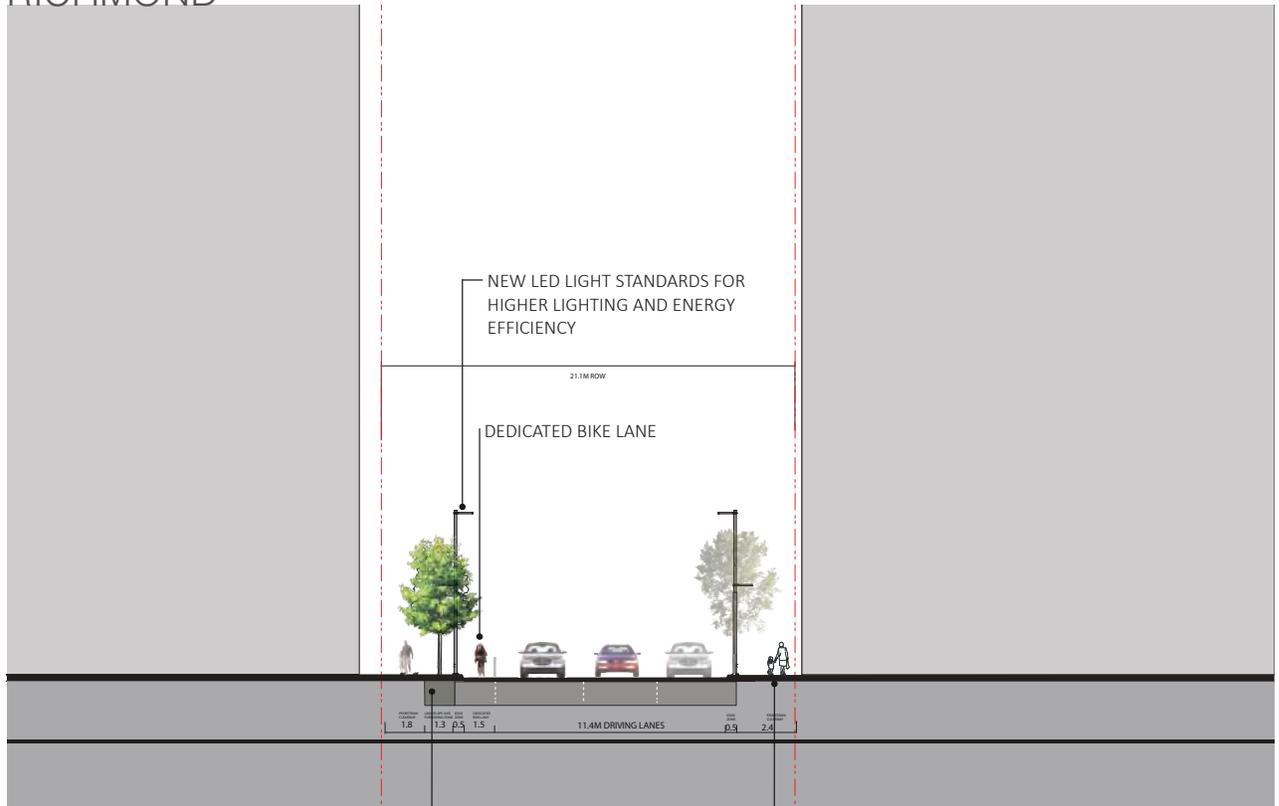


Visualization of proposed back alley revitalization



RICHMOND STREET IS A FOUR LANE ONE WAY, WESTBOUND STREET. THE STREET HAS NARROW SIDEWALKS WITH LITTLE TO NO SETBACKS FROM THE PROPERTY LINE. THE STREET ALSO SERVES AS THE MAIN ACCESS FOR BACK OF HOUSE ACTIVITIES FOR MAJOR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS. RICHMOND IS MAJOR ACCESS POINT TO DOWNTOWN FROM THE DON VALLEY PARKWAY, WITH VERY HIGH VEHICULAR VOLUMES. A PERMANENT BIKE LINE IS PROPOSED ALONG RICHMOND TO ENCOURAGE ALTERNATE TRANSPORTATION THROUGH THE DISTRICT. STREET SHOULD BE INTRODUCED WHEREVER POSSIBLE WITH ALTERNATIVE LOW MAINTENANCE AND LOW IMPACT PERENNIAL PLANTS WHERE TREE PLANTING IS NOT POSSIBLE. THE NUMEROUS ALLEY THAT CONNECT TO RICHMOND SHOULD BE USED AS SITES OF PUBLIC ART PROJECTS TO ANIMATE A CONDITION WITH LOW PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY.

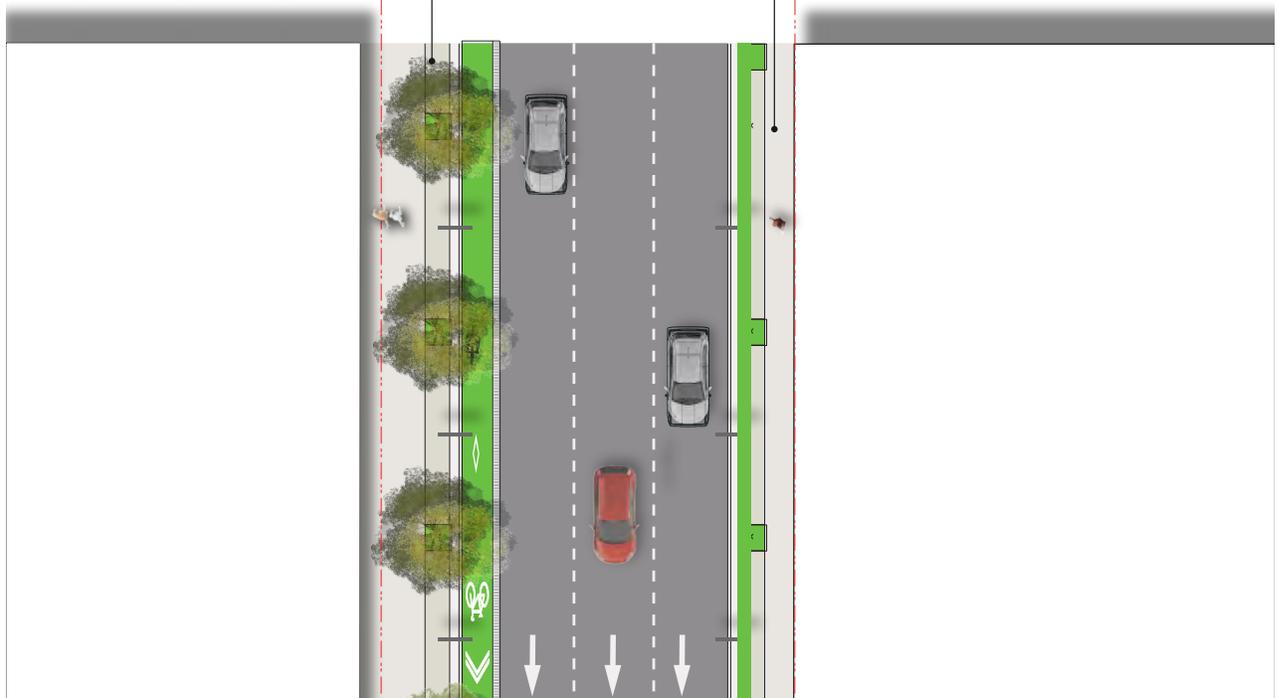
RICHMOND



Richmond Street, Proposed Plan and Section

A TREE/LANDSCAPE ZONE SHOULD BE INCORPORATED WHEREVER POSSIBLE, WITH SILVA CELL SYSTEMS WHERE SOIL AND UNDERGROUND OPERATIONAL SERVICES DON'T PERMIT STREET TREES.

SIDEWALKS SHOULD BE TREATED WITH THE SAME PAVING MATERIAL AND PATTERS THROUGHOUT THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT. WHERE A LANDSCAPE WOULD FORCE THE SIDEWALKS TO BE TOO NARROW OTHER LOW IMPACT PLANTING WILL BE INCORPORATED ALONG THE STREET CURB.

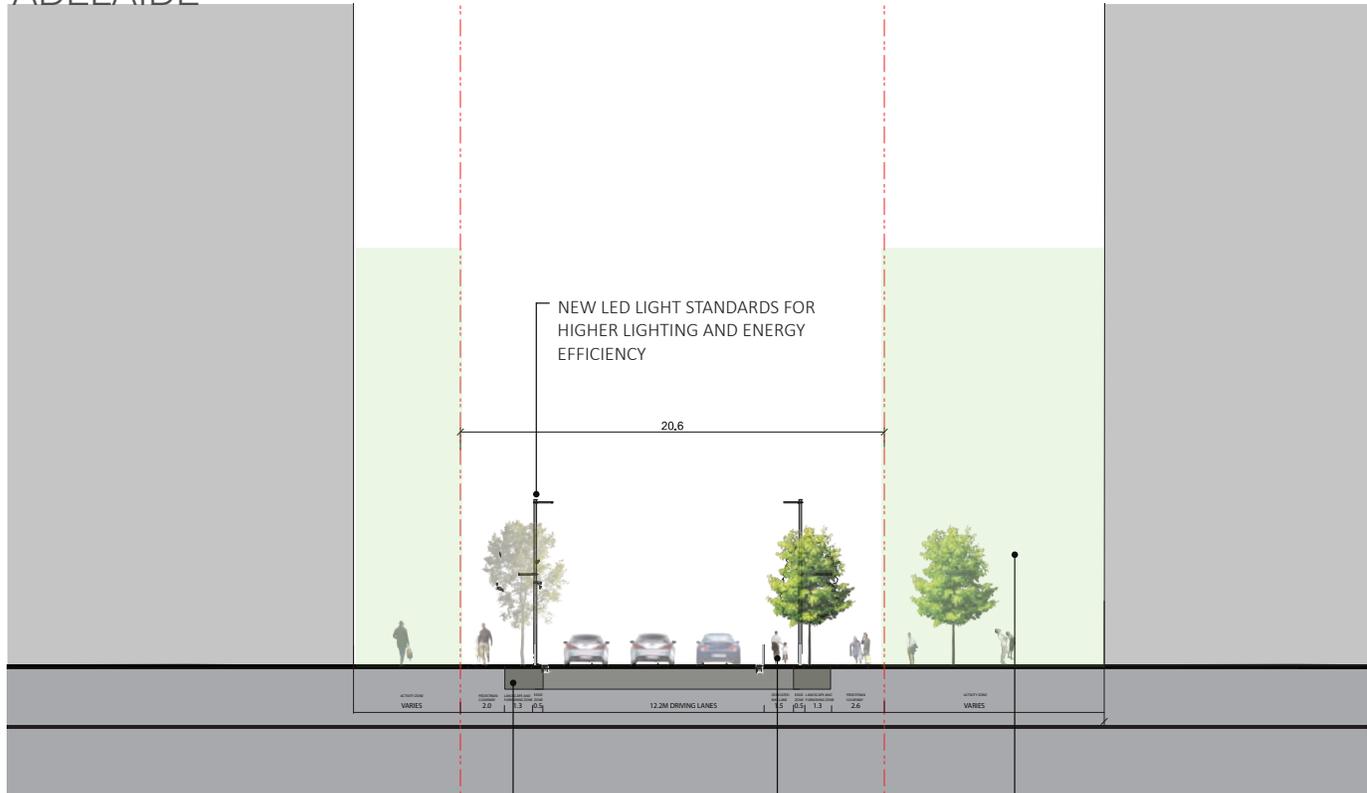




Visualization of proposed Richmond Street streetscape

ADELAIDE STREET IS FOUR LANE ONE WAY, EASTBOUND STREET, WITH HIGH END COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS AND STREET LEVEL RESTAURANTS AND CAFES. THE PROPOSED STREETScape PLAN IS FOR A CURBLESS CONDITION, WITH STANDARDIZED SIDEWALK AND STREET PAVING, AS PER THE REST OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD. STREET TREES ARE PROPOSED WHEREVER POSSIBLE AND LANDSCAPE BUFFERS ARE PROPOSED ALONG THE STREET EDGE TO PROVIDE VISUAL SEPARATION FOR THE SIDEWALK RESTAURANT PATIOS. PUBLIC ART IS PROPOSED AT GATEWAY LOCATIONS LEADING TO THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT AND AT MAJOR INTERSECTIONS ALONG ADELAIDE.

ADELAIDE

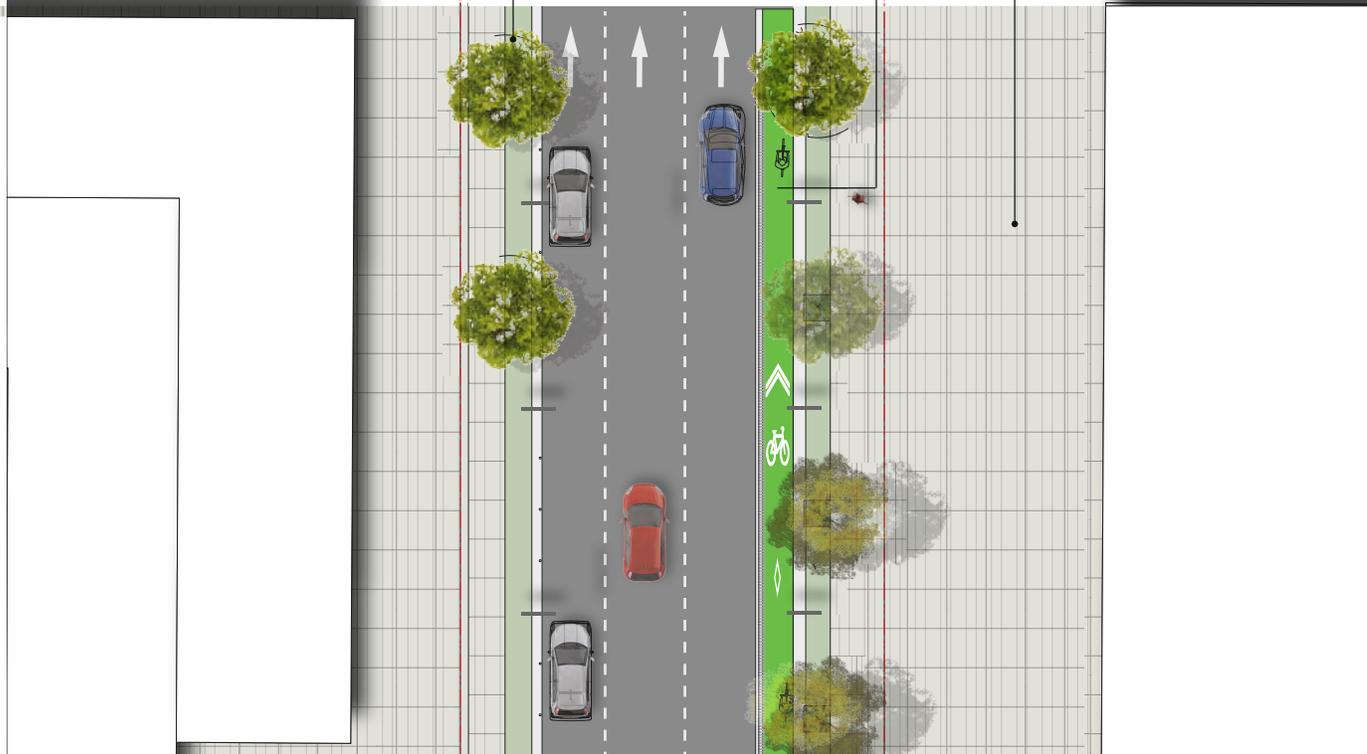


Adelaide Street, Proposed Plan and Section

A TREE/LANDSCAPE ZONE SHOULD BE INCORPORATED WHEREVER POSSIBLE, WITH SILVA CELL SYSTEMS WHERE SOIL AND UNDERGROUND OPERATIONAL SERVICES DON'T PERMIT STREET TREES.

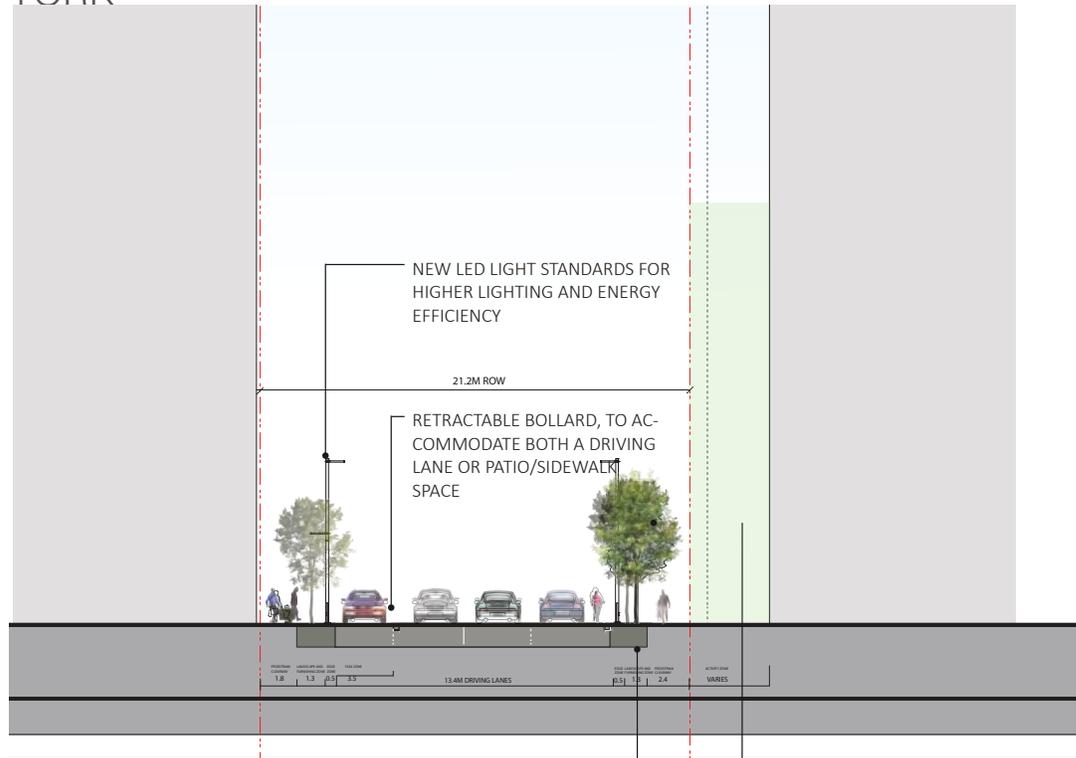
DEDICATED BIKE LANE

ACTIVITY ZONE. SPACE VARIES AS BUILDING SETBACKS VARY ALONG KING STREET. THIS ZONE WOULD BE USED FOR LANDSCAPING STREET SIDE POP-UP CAFES, PUBLIC ART OF GATEWAY FEATURES AT KEY INTERSECTIONS IN THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT. THE PAVING MATERIAL SHOULD BE SIMILAR TO THE SIDEWALK - PERMEABLE UNIT PAVERS. PATTERNS AND COLOURS TO BE THE SAME THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT



YORK STREET IS A TWO WAY, FOUR LANE STREET RUNNING NORTH-SOUTH AND SERVING AS FRONTAGE FOR MID-RISE AND HIGH RISE BUILDINGS. IT IS BEGINNING TO DEVELOP AN IDENTITY AS A RESTAURANT DESTINATION IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD. IT HAS NARROW SIDEWALKS ALONG THE MID-BLOCK AND DEEP SETBACKS AT THE INTERSECTIONS. THE PROPOSED SECTION IS FOR A CURBLESS STREET WITH RETRACTABLE BOLLARDS TO PROVIDE BUFFER FROM VEHICULAR TRAFFIC. ONE OF THE DRIVING LANES IS PROPOSED A FLEX ZONE WHICH WOULD BE TAKEN OVER BY SIDEWALK ACTIVITY AND STREET LEVEL PATIOS IN THE SUMMER MONTHS. YORK SHOULD SERVE AS A GATEWAY TO THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT AT THE INTERSECTION WITH QUEEN STREET, WHICH EXPERIENCES VERY HIGH VOLUMES OF PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY

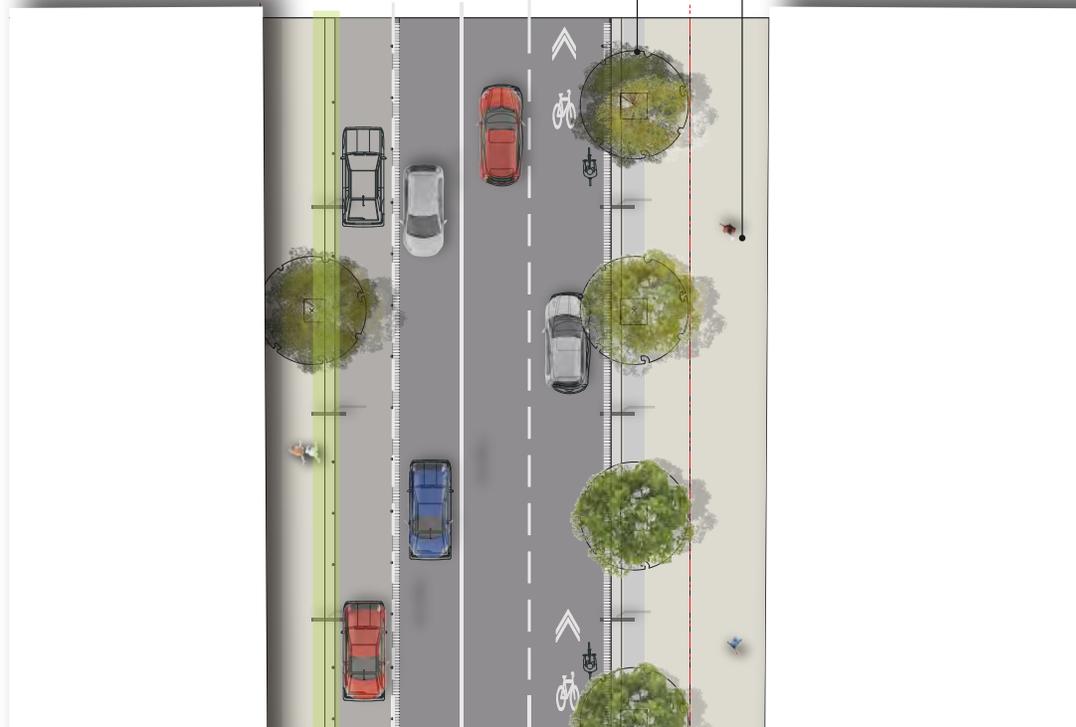
YORK



York Street, Proposed Plan and Section

A TREE/LANDSCAPE ZONE SHOULD BE INCORPORATED ON BOTH SIDES OF THE STREET WHEREVER POSSIBLE, WITH SILVA CELL SYSTEMS WHERE SOIL AND UNDERGROUND OPERATIONAL SERVICES DON'T PERMIT STREET TREES.

ACTIVITY ZONE. SPACE VARIES AS BUILDING SETBACKS VARY ALONG KING STREET. THIS ZONE WOULD BE USED FOR LANDSCAPING STREET SIDE POP-UP CAFES, PUBLIC ART OF GATEWAY FEATURES AT KEY INTERSECTIONS IN THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT. THE PAVING MATERIAL SHOULD BE SIMILAR TO THE SIDEWALK - PERMEABLE UNIT PAVERS. PATTERNS AND COLOURS TO BE THE SAME THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT





Visualization of proposed York Street streetscape - Summer condition, with reduced vehicular lanes and wider sidewalk activity zone

2.6.4 *Green Spaces and Vegetation*

Green spaces and trees provide a level of approachability to any neighbourhood. By increasing the number of trees and introducing new landscaped spaces in the spaces between buildings and on low rise rooftops. Street trees should be planted wherever possible and use landscape innovations such as silva cell systems where space is limited. These technologies employ modular systems to support the growth of large trees and storm-water management in small spaces.

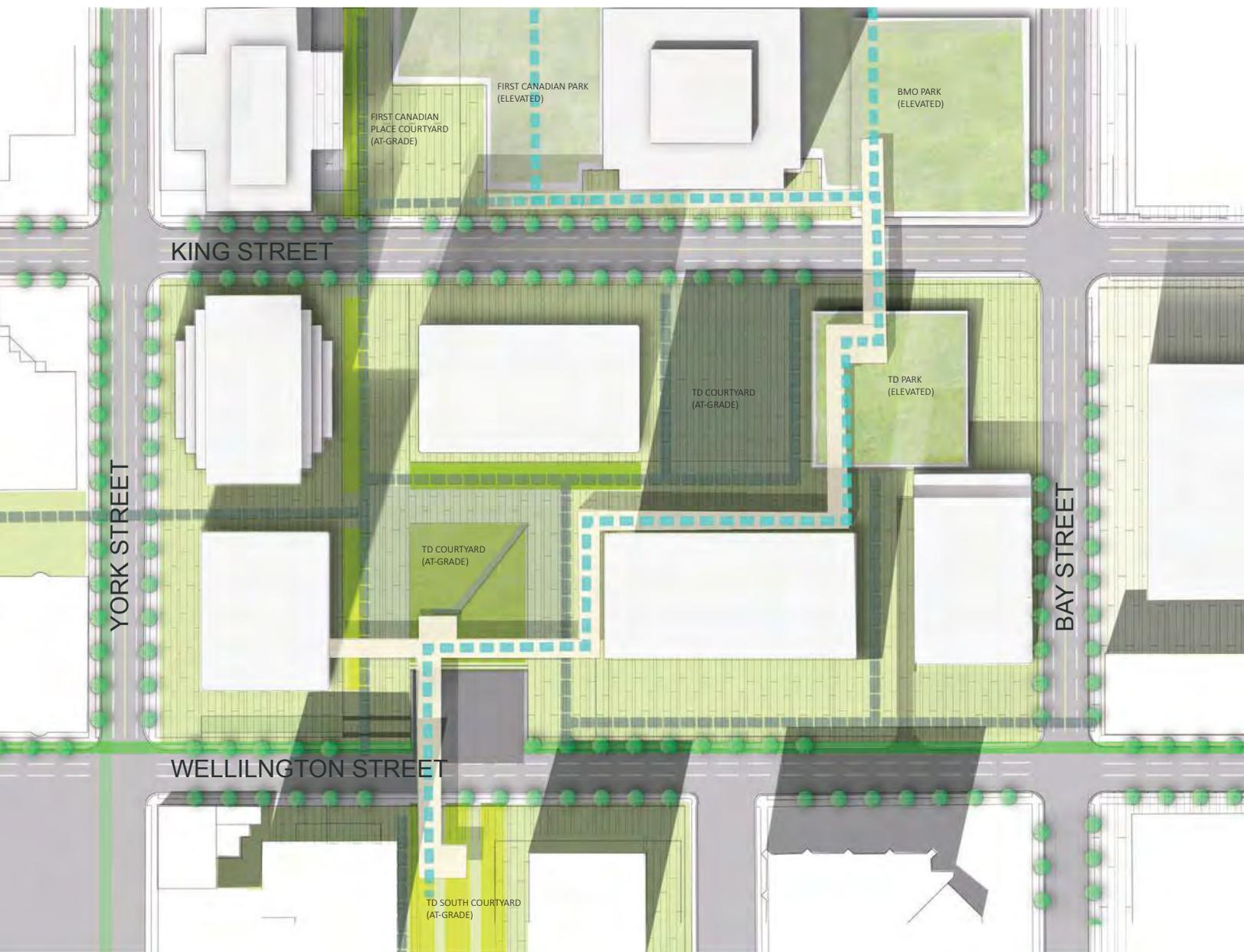
Large raised planters, which are a familiar fixture in front of many of the Financial District towers, should be replaced with in ground planters and vegetation, which to not block the flow of pedestrian traffic and provide a green presence on the ground.

Wherever possible, low-rise rooftops should be utilized for green roofs and gardens that can be accessible and be integrated into the major public network of the neighbourhood.

FINANCIAL DISTRICT | GREEN SPACES AND URBAN PLAZAS



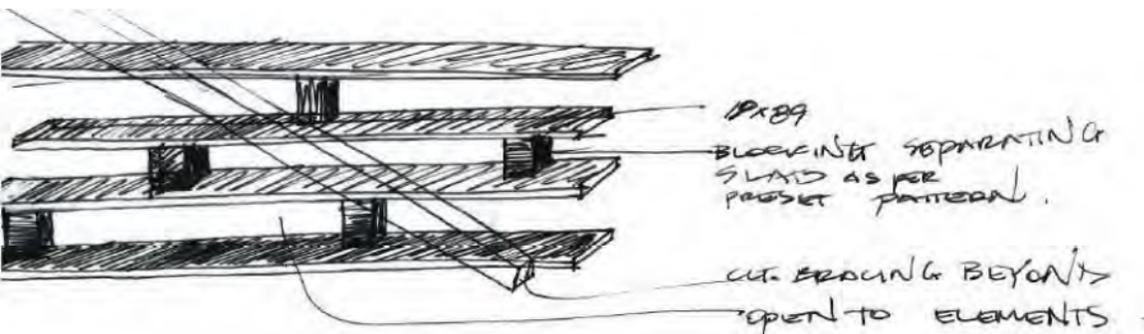
- ELEVATED PATH
- AT-GRADE PATH



Site Plan illustrating at-grade and elevated public spaces and at-grade and elevated pathways

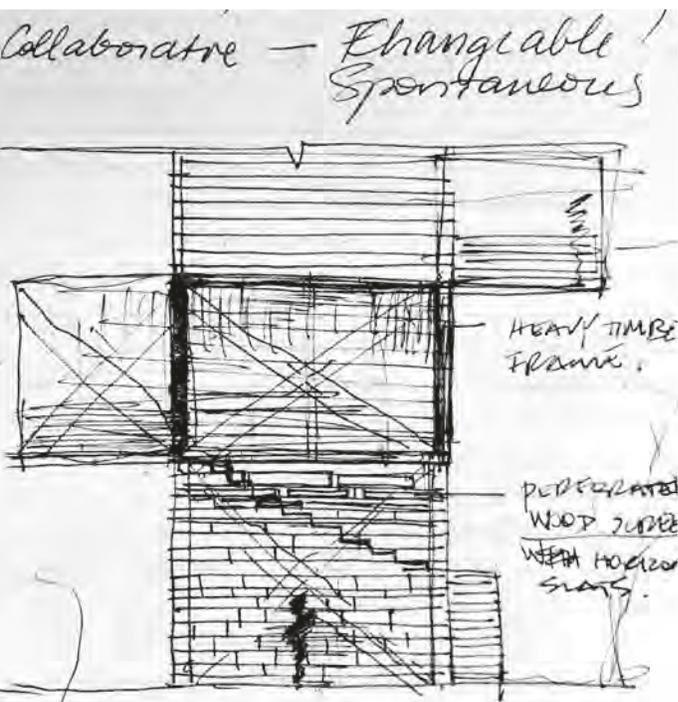
FINANCIAL DISTRICT | SITE PLAN



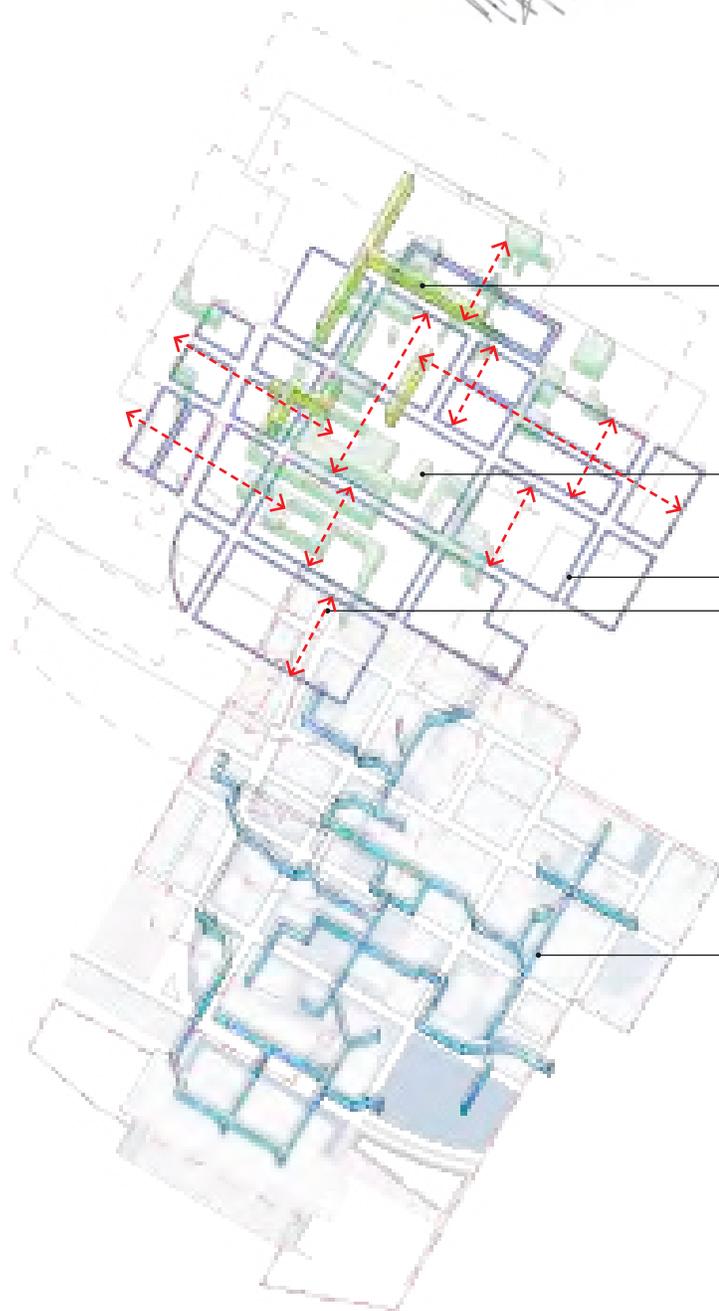
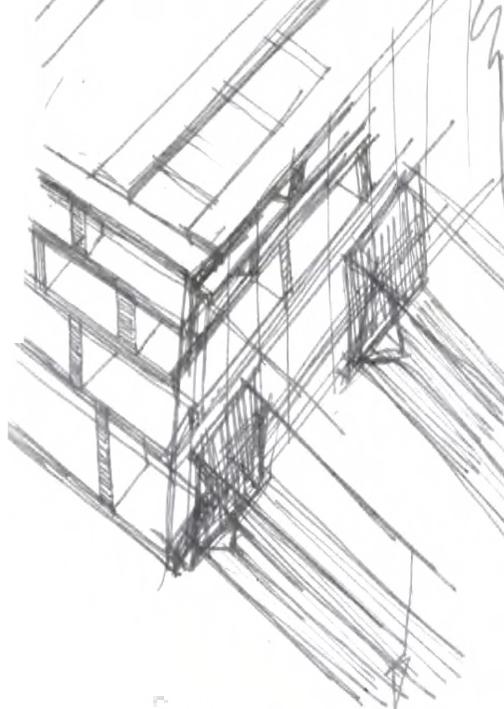


2.6.5 The Public Realm 'Building'

In addition to the proposed improvements outlined the previous sections, this section will outline a series of structures which will serve as destination spaces as well as connective paths between buildings and plazas. These structures will similar in construction language and building method throughout the district and be connected through a smaller network of pathways, landscape and activities. They are designed within the established public realm height limit (maximum 5 storeys) and will serve as the seat of a variety of activities ranging from cafes, to galleries to pop-shops etc. These public realm buildings will also serve as a secondary infrastructure layer for above ground circulation, offering a new vantage point amount the towers and therefore effectively increasing publicly accessible space.



The primary material choice for these structures, wood, is partly because of one of the inspirations for this proposal (tkaronto - 'where there are trees standing in the water') and partly because of the contrast that it creates next to the concrete, steel and glass palette of its immediate surroundings. These architectural catalysts, seek not only to welcome people into the neighbourhood but to serve as an apparatus for exploring the neighbourhood. They can be a path to elsewhere as well as a destination. They seek to occupy the intersection of day and night, of work and play. They are designed as porous, open structures that welcome spontaneity, changeability and accessibility. The separated wood slat facades articulate spaces that are not exclusive, but rather able to define spaces and a range of unique activities. Stairs, ramps and platforms facilitate vertical circulation through these semi-buildings. The intention here is to respect the space between with built form that connects, facilitates movement and demarcates the possibility of destination spaces.



Potential elevated structures within the publicly accessible space volume, intersecting both at grade and below grade pedestrian networks and destination spaces.

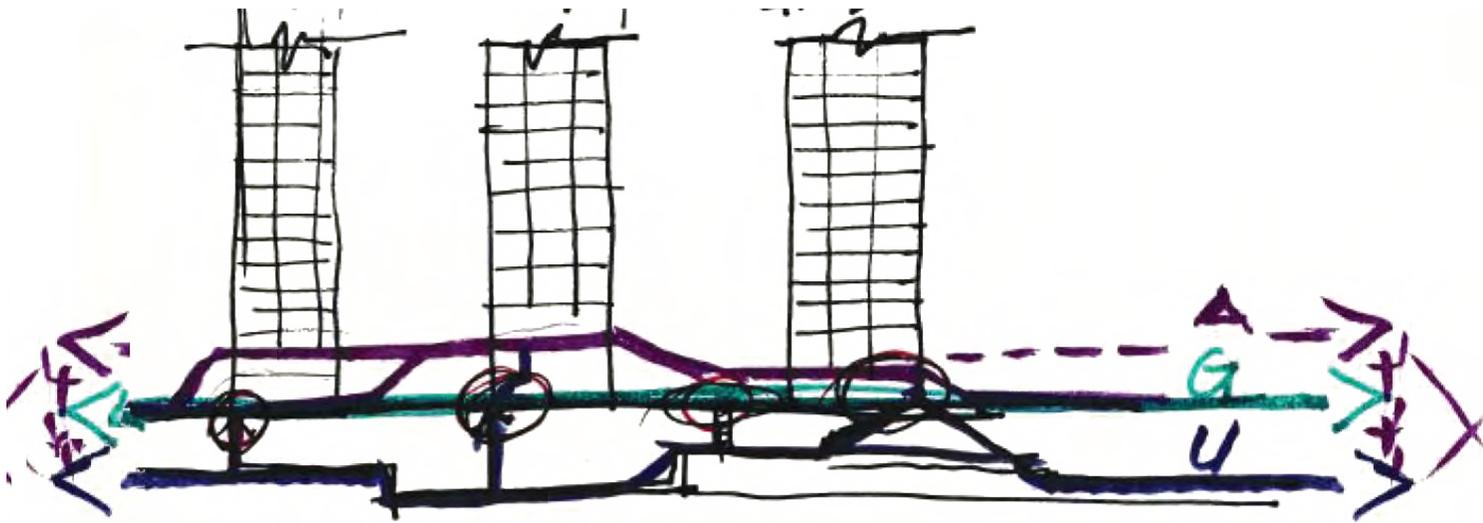
Privately owned publicly accessible open space. This space is essentially the void between the buildings. If we look at this space as a volume we can start to see it a space with opportunities for definition and refinement; opportunities to be more than just leftover space between buildings, but rather an entity on its own.

Sidewalks, public, perimeter block circulation

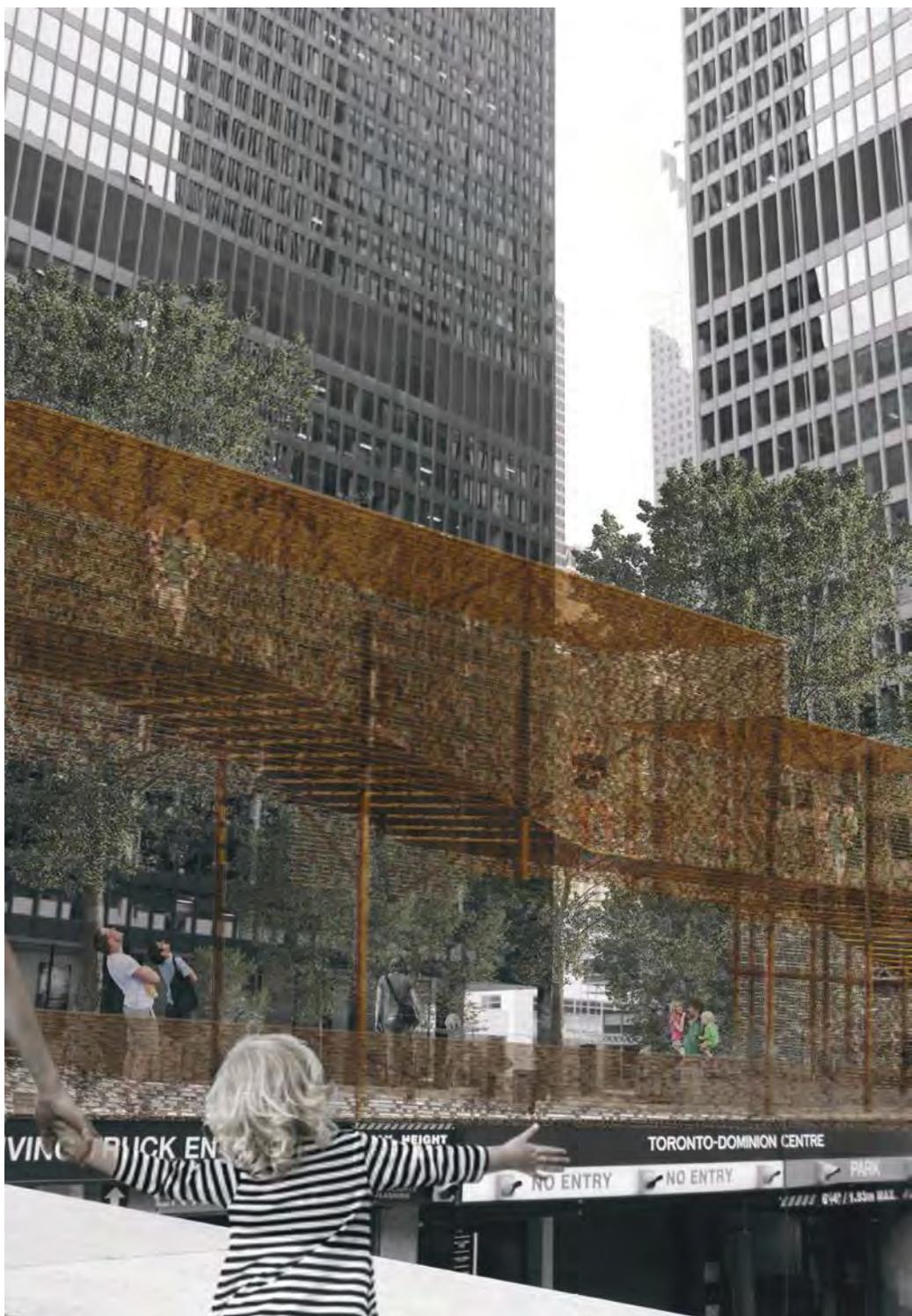
Potential mid-block pedestrian connections

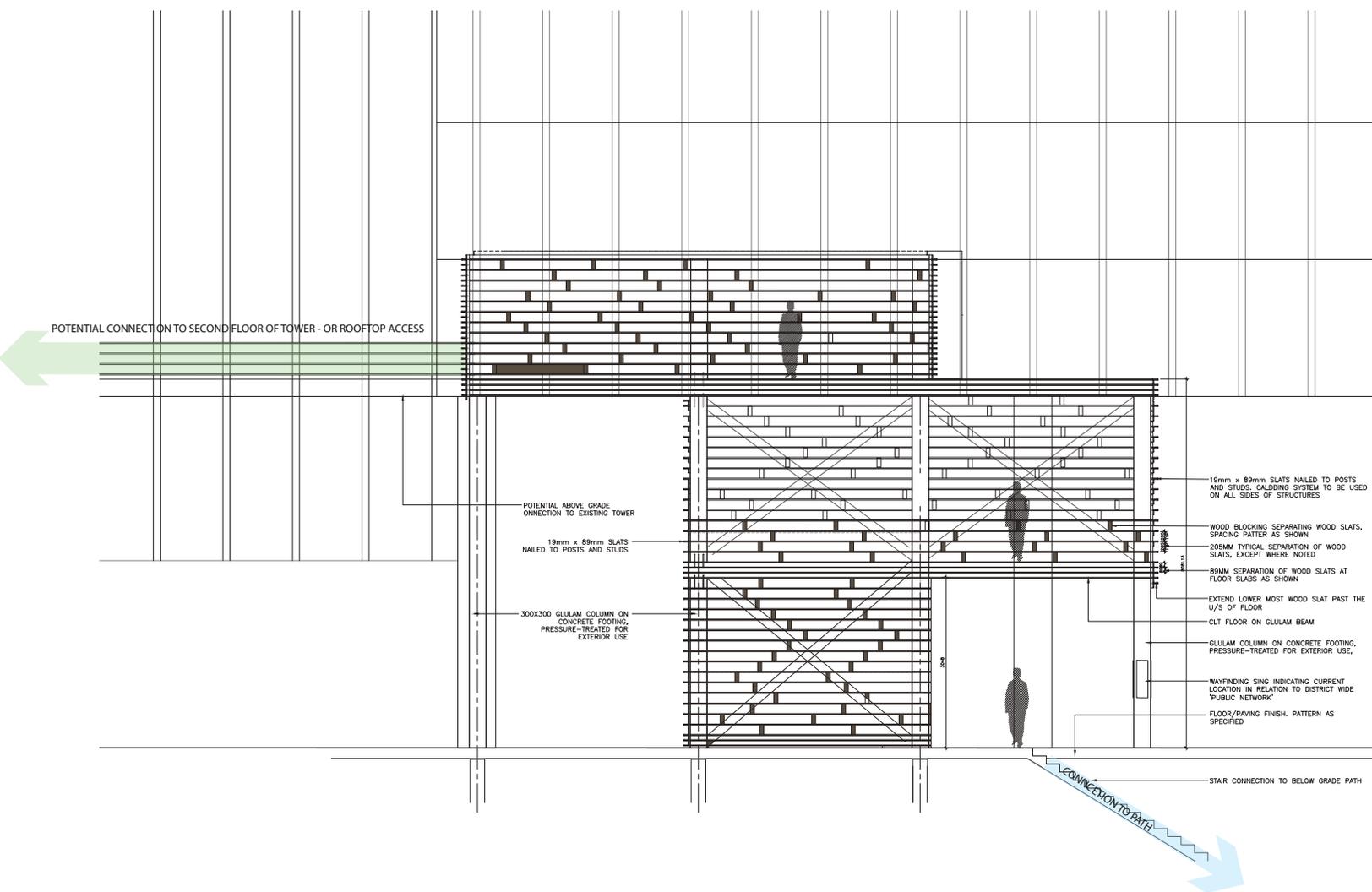
The PATH, illustrated as a continuous volume below grade

The main intention here is to extend and build on the current pedestrian circulation in the Financial District. Mimicking the underground PATH in its nature, this above grade network elevates to connect central spaces, and meets back repeatedly with at-grade public amenities, and at PATH access points, providing additional possibilities for exploration. The ability to intersect continuously with the other circulation layers in the district offers opportunities to bring these components together to avoid segregation of activities, and opportunities to keep at grade public spaces continuously engaged. Integrated, these systems have an opportunity to create a unique kind of architecture, made up of voids, vegetation, and the thresholds that the existing architecture of the neighbourhood provides.

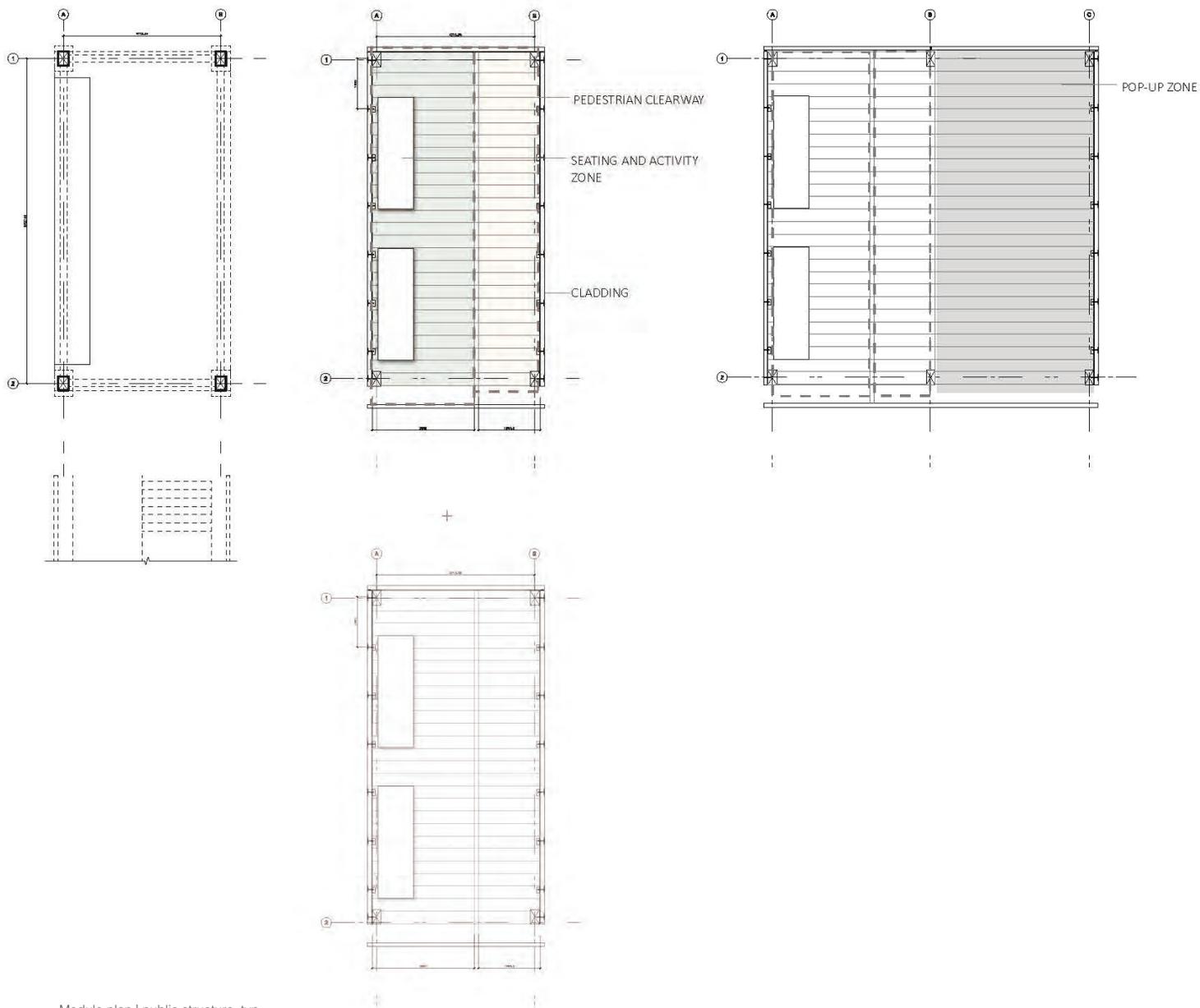


Schematic massing of elevated path





Elevated path | public structure, typ



Module plan | public structure, typ

Key Built Form Design Guidelines

Built form should be designed to always be publicly accessible. In keeping with the contemporary nature of the existing architecture of the area, new build form should complement existing buildings by providing a means of mediating open space with high-rise towers.

New construction should use local and sustainable materials whenever possible to contribute to high standards of design and sustainable construction practices.

Architecture should be designed to be a porous component of the public realm, respecting the space between buildings as a permeable, transition space.

It should allow for a multitude of access points at grade and transition points to central nodes, open spaces, urban plazas and the PATH.

Architectural feature lighting should be used to enhance design features, without increasing light pollution in the area.

New built form should be designed in keeping with what the City of Toronto recognizes as the appropriate scale relating to the public realm, with height being limited to 5 storeys or the maximum width of the fronting Right of Way.

New structures should not impose additional shadows on the open spaces of the Financial District. They should be designed to be adaptable to a variety of activities and users.

PARTIAL SITE SECTION | TD PLAZA - WELLINGTON STREET



Visualization of proposed rooftop public spaces and elevated path at the intersection of King Street and Bay Street



Looking south toward wellington street, winter



TD plaza courtyard | looking east



TD plaza courtyard | looking east



2.7

INTEGRATION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS INTO THE PUBLIC REALM

All the urban catalysts outlined above, are proposed as cohesive strategy that works by plugging into the existing downtown network and activities; inspired in part by a uniquely Toronto identity: *Where there are Trees standing in the water*; bridging the gap between people and the steel/glass/concrete structures of the Financial District.

2.7.1 Private / Semi-private / Public Transitions

As part of this integrated neighbourhood the existing towers and other buildings in the district play an essential role in the identity of the public realm. They are not only the unchangeable frame within which the public realm exists, they guide many design moves with their structural and architectural identities. Further than that, these buildings cross over into the public realm a several key moments, bridging the gap between private, semi-private and publicly accessible space.

2.7.2 Ground Floor Lobbies as Public Spaces

Many of the ground floor lobbies in the Financial District are accessible to the public, and are used as transition spaces, providing access to the underground PATH. These spaces are under 24 hour security surveillance and often house many prominent works of art by renowned artists. These conditions are optional to look at these lobbies as ‘rotating galleries’, with the potential for the temporary exhibitions of works by local artists. These can be more than intimidating, vast, empty spaces. After office hours they have the potential to transform into a cultural hub of the neighbourhood.

2.7.2 Low Rise Rooftops of as Urban Catalysts

The rooftops of low-rise buildings, wherever possible, should be viewed as potential spaces in which to extend the public realm. The could be planted gardens, raised urban plazas, public art sites and settings for special city and district events, both in the summer and winter.

part three

3.1 POSTSCRIPT

Ultimately, this study has looked at the space between buildings as a space of intersection. The threshold between looking up and looking down, looking back and looking forward, private and public, work and play, day and night. In attempting to identify and quantify this intersection we have viewed it as a transition space where this dichotomy collides. As such the intersection is transient, a constantly evolving space that alleviates the tension that the polarity of a neighbourhood such as the Financial District creates. The solutions proposed here aim to provide the starting point for speculating the possibilities that the public realm can offer, exploiting its inherent duality rather than imposing a single narrative. We find the identity of the neighbourhood in its underlying dichotomy, much like the identity of Toronto itself. There is no attempt at a single narrative here, but rather an attempt to create a connected space acting as a singular entity through which all the nuances and personalities of the neighbourhood can be perceived. It aims to present this space as an exploration apparatus for the Financial District... and maybe even the city.

And as such, the solutions offered here are also charged with duality, often struggling to navigate the disconnect between the practical and the imagined. In practical terms the broad questions of ownership and publicly accessible open space would have to be addressed further, to explore any real possibilities of a fully connected public realm for the financial district. Even something as simple as standardizing paving materials would be a logistical nightmare when hundreds of owners must weigh in. Even beyond that, the role of the city in such a project would have to be carefully defined, for the property boundaries are completely blurred when we look at the public realm in this way. There is no policy in place to properly regulate privately owned publicly accessible open spaces - and there shouldn't be - so proposing a 'network' that exists in city owned space and privately owned space would in itself be one of the most important issues to explore. The issue of improving the public realm has been getting a lot of attention of late from both the city and multiple BIAs. The City of Toronto has developed Guidelines for Privately Owned Public Open Space to begin to address this very problem, so there is, at the very least, an open conversation about how to improve and revitalize public space in the Downtown (where the majority of privately owned public spaces in Toronto are located). As the downtown continues to grow upward, with an ever increasing residential presence in the inner core, the conversation of the public realm must get louder, for to be able to improve (or at the very least even maintain) our quality of life during this rapid growth, we have to rely on vibrant public spaces that are able to handle the extra load.

3.2

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the continuing support of the faculty of the School of Architecture, and the encouragement of friends and family. This has been a challenging process that required an extraordinary balancing of many busy schedules. I would like to thank my advisor, Roger Connah for finding the time to discuss, at length, the ways of exploring cities, and provide guidance and support throughout the past year.

I have to thank all the friends and family that have listened to me talk public space and the Financial District and who have contributed to the formation of these ideas. In particular, I have to thank the hyper-talented Adriana Ross, whose support and imaginative mind have always been a place of inspiration for me. Most importantly I must thank my parents for their unrelenting patience during this process, for letting me turn their house into an auxiliary research office and for being the strongest support system I could ever need.

part four

4.1

Endnotes

- 1 Toronto Financial District BIA, (2014) *A Public Realm Strategy For Toronto's Financial District*, pp 9
- 2 Toronto Financial District BIA, (2014) *A Public Realm Strategy For Toronto's Financial District*, pp 4
- 3 Canadian Urban Institute, (2011) *The new geography of office location and the consequences of business as usual in the GTA*, <http://www.canurb.com/publications-archives/cui-publications.html>
- 4 TD Economics (2013) *Toronto - A Return to the Core*, http://td.com/document/PDF/economics/special/ff0113_toronto.pdf
- 5 City of Toronto (2012), *Downtown Tall Buildings: Vision Supplementary Design Guidelines*
- 6 Spatial Practice as coined by Henri Lefebvre, in *The Production of Space*
- 7 Henri Lefebvre is a French philosopher who wrote extensively about the practice of everyday life and most notably about space as a product. For Lefebvre Spatial Practice is the material dimension of social activity and interaction. It stands for the aspect of simultaneity of activities. A system resulting from articulation and connection of elements or activities. The Production of Space
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- 9 Paci, F.G, 1993, *Sex and Character*, Ottawa: Oberon Press, pp 81
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- 18 De Certeau distinguished between 'tactics' and 'strategies'. Tactics are the means in which people – the users of the city – navigate the city which is formed by 'strategies' of policy, planning etc. De Certeau maintains, however, that these tactics alter the city, thus altering it. He focuses on walking as one of the primary tactics of experiencing and altering the city.

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- 33 Jacobs, Jane, 1961, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, New York:Vintage Books
- 34 The City of Toronto requires all developments in the City of Toronto to submit a Green Standards Checklist where applicants are required to fulfill a list of requirements, at times that is an exchange between the city such as Privately Owned Public Open space for additional GFA etc.
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