

Yonge St. framework includes businesses, students, residents

Duncan McAllister

A well-attended design charette was held at the Courtyard Marriott Hotel at 475 Yonge St. in on March 11.

The charette was the third step in the creation of a Yonge St. planning framework to help the community recover after the recent fire at 335 Yonge.

Earlier in the week, councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam hosted a public site tour. The councillor reported that she and a group of about 30 people walked Yonge St. and its laneways—and even stopped in to look at the new renovations of the Salad King restaurant at 340 Yonge St. “People love Yonge St. and they’re very committed to the future of the street,” Wong-Tam observed.

According to community planner Chris Drew, the charette drew an “eclectic group” of members of local BIAs, key residents’ groups, city planners and Ryerson students, and he was quite happy with the turnout despite inclement weather.

Planning consultants presented various options for discussion in smaller,



breakaway groups.

“The option that emerged as most popular was to eliminate one lane of traffic in each direction, widen the sidewalks and showcase its treasures of 19th century heritage instead of covering it up with advertising,” said Paul Farrelly of the Church Wellesley Neighbourhood Association. His breakaway group consisted of Norm Waite of the Bay Cloverhill community association, city planner Michael Hynes, Jane Beecroft of the community history project and professor Masha Etkind and students from the Ryerson school of architecture, who plan to compile a heritage inventory.

Even though the fire at the

Empress Hotel site was a catalyst for the meeting, the owners of the property were conspicuously absent from the proceedings. “They didn’t show this morning or this afternoon, and they didn’t show up for our councillor’s walk, but what matters is I invited them,” Wong-Tam opined.

Prior to the half-day planning charette, individual stakeholder interviews were conducted. High-level meetings that included Ryerson University’s president and



vice president and the executive of the Ryerson student union were also held.

“So I didn’t just talk to the big guys, I spoke to the students themselves. We spoke to select property owners. We had a meeting with social agencies who are on Yonge St. such as the Yonge St. Mission, as well as resident leaders and a whole day with TTC staff,” said Wong-Tam.

A report titled the Yonge Street Planning Framework will be completed by the end of April and will be introduced to community council later in May. The framework

will serve as a guide for all new incoming development applications.

“We know that there are a number of individual property owners that have been sitting on their property because of the uncertainty of the future of Yonge St.,” Wong-Tam cited. “The next steps will be the creation of a feasibility report so we’ll have the big vision piece in this document—but now I need to build the business case models and that will be the second report.”

“I’m moving as fast as I can, I just got here in December,” she concluded.

Sleepless nights continue for CityPlace: GO no

Kimberly Spice

CityPlace residents fed up with the constant construction of the

