

First it has to be imagined ...

This walk is about how an imagined Downtown Pedestrian Inner Loop might be realized. For me, it began with the linear parks (5) over the subway just south of Bloor. These became the first three links in the imagined Inner Loop. The southern link was an imagined connection across Yonge Street between McGill Parkette (1) and the revitalized College Park (11). “All” that remained was to add the two new parks west of Yonge (8) and (9) to form the western side of the loop and discover/develop the missing links on the east side of Yonge.

We start by walking north along O’Keefe Lane. There is a new 94 storey building planned along most of the west side of the lane. Wouldn’t it be great if this became a funky student retail strip complete with cobblestones and pedestrian priority (during the afternoon and evening). The McGill Parkette (1) is our next stop. It’s decorated with massive murals celebrating music along Yonge and provides a quiet oasis just off the street. Walking north through the “blue arch” leads us to Carlton. There is a lane connecting Carlton with Wood, with a new building planned for the corner, ... a now closed walkway on the east side of the Toronto Hydro building.

The Marriott (2) is slated to be replaced by twin towers with a wide strip of green on the east side of the new building. The parking lot is on “public” land. It should be possible to combine the new green strip with a converted parking lot to form a needed new green oasis between Wood and Alexander. Just across Alexander is a parkette with a new condo under construction (3) along Maitland Terrace. An attractive walkway is easy to imagine. Across Maitland, the Green P lot is slated to be replaced by a condo development that will include a significant urban park.

During work on the Wellesley Subway station (4), the walkway immediately east is being widened and made more inviting. At Dundonald, a secondary subway station entrance is being built. There will be a pedestrian friendly link between Wellesley East and Dundonald. At Dundonald the linear parks begin, with new construction planned along almost the entire three

blocks. It will be in the public interest and in the interest of developers to make these linear parks one of the jewels on the Inner Loop.

Charles (6) is already interesting with patios just east off Yonge. Just west of Yonge, Shoppers is revitalizing the corner. This should become a pedestrian friendly intersection. St. Nicholas Street (7) begins just west of Yonge. This is one of the hidden downtown gems, with 19th century workers “cottages” along the east side of the street. But we need to turn west along Inkerman Street (7) to reach Bay.

Bay Street (8) is slated to receive three new parks. Just south of St. Basil Church a new park is planned between U-Condos and St. Joseph Street. The land and the funding for Cloverhill Park are in place. The park should be in place by 2019. Walking south to Wellesley we come to what will become a new 2 acre park at 11 Wellesley West (9) – to be called Dr. Lillian McGregor Park. Just across Bredalbane Street is the East of Bay Park along the west side of the Downtown YMCA. Across Grosvener Street the “Morg Lands” are planned as the new location for assisted living residential units. An attractive pedestrian connection should be possible. The intersection of Bay and Wellesley (10) is already interesting and leads to a newly revitalized College Park (11).

Adding a pedestrian crossing to McGill Parkette would complete this Downtown Inner Pedestrian Loop. Getting all the links in place is going to take years. But it can and should happen. It can happen importantly because of all the commercial development that’s happening – there are clear commercial benefits to being located along a Downtown Inner Pedestrian Loop. It can happen thanks in part to all of the funds provided to the city by developers. It should happen because all of the thousands of new downtown residents need as many pedestrian places as we can imagine. Imagining is the first vital step.

Bob Fabian
2018.09.04