

# Downtown Yonge BIA Strategic Plan 2023-2028

Executive Summary



DOWNTOWN





Part 1

# Strategic Context 4511

# Background

The Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area (DYBIA) is a non-profit organization that is committed to improving the daily experience of our members, residents, customers and all stakeholders with an end goal of strengthening the culture and economy of Downtown Yonge.

## Looking Back on the Previous Plan

In 2017, the DYBIA launched its previous, ambitious strategic plan. Since that time, the organization has constantly innovated and adapted as the needs of Downtown Yonge have changed. The organization has accomplished much since the previous plan, including:

- Establishing Downtown Yonge as a leading voice and focal point for business and downtown interests in Toronto
- Continuing its long history of public realm improvements, street maintenance, and placemaking
- Developing new models for serving local social challenges, including the Community Engagement Team and partnered outreach programs
- Creating a suite of new resources including its Economic Newsletter that has influenced government decisions and attracted new businesses
- Running hundreds of events attracting thousands of residents and visitors all while promoting local businesses

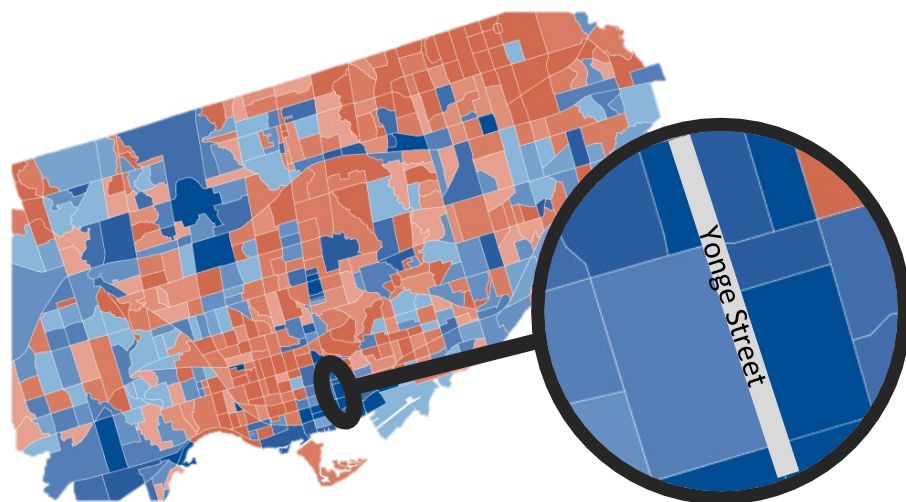
## Looking Forward to the New plan

In March 2023, DYBIA launched a process to develop a new strategic plan to guide its work over the coming years. This process provides an opportunity to take stock of changes in the community, explore new creative ways to address members' needs, and clearly articulate a renewed vision and plan. This document provides a summary of those findings and our plans for the coming years.



# A Downtown in Flux

Downtown Yonge has changed dramatically since our last strategic plan. Population growth, evolving demographics, a transforming business environment, and emerging challenges are all putting new demands on members and the BIA.



**Downtown Yonge is one of the fastest growing areas in the City, with population in some corners growing by 50%+ since 2016<sup>1</sup>**

## DEVELOPMENT<sup>2</sup>



**28 projects**  
under development or pre-construction



**17,000 units**  
to be added to the local area by 2030

## SPENDING<sup>3</sup>

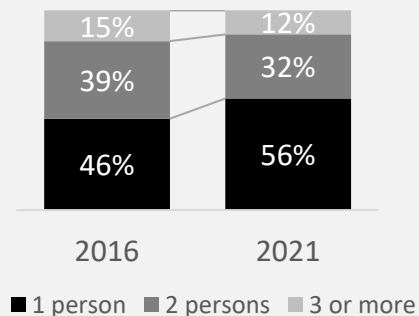


**\$230 Million**  
Total local spending in 2022



**~6 million**  
Annual transactions in 2022

## FAMILY STRUCTURE<sup>4</sup>



## BUSINESS MIX<sup>5</sup>



**50%+**  
Growth in square footage for personal & recreation service businesses from 2021 to 2023



## WORKING HABITS<sup>6</sup>



**<50%**  
Weekday office occupancy in Downtown Toronto in May 2023 relative to May 2020

## FOOT TRAFFIC<sup>7</sup>



**5 million+**  
Monthly foot traffic on Yonge St (Q1 2023)



**860K+**  
Average monthly visitors in 2023

Sources:

- 1. Toronto Star, Statistics Canada
- 2. Toronto City Planning Applications
- 3. Moneris
- 4. Statistics Canada
- 5. J. A. & Associates Business Inventory Data
- 6. Strategic Regional Research Alliance
- 7. Springboard Data, Environics Analytics

# Changing Community Needs

As part of the development of the new strategic plan, we consulted extensively with members, businesses and the local community on what they were experiencing and needed from the BIA. This helped highlight key areas of focus for the next plan.



**350+**

Responses to online surveys on current conditions, priorities, and role of the Downtown Yonge BIA



**100+**

1-on-1 interactions with stakeholders and members through interviews and public open houses



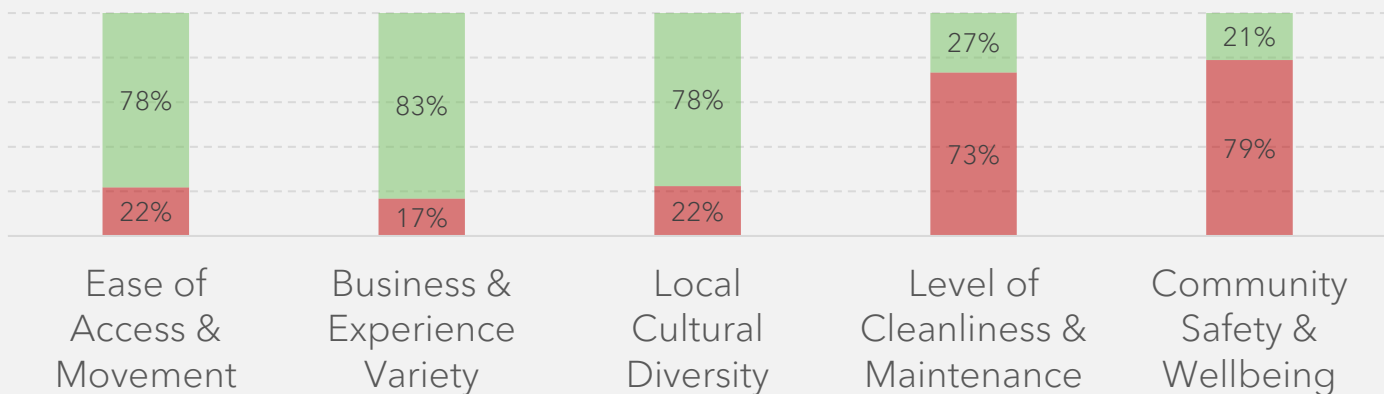
**1,000s**

Of previous survey and consultation responses reviewed to gather insights from past engagements

## What We Heard

Factors pulling to or pushing away from Downtown Yonge (% of survey responses)

\* Pull Factors encourage people to come while Push Factors drive them away



*“ Don’t try to create an identity for Yonge Street. Its identity is it has no identity.*

*We need a “back to basics” plan. We cannot try to solve too much.*

*A more residential Yonge Street is going to change the businesses that are viable here.*

*Increasing visitors, addressing safety, running events... these efforts all support one another.*

Part 2

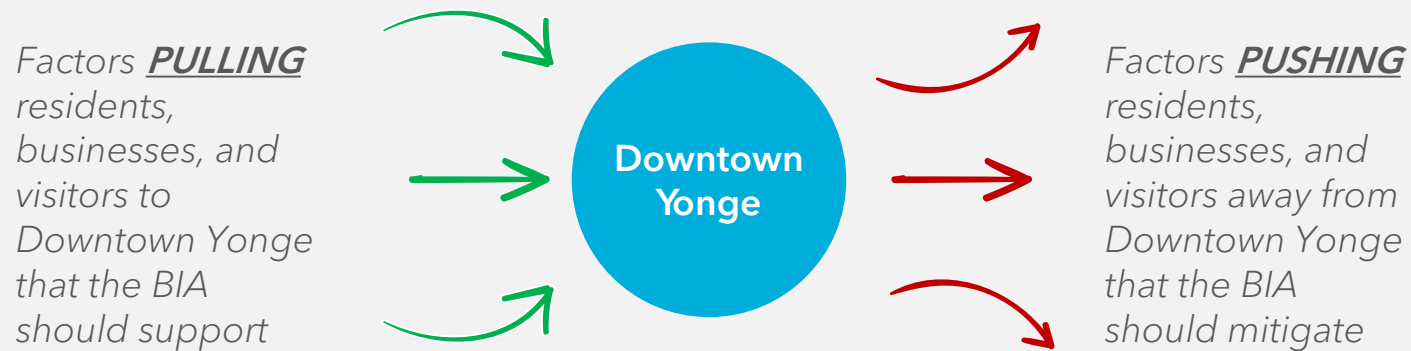
# Strategic Plan



# Strategic Planning Approach

## Setting our Priorities

To build the new strategic plan, we started by taking stock of the push and pull forces highlighted in the economic and demographic data as well as the public consultations. This served as the foundation for our priority setting.



The analysis highlighted that many of these forces were not ones that the BIA could directly influence. We assessed where the BIA did or did not have control over push and pull factors and used this to prioritize actions within the plan.

## Structuring the Plan

The BIA's experience in recent years highlighted the need for flexibility. Embracing this principle, we identified actions within the plan that focused not on addressing specific needs today, but strengthening the BIA's ability to respond in the future.





# Guiding Principles

## Our Vision

A world leading downtown neighbourhood renowned for its culture, commerce, opportunity, and liveability.

## Our Mission

We help our members thrive by strengthening the culture and economy of the Downtown Yonge neighbourhood through our programs, partnerships, and advocacy.

## Our Values



### Responsive

We recognize and prioritize the challenges that are imminent & time sensitive with targeted programming and collaboration.



### Collaborative

We recognize the need to develop partnerships that focus on addressing key challenges affecting the local area.



### Inclusive

We represent the needs of diverse people & businesses. We convene conversations that balance these perspectives.



### Innovative

We are creative and forward-thinking in our approach to solving challenges, building partnerships, and developing strategies.



### Results-Oriented

We focus on delivering services and solutions that are effective, measurable, and scalable.

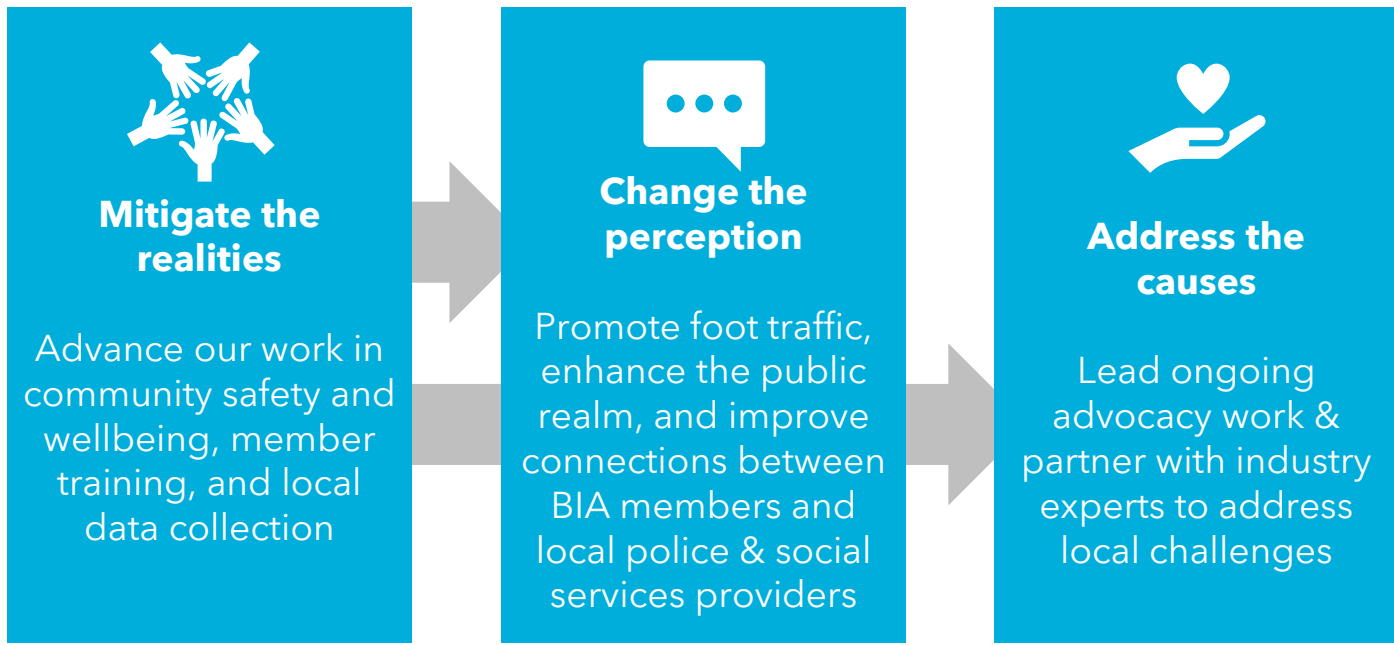




*Strategic Priority 1*

**Creating a safe, clean, & welcoming environment for all**

A safe & welcoming environment is the foundation upon which a thriving local economy must be built. DYBIA will use all of the levers at its disposal to elevate challenges, advocate on key topics, support local social service providers, and foster a community of good neighbours.





## Strategic Priority 2

# Championing diverse businesses, experiences, & communities

Downtown Yonge's eclectic mix of shops, spaces, and experiences is at the core of what distinguishes it from other commercial areas. The BIA will continue to promote and encourage this healthy mix through its programming, information sharing, and contributions to planning decisions.



### Support member businesses

Connect members with new business opportunities and help them navigate public services and programs



### Build the destination

Continue our series of local events and activations to enhance the vibrancy of Downtown Yonge



### Promote the Opportunity

Capture and share local economic data with businesses interested locating in Downtown Yonge



### Strategic Priority 3

## Prioritizing ease of access for businesses, visitors, & residents

Downtown Yonge's location at the heart of the city and its transit system has always provided the unique advantage of convenience. With a period of change ahead, the BIA will focus on preserving this advantage through its advocacy, monitoring, and investments in the public realm.



### Improve access to the area

Advocate for local transportation and access needs, including participating in planning for major infrastructure projects



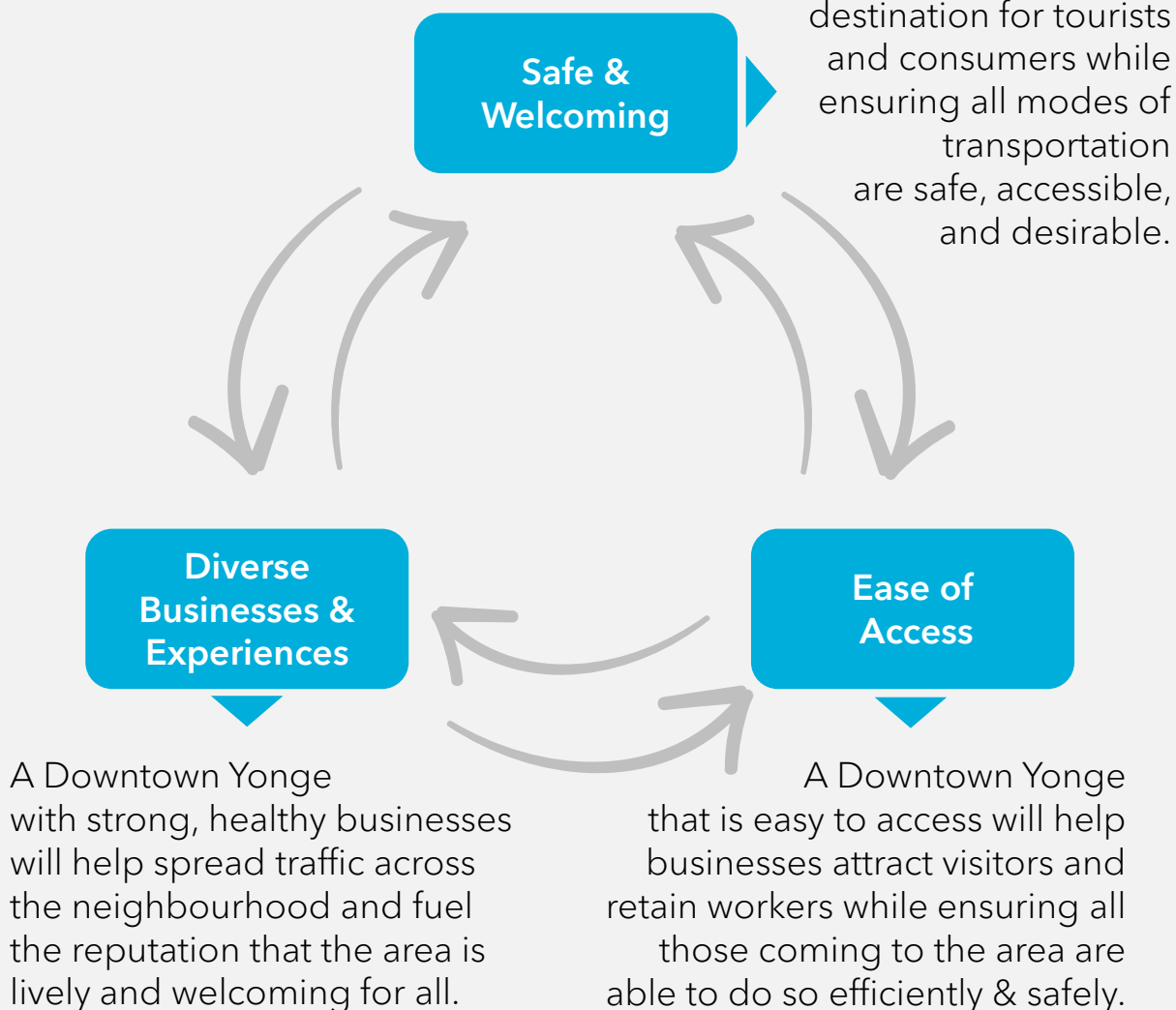
### Ease flow within the area

Inform members of upcoming work and partner with government agencies to mitigate the effects

# An Integrated Approach

By design, DYBIA's three strategic priorities were selected to be complementary – with success in any one area contributing to the aims of the others. This approach helps minimize trade-offs and improves the likelihood of success of the plan.

## Example Connections & Complementarities Between Strategic Priorities



# Building a Model, Modern BIA

Downtown Yonge's diverse and complex community calls for a BIA of similar sophistication. To deliver on the new strategic plan, the DYBIA will look to build the organization's capacity to deliver across each of its key functions.

## Our Capabilities



### Member Engagement

We know our local business community and what topics matter most to them. We are constantly looking for new, innovative ways to engage them and support their needs.



### Advocacy & Measurement

We have a clear, concise, and forward-looking advocacy plan that brings together business and community voices to advocate for the needs of our area.



### Community Wellbeing

We build partnerships across the public, private, and non-profit sectors to pragmatically and effectively address community safety and wellbeing challenges affecting the local businesses.



### Planning & Public Realm

We proactively participate in and provide information on construction projects in our area, ensuring members and the community are aware, engaged, and have a point of contact.



### Marketing, Promotion, & Culture

We use events and marketing as a tool to spur commerce, working with a range of partners to deliver a diverse, year-round program of activity in the area.

# Acknowledgements

The Board of Directors and staff of the Downtown Yonge BIA thanks the membership of DYBIA which includes property owners, business investors and those who live, work, play, learn, shop and invest in our neighbourhood, and community stakeholders who participated in this important conversation, including the arts and culture sector, neighbourhood associations, social agencies, Toronto Metropolitan University, advocates for parks, active transportation, public realm, and quality of life, development community and urban thinkers who gave us a wealth of their insights.

**This strategic plan is for everyone who lives, works, plays, learns, shops and invests in our neighbourhood.**

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Published Fall 2023.

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