

# Downtown Business Council

## ***DOWNTOWN: the issues and answers***

By David Walsh\*

Toronto has a thriving downtown which is the envy of many other North American cities, so businessmen often inquire about the purpose of the Downtown Business Council.

The fact is that our downtown is faced with many important issues and problems that are crying for the expertise and organization which business can offer. The most important problem today is the absence of business input in planning the City's growth and the lack of participation of businessmen in the downtown community. Both of these activities go hand in hand. Unless business is involved with downtown issues, it will neither understand nor be welcomed in the planning process.

Another major problem is that most businessmen live out of the downtown area, and they are not really familiar with downtown issues. Thus, the Downtown Business Council is holding monthly Forums to discuss issues which are currently important in order to gain the interest and participation of businessmen.



**\*David Walsh recently was elected President of the Downtown Business Council. He was asked to discuss the most important issues facing downtown Toronto.**

Issues which are receiving the attention of the Council are the following:

### **Municipal Elections**

The Council held a Forum on November 24, 1976, where the four candidates for Ward 6 Alderman offered their viewpoints on the downtown. Although the business audience did not agree with many of the opinions of the candidates, it was an excellent opportunity to openly discuss the issues.

One issue which was discussed was the lack of representation of the business community on City Council. There is little chance of such representation in the future, because most businessmen do not have a vote. The residential areas of Ward 6 are well represented by Alderman Allan Sparrow and Alderman Dan Heap, and these men also share many of the same concerns as the business community, regarding such issues as Yonge Street, the skid-row situation, the pedestrian environment, and housing.

But on other issues such as realty taxes, property insurance, traffic problems, a convention centre, and the downtown office core, there is considerable disagreement or disinterest by the Ward 6 aldermen. The Council believes therefore it is important to maintain a strong and interested membership and to encourage open communications with the aldermen, the mayor, and the City Council.

### **Retailers**

Generally, retailers and restaurateurs have been a disorganized group, and there has been little co-ordination in dealing with common problems such as deliveries, high taxes, and promotion. The Council has formed a retail committee, for the following purposes:

- A. to deal with specific problems of retailers in the core area.
- B. to act as a clearing house to field questions that retailers have been exposed to, and have been unable to solve on their own. Council members have a wealth of knowledge on such subjects as realty tax assessment, consumer affairs, leases, property insurance, and financing. These questions are being cleared through Norton Anderson, our managing director.
- C. To establish an "idea bank" for retailers utilizing promotions and techniques which were successful in other cities. Numerous ideas were discussed at the recent International Downtown Business Associations conference in Chicago.

### **Underground Malls**

During the last few years, a great number of retail stores and restaurants have been created in concourses under new office complexes. More are planned, especially in the First Canadian Place.

These malls, however, are facing serious problems. For example, they do not have the shopping traffic on nights and weekends that suburban malls attract, yet they face higher rents, higher taxes, and expensive customer parking. It is being questioned whether these stores and restaurants can survive only on the office building population.

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A NEWSLETTER OF THE DOWNTOWN BUSINESS COUNCIL OF TORONTO

## Traffic Planning The Key to the New Downtown

**CAN WE ACHIEVE AN OVERALL  
TRAFFIC PLAN FOR  
DOWNTOWN TORONTO?**

Torontonians continue to ask if there is a way to improve traffic conditions in the City's downtown core. In the past few months, with the search for means to revitalize Yonge Street, the issue has been raised frequently.

**ZEIDLER**



The car is our "love-hate" relationship, according to principal architect of the Eaton Centre, Eberhard Zeidler.

Consequently, this relationship must be a key consideration in the formulation of plans to successfully revitalize downtown Yonge Street. While the car is a vital transportation link, particularly for the merchant, the main reason for retaining

the car downtown is its "attraction" — "the Saturday Night Syndrome", in which the car is used as a vehicle to explore the activities of the downtown. This doesn't mean pushing the pedestrian into the street — doing that will ultimately kill the prime function of the street — to be a people shopping place. "In our lifestyle, it is important that the activity of the downtown can be seen from the car," says Mr. Zeidler, and "once the pedestrian has been given sufficient space, the car, at least on Yonge Street, should be looked at not as a transportation means but as a means of amusement for the people inside and the sense of activity and movement that it provides for the pedestrian, without threatening him."

"You understand a city through its streets," says Mr. Zeidler. "Think of any city and you will conjure up in your mind the streets of that city."

But streets must be for people and for cars — so any solution to the downtown traffic problem must accommodate both the pedestrian and the automobile, where occasionally the car is discouraged from continuing in a straight line and must make a detour to move, thus discouraging through traffic. "The principle should be that one can easily see from the car the activities of the pedestrian areas" maintains Zeidler. "The street might be narrowed in certain areas to two or three lanes, or a block might even occasionally be totally closed to vehicular traffic and only open for pedestrian movement." Such a policy, says Zeidler, needs a co-

ordinated planning philosophy, and must be integrated within the overall traffic system of the downtown. Thus, we would retain all the advantages which the car offers to our downtown, while at the same time, we would give back to the pedestrian, a *PLACE TO BE*.

**SAM CASS**



"The key to a successful pedestrian oriented downtown seems to be predicated on the implementation of a good traffic circulation plan and not, as some would have us believe, on a pattern of ever-growing road restrictions."

So states Sam Cass, Commissioner of Roads and Traffic for Metro Toronto. In his speech to the Toronto Traffic Conference, Cass first looked at some statistics.

In the last six years, there has been an increase of 8.8% in the number of persons entering the downtown daily. Almost all of this growth comes in by public transit. Apparently, the number of persons entering the downtown by car has stabilized although the number of private cars entering and leaving downtown has increased by 8.4% in the same six years. This would seem to represent a further reduction in the per car occupancy rate and since the reduction in car occupancy has to bottom out soon, then the number of private cars can also be expected to stabilize.

*(Continued on back page)*

Algold Music Ltd.  
 Arliss Shoes  
 Athens Leather Ware  
 L. Axmith & Son  
 Bally Shoes  
 Barberian's Steak House  
 Bassel's  
 Ben Berke Ltd.  
 Bermuda Tavern  
 Blue Star  
 Braemar  
 Brights Wines  
 Cadillac Fairview Corp. Ltd.  
 Cameron Jeffries  
 Chapman Brothers  
 Clark Shoes Ltd.  
 Classy Formal Wear  
 The Coat Factory  
 Colosseum Restaurant  
 Crawford Clothes  
 Dack Shoes  
 Delta's Chelsea Inn  
 Diana Sweets Ltd.  
 Fairweathers  
 Federal Trust Co.  
 Flash Jack  
 Fran's Restaurant  
 Lynn Gold Clothes  
 Hallmark Cards  
 Her Place  
 Hobberlin's  
 Hong Kong Imports  
 Household Finance  
 Jewel Case Ltd.  
 The Jeanery  
 Robert Jones Ltd.  
 Kelly's Stereo Mart  
 Kentucky Fried Chicken  
 Michael Kominek Photo  
 S.S. Kresge Co. Ltd.  
 Leader Furs  
 Leather Fashions  
 Lindy's Restaurant  
 Loblaw's — Arcade  
 Cy Mann's Room at the Top  
 Marks & Spencers  
 Music World  
 Mr. Submarine  
 Novelty Shoe Repair  
 Nickelodeon  
 Orientique  
 The Outdoor Stores  
 Pennington's Large Size Shop  
 Peoples' Jewellers  
 Peoples' Optical  
 Picadilly Tube  
 The Pin Ball Spot  
 Prudential Insurance Co. of America  
 Sam the Record Man  
 Sav-In (Discount) Yonge Ltd.  
 Laura Secord — Arcade  
 Sevan Art Gallery  
 Robert Simpson Co. Ltd.  
 Soles Sporting Goods  
 Steak 'n Burger  
 Studio 267  
 Swiss Chalet  
 Thrifty's  
 Times Square Books  
 Tip Top Tailors  
 Top Drug Mart  
 Toronto Camera Centre  
 Toronto College Street Centre Ltd.  
 Town & Country  
 F.W. Woolworth Co. Ltd.  
 Harry Young (Downtown) Ltd.  
 Zanzibar Circus Tavern  
 Bank of Montreal 173 Yonge St.  
 Bank of Nova Scotia  
 Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce  
 Royal Bank of Canada  
 Toronto Dominion Bank

# Top Downtown Planners Bring Their Expertise to Toronto

December and January have been a particularly busy time for the Downtown Business Council, as three out-of-town speakers addressed various meetings of merchants, community groups and planners on what has been accomplished and realized in other cities by main street re-design.

All three speakers indicated that many cities are now giving consideration to making their downtowns better places for people by creating more comfortable, safe, and pleasant environments. All speakers made exciting slide presentations which clearly conveyed to the audience the potential for our own main street, Yonge Street.

**CYRIL PAUMIER**, President of Land Design Research Inc. in Columbia, Maryland, addressed the Council on November 30, 1977. He showed slides which outlined the number of mistakes made by other cities in the implementation of changes to their main streets. Errors are often not realized until it is too late, and often after substantial sums have been spent. Sometimes change can do more harm than good. In particular, some cities have over-designed their main streets by overemphasizing landscape and underemphasizing the creation of a better environment for people where the pedestrian is comfortable and can move about freely.

Mr. Paumier suggested that any design of pedestrian spaces should be basically simple to allow for flexibility and that quality ground materials should be utilized. From his experience with other cities, he outlined the importance of dealing with the major concerns of various interest groups such as merchants, traffic engineers and shoppers, suggesting that the best approach is to develop alternatives for improvement. Then, through discussion and meetings, the optimum solution will become evident.

**RONALD WIEDENHOEFT**, civil engineer and architectural historian from Salt Lake City, Utah, addressed the Council on January 11, 1978. He discussed his strong positive experiences in several European and North American cities.

He spoke of differentiation in the use of street spaces by creating on one hand, urban rooms where people can shop, look about, live, and move in reasonable freedom from the hazards of motor traffic, and, on the other hand, creating a complementary network of roads or urban corridors for the efficient distribution of traffic. He indicated that the improvement of vehicular traffic flow has been one important motivation in the planning of pedestrian areas in other cities, because there is less through traffic and unnecessary traffic is discouraged from entering the downtown core.

Dr. Wiedenhoefte gave us a better

understanding of the need to look at an overall traffic plan for the downtown, stressing that we should be looking ten to twenty years ahead in order that the changes instituted today do not act as bottlenecks to changes in the future. For example, he indicated that transforming Church and Bay Streets into one way roads could be detrimental to our downtown in the long run.

**STEPHEN CARR**, partner in Carr Lynch Associates of Cambridge, Massachusetts, addressed the Council on January 24, 1978. He placed emphasis on the "process" of implementing changes and on the importance of involving many interest groups, including professional planners, residents, merchants, and the police and people who use the street. He presented some excellent slides of the "Streets for People" programme in Washington, D.C. which conveyed the message that streets *can* be better designed as places for people.

Mr. Carr stressed in his presentation that management of street improvements is just as essential as the implementation itself. He outlined management schemes which have been successfully undertaken in other cities. For further details, see insert.

Many members of the downtown community have told us that listening to these three speakers was an educational and stimulating experience. It indicated to those present the great potential for our own main street and the many important factors to be considered in the implementation of any major program.

## Financial Report

The year end for the Downtown Business Council is September 30, 1977 and the latest audited financial statements are now complete. The statements indicate that the Council is now out of a deficit position and we have sufficient funds to undertake our programmes for the coming year.

Membership has increased by approximately 10% and gross revenues have increased by approximately 20%. Expenses were down slightly.

The formal annual meeting to approve the latest financial statements will be held in the offices of the Downtown Business Council on March 10, 1978 at 2:00 p.m. Any interested Council member is welcome to attend.