

# Citizen Control of the Citizen's Business

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*White Paper No. 139*

*March 27th, 1929*

## THE ADVISORY CITY PLANNING COMMISSION, ON MARCH 7th, 1929 MADE ITS REPORT TO THE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT OF TORONTO

How this report is to be dealt with is fundamentally not a matter of squalid local politics, of accusations in the press, or of personal animosities between rivals for civic preferment. It is a matter affecting the vital interests of everyone who earns a living in Toronto or dwells in a Toronto home.

Whether or not these public and universal interests are to be sacrificed on account of matters entirely irrelevant to the issue, depends on the "industry, intelligence, integrity" and courage of Toronto's citizens. No one, not even the Commission itself, claims that the report is perfect, much less solves all the City Planning problems of Toronto; but a report to which six outstanding citizens have devoted hours of thought and study must have merit, and, in any event, deserves the most careful consideration of the City government and of the citizens.

A digest of the report of the Commission is reproduced herein. It is mostly made up of direct quotations, and contains no expressions of opinion on the part of the Bureau. Pages quoted are those of the Commission's Report.

### What Led up to the Commission:

The report points out that there was the germ of an interest in city planning as early as 1811. The harbour development and the separation of grades culminating in the waterfront viaduct are concrete results of a growing citizen interest.

The Civic Improvement Committee, appointed by Council in 1909, issued a pamphlet in 1911, under the Chairmanship of Sir William Meredith. At least three of its major recommendations have been given effect to, although its plea for "immediate planning action upon comprehensive lines" has so far not been put into effect. The present control of the City over the subdivision of land into building lots grew out of the work of a sub-committee. The amendment to the Municipal Act permitting larger municipalities to defer action for a period of years, while maintaining a new building line, also grew out of the same effort. The Bloor Street widening would probably have been impossible without this provision, at any rate for the same expenditure. The Bloor-Danforth viaduct and the widening and extension of Bay Street are outgrowths of this early work. The Civic Guild for many years devoted much time and attention to city planning, and did an important work in stimulating citizen interest and in co-operating with official bodies.

The beginning of the era of skyscrapers in down-town Toronto no doubt gave an impetus to the city planning movement so far as it affects the down-town business area.

An Act of the Provincial Legislature, assented to in April, 1928, gave the City of Toronto important powers in regard to an extension of University Avenue southerly or south-easterly. Council must pass a by-law before Jan. 1st, 1930, in order to take advantage of the Act.

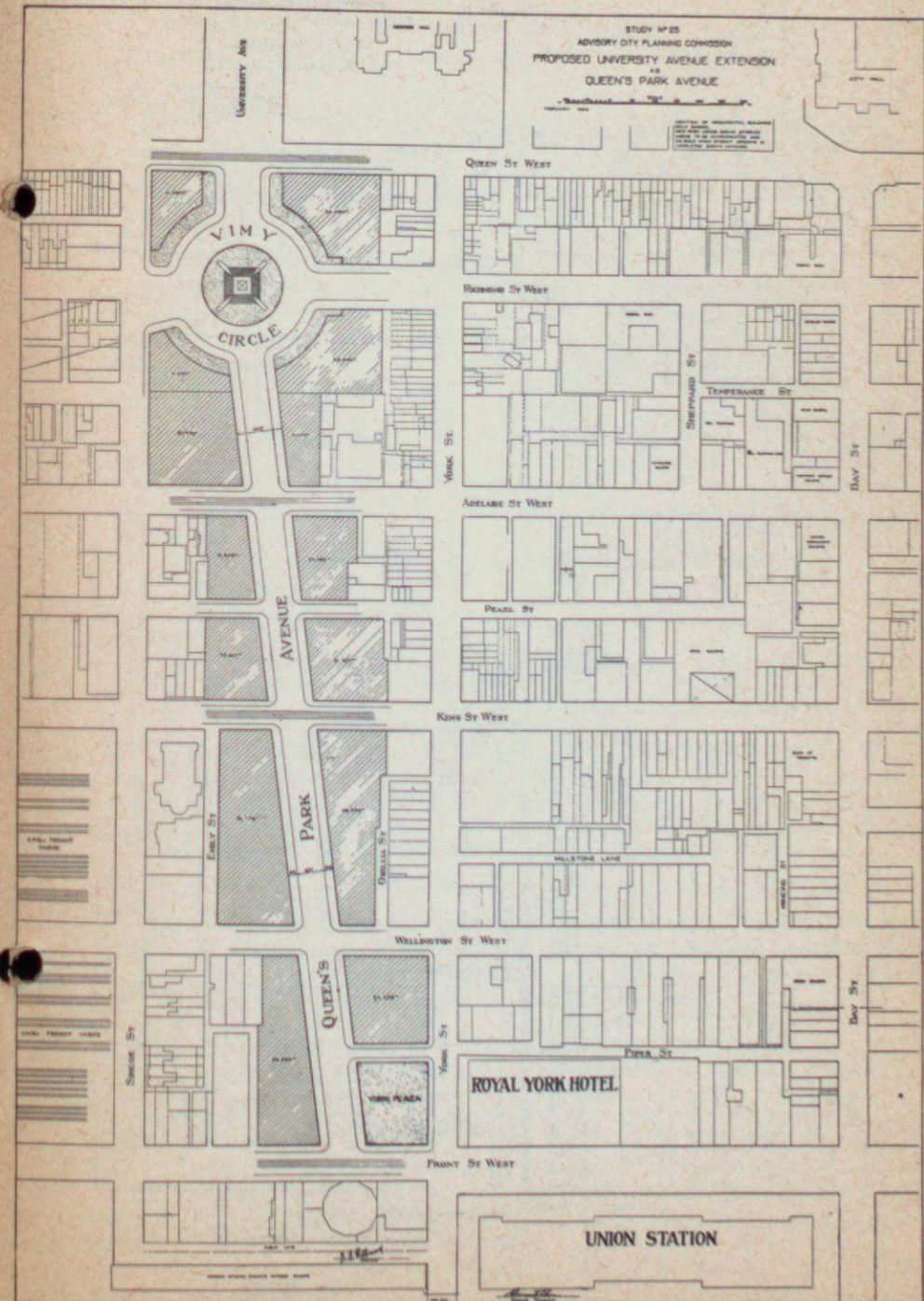
The City Council on May 17th, 1928, appointed the Advisory City Planning Commission, presumably to report, in the first instance, on the location of such extension and such related matters as might affect the extension. It was hoped, however, by many who believed that only special reasons of haste could warrant the undertaking of a fractional problem, and then only in the light of a considerable body of information as to the city planning needs of the City as a whole, that this was only the beginning of an attempt to solve the larger total problem of city planning.

The Report of the Commission contains evidence that it had a good deal of such information and that it considered it in coming to its apparent conclusion that a primary need of city planning in Toronto is the proper treatment of the down-town business area from the standpoint of congestion and a maximum use of University Avenue as a major civic asset.

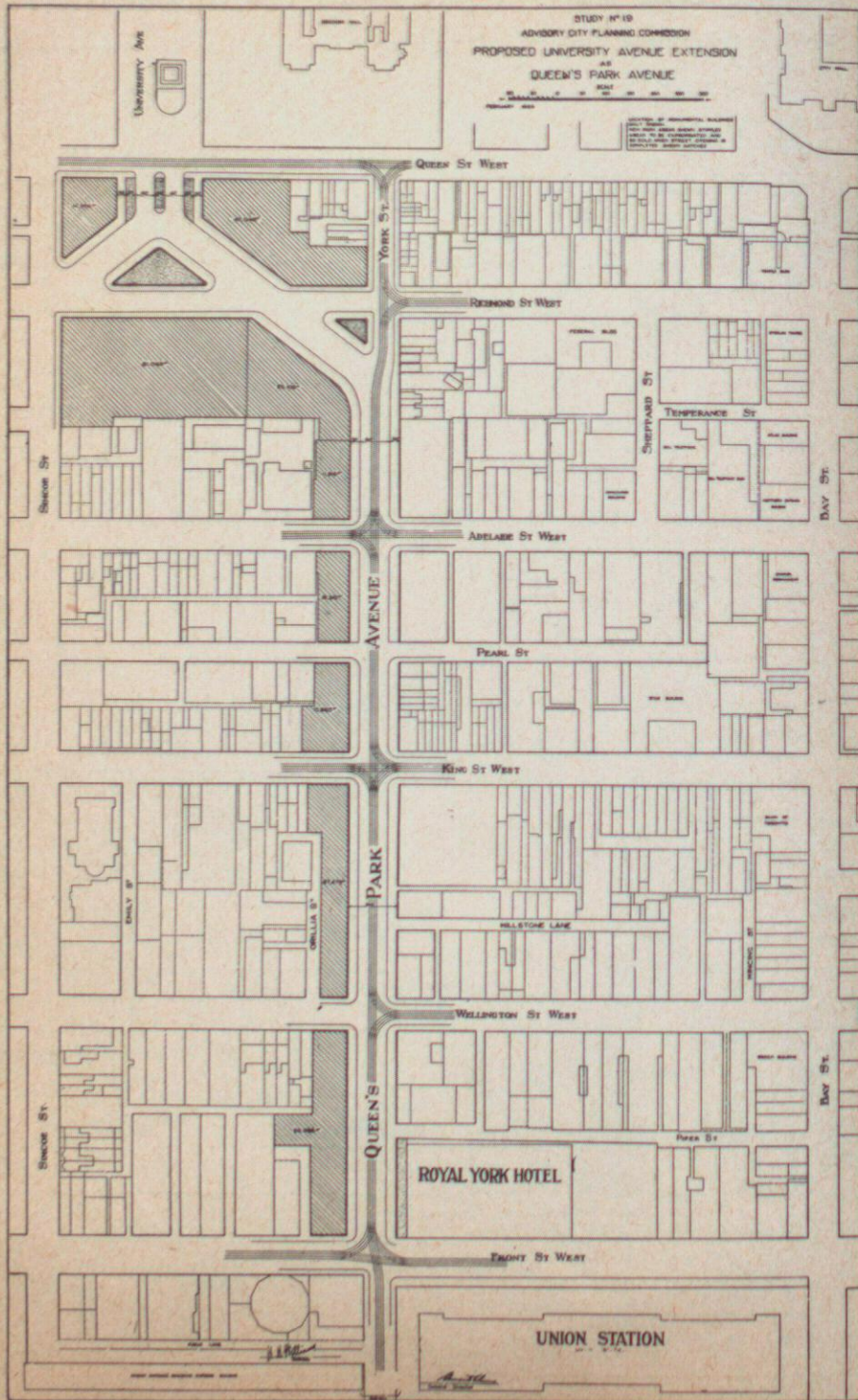
### Reasons Given in the Report Why Down-town Development Should Have Priority.

"As a general problem and, in fact, as one vital reason for extension of University Avenue, your Commission is convinced that the primary need of the city is the development of a series of through arteries for motor traffic free of car tracks." (p. 23.)

No. 1 (PLAN No. 25 OF THE COMMISSION'S REPORT)



No. 2 (PLAN No. 19 OF THE COMMISSION'S REPORT)



2. "The extension of Queen's Park Avenue southerly from this circle at a width of 100 feet to Front Street, where it will form the west side of a small park at York and Front Streets.
3. "The opening up of a new motor boulevard 100 feet wide from this circle south-westerly to Bathurst Street and the Exhibition Grounds.
4. "The widening of Richmond Street to 100 feet from this circle easterly to connect with a new street intersecting the block between York and Bay Streets. It is proposed that Richmond Street be entirely cleared of street car tracks throughout its length.
5. "The opening of a new street between Bay and York Streets designed to be a monumental gate-way street. It is centred on the new Union Station, while at Adelaide Street is located a site for a monumental building around which the street forks. Sheppard Street is incorporated into the northbound branch, while a new street is opened west of the Federal Building for southbound traffic. The two branches come together again in a semi-circular parkette on the north side of Richmond Street. From this point the 100 foot street continues to Queen Street.
6. "It is proposed that York Street be widened by twenty feet on the west side from Front Street to Richmond Street. From Richmond Street York Street is diverted north-easterly to Bay Street at Louisa Street. Bay Street is widened to 86 feet from this point to Dundas Street.
7. "It is proposed to widen Queen Street to 100 feet from its present wide portion at Soho Street to Sherbourne Street.
8. "On the north side of Queen Street, fronting the Registry Office, a small open space is proposed to be laid out as a municipal centre. On the west side of this square is located Osgoode Hall, on the east side it is proposed should be erected the new Civic Building. In this event there would exist 1,800 feet of public frontage on Queen Street from University Avenue to James Street.
9. "It is proposed to open up a diagonal street to the north-east from Richmond and Jarvis Streets to Dundas and Parliament Streets as a motor boulevard to be ultimately extended via Dundas Street to the easterly limit of the city.
10. "As an immediate relief to eastbound traffic it is proposed to open Eastern Avenue into Front Street at Trinity Street.
11. "It is proposed to eliminate the jog at Carlton and College Streets and to widen Carlton Street to 80 feet from Yonge Street easterly to Jarvis Street; to extend Victoria Street from Gerrard Street to Carlton Street; to widen Yonge Street from Gerrard Street to Hayter Street; and as well, Gerrard Street from Yonge Street to Elizabeth Street.

12. "It is proposed to widen Elm Street from Simcoe Street west-erly and connect it with Baldwin Street to form with Gerrard Street a miscellaneous traffic street between Dundas and College Streets.
13. "To improve St. George and Beverley Streets as a traffic artery it is proposed that the jog at College Street should be eliminated by taking a narrow gore from University lands and adding a similar width to the grounds of the Public Library.

"Regarding Yonge Street, it is considered that the relief of this street for vehicular traffic will be best accomplished in the future by the construction of a rapid transit subway, and the elimination of surface street car operation."

"Were the Commission persuaded that a single street extension would solve all the problems of the down-town area, it would unhesitatingly recommend Study No. 18, but on the other hand it believes the time is ripe to adopt a progressive plan for the improve-ment of the entire down-town area, and recommends a fifteen-year programme of street improvements under the deferred widening provision of the Municipal Act, and the University Avenue Extension Act, amended if necessary. Such programme can be accomplished by the use of a revolving fund of \$13,000,000, allocated to this work free of interest or other annual charges. Such could be met by an in-crease of not more than one mill at maximum on present city assess-ment." (p. 12.)

The \$13,000,000 is not an estimate of the total cost, but of the total net cost of acquiring the street rights-of-way, and includes neither the annual debt charges nor, of course, the costs of con-struction, such as sewers, water mains, sidewalks, pavements, etc.

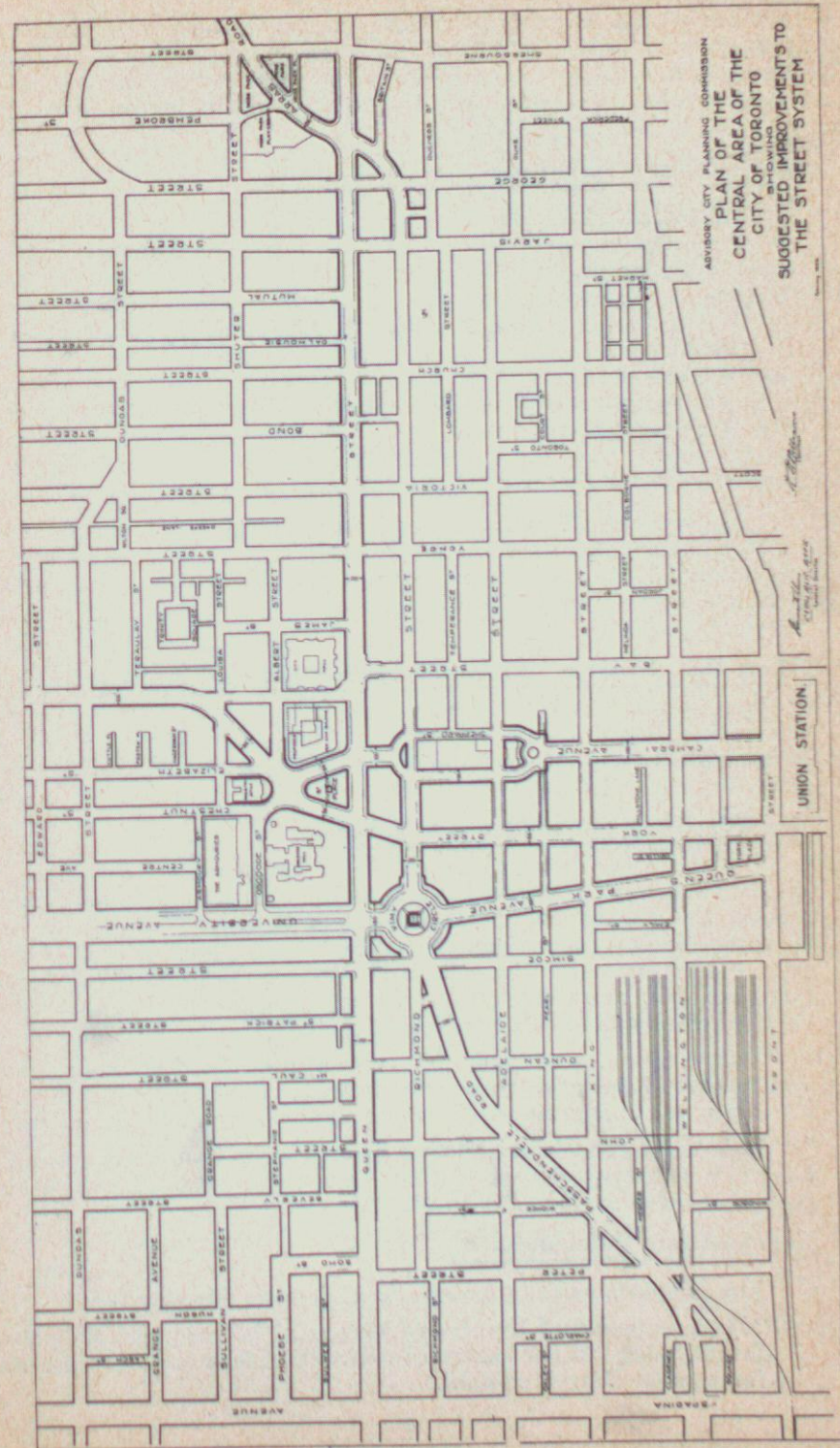
#### Financing of Improvements Recommended.

"Our recommendation is that this plan of street improvements as submitted be faced as a fifteen-year programme, and that full ad-vantage be taken of the University Avenue Extension Act and parallel powers available under other existing legislation to expropriate ex-cess lands and reap the benefit on re-sale of the increased values due to the improvements. It is proposed to make full use of deferred widening powers to mitigate damage claims." (p. 48.)

"Your Commission is satisfied that the allocation to the work of thirteen million dollars, free of all interest or other charges, to be used as a revolving fund, will carry the whole programme to com-pletion within the period specified. Carried out as a business pro-portion the cost of these street improvements can be met by an increase of not more than one mill at a maximum on the present city assessment and this maximum rate would gradually decrease as the work suggested is completed, and as increased city revenue is ob-tained from the increased assessments due to the improvements." (p. 48.)

"It is proposed that the Legislature be requested by the city to pass an Act similar (to the University Avenue Extension Act) with

### THE PLAN RECOMMENDED BY THE COMMISSION (See Commission's Report, opposite p. 48)



but the extent of this study, both in area to be covered and complexity of solution, precludes the possibility of your Commission bringing in a balanced comprehensive report for the whole of the city, let alone of the Toronto metropolitan area, in the limited space of six or eight months." (p. 35.)

The Ultimate Necessity of Certain Particular Improvements Recognized.

"The ultimate necessity of certain outstanding street improvements is apparent, such, for example, as a through street for motor vehicles to the east end of the city; the opening of a major street into North Toronto, east of Yonge Street, from Bloor Street to St. Clair Avenue; the restoration of Avenue Road to its original conception of a boulevard street in purpose as well as location, a northerly extension of University Avenue; linked up with this latter, the necessity of extending Bay Street before the car tracks can be removed from Avenue Road; the opening of a relief street for motor vehicles parallel to Bloor Street from Queen's Park westerly, etc., etc.

"Of these probably the most desirable immediately is the extension of Bay Street northwesterly as far as Avenue Road to free at least the lower section of Avenue Road from street car operation and decrease congestion on Bloor Street at both Avenue Road and Bay Street." (p. 35.)

These Are, However, Rather of Sectional Than City-wide Interest.

"But all these street improvements, while matters of great importance, are to more or less degree of local or sectional interest and hence legitimately may be, and probably will be, carried out as local improvements." (p. 35.)

The Plan Proposed of City-wide Interest:

"On the other hand the central area of the city, the essential down-town, is the common interest of the whole city. Almost every citizen uses the streets and is acquainted with its traffic conditions, its public buildings and monuments. The same applies in even greater degree with regard to the visitor of whatever rank or class. In the last analysis it is an impression of the business area that the visitor carries with him as his impression of Toronto.

"Furthermore, it is from this concentrated business area that a goodly part of the city's revenue is drawn. Within seven per cent. of the city area is included one-third the total assessment of the city.

"It is these considerations that prompt your Commission to confine their recommendations to the down-town area. There is also that of relative urgency." (pp. 35, 37.)

Improvements Recommended.

"The improvements proposed are as follows (pp. 13, 14):

1. "The production of University Avenue at full width to Richmond Street, where in the centre of a circular plaza is reserved a site for a great War Memorial.

Relative Costs of Expropriation Under These Plans. (p. 34)

Number	Estimated Cost of Expropriation	Estimated Selling Price of Excess Lands	Surplus or Deficit
No. 1 (Plan 25).....	\$ 8,941,864	\$ 7,272,475	\$1,669,389 D.
No. 2 (Plan 19).....	6,185,664	5,860,320	325,344 D.
No. 3 (Plan 18).....	10,730,772	11,645,238	914,466 S.

These estimates do not include interest on debt or the cost of construction, such as sewers, water mains, sidewalks, pavements, etc.

Points For and Against These Plans:

No. 1 (Plan 25 of Report).

This approximates the straight extension in some respects against and in favour of which the following points from the Report may be listed:

Against a Straight Extension:

- (a) It "is costly for the benefit obtained." (p. 33.)
- (b) "It leaves a shallow block between it and Simcoe Street." (p. 33.)
- (c) "It is close to the railway yards, where additional trucking street space, rather than boulevard space, is desirable." (p. 33.)
- (d) "It comes to a blank terminus on Front Street, little different in present fact or in future prospect from its present terminus at Queen Street." (p. 34.)
- (e) "A direct extension again is too far removed from the present commercial and financial centre to expect the early development of a monumental street." (p. 11.)
- (f) "As a gateway to Toronto it would not be within view of the railway station entrance." (p. 11.)
- (g) "... Not a single correspondent advocates a perfectly direct extension." (p. 33.)

In Favour of a Straight Extension:

"The sole advantage of the direct extension of University Avenue is the lengthening of the long vista from the Parliament Buildings." (p. 11.)

By a slight deviation from the straight, the extension lessens some of the above objections, such as (b), (d), (f), and loses the advantage of the "vista." Being 80 feet narrower, it also makes the blocks less shallow than they otherwise would be. By the creation of a plaza at

the north-west corner of Front and York, the extension is made more visible from the Union Station.

**No. 2 (Plan 19 of Report).**

**Against:**

- (a) "York Street, from its very position, must become a heavy traffic street. It will be a miscellaneous traffic street with a fully adequate volume even if widened to 86 feet and therefore University Avenue Extension should be made by a totally independent street." (p. 31.)

**No. 3 (Plan 18 of Report).**

**Against:**

It is not comprehensive enough. "Such are the salient features (p. 34) that would lead the Commission to unhesitatingly recommend that if down-town street betterments are to be confined to one street extension, that University Avenue should be extended at its full width to Richmond Street, and thence at a width of 100 feet diagonally across York Street to Adelaide Street, and thence due south to centre on the new Union Station. However, the recommendation of your Commission is for a more comprehensive scheme of down-town development. . . ." (p. 34.)

**In Favour:**

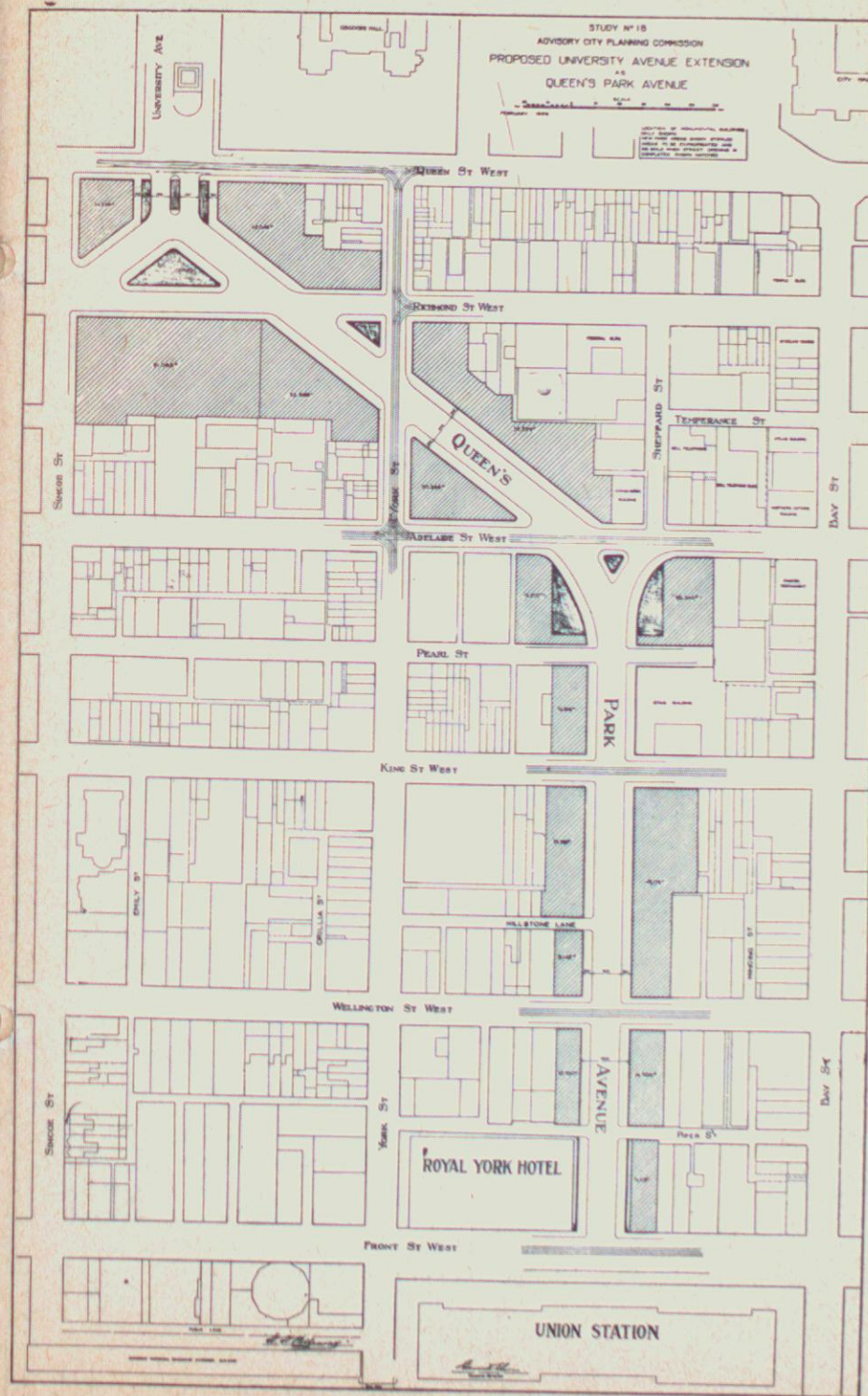
- (a) "Not the least of the ideas behind the desire to extend University Avenue is to create a noble gateway street." An "essential of a gateway street is that it be in full view from the portal of the city, that is, that it lead away from the entrance to the railway station." (p. 33.)
- (b) Investors would be more willing to erect noble buildings of the type required for a gateway street if it were in the present zone of such buildings rather than "a full quarter-mile west of the present edge of such class of development. . ." (p. 33.)
- (c) Putting a street requiring such development so far west might disadvantageously affect the "present financial and business nucleus of the city . . ." (p. 33.)
- (d) "It is interesting to note that on November 7th, 1919, the Works Commissioner, Assessment Commissioner and Finance Commissioner reported emphatically against a straight extension, and favored a diagonal extension to the centre of the new Union Station, if any extension were to be carried out." (p. 33.)

**A Comprehensive Development of Down-Town Area Recommended by the Commission.**

**The Ultimate Desirability of Complete City Planning Recognized.**

"Your Commission have given considerable thought to the traffic requirements of Toronto in the residential and outer areas of the city,

**No. 3 (PLAN No. 18 OF THE COMMISSION'S REPORT)**



"Through streets with adequate width of pavement upon which a motor car can manoeuvre . . . are totally lacking in Toronto, with the notable exceptions of the Lake Shore Boulevard and the short stretch of University Avenue, and the opening up of such through streets is, in the opinion of your Commission, of prime urgency." (p. 23.)

"In no section of the city is this vital need more apparent than in the down-town area." (p. 23.)

"Without disparaging the need of improvement in other parts of the city, the type of building now being erected in down-town Toronto, makes it incumbent to act promptly, as one modern office building erected in the path of a projected improvement eliminates all hope of ever carrying out such project." (p. 13.)

#### Some Important Statements of Fact in the Report:

1. "The trend of growth in Toronto has been steadily north-westward." (p. 11.)
2. "Similarly the trend of development of the business district has been north-westward." (p. 11.)
3. ". . . To-day the centre of population of the city proper is in the vicinity of Spadina Avenue and Bloor Street, while that of the metropolitan area, or greater Toronto, is two blocks west of Bathurst Street and slightly north of Bloor Street." (p. 17.)
4. The University Avenue line produced north and south divides the population about 300,000 west of the line and 285,000 east of the line in the city proper; or 402,000 west of the line and 329,000 east of the line, if the whole metropolitan area be included. (p. 17.)
5. In the down-town district south of Queen Street, since the close of the war, building permits have totalled \$23,000,000 in the blocks between Yonge and Simcoe, and only \$2,000,000 in the blocks between Jarvis and Yonge. (p. 19.)

Three possible ways, other than direct extension, of extending University Avenue south, if the extension were to be considered as a unit without regard to the needs of the down-town district as a whole, are:

1. An extension at a slight deviation from the direct line and intersecting at a slight angle the blocks west of York. (p. 34.) (Plan No. 25 of the Report opposite p. 30.)
2. The extension of University Avenue to Richmond Street, thence diagonally to York Street and the widening of that street on the west side. (p. 34.) (Plan No. 19 of the Report opposite p. 28.)
3. The extension of University Avenue to Richmond Street, thence diagonally across York Street to meet a new street extending south from Adelaide Street and splitting the block between Bay and York Streets. (p. 12.) (Plan No. 18 of the Report opposite p. 26.)

regard to the other street improvements recommended, and fixing the values of the lands affected as of the date of making public this report." (p. 50.)

#### Basis of Recommendations.

"The immediate necessity is not to force to completion a whole series of expensive street improvements, but by taking advantage of existing legislation to arrange that such will be available in the future, when the need is imperative. The actual widening of pavements, etc., is of minor account, if the rights-of-way for the essential arteries are preserved. Five years, or even ten years' delay in realizing the full use of an improvement is a short time in the life of a city, if the improvement is certain to be accomplished in the end. (p. 14.)

"But delay in protecting the necessary right-of-way from costly building development may be the contributing factor that would debar the city from ever realizing such improvement. The deferred widening provisions of the Municipal Act were enacted to cover just such contingency. (p. 14.)

"The stimulation to general business, to the building trades, in fact to every department of city life, from such a programme will be certain and profound, both during the fifteen years in which the work is proposed to be carried on, and upon its completion. When completed the city will have a down-town section which in beauty and dignity, ease of traffic flow, and business utility, will be equal to that of any city on the continent. (p. 14.)

"To the City Treasury such a programme means increased revenue from new development. To the citizens in general it means that the increment in value in down-town real estate through the city's progress will be used for public purposes and not altogether for private gain." (p. 49.)

"The development of the north country means great things for Toronto, as does the opening of the Welland Canal next year, and of the St. Lawrence Canal, which ultimately must come. A million population within ten years seems certain. Toronto has a great opportunity within reach. An opportunity that will disappear within a year or two at most. It should be grasped now. (pp. 14 and 15.)

"In the carrying out of the work as proposed, and as may be decided upon by the City Council, the Commission recommend that such be placed in the hands of a special improvement commission vested with all the necessary powers to carry the work to completion." (p. 15.)

The Bureau of Municipal Research is, and has been from the first, supported by private subscriptions from public-spirited citizens. It has received no governmental or municipal grants, for the reason that its statements of facts, and suggestions as to policy must not only be independent and unbiased, but must be so considered by the general public. The value of the Bureau to the citizens of Toronto depends on its independence as an agency of constructive criticism and citizen co-operation.

The Bureau requests readers of this White Paper to fill in the questionnaire below, tear off the sheet, and return it to the Bureau Office, 21 King Street East. It is not necessary to sign, but any signature will be regarded as confidential by the Bureau.

1. Are you in favour of the whole plan for down-town improvement as recommended by the Commission? Yes..... No........
2. If not, are you in favor of the third plan described in this Paper, which is Study No. 18 of the Commissioner's report (page 6 of this Paper, or opposite p. 26 in the Commission's Report)?..........
3. If not favourable to either, are you favourable to either of the other plans Yes........ No..... If so, which?.....*Not noticed*
4. If in favour of the whole plan, do you think it should be proceeded with if it would mean the delay of improvements outside the down-town area, such as the extension of Bay Street north, and the extension north of Sherbourne or some other avenue east of Yonge Street? Yes..... No........
5. If your answer is "No," what other improvements in your opinion should take priority over the plan of down-town improvements recommended? .....*Amersbach Avenue*  
.....*Sherbourne St.*  
.....*Bay St.*
6. Should the principle of special assessments for benefits be applied in such cases? Yes.......... No.....
7. Should any of the Commission's plans be financed partly by special assessments for benefit? Yes........ No.....
8. Are you in favour of the city's fixing the values of the lands affected by the proposed improvements as of the date of the report, either by application to the Legislature, or the registration of plans in the Registry Office? Yes.......... No.....
9. If so, which? .....*Should fix value, those they definitely*  
.....*decide to grow with by Legislature if possible*
10. Are you in favour of the principle of the city's obtaining the increment in land values from this development to pay for the improvements? Yes........ No.....
11. Should the Advisory City Planning Commission be continued as a permanent feature of the civic organization? Yes........ No.....

TEAR OFF HERE

### Remarks and Suggestions

(Whether or not you care to fill in the answers to the above questions, the Bureau hopes that you will be willing to record below any observations you may care to make. Use the other side of this page if necessary.)

\* *Push sheet straight to Richmond - Have immediate office building with extension southward on other side near middle of block in front of York and create new street through block*