



Will John Street be the city's first pedestrian street?

News Feature

Dangers in District master plan

Is reimagining of clubland code for condofication?

|By Enzo Di Matteo

The Entertainment District Master Plan, the result of a visioning exercise led by the local BIA over a 10-month period in 2008, has become the blueprint for development in the area. Who's buying in? We break it down.

Its stated purpose "To enable the District's continued transformation in a predictable and coordinated manner."

Code for condofication? The plan talks about the importance of a diverse range of uses "contributing to the area's vibrancy and dynamism." Present reality is a bit of a mess. And residential development continues to dwarf, in the form of oversized towers, all other building.

The big question Is the real goal here to squeeze clubs out of the nightlife mix? The answer depends on your perspective. For some, the death of clubland can't happen soon enough. The Hilton Hotel, for example, has put the brakes on a \$30 million facelift because of continuing concerns about club-related nuisances.

The inspiration New York's Times Square redevelopment and the remake of State Street/Michigan Avenue in Chicago. Closer to home, think the more pedestrian Bloor-Yorkville and Yonge-Dundas redos. The local councillor, Adam Vaughan, has a slightly different vision in mind: an arty Kensington with high-tech industry.

Key elements A "cultural corridor" along John; "green streets"; parks and squares; and residential development that "aspires to great architectural design."

Focal points A festival plaza outside the Bell Lightbox; major open space at Metro Hall Square and Roy Thomson Hall; promenades along Richmond and Adelaide; major gateways at different entry points around the District; pedestrian scrambles along John and King; strategic locations for public art.

The danger for the District We're at the tipping point – again. There have been welcome additions to the neighbourhood, OCAD for one and the Bell Lightbox for another. But what commercial and retail uses will fill the empty spaces? Can the height precedent set by existing condo projects be offset by future development so Queen and King don't go kablooey? Or, it is too late to put that genie back in the bottle?

