


AN EVALUATION OF THE PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT OF PRINCESS
STREET IN KINGSTON, ONTARIO, FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE
'GREAT STREET' CONCEPT

A report submitted to the School of Urban and Regional Planning
in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Urban and Regional Planning

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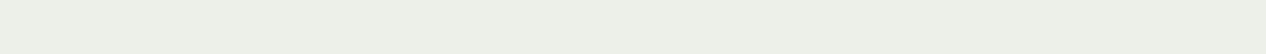
Princess Street has many of the characteristics of a typical north-American main street. However, while many main streets and urban centers have lost their vitality in the past few decades as a result of suburbanization, this Kingston trademark has maintained an intense public life and a strong identity in its community. It is not clear how Princess Street compares to other popular vibrant pedestrian corridors. Various opinions stemming from specialty literature provide a range of definitions or particular principles attached to the concept of 'great streets', although this theoretical model remains to be defined.

What are the parameters and principles associated in literature with good urban thoroughfares? How does Princess Street compare with these theoretical benchmarks? Which streetscape aspects could be improved, based on such a comparative assessment, along Princess Street?

Guided by these questions, this study evaluated the downtown portion of Princess St. from the perspective of the 'great street' model, outlining those characteristics of the street that contribute to its pedestrian appeal, and those he hosn7 Tmsqnl055>30048004444057>esss73lc4 f(se)3(ss)l(cs)-4(r)7()

The evaluation of the street environment quality involved observing street attributes relating to 'protection', 'comfort', and 'delight'.

Key map and outline of the study area and street blocks along Princess Street



The street life observations and pedestrian environment observations provided data about the pedestrian activity and the physical quality of each block in the study area. The data analysis permitted an overall evaluation of the vitality of the street and of the types of activities people engaged in within, on each block, during a weekday or a weekend day. Further information from the street environment assessment allowed for a qualitative evaluation of its pedestrian environment and provided a physical environment profile for each block.

Cross referencing data from each category of observation (i.e. physical activity and physical environment) in referent) teca, stcted an tenallations provi3(t)-4(e)14(e)13(r)8(ed)14()14(e)dTBTgf

Table showing a summary of street life and street environment observations.

protection, occasional interim passageways for pedestrian access, universal accessibility, layout clarity, opportunities to stand or wait, some opportunities to sit along some blocks, including café/restaurant terraces in a few cases, and a relative aesthetic consistency based on heritage architecture throughout the study area offering significant visual interest. More particular criteria, related to pedestrian delight are addressed by the street's appropriate proportion and scale and the visual and cultural resources represented by the built environment.

A number of less favorable aspects were remarked on as well, as they pertain to the street's pedestrian environment: gaps in the physical frontage of the streets, traffic intensity, poor wind protection, narrow sidewalk widths on many segments - often reduced by a variety of obstructions, long blocks, and few landmarks. Formal sitting opportunities are missing along most blocks, while socially stimulating sitting choices (i.e. 'talkscapes') are poorly provided for. Other observations remarked on impeded views, across and along the street, aesthetic conflicts between historic and some modern buildings, the lack of opportunities for play or exercise, as well as the lack of natural elements or public art in the street.

Recommendations were made in regard to better opportunities for stationary and social activities, for better legibility, improved aesthetic and cultural dimensions of the street, as well as an increase in the available pedestrian linkages beyond the street exclusive space:

Recommendation One: Offer better opportunities for stationary activities and improve overall safety on all blocks, by restructuring curb extension space, integrating appropriate sitting areas, and encouraging late-hours land-uses.

Recommendation Two: Improve street legibility by providing landmark features or

Recent work by the City of New York (2012) and the City of Chicago (2013) on street design and legibility. The City of New York (2012) and the City of Chicago (2013) on street design and legibility.