

Councillor Joe Cressy and the rest of council,

## **We want a neighbourhood not a highway**

Dear Councillor Cressy,

We reach out to you as small, independent, locally owned & operated businesses that give the Annex (and Koreatown) its flavour. We represent the heart of the Annex. Many of us have been in this area for decades and have never witnessed a downturn in sales as dramatic or as wide-reaching as this. It cannot be coincidence that such disparate shops-- ice cream to clothing to full-service restaurants--have experienced such loss. Should the current bike lane design become permanent, some of us see no other option but to relocate. We look to you, Councillor Cressy, City Council and Mayor Tory to help us continue to bring culture, entertainment and enjoyment to Bloor St and to continue to create jobs and revenue for this city that we love.

In February we reached out the local BIA to have them assess the impact on small business in our area post installation by creating a sub committee. However you chose to rely on a study from a group whose opinion on economic impact from these lanes would not seek out the local business's in a meaningful way.

So this summer we went out and sought information from the economic impact from local business's.

The bike lane pilot project in the Annex is having a negative effect on the Annex neighbourhood and its businesses. In a grassroots survey, 69% of businesses report that sales have been down since the bike lanes in the Annex were installed.

The survey was done from Madison to Bathurst. The participants

- Mostly local and independent business
- 63 answered our of 108 business's. Only two were chains and of the 35 business's not answering most were national chains and financial institutions.
- All have a degree of off and on street parking for their business.
- Business's ranged from Ice Cream stores, clothing, full servicer restaurants, fast food restaurants, grocery stores, general retail and bars.
- Even bars who do not encourage people to drive have issues at night when patrons require UBER/Taxis and the drivers cannot get curb access.

We are the Annex Business Bike Alliance who want to encourage and expand cycling in the GTA but do it in a way that does not dramatically impact local independent business's along Toronto's main streets.

The Bloor and Bike lanes design and operating hours have created a highway that has reduced business activity along the entire strip(Madison to Shaw).

Traffic to the area to shop has been reduced as cars do not come and cyclists do not stop and shop.

Our group has business's who have been on street for decades and have never seen such a down turn in business. NEVER.

To prevent local independent business's from relocating from Bloor Street and creating a one dimensional neighbourhood we have come up with some recommendations that council should put forward when the trial period for the lanes conclude in the fall.

**Over a third of business recommended:**

REMOVE BIKE LANES FROM BLOOR ENTIRELY AND FOCUS ON DUPONT AND HARBORD (and/or surrounding side streets) AS A MORE FUNCTIONAL BIKE ROUTE OPTION

ENHANCE HARBORD BIKE LANES

CONSIDER INSTALLING BIKE LANES ON SIDE STREETS AND BACK ALLEYS (ones w/ fewer businesses as Ottawa and Vancouver have both done

REMOVE BIKE LANES FROM BLOOR ENTIRELY AND FOCUS ON DUPONT AND HARBORD (and/or surrounding side streets) AS A MORE FUNCTIONAL BIKE ROUTE OPTION

As ABBA we believe that cyclists, business owners, cyclists and residents should create an environment that can enhance all our interests.

We suggest the following

CREATE RUSH-HOUR ONLY BIKE LANES USING A WHOLE LANE OF TRAFFIC (from 7-10AM eastbound/4-7PM westbound), THEN RETURN THAT LANE TO MOTOR VEHICLE PARKING FOR THE REMAINING HOURS OF THE DAY

CREATE SEASONAL BIKE LANES (operational from May to September)

REMOVE THE BIKE LANES FOR 1-YEAR AS A PILOT PROJECT TO MEASURE THE AFFECT ON SALES/BUSINESSES

CREATE MORE MOTOR VEHICLE PARKING SPOTS ALONG SIDE STREETS, DIRECTLY NORTH/SOUTH OF BLOOR (free, 1-hr parking on BOTH sides of these sections of the those streets)

ENFORCE SPEED LIMITS ON CYCLISTS RIDING IN THE BIKE LANES (especially during the AM and PM rush-hours)

OFFER FREE BIKE BASKETS TO CYCLISTS TO ENCOURAGE SHOPPING ALONG BLOOR

From a safety perspective we recommend the following:

ENFORCE Toronto Municipal Code Bylaw 950-300 WHICH STIPULATES THAT: no person shall ride a bicycle, skateboard, in-line skate or roller-skates, coaster, scooter, toy vehicle, toboggan, sleight or similar device on a sidewalk recklessly or negligently or at a speed or in a manner that is dangerous to the public, having regard to the circumstances. The fine for this offence is \$90.

DISALLOW PASSING IN THE BIKE LANES (enforced by police)

We encourage bike lanes and cycling through out the city but the design and functionality of these lanes need to be updated and we recommend the following:

REINSTATE A REASONABLE AMOUNT OF CURBSIDE PARKING/ACCESS

CREATE MORE PARKING LOTS FOR MOTOR VEHICLE (with proper signage and include charging stations for electric cars)

REDESIGN BOLLARDS (remove or at least improve bollard aesthetics)

If the city wishes to have the bike lanes remain and continue to encourage loss of businesses along the corridor we recommend the following:

LOWER CITY PARKING RATES (INCLUDING GREEN P LOTS) IN AFFECTED AREAS

FREEZE COMMERCIAL PROPERTY TAXES IN AFFECTED AREAS (as tax increases affect rental prices)

PROVIDE us with a marketing budget to stimulate traffic, create valet parking and promote the area.

ENHANCE the area by providing a new aesthetic along the street, increase parking for cyclist, encourage cyclists to stop and shop along Bloor Street.

We are willing to meet up with any councillor on this list and explain in further detail the impact on our business's and the street. We want to encourage cycling in the city. We want more bike lanes. We want them designed and operated in a manner that helps local business's throughout the city. These lanes place us at a competitive disadvantage with the rest of the city and if this design continues more neighbourhoods will be negatively impacted.

These bike lanes are not inclusive and are designed and operated in a way that will turn dense, vibrant commercial strips into the domain of national chains. It does not have to be this way.

A Neighbourhood not a highway.

Thank you,

Barry Alper

Chairman, ANNEX BUSINESS BIKE ALLIANCE