

# Toronto's Discovery District

## A Capital Design Strategy

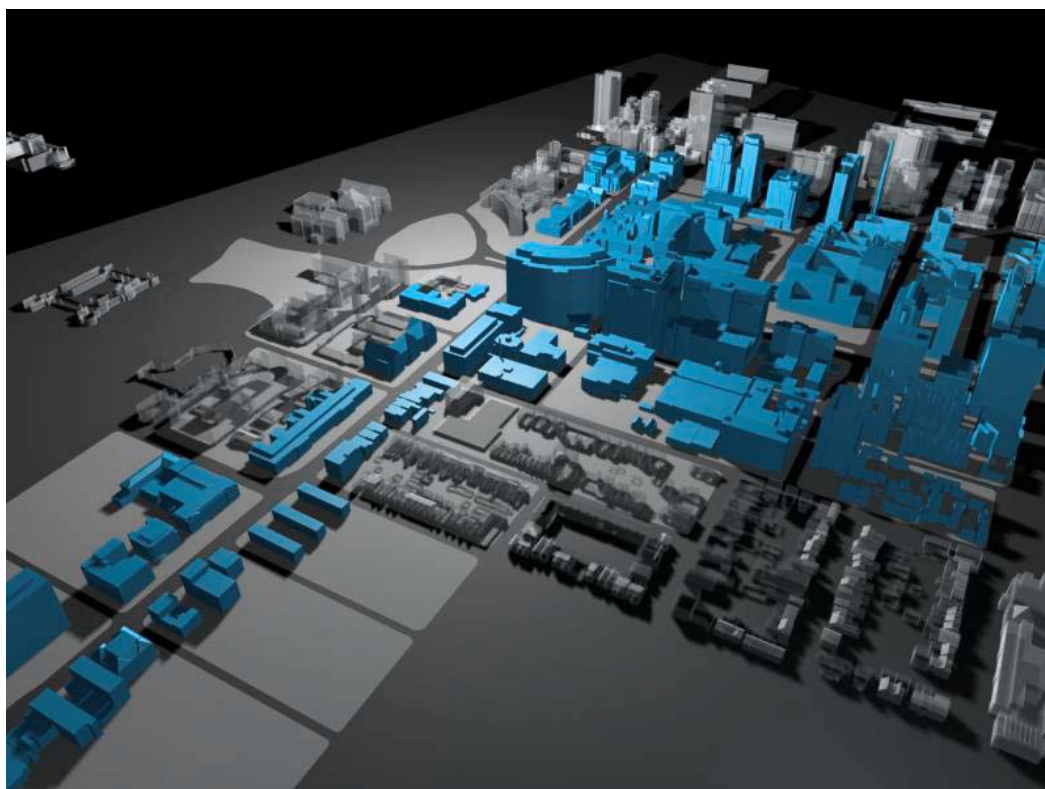
For the City of Toronto

Department of Economic Development Culture and Tourism

## Phase 1 Summary Report Research and Analysis

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## Executive Summary

This report summarizes the progress of the first phase of research and analysis for the Discovery District Capital Design Study that has been undertaken by Brown and Storey Architects with Rodger Todhunter Associates, Landscape Architects, and Richard Gilbert, for the City of Toronto Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Department.

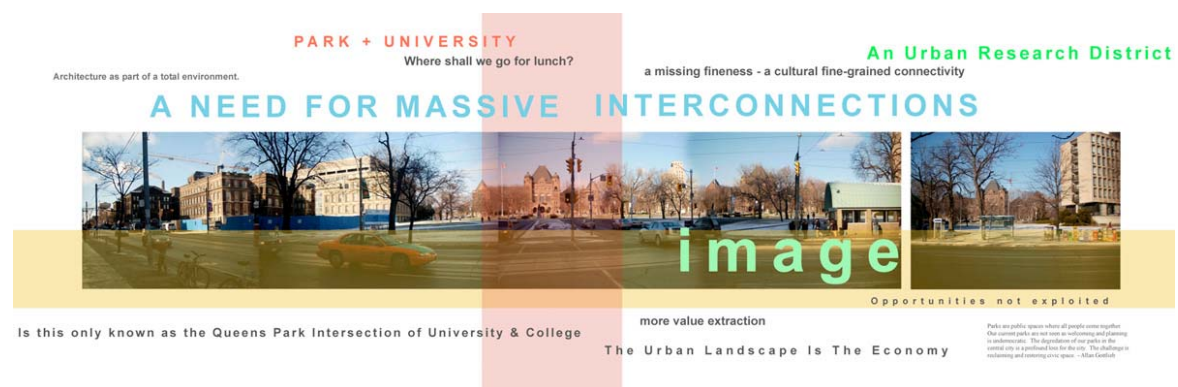
This report is divided into brief summaries of the following topics:

- a. **General Aims of the Project**
- b. **Talking to Stakeholders**
- c. **Mapping and Analysis**
- d. **Design Directions**
- e. **Design Workshop and Public Events**

The final topic, "Design Workshop", has been planned for April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2004, and it is the hope of the project team and Steering Committee that a full complement of the stakeholders will be present, along with representatives from the City of Toronto, TTC, and the Province of Ontario. Our initial discussions with the stakeholders has indicated there is an overwhelming amount of interest in and enthusiasm for the ambitions of the Discovery District. We look forward to presenting the next stage's design propositions for the review and input of the Discovery District community.

## A. General Aims and Methods of the Project

The chief ambition of the Capital Design Strategy for The Discovery District Area is to find the most effective means for the City of Toronto to create a strong identity (or “brand”) for the burgeoning biomedical research industry accommodated in this area of the City, through its urban design elements in the public domain. Although the main industry is the biomedical research field, the term “Discovery” has been invented by the City to allow a multiplicity of interpretation of different university faculties and cultural initiatives. Our project team have been looking at long term, medium term and short term design strategies to achieve these aims.



TOURISM - INFORMATION - EXPERTS - MEDICAL RESEARCH - NIGHT-

The in-between spaces of the urban park.



The Urban Centre and Capital of the Province

Intellectual Stimulation

Support and Linkages for New Developments

Enhance and recreate a new template for University Avenue - Consolidate traffic - Widen Sidewalks - Create a more appealing public realm - Remove the Centre Median

A new urban substance to build from.

University Avenue Transformed as a Gregarious and Open Air Space

Wide Sidewalks - Awnings - Better Materials - Drinking Coffee on the Avenue

2006 International AIDS Conference in Tor



Our working method has focussed on multiple paths of research in the first phase:

- We have had ongoing discussions with over thirty stakeholders in the Discovery District area, including medical researchers, doctors, University of Toronto planners, U of T deans of various faculties, engineering faculty, and Ontario Hydro facility planners, all active within the Discovery District. We will be extending this outreach to insurance companies and bankers who also are major tenants of the area.
- We have conducted an extensive mapping of the Discovery District, creating a versatile three dimensional model of the area, while cataloguing existing conditions and potentials.
- We have initiated design propositions for College Street and University Avenue where there are imminent construction plans.
- We have had biweekly meetings with the Steering Committee to review analysis and ideas and chart future actions.
- We have established an "archive" of material, collecting and cataloguing information provided by this study, including biweekly progress reports, minutes, stakeholder interviews and design notes – formatted for ongoing review and discussion by the Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee.

The biomedical research industry in Canada is the fourth largest internationally; Toronto has the second largest international concentration of biomedical research. Our aim for this Capital Design Strategy is to build upon the enthusiasm that has been expressed by the Discovery District community to create a public realm that will act as a catalyst and partner to the private realm – attractive to investment, tourism, and the local workforce and citizens.





*Champs Elysees, Paris*

## **B. Talking to Stakeholders**

We have been fortunate in being able to make strong connections with the Discovery District community. Full reports of each meeting with each stakeholder group has been catalogued in the project binder, and the

“discoveries” of these encounters has become the chief subject matter for developing a strong public programme for the area.

Some of the observations made by these groups are noted below:

- The generally poor quality of the public realm is recognized by the whole community, and its improvement is seen as key to improved working productivity, tourism, and attractiveness to visiting researchers / future investors.
- Programming like pleasant public spaces, retail facilities – places to eat, shop, exercise – are now missing, but are greatly desired.
- Providing affordable housing in this area of the city would greatly aid in the quality of life for the workforce, and in sustaining retail support activities.
- University Avenue and College Streets are focussed in on as the streets with the worst facilities, worst character, and greatest potential.

The stakeholders – research scientists, doctors, University of Toronto medical faculty, engineering faculty and planners, the insurance and banking industries, Ontario Power Generation – have all expressed interest in participating with the City in the next stage's Design Workshop, which has been scheduled for April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

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## C. Mapping and Analysis

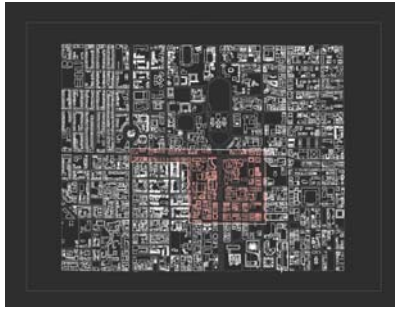
Over thirty analytical mappings in both plan and three dimensional models have been developed by our project team that look at infrastructure systems like public transit systems, retail facilities, major pedestrian and vehicular routes, and attractions and connective systems at the perimeter of the Discovery District. General findings include that:

- **College and University** can be seen as the two “main streets” of the Discovery District, and their intersection is the central focus of the area. As such, these streets need major renovations in both the public and private realms. The urban streetscape can be significantly improved by a new reading of the role of public space, and by a recognition of the interconnection needed (now non-existent) between the buildings and street.
- **The boundary streets** – Dundas Street, McCaul Street and Bay Streets have to develop a character in both programming, built form and urban elements that will introduce the Discovery District as a distinct entity of the City. New programme elements, or intensified roles, or housing, retail activity, and general support services can be encouraged in these areas.
- **The secondary streets** – Elm Street, Edward Street, Elizabeth Street, etc. should promote a more intimate kind of public space. These are ideal areas to promote more restaurant and night life where the narrower street sections can promote a more intense urban ambiance. They also provide a possibility for small urban places / parkettes for more intense planting and greening opportunities.

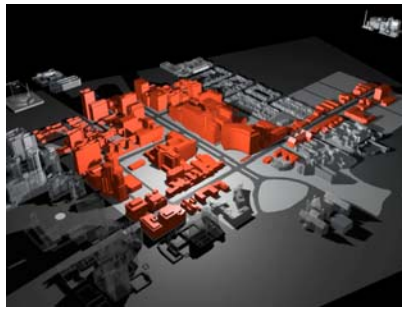
Cultural Tourism – The Discovery District, as a co-inhabitant with a strong new cultural policy to be instituted along University Avenue, can potentially take good advantage of the Cultural / Superbuild Renaissance currently under construction. The AGO, OCAD, ROM, CCBR, Pharmacy Building, and the new Opera House, are all either within the boundaries of the Discovery District or at its perimeter. This provides an exciting potential for cultural tourism combined with the biomedical research visitors for commercial / retail programming that will bring the “Florida effect” to the Discovery District.  
*[Cultural attractions and urbane neighbourhoods are an important draw to new industries in North America.]*

*Sample of Mapping produced to date  
For full documentation, refer to Documents Binder*

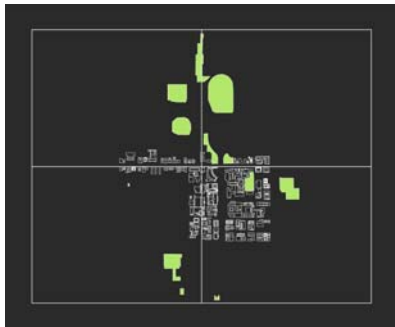
## Toronto's Discovery District



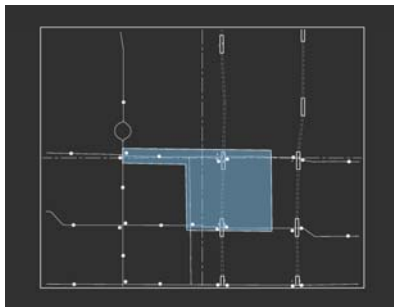
*Study Area in Context*



*3-D Model of Study Area*



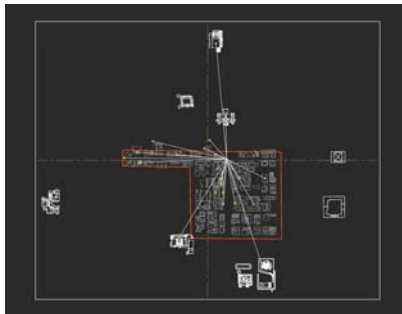
*Open Spaces*



*Public Transit Connections*

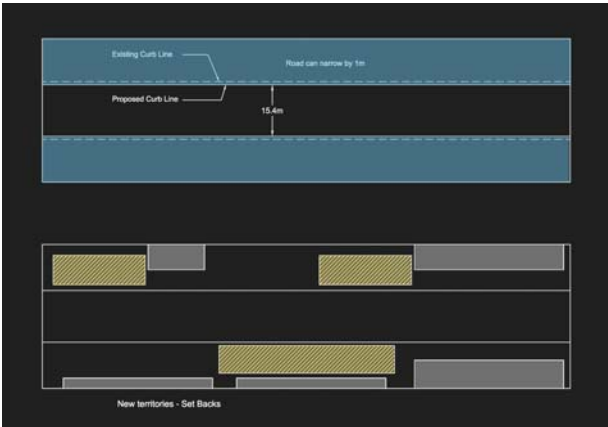
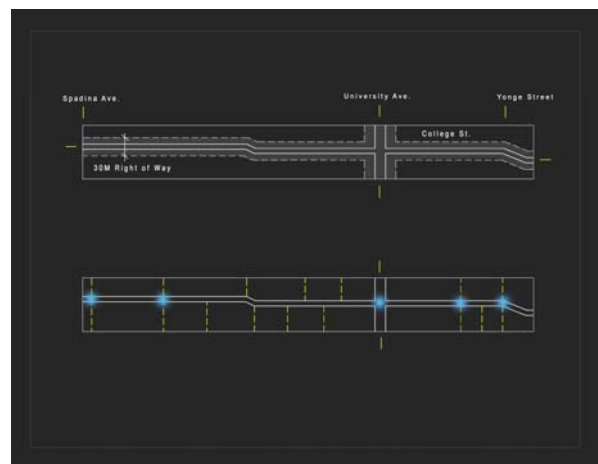


*Retail / Commercial Areas*



*Cultural Institutions*

College Street Mapping



## **D. Design Directions for Phase 2**

The second phase of the Discovery District study, now beginning, consists of developing design strategies, budget estimates and priorities. The directions for this work, established through our work in the Research and Analysis Phase, are long term, medium term and short term strategies. All three are needed to have a comprehensive view of the economic potentials and requirements of the Discovery District area.

### **1) Long Term Strategies: (10 years +)**

Broad conceptual ideas that deal with larger questions of planning, built form, public transportation solutions, have been prime focuses of interest in the stakeholder discussions. Ideas like bridges over University Avenue, affordable housing, public/private partnerships in open space intensification, stronger vertical connections between underground systems and the ground plane, and programming / use discussions for primary and secondary streets are all important issues that need to be addressed at the conceptual level to introduce topics for future reference for City of Toronto initiatives.

### **2) Medium Term Strategies: (2 – 5 years +)**

Extensive streetscape / urban design strategies are being developed that will work to transform the Discovery District area into a highly connected and integrated precinct of the City. Many of the streets in the Discovery District have the potential to be significantly altered in sidewalk widths, greening, and urban design elements like canopies, water features, and small urban squares. These potentials will be explored, with budgets and priorities attached, so that these major initiatives could be implemented through future capital budgets. The Discovery District needs this kind of large scale intervention to compete globally with other major cities, who will also be working hard to attract international investment in the biomedical research sector.

### 3) Short Term Strategies: (1 – 2 years)

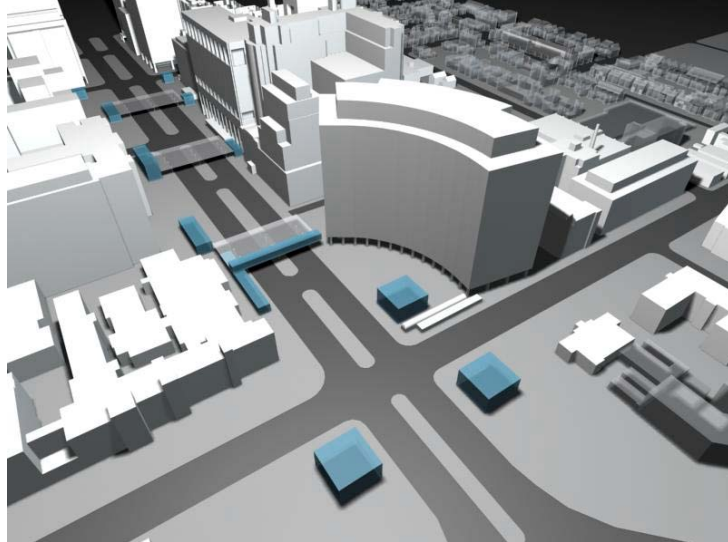
At the same time, it is important that visible interventions be determined that can immediately identify and brand the Discovery District in the short term. Many of these strategies have been identified for development in the design phase including:

- **Banners** – strategies for attachment to existing buildings and infrastructure of “super-sized” banners as a semi-permanent identifier of the area.
- **Street signs** – locations for Discovery District street signs has been proposed for this year’s capital budget
- **Medical Walk of Fame** – Working with the Walk of Fame initiative developed by the EDCT, our team will develop a number of alternatives that take the programme beyond the “slab in the sidewalk” to a more physically imposing display that will provide much more prominence to the “Hall of Famer” and much more information to the public.
- **Re-naming University Avenue:** “University Avenue – Avenue of the Arts and Sciences” to mark the confluence of the cultural and scientific milieus that both occupy Toronto’s premier avenue. This will announce in an ongoing and very public way the new economic initiatives both in cultural tourism and in the biomedical research industry that will be centred on University Avenue.
- **Re-naming Queen’s Park Subway Station:** “Queen’s Park / Discovery” to establish the district in the public transit milieu. The underground connection between the University, the hospitals and the provincial legislature buildings is a critical junction in the Discovery District’s main intersection, and will also announce to a large audience of students, researchers, general public and tourists the presence of the Discovery District.
- **Public Information:** Potentially related to the Medical Walk of Fame, a comprehensive network of digital / interactive signage elements that are placed strategically throughout the Discovery District have been endorsed by all the stakeholders as a significant contributor to the public’s understanding of the vital work being carried on in both the research hospitals and in the University. The broad theme of “Discovery” also allows related fields like Design, and Engineering, and the energy efficiency initiatives of the OPG to be highlighted in this proposed network of public exhibit panels.

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- **Lighting:** Special lighting effects and a distinctive lighting element will be proposed for the Discovery District to promote its 24 hour use by the general public, tourists and the research community.

### *Queen's Park and University Avenue*



### *University Avenue Design Strategies*





## **E. Design Workshop and Public Events**

On April 14<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 a.m., a design workshop is scheduled to present preliminary ideas of the long, medium and short-term strategies to a number of invited participants, including the many stakeholders that have already contributed time and ideas to this project, the City of Toronto Steering Group and Technical / Cultural Advisory Group, and representatives from the TTC, Councillors' offices and provincial representatives. The University of Toronto has generously offered the use of 155 College Street for this 3 hour workshop, and invitations will be issued shortly. The project team will conduct the workshop, along with several invited consultants who specialize in public facilitation, interpretative exhibits, and the research field.

### **Format Summary**

<b>11:30 a.m.</b>	<b>Introductions</b>
<b>11:45 – 12:30</b>	<b>Powerpoint presentation Research and design propositions (Work in progress)</b>
<b>12:30 – 2:00</b>	<b>Working lunch and discussion in six groups</b>
<b>2:00 – 2:30</b>	<b>Summary discussion</b>



The Design Workshop will be opened with an introductory power-point presentation of the Research and Analysis mapping and analysis, followed by a presentation of the three-pronged design strategies. These ideas will be presented as work in progress, and be illustrated with exhibit panels and booklets for each participants' information. The introductory presentation of work will be followed by a working lunch, and the participants requested to join one of six tables, where various aspects of the design propositions will be reviewed and built upon, according to the categories and items listed above in Design Strategies. Each table discussion will be led by a member of the project team and be composed of representatives from various communities of interest. The last half hour will briefly summarize each group's discussions. The Design Workshop will be documented and results distributed to all participants and follow-up comments encouraged.

### Open House

The participants will be specially invited to the concluding public Open House of the Discovery District study which is presently scheduled to occur April 28<sup>th</sup>. The work of the Open House will be to finalize the Design Strategies content through consultation with the Steering and Technical / Cultural Advisory Groups and with the feedback anticipated from the Design Workshop. The location of the Open House is still being determined, but a very public and visible location is recommended.



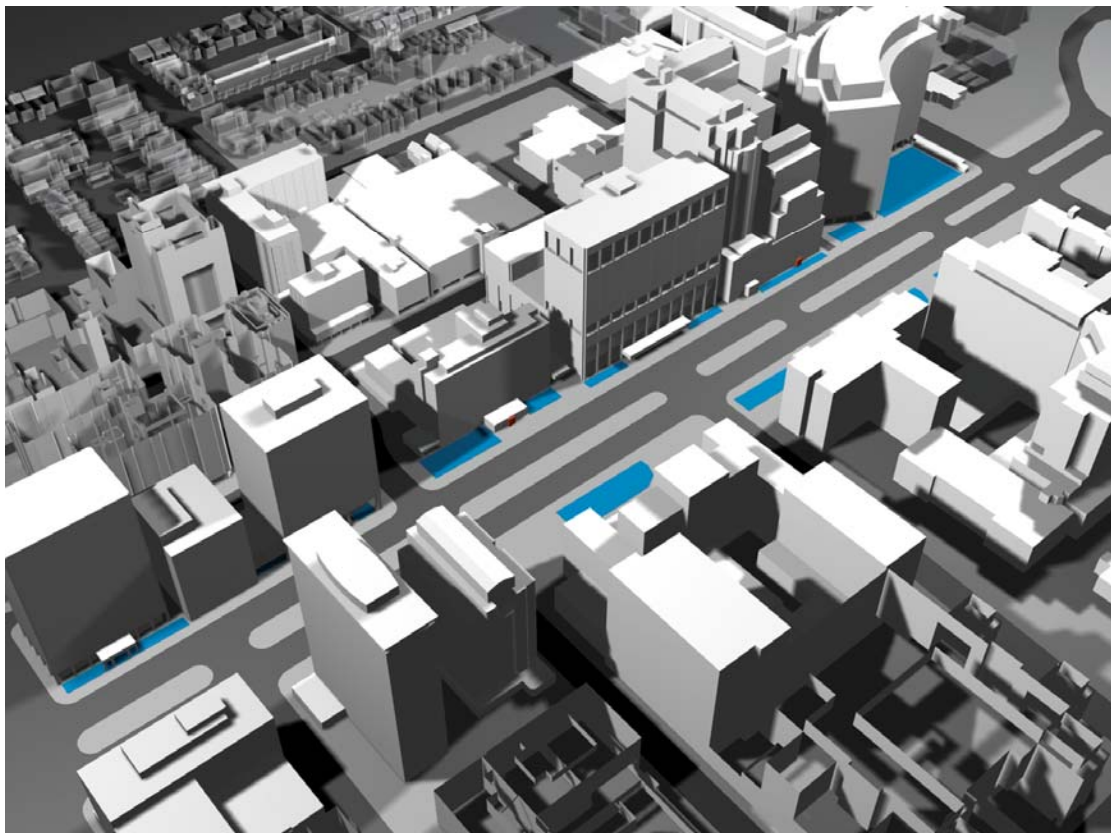
## Other Public Events

### Visiting Architects' Workshop

In addition to the Design Workshop and final Open House, a special public event has been proposed where the internationally acclaimed architects now doing major cultural and institutional projects within or close to the Discovery District will be invited to a public seminar discussion of the nature of University Avenue. These architects include:

- Jack Diamond (The Opera House project, Queen and University)
- Sir Norman Foster (The Pharmacy Building, Queen's Park and College)
- Frank Gehry (AGO, Dundas and McCaul)
- Will Alsop (OCAD, Dundas and McCaul)
- Daniel Libeskind (ROM, Bloor and Queen's Park)

While this special event will require a separate budget, it is anticipated that an event of this kind would attract international attention, and focus the public's perception of the importance of University Avenue, and consequently, the Discovery District.



## **Appendix**

**Street Signage Locations Map**

**Renaming University Avenue: "Avenue of the Arts and Science"**

**Renaming Queen's Park Subway: "Queen's Park / Discovery"**

**Invitation to the Design Workshop (Draft)**



John Howard designed the Queen St. entrance gates to College Ave. (now University). Circa 1868.

### Renaming University Avenue – The Avenue of the Arts and Sciences

As part of a general strategy of “branding” the Discovery District at a very visible public level, it is being suggested that University Avenue be renamed “The Avenue of the Arts and Sciences”, or that that phrase be attached to “University Avenue”.

There are two concurrent initiatives being strongly promoted:

- a) the Discovery District - an urban “branding” exercise of the urban spaces of the area bounded by Queen’s Park, Dundas Street, McCaul Street and Bay Streets: University Avenue forms the central focus of this district, where the biotechnology industry has become a vital part of Toronto’s economy, and where great growth potential exists.
- b) Public Art – The role of University Avenue as a new “Champs Elysees” with strong emphasis on both temporary and permanent new public art installations: The name “The Avenue of the Arts” has been tabled. It is here proposed that this be amended to the “Arts and Sciences”, promoting both cultural and research oriented industries and tourism.

### Background to the name “University Avenue”:

In 1829, a new avenue was laid out to mark the new entrance to the recently founded King’s College, the forerunner to the University of Toronto. This new avenue ran from Queen’s Park to Queen Street, and was originally called College Avenue. This avenue originally formed a park cut off from the rest of the city, which did not permit commercial traffic, with gatehouses marking its boundaries. In 1859, the pressures of the growing city forced College Avenue to become open to the general public, permitting east/west traffic. At this point, it was renamed University Avenue to avoid confusion with College Street.



## Renaming Subway Stations: Queen's Park



*Fifth Avenue / 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, "Culture Station". New York City*

## A Cultural Stations Project

As part of a general strategy of "branding" the Discovery District at a very visible public level, it is being suggested that the Queen's Park Subway Station be re-named



"Discovery"; alternately, it is proposed that the "Discovery" title be appended to the Queen's Park station name.

The Queen's Park subway station is at the main intersection of the Discovery District. At this point, the University of Toronto, major health / scientific research facilities, and the Ontario Legislature are physically joined by a somewhat undeveloped underground system. The ability of this underground system is seen as a key element of urban improvements for both the industry workers, and for tourists and citizens to understand the nature of the area that they are visiting or travelling through.

This development of the public nature of transit stations has become highly successful in other major cities: in the Paris Metro, the Louvre station has long been a museum station full of displays and other visual references to the large museum itself. This is similar to the Museum subway stop a short distance to the north of Queen's Park; it would be expected with the R.O.M.'s major expansion, that its subway stop will become something more like the Paris subway stop. Likewise, in New York City, the "Culture Stations Project" was initiated, in which four selected stations were redesigned so that subway passengers could see what cultural activities were going on above ground.