

Assessment of InfoToGo Pillar Design Modification vs. Vibrant Streets Guidelines

In the Staff Report requesting Council support for a proposed pillar redesign, Staff commit that they will “continue to vigilantly enforce the placement guidelines outlined in the Council endorsed Vibrant Streets Guidelines document to ensure pedestrian passage remains unobstructed.”

However, a review of the Report against Vibrant Streets Guidelines and the RFP appears contradictory.
See http://www.toronto.ca/transportation/walking/ped_environment.htm#vibrant -- for Vibrant Streets.
See <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2011/pw/bgrd/backgroundfile-39000.pdf> -- for Staff Report.

What VSG has to say about sidewalk space priorities...

- ✓ VSG (P28/30) states: Provision of the Pedestrian Clearway is high priority, with recommended minimum width of 2.1m – however, Clearway width should be sized to suit expected pedestrian flow. In rare and extreme cases, the minimum width may be reduced to not less than 1.525m”. Once an appropriate Clearway is assigned, availability of space for a furnishing or other use can be assessed.
- X Staff report graphic shows: *Pedestrian Clearway is reduced to the “rare and extreme” dimension of 1.525m dimension, to accommodate the InfoToGo Pillars placed perpendicular to the curb.*

What VSG has to say about furniture design and placement...

- ✓ VSG (P30) states: dimensions of installed street furniture should respond to the width of the Furnishing and Planting Zone, for example, on a narrow boulevard where the Furnishing and Planting Zone is 1.0m wide, furniture should be narrow enough to comfortably fit within this space.
- ✓ VSG (P34) states: no furniture shall be placed within the Pedestrian Clearway zone, or such that use of the furnishing will interfere with the Clearway.
- ✓ VSG (P34) states: furnishings must be accessible to all
- ✓ VSG (P34) states: no furniture shall obstruct pedestrian, cyclist or driver sight lines.
- X Staff Report shows: *a ‘one-size-blocks-all’ proposal. The billboards “bully sidewalks” by demanding perpendicular placement that exceeds furnishing space available on most downtown streets.*
- X Staff Report shows: *pillars set back only 0.2m (~8”) from the narrow sidewalk. “Use of the furnishing” requires visitors to block the Pedestrian Clearway -- which violates VSG. How comfortable will this be for a family of five, or a wheelchair user, or someone with reduced vision -- to block pedestrian flow while they strain to see high/low info on the narrow spine of the new pillar?*
- X Installations show: *Most obstruct the Pedestrian Clearway, with no setback. Sightlines are blocked.*

What VSG has to say about advertising on street furnishings...

- ✓ VSG (P39/49) states: The design of new street furniture must demonstrate appropriateness for its intended use, not as a venue for advertising. This means the public must be able to recognize the functionality and use of the elements. The size and scale of amenities should not be increased in order to accommodate larger advertising faces.
- X Staff Report shows: *Advertising clearly drives the size and format of this “furnishing”, which offers only secondary positioning and limited space for the its way-finding purpose. It is clearly a billboard.*
- X Staff Report states: *the modified pillar design allows advertisers to move from 3’x5’ ad format to the more standard 4’x6’ – with pillar size clearly increased to accommodate larger advertising faces.*

What VSG has to say about public input on the subject...

- ✓ VSG (P43) presents a summary of the extensive public consultation process associated with the coordinated street furniture program, and development of Vibrant Street Guidelines. Key Themes and Recommendations (Item 1) states: Workshop participants, those that e-mailed the City and those that filled out questionnaires expressed very clearly that the design and functionality of all street furniture items must be primary: expressing the opinion that Megabins are advertising vehicles rather than functional recycling bins. “They are opposed to them, and any other item that, in the opinion, functions as a “billboard first and street amenity second”.
- X Staff report shows: *a modified Megabin, with “way-finding” on the spine vs. garbage/recycling slots.*

What RFP 9103-06-7316 for Coordinated Street Furniture Program states...

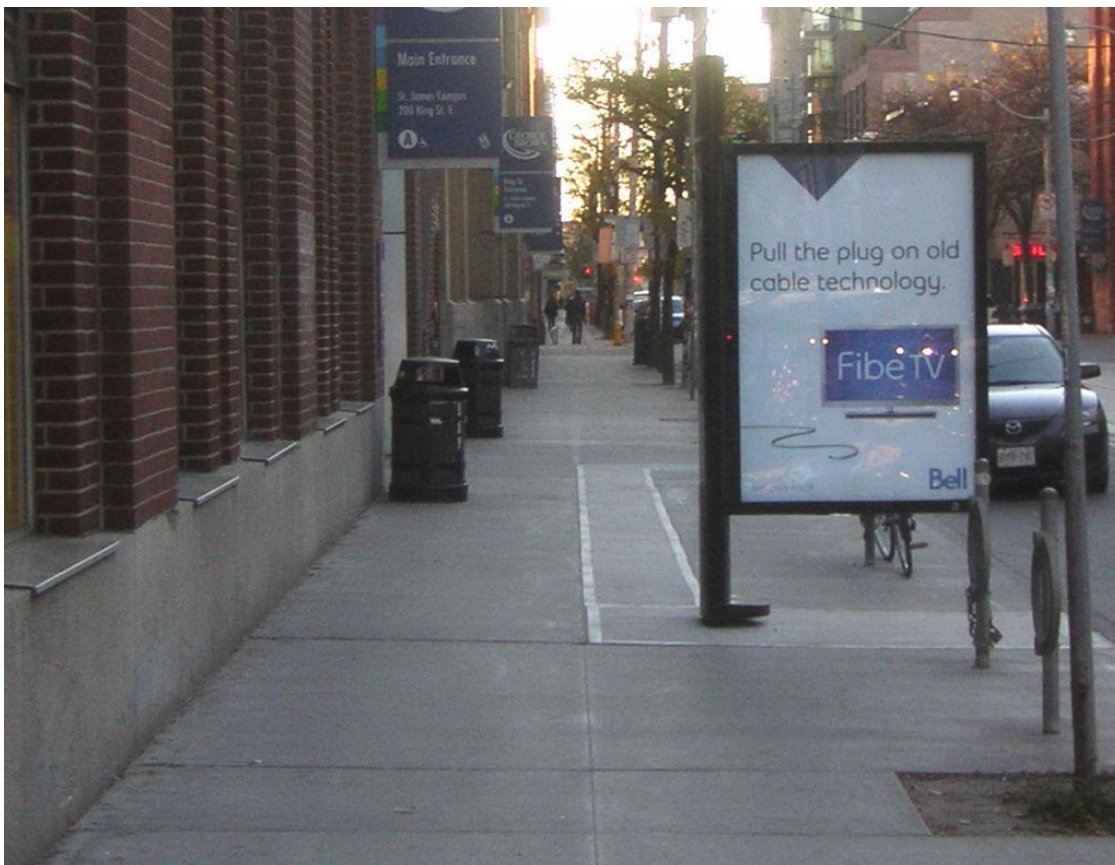
- ✓ Section 3.13 P24: The design of new street furniture must, first and foremost, demonstrate suitability for its intended uses. The design must be driven by the needs of its users and the public must be instantly able to recognize the functionality of elements. The size and scale should not be unduly modified or enlarged simply to accommodate larger advertising panels. Advertising must be tastefully integrated into the design of street furniture, not visa versa (sic).
- X Staff report shows: *enlarged ad panels, with suboptimal way-finding integrated into billboard design.*

Attachment 1: Spot the difference...Megabin vs InfoToGo Pillar...

The vilified Megabin -- with garbage/recycling slots at the end of a billboard...



The proposed InfoToGo Pillar – with 'way-finding' info at the end of a billboard...



Attachment 2: Recent Pillar Installation on College Street, Opposite MaRS Site.

Problem: A clearly-defined Furnishing Zone and Pedestrian Clearway width that suits the volume of traffic – obstructed by the InfoToGo Pillar on the north (...and non-compliant bike rings on the south...).

Solution? *Relocate pillar to Furnishing Zone, parallel to the curb, to remove obstruction, and provide a safe location for users to access Way-finding Info -- outside of the pedestrian flow.*



Attachment 3: Recent Pillar Installation on Queen Street, West of Spadina.

Problem: Staff have reduced Vibrant Streets Guidelines to a simplistic rule of measuring 2.1m from building face to billboards – without consideration for the space required for pedestrian flow, or set-back of furnishings to allow way-finding usage without obstructing Clearway.

Solution? Follow the Guidelines... Vibrant Streets Guidelines require staff to assess sidewalk space upfront before installing furnishings– giving priority to the Pedestrian Clearway. In this case, installation parallel to the curb -- in line with the fire hydrant and tree pits -- would be a less obstructive while allowing users to access way-finding information, outside of pedestrian flow.

