University of Toronto students present redesign for West Bend intersection

Lisa Rainford

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It’s no secret among pedestrians, drivers and cyclists alike that the Dundas Street West/Dupont Street/Annette Street intersection is difficult to maneuver, even dangerous for all who use it.

This is not lost on members of the West Bend Community Association (WBCA). For years, they’ve wanted to see improvements and have now decided to take matters into their own hands.

“A lot of pedestrians avoid it,” Des McComish, WBCA chair told The Villager.

Added member Jim Chisholm: “A cyclist was killed there in 2004 – prior to the installation of the bike lanes. (The intersection) doesn’t work for anyone.”

A professional engineer, Chisholm initiated a redesign project with his contacts at the University of Toronto’s engineering faculty. Two teams of first-year engineering students were assigned to overhaul the intersection.

“We’ve ended up with a redesign by students that is way more user-friendly for everyone,” McComish said.

The redesign, agreed McComish and Chisholm, simplifies the intersection.

“The current Dundas Street West/Dupont Street/Annette Street intersection has failed to regulate modern traffic flow safely and efficiently,” noted students Nikola Kostic, Amy Wang, Adrian Cheung, Susan Lu and Yanbo Wang in their report. “Traffic is forced to make dangerous turns with no clear line of sight while pedestrians and cyclists are made to compete with motorized vehicles for road space, producing a dangerous, unwelcoming, stressful environment for users and local residents alike.”

The students are proposing closing off Old Weston Road, making it a dead-end street. Those who live on the “infrequently used” road would use Watkinson Avenue to access Dundas Street West. Meanwhile, the Dupont ‘slip road,’ which acts as a ramp from Dundas Street West to Dupont Street would be closed off. By closing off these routes, an acre of green space could be created and a pedestrian footbridge could be created over the reclaimed land, McComish said.

At the end of April, the U of T students presented their projects at the school in front of the likes of Parkdale-High Park Councillor Gord Perks and members of the WBCA.

“We got a skilled group of students,” Chisholm said. “The students were so professional. They gave really great power point presentations. They came up with some great ideas.”

Added McComish: “It gets the ball rolling. It validates what we’ve been thinking all along. It is a daunting intersection.”

The goal is to get this intersection redesign on the city’s radar, McComish said.

“And, have it funded for study by the traffic and transportation departments,” he said. “We want the city to take this on, to come up with their own study – we’d like to get on various departments’ five-year plan.”

The group would like a broad range of people to get on board with the project. Already, it has piqued the interest of surrounding residents’ associations, such as the Junction Residents Association, among others.

To find out more or to get involved, visit www.thewestbend.ca, or join the Facebook group Toronto West Bend Community Association.