

# FANS PUSH TO RENAME STREET FOR DEVELOPER

Paul Oberman was renowned for restoring Toronto landmarks

Patty Winsa

The man who helped bring Toronto's past to life should be remembered with one of the city's most historic streets, says architect Michael Taylor.

He'd like to see Market St., on the west side of the St. Lawrence Market, renamed for a man he calls a "champion of the city": developer Paul Oberman, who was 53 when he died in a plane crash in March.

Oberman was a rare developer who bought and restored iconic properties such as the Flatiron building and Summerhill Station before renting them out to tenants.

"We really lost someone in his prime," Taylor says. "He was just getting going, and one can only dream of what he would have achieved through his life."

An online petition has been set up to have Market St. named Oberman Way. Oberman's company, Woodcliffe Landmark Properties, was in the process of restoring properties on the street's west side when he died. The city requires that renaming proposals include a petition signed by business owners and residents in the area.

But changing the street name could prove difficult. City policy states that "existing names in themselves are part of the historic fabric of the city," explains Walter Kowalenko, director of survey and utility mapping for the city.

Toronto grants rare exemptions and did so recently after Ted Rogers died, renaming a portion of Jarvis St., from Bloor St. south to Charles St., as Ted Rogers Way.

Woodcliffe is retrofitting three heritage buildings on the west side of Market and building a fourth at the southern end where it meets The Esplanade. The LCBO will rent the top floor, and the plan calls for restaurants with patios on the ground floor. Eventually, Oberman's vision was to close the street to traffic and create glassed-in flower markets under the mezzanine that runs along the west side of the St. Lawrence Market.

"He made such a difference in the years that he was here with us," says Taylor. "In fact, what he's managed to do with Market St. is the very best thing anyone could do."

The petition is part of a website built by the developer's younger son, Evan Oberman. Oberman and his wife, Eve Lewis, had a large blended family with six children.

"When the memorial was held, there were so many photographs. Lots of people asked for copies or access to these," Lewis, who is now CEO and president of their company, wrote in an email. The family posted the photos on the site.

If the city doesn't change the street's name, Kowalenko says another option is to recognize Oberman with secondary signage. The city, for example, added "Mirvish Village" street signs on Markham St., near Bloor St., in honour of the Honest Ed's founder.

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## Fans push to rename street for developer

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**PATTY WINSA**  
CITY NEWS REPORTER

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**TORONTO TAKES CUES FROM NYC**

Inspired by New York City's efforts to close to traffic a portion of Broadway in Times Square, Toronto is considering its own novel approach to creating public spaces on roadways.

Since 2009, the city has been in talks with Woodcliffe Landmark Properties, which is redeveloping the historic west side of Market St., to use part of the road in the summer as a bike lane.

Restaurants in the new development can have patios. Currently, the sidewalk is too narrow to allow them.

The idea would be to have the developer pay for rebuilding the street to eliminate curbs and install movable bollards to separate pedestrians from the southbound traffic.

The idea is new to Toronto, but has been used in Atlanta and Kitchener.

Toronto already has two successful pilot projects for pedestrian-only zones on streets through Ryerson University and the University of Toronto.

Another temporary street closing at Yonge St. and Orchard View Blvd., just north of Eglinton Ave., will continue until Thanksgiving.

## Universities want to keep car-free zones

**GLORIA ER-CHUI**  
STAFF REPORTER

Two universities are asking the city to ditch cars in favour of tables and chairs on stretches of streets in their campuses.

A pilot project that created pedestrian-only zones last year at Ryerson University and the downtown University of Toronto campus set to end on Sept. 30.

A recommendation to make the closures permanent will be discussed at a community council meeting on Sept. 12.

"Closing the zones" would be a real blow to students," said Julia Hangenberg, Ryerson's vice-president of administration and finance. Planners on Graft St., currently block vehicles between O'Keefe Lane and Bond St. at Ryerson. Tables and chairs have been set up under large umbrellas. A section of Victoria St., between Gould St. and Dundas St. E., is also closed.

More than 40 events were hosted in the no-car zone this year, said Hangenberg. "We think of it as the heart of our campus."

Fiona Chapman, the city's pedestrian projects manager, said city staff will support the permanent closures.

Residents at the University of Toronto were asked, Chapman said. Debrahine H, who responded to vehicles after the pedestrian zone failed to attract enough people.

However, the closure of Villavicka St., between Huron and St. George Sts., has created "a good hanging around" space for students," said University of Toronto administrator Elizabeth Slem.

She estimates that as many as 70000 students use the pedestrian zone a week. Students enjoy a weekly farmers market and ball hockey and basketball games.

James Robinson of the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area said permanent closures must be treated "carefully" because they can affect local businesses.

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