

**West District Design Initiative  
Community Presentation on Consultant's Findings**

**Monday, October 29, 2007**

**Etobicoke Civic Centre – Council Chambers  
399 The West Mall  
7:00 – 9:30 p.m.**

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**SUMMARY NOTES**

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*The community consultation meeting presenting the consultant's findings on the West District Design Initiative was held on October 29, 2007 in the Council Chambers of the Etobicoke Civic Centre. The meeting was hosted by the project managers, Anne Milchberg from Facilities & Real Estate and Lorna Day from City Planning. City staff from City Planning, Transportation Services and the TTC were also in attendance, to answer specialized questions as required.*

*The format of the meeting included an open house, presentations by Anne Milchberg and the consultant, Ronji Borooah of Young & Wright Architects, remarks by Councillor Milczyn and Councillor Holliday, a Q&A/discussion session with the community, and concluding comments by Lorna Day. Approximately 140 people were in attendance.*

**Introduction to the West District Design Initiative**

Anne Milchberg started the meeting by providing the context for the West District Design Initiative (WDDI) and a description the three subject properties: the Etobicoke Civic Centre Complex, the Westwood Theatre Lands, and the Bloor-Islington Lands. Following Council's direction in 2003, City staff have been exploring the possibility of relocating the Civic Centre functions to either the Westwood Theatre Lands or the Bloor-Islington Lands. Both properties are located along the Bloor-Danforth Subway line and are included in the Etobicoke Centre Secondary Plan.

The West District Study focuses on a number of different elements including: the Six Points Reconfiguration Class Environmental Assessment, Kipling-Islington Bus Operations Study, Etobicoke Centre Community Improvement Plan, Etobicoke Centre Community Services and Facilities Implementation Strategy, polling of Agencies, Boards, Committees and Divisions (ABCDs) and the West District Design Initiative.

The purpose of the WDDI is to examine the feasibility of relocating the current Etobicoke York Civic Centre to either the Bloor-Islington Lands or the Westwood Theatre Lands and to produce urban design visions for the three sites. The objective of the Initiative is to study the built form options for the three sites, so that if redevelopment occurs, it is done so in a comprehensive manner that maximizes the value of the land, supports the Official Plan, the Etobicoke Secondary Plan provisions and any other City policies and regulations.

### **Presentation of the Preferred Design Visions**

The consultant, Mr. Borooah, elaborated on the existing conditions of each site, the design processes (workshops and design charrettes) that took place, and the preferred built form and design visions.

The following outlines key elements of the preferred built form and design vision for the sites. For a more detailed review of the preferred design vision, please refer to the full reports available at <http://www.toronto.ca/business/wddi.htm>

If the **Etobicoke Civic Centre Complex** is redeveloped, the preferred design vision for this site includes:

- Preserving the existing Council chamber and specific parts of the building such as the cenotaph, if technically and financially feasible
- A new north-south street through the site connecting Burnhamthorpe Road with Civic Centre Court
- Open space in the middle of the site with the retained Council chamber acting as a “pavilion in the park”
- Low rise buildings surrounding the open space, and high rise buildings adjacent to Highway 427
- A variety of uses (office, residential and retail), as the Official Plan designates this area as Mixed Use

The **Bloor-Islington Lands** are considered suitable for the development of a new West District Service Centre or as a mixed-use node.

The Mixed Use Option includes

- A new public square fronting Bloor Street and extending east to Islington Avenue
- A new public street to align with the signalized intersection of Bloor Street with Green Land.
- Three buildings configured to support and reinforce the public square, with the tallest building at Islington Avenue.

The Civic Centre Option includes:

- Placing the civic functions in the eastern tower at the Bloor Street and Islington Avenue intersection, office space with ground floor retail in the central tower and mixed-use residential in the western tower.
- Moving the TTC entrance to the northern portion of the site
- Phasing for the redevelopment

The **Westwood Theatre Lands** are also considered suitable for the development of a new West District Service Centre or as a mixed-use node.

- In either option the design vision includes a comfortable mid-rise environment through continuous street-wall buildings, ground floor pedestrian-oriented and street related uses
- The design vision is tied into the Six Point Reconfiguration Class Environmental Assessment which identified several

The Civic Centre Option includes:

- Placing the civic building at the south east corner of Bloor Street and Kipling Avenue next to a south-facing civic square fronting Dundas Street
- Creating a safe, attractive and continuous pedestrian connection to Kipling Station
- Three new public parks connected by a linear green path

The Mixed Use Option includes:

- Placing a mixed use building at the south east corner of Bloor Street and Kipling Avenue next to a south facing urban square fronting Dundas Street
- Keeping Bloor Street as a pedestrian friendly street, with street related ground floor uses
- A realigned road pattern northeast of Kipling Avenue and Bloor Street to create a more normalized development parcel

The consultant concluded the presentation by noting that the Bloor-Islington site and the Westwood Theatre Lands could both accommodate a Civic Centre, however some differences do exist. A critical mass of office and apartment buildings and a subway stop already exist at Bloor-Islington so it becomes a very easy option. The development of a Civic Centre at the Westwood Theatre Lands would act as a catalyst for revitalization and a driver for new development, however, the timing and costs associated with the Six Points Reconfiguration acts as a constraint on this site

## **Public Discussion and Comments**

Question: Where will the snow storage facility currently located on the Westwood Theatre Lands go?

Anne Milchberg

(AM): The new snow storage facility is intended to be on New Toronto Street in South Etobicoke. Details on timing of the move are still being worked out.

Question: What are the space requirements for the new Etobicoke York Civic Centre?

AM: Currently, staff in Etobicoke York Civic Centre occupy 180,000 square feet; however we estimate an additional 100,000 square feet may be required to consolidate staff from other locations.

Comment: A community member supports relocating the Civic Centre to the Bloor-Islington Lands.

Question: What would happen to the current Etobicoke York Civic Centre building if the City of Toronto moves out?

AM: If the property ceases to house a Civic Centre, it will ultimately be redeveloped. It is our recommendation that, to guide future redevelopment, Council endorse the vision that we're presenting to you tonight.

- Question: If the Six Points does not get reconfigured, would Westwood be ruled out as a location for a Civic Centre?
- Ronji Borooah (RB): The redevelopment of Westwood as the location for the Etobicoke York Civic Centre is tied into the Six Points Reconfiguration so without the change in pedestrian environment, we as professional consultants would not recommend Westwood as the location for a new Civic Centre.
- Question: Would the number of TTC Metropass parking spots increase or decrease with the proposed Bloor-Islington change?
- Domenic Garisto: (TTC) With the relocation of the Mississauga Transit bus barns to Kipling Station and the SNC development, the number of TTC Metropass parking spots at Islington Station will decrease but a new lot will be located at 2 Fieldway Road.
- Comment: A community member supports the relocation of the Civic Centre to the Bloor-Islington Lands but opposes the Six Point Reconfiguration due to potential for increased traffic in surrounding residential neighbourhoods. The redevelopment of the Westwood Theatre Lands should proceed without the reconfiguration of Six Points.
- Question: Are there any elements within the presented visions that will make the area more beneficial for residents?
- AM: The YMCA has indicated a strong interest in locating on the Westwood Theatre Lands and in prior meetings, groups representing the performing arts (specifically music performing arts) have indicated a strong interest in being at Westwood. We will be engaging both groups as we move forward. New parks, daycare and affordable housing will be incorporated into redevelopment plans for Westwood. Also, the east end of Kipling Station will be upgraded with a new subway entrance. At the Bloor-Islington Lands new open space and streetscape improvements will be provided, as well as a better passenger pick-up and drop-off for TTC purposes. Also, the SNC Lavalin development will bring around 1000 jobs to the site – a better use for the land than a parking lot.
- Question: Community member has concerns about the amount of traffic that will be generated on Westwood, especially caused by deliveries to office buildings. How will additional traffic be accommodated?

Mike Wehkind: (MW, City Planning):

Staff have developed a plan for a fairly fine-grained road system, including service lanes, to provide access to the developments. The Six Points Environmental Assessment Study also provides the option for an additional road through the area.

Question: If you were to decide to put the Civic Centre on the Bloor-Islington Lands, would the City still reorganize Six Points to make it more pedestrian friendly?

RB: Based on the study, I would say yes because you would want to provide the opportunity for a new neighbourhood to develop.

AM: We are learning that there is a critical mass of interest in redeveloping the Westwood Theatre Lands.

Comment: A community member is concerned that the best part of the Bloor-Islington Lands could be turned into a non-revenue generating building project which would not draw people after hours.

Question: Cycling along Kipling Avenue is particularly difficult because there is an interchange instead of a intersection. What cycling facilities will be included?

MW: The Toronto Bicycle Plan shows bike lanes on Bloor Street and through Six Points. The curb lanes along Dundas Street will be wider.

Question: Will north-south routes be included?

MW: That was not included at this time because it was not part of the approved Bike Plan, but that does not preclude any future opportunities to include a north-south route through Kipling Avenue.

Comment: A community member is concerned about financing for the Six Points Reconfiguration.

AM: By looking at all three sites together, we can better understand what their collective value is to us. We would only recommend moving the civic centre if and when there is a sound business case for doing so.

Question: Have you left room at Westwood Theatre for a new school?

AM: During the polling of the City's Associations, Boards, Commissions and Divisions, both the Toronto Catholic District School Board and the Toronto District School Board were asked if they were needed land on Westwood. Both said no.

Question: Could the civic centre stay here (i.e. on the West Mall) as is?

- RB: Our study looks at this site in terms of what would happen if the civic centre were moved. If it does not get moved, it would in all likelihood stay the same, but this is really a decision for City Council to take.
- Question: Is the current Etobicoke York Civic Centre a heritage property?  
AM: The property is not historically designated, but portions of it are listed and the WDDI vision retains the listed features. The rest of the property is considered by Heritage Preservation Services as not having heritage status. However, the ultimate choice about what to preserve must be made by City Council.
- Comment: A community member strongly supports the YMCA at the Bloor-Islington Lands.
- Comment: The farmers' market should also be supported wherever the Civic Centre is located.
- Question: Have wind studies been conducted?  
AM: It is too early to conduct wind studies. They are generally conducted as part of planning applications, likely at the Site Plan Review stage.
- Question: There is concern about school children jumping the railroad tracks north of the Bloor-Islington site to travel southward to Bloor Street and Islington Avenue. Has there been consideration of creating a connection over or under the rail right-of-way to facilitate safe pedestrian movement southward?  
RB: We likely cannot build above or below the rail right-of-way for both technical and financial reasons, but the City plans to make sidewalk improvements along Islington to make it more pedestrian friendly.
- Comment: The new Civic Centre should include space for councillors to meet with constituents.  
AM: It will.
- Comment: There is significant potential to make the area surrounding the new 2 Fieldway Road building more pedestrian friendly and allow people to cross the railway tracks along the south side of Bloor Street.

- Question: Has there been any thought about having a path west to Kipling Station from the Westwood lands?
- Zulfi Haider (TTC): Kipling Station will have a new weather-protected east entrance. We are hoping to locate the new entrance under the Kipling Avenue bridge, with a walkway through to Kipling Station. The east entrance would be easily accessible from the Westwood Theatre Lands. Also, Kipling Station will become fully handicapped accessible.
- Comment: Community member supports the current intersection at Six Points because the traffic flows very well.
- Comment: Community member states that although a number of comments made about pedestrian and cycling improvements are very important, fiscal responsibility should be the number one consideration. Proceeding without additional cost to the taxpayer is key. Further, in this community member's view, the current Six Points Interchange does not make sense, is dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists, and should be dismantled.
- Comment: Transit through Six Points does present a challenge; has the City considered a round-about for the area?
- AM: A round-about was explored in the early stages the Six Points Reconfiguration Class Environmental Assessment study, but those who studied it quickly learned that the circle would have be so large that it would consume most of the Westwood site and surrounding area, and that it would be hard to access and develop anything on the interior of the circle.