



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Report on Avenue Studies, 2010

Date:	May 4, 2010
To:	Planning and Growth Management Committee
From:	Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	Pg10025

SUMMARY

This report recommends that no new Avenue studies be undertaken in 2010. The Chief Planner proposes to report to Planning and Growth Management Committee in 2011 with recommendations for Avenue Studies in 2011. This report also recommends that no Avenue study be undertaken on Weston Road between Humber Boulevard and Ray Avenue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. No Avenue Studies be undertaken in 2010.
2. The Chief Planner report to the Planning and Growth Management Committee in the first quarter of 2011 recommending which Avenue studies should be undertaken in 2011.
3. No Avenue study be undertaken on Weston Road between Humber Boulevard and Ray Avenue at this time.

Financial Impact

The recommendations in this report have no financial impact.

DECISION HISTORY

The Etobicoke York Community Council, at its meeting of January 12, 2010 referred the following motion to the Planning and Growth Management Committee for consideration: 'That the Planning and Growth Management Committee request the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, to ensure that the Avenue Study planned for Weston Road between Ray Avenue and Humber Boulevard (and including Eglinton Avenue West to Black Creek Drive and Black Creek Drive from Eglinton Avenue West to Tretheway Drive) be scheduled for study in 2010.'

At the Planning and Growth Management Committee meeting of February 11, 2010, Committee referred the request to the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, for inclusion in his report to the Committee on the Avenue Study Program. This report will deal with the request for the Weston Road/Mount Dennis Avenue Study.

BACKGROUND

The Selection of Avenues for Study

The Official Plan identifies selected corridors along major roads as Avenues where reurbanization is anticipated and encouraged to create new housing and jobs, while improving the public realm and pedestrian environment. The Avenue studies began a decade ago and since 2000 the City has undertaken 19 Avenue Studies, including the studies of portions of Avenues along Sheppard Avenue East and St. Clair Avenue West that are currently in progress. The initial study is conducted by outside consultants working with staff and, subsequently, staff reports to Committee on the adoption of implementing mechanisms including Official Plan Amendments, Zoning By-laws, Urban Design Guidelines and other necessary measures to implement the Avenue Study.

The Official Plan identifies approximately 160 km. of Avenues, which is the distance from Toronto to the USA border at Fort Erie. These Avenues cannot be studied at one time given limited resources, and as such Committee and Council select portions of Avenues to be studied each year. Funding levels provide for two to three Avenue studies per year. A list is kept by staff of Avenues recommended by Councillors or Community Councils for study, and staff report annually to Planning and Growth Management Committee on which of these are the best candidates for an Avenue Study.

In February 2003, Council identified the following as the criteria for selecting which Avenue segments should be the subject of Avenue Studies:

- The presence of vacant and underutilized lands with redevelopment potential;
- Significant potential to create new jobs and housing along transit lines;
- Existing zoning is acting as an impediment to area improvement and growth;
- A need for streetscape improvements;
- The study would coincide with scheduling of road reconstruction;
- A strong market exists for redevelopment and development pressure;
- Physical infrastructure can accommodate additional growth, or is scheduled to be expanded to do so;
- There is demonstrable community support for an Avenue study;
- A good geographic distribution of studies is achieved across the City;
- Land use and design studies previously have been done for the area but not implemented; and
- There is a potential synergy with existing economic development programs and initiatives.

In November, 2007 Planning and Growth Management Committee added the relationship to Transit City priorities as a further selection criterion.

COMMENTS

The Avenues and Mid-Rise Buildings Study

Recognizing that the process of studying every Avenue would take many years, the City has engaged a consulting team, led by Brook Mcilroy Planning /Pace Architects, to identify commonalities among Avenues and previous Avenue studies which could be applied more broadly and expedite the implementation of the Avenues program across Toronto.

The consultant's report will be presented to Planning and Growth Management Committee. The report identifies performance standards and guidelines for mid-rise buildings on the Avenues that could be applied to many, but not all, of the Avenues that have not yet been studied. The implementation of the study would include: possible amendments to the Official Plan as part of the statutory 5-year review; amending the zoning by-law to permit Avenue development; adopting Design Guidelines for mid-rise buildings; and creating procedures to expedite developments that meet the guidelines and by-laws for mid-rise buildings. The selection of future Avenue studies should be made in concert with the results of this Avenues and Mid-rise Buildings Study.

No Avenue Studies Recommended until 2011

Due to the labour disruption the selection of consultants and commencement of the 2009 Avenue Studies on St. Clair Avenue West (Keele St. to Scarlett Rd.) and Sheppard Avenue East (at Warden Ave.) were delayed. The consultant reports for these studies are expected to be submitted in the summer of 2010 and the staff implementation reports with amendments to the Official Plan and Zoning By-law as well as Urban Design Guidelines will be submitted to the Community Councils and Council in the first quarter of 2011.

We are recommending no additional Avenue Studies be undertaken in 2010 and that Planning Staff focus on completing the ongoing studies. The Chief Planner will submit a report on the selection of Avenue Studies to the Planning and Growth Management Committee in the first quarter of 2011.

Mount Dennis/Weston Road Avenue Study

At its meeting of February 25, 2010 Planning and Growth Management Committee referred to the Chief Planner, for inclusion in his report to the Committee on the Avenue Study Program, the motion referred by Etobicoke York Community Council on January 12, 2010. That motion requested that the Avenue Study planned for Weston Road between Ray Avenue and Humber Boulevard, including Eglinton Avenue West to Black Creek Drive and Black Creek Drive from Eglinton Avenue West to Tretheway Drive, be scheduled for 2010.

Staff carried out a property by property evaluation of this area for an Avenue Study. After visiting the properties and reviewing the Official Plan and Zoning By-law provisions and Urban Design Guidelines for the area, Planning Staff have concluded that the equivalent of an Avenue Study has already been done, the regulations are in place, and there is little potential public benefit to be gained from an Avenue Study on this portion of Weston Road in the near future.

Shortly prior to amalgamation, the former City of York brought into force a Mount Dennis Secondary Plan with implementing Zoning By-law amendments and Mount Dennis Urban Design Guidelines. The strategic thrust of the Plan was to consolidate commercial and mixed use development in the core around the intersection of Eglinton Avenue and Weston Road and to redesignate and rezone the other blocks to encourage residential redevelopment to provide a population to support the existing businesses. The key provisions of the Mount Dennis Secondary Plan were carried forward into Chapter 7, Policies 39 to 43 inclusive of the Official Plan that came into force in 2006. The implementing zoning was approved and is still in place, and Council adopted the Mount Dennis Urban Design Guidelines in 2003.

All of the priority development sites on Weston Road identified in the Mount Dennis Secondary Plan that did not require lot consolidations have already been redeveloped—two sites for residential infill townhouses and one site as an expansion of Caplan’s Appliances. The blocks where consolidation still is required have the benefit of density bonuses in the current Official Plan provisions to encourage consolidation for residential redevelopment. The Urban Design Guidelines call for mid-rise buildings between 6 and 8 storeys massed to achieve a good height/setback relationship with front and rear angular planes to maintain sunlight, provide good street proportion and transition to adjacent low density residence areas. The existing guidelines are very much in keeping with the recommendations of the Avenues and Mid-rise Buildings Consultant’s report.

These provisions could be supplemented by applying the guidelines and zoning that is emerging from the Avenues and Mid-Rise Buildings Study to the lands in this area of Weston Road.

The policies for consolidating and redeveloping certain blocks are already in force in the Official Plan and Zoning By-law and there are no large underutilized or vacant lots in the Avenue area that can be redeveloped without demolishing low-rise apartment buildings containing affordable units or demolishing key local institutions such as the Mount Dennis library branch, the Salvation Army Church, the Good Shepherd Church, the Royal Canadian Legion or the local bank. The public realm is in reasonably good shape with signage welcoming people to Mount Dennis, decorative street lighting and new street furniture.

Not all of the area subject to the motion is part of an Avenue. The west side of Weston Road between Humber Boulevard and York Avenue is not part of an Avenue. The blocks of Weston Road between Cordella and Dennis Avenues are not within an Avenue and have a mix of low rise residential uses designated as ‘Neighbourhoods’ in the Official Plan that particularly should not be included in an Avenue Study. The east side of Weston Road between Black Creek/Humber Boulevard and Lambton Avenue is not part of the Avenue and is designated as an ‘Employment Area’. This area is currently the subject of a local area study as well as a site specific planning application to permit a low-rise residential redevelopment of vacant lands formerly used for industrial uses. The application is under appeal at the Ontario Municipal Board. Similarly, the Black Creek Road frontage of the former Kodak lands with a municipal address of 3500 Eglinton Avenue West is not part of an Avenue although the lands that front onto Eglinton Avenue are shown as an Avenue. The former Kodak lands are currently both the subject of an application for commercial redevelopment and the subject of an expression of interest by the TTC for use as a TTC yard.

There are a great number of City programs and initiatives in the Mount Dennis area. Notwithstanding that the area is one of thirteen 'Priority Neighbourhoods' in the City and is also along the route of the potential Eglinton LRT route, a new Avenue study should not be added to that list of local initiatives. Given that many of the implementing mechanisms that would emerge from an Avenue Study are already in place, and the lack of large underutilized developable lots in the 'Avenue' segment, Planning Staff do not recommend an Avenue Study on this portion of Weston Road. However, the zoning and guidelines for this portion of Weston Road should be updated and strengthened through the adoption of the citywide Avenues and Mid-Rise Buildings strategy.

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SIGNATURE

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