

Queen Street West Retail Floorplate Study

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To:	Toronto and East York Community Council
From:	Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District
Wards:	Ward 20 – Trinity-Spadina
Reference Number:	10-196737 SPS 00 TM

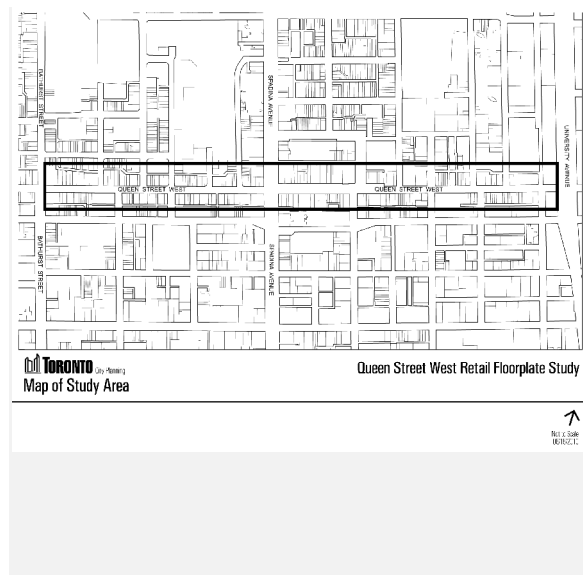
SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to summarise the progress to date on the Queen Street West Retail Floorplate Study and recommend a work program for a targeted completion of the study in the first quarter of 2011.

At the October 2008 meeting, the Planning and Growth Management Committee directed the Chief Planner and Executive Director of City Planning to submit a report establishing a maximum retail floorplate by-law for the Queen Street West Heritage Conservation District.

On July 8, 2010, City Planning staff and the Ward Councillor held a community consultation meeting to discuss the study. Comments received at the meeting strongly favoured additional time for consultation with the various stakeholders in the study area and the creation of a working group to advise staff on issues and concerns related to the study.

This report provides a summary of comments received to date and recommends a consultation process and work program for completion of the study.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. City Council direct staff to continue working on the Queen Street West Retail Floorplate Study and to bring a final report in the first quarter of 2011;
2. City Council direct staff to establish a working group consisting of area residents and business owners, the Queen Street West BIA, local resident associations, and the Ward Councillor to provide advice and feedback on the study; and
3. City Council direct staff to identify any additional changes to the Zoning By-law that may be required for the Zoning to conform to the Heritage Conservation District Plan and report on these in the first quarter of 2011.

Financial Impact

The recommendations in this report have no financial impact.

DECISION HISTORY

In July 2007, City Council designated Queen Street West between University and Bathurst Streets as a Heritage Conservation District (HCD) and adopted a Heritage Conservation District Plan for the district. Council also adopted a series of recommendations resulting from the Study including the following proposed amendments to the Zoning By-law:

- The primary use at grade should be commercial
- No portion of the lot visible from Queen Street West shall be used, at or above the level of the ground for the purpose of parking or storing a motor vehicle
- Set backs and setbacks are not permitted under 13 metres of building height
- New buildings are required to be 2 storeys or more
- New buildings are required to be built to the full extent of the lot along the street frontage.

The HCD Plan also recommended that ‘an inventory and a study of building floorplates within the HCD be undertaken to generate guidelines related to the interior of buildings, such as further restricting floorplate size.’

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/cc/decisions/2007-07-16-cc11-dd.pdf>
(TE7.15)

On October 14, 2008, the Planning and Growth Management Committee considered a report that responded to Council's July 2007 direction. It reported on a by-law to implement a maximum retail floorplate to protect older commercial districts and small businesses in older neighbourhoods. The aim was to retain affordable rental space for small business on these traditional shopping streets.

The report concluded that there is little evidence that the older commercial strips are being affected by large stores, and that regulating the floorplate size would be an inappropriate technique for addressing the issue. No changes to the zoning by-laws were recommended.

When considering this report, the Committee requested the Chief Planner and Executive Director of City Planning to report back as soon as possible, on a proposal for a retail floorplate by-law for the Queen Street West Heritage Conservation District; and on a by-law with thresholds for new development that replicates existing and established densities, heights and building footprints.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2008/pg/decisions/2008-10-14-pg19-dd.pdf>
(PG19.5 at pages 7-8)

In December 2009, City Council adopted an amendment to the Official Plan (OPA 95) that introduced policies to address instances where large stores in new neighbourhoods and on pedestrian shopping strips may take away opportunities for small start-up businesses, and reduce the cultural heritage values and character of the district and pedestrian environment.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/cc/decisions/2009-11-30-cc42-dd.htm>
(PG33.3)

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Official Plan

The Official Plan provides for limits on sizes of ground floor commercial uses on pedestrian shopping strips through the policy introduced by OPA 95 noted above. The policy requires that the Zoning By-law provide for a maximum store or commercial unit size in commercial heritage conservation districts such as Queen Street West. The main objectives of the policy are to:

- Maintain the cultural heritage values and character of commercial heritage conservation districts.
- Provide local opportunities for small businesses.

The maximum size is to be based on the following considerations:

- a) the prevailing sizes of existing stores and commercial units in the area;
- b) other indicators of opportunities for small business, such as vacancies in existing stores and commercial units;
- c) the provision of a range of store and commercial unit sizes to meet the range of local needs including day-to-day convenience shopping and other household goods and services;
- d) the potential impact of large vacant stores and commercial units at the ground floor level on the cultural heritage values and character of the conservation district,
- e) the need for ‘eyes on the street’;
- f) the rhythm and flow of storefronts on the strip; and
- g) the potential for the building design, particularly the street façade, to address the cultural heritage values and character of the conservation district and shopping area.”

Zoning By-law

The zoning along the Queen Street West Heritage Conservation District is Mixed-Use (MCR), which permits commercial and residential uses. Generally a maximum density of 3.0 times the area of the lot and a maximum height of 16 metres with a step back at 13 metres along a 45 degree angular plane is permitted.

The zoning also contains limits on retail space and store sizes in addition to those imposed by the density limits:

- no more than 1,800 square metres (19,370 sq. ft.) of retail and service space may be added to that which existed on the property in July 1993 (does not apply to the north side of Queen, east of McCaul).
- no store may exceed 8,000 square metres (86,080 sq. ft) (does not apply to the north side of Queen, east of McCaul).
- restaurants, taverns, club, and other places of entertainment and amusement may not exceed 400m².

Heritage Conservation District Guidelines and Direction from Study

The HCD Plan sets out policies and guidelines for alterations to existing buildings and new construction that apply to the exterior parts of the buildings that can be seen from Queen Street and the side streets. The following guidelines provide direction for the consideration of floorplate size restrictions:

- New and renovated buildings must maintain and enhance the continuity of the street edge by building out to the front property line.

- New and renovated buildings must build the full extent of the property width fronting on Queen Street West.
- Through the design of the façade, new buildings should respect the scale of adjacent contributing buildings.
- The original storefront widths of contributing buildings must be maintained.
- New and renovated buildings must be sympathetic to the heritage character of the built form by respecting the narrow rhythm of facades. This is particularly crucial in large buildings.
- The bays of storefronts and facades should ideally be 4.5 meters wide and should be no more than 7 metres wide.
- Upper floor uses must be accessed through doorways with primary entrances on Queen Street West, except for corner sites, which may be accessed through side streets.
- New development must be a minimum of 2 storeys and no more than the permitted height of 16 metres.
- Blank walls are not permitted facing Queen Street West or side streets.
- The existing Zoning By-law allowing a 16 metre height with a stepback at 13 metres along a 45 degree angular plane is affirmed.
- Setbacks and stepbacks are not permitted under 13 metres of building height.
- New and renovated buildings must be characterized by ground floor retail /commercial uses. Retail storefronts that have a 2-level or greater presence on the street should be avoided.

The HCD Plan also recommended that ‘an inventory and a study of building floorplates within the HCD should be undertaken to generate guidelines related to the interior of buildings, such as further restricting floorplate size.’

COMMENTS

Community Consultation

A Community Consultation meeting was held on July 8, 2010 at Metro Hall and was attended by approximately 60 people with staff from Community Planning, Policy and Research, and Heritage Preservation Services and the local Ward Councillor attending. Key issues raised at the meeting were the effect that a limit on retail floorplates would have on existing businesses and the property owners who lease storefronts and the short timeline for completion of the study. Attendees of the meeting were strongly in favour of a longer study timeline that allowed for greater collaboration between stakeholders, the Ward Councillor and City staff. The establishment of a working group to advise staff was recommended by the majority of attendees.

Working Group

Staff recommends that a working group be established consisting of area residents, property and business owners, the Queen Street West BIA, local resident associations, the Councillor's office, and City Planning staff (Community Planning, Policy and Research, Heritage Preservation Services).

The objectives of the working group will be:

- Address concerns raised by area residents about the impact of large-format retailers along Queen Street West.
- Provide a forum for open dialogue and collaboration between parties with different interests.
- Help inform City staff more thoroughly about the issues.
- Discuss ideas and solutions for addressing the issues.
- Provide feedback to staff about proposed solutions/changes to recommend to City Council for approval.

The working group should meet up to three times followed by a broader community meeting where the findings of the working group and final staff recommendations can be presented and discussed.

Study and inventory

To date, staff have assembled an inventory of retail and commercial establishments along Queen Street West. The inventory was based on data in the City Planning Land Use Information System (LUIS), the Employment Survey for 2009 and field work in June 2010. The Employment Survey and field work identified individual establishments. The LUIS data provide basic information on lot sizes and ground floor area and was supplemented where necessary with field estimates of the frontage of individual establishments. Although not all the gross floor area (GFA) data can be verified as 'survey' accurate, they are a reasonable initial analysis of the issues. If necessary, more accurate data will be collected as the study progresses.

Role of the HCD Plan

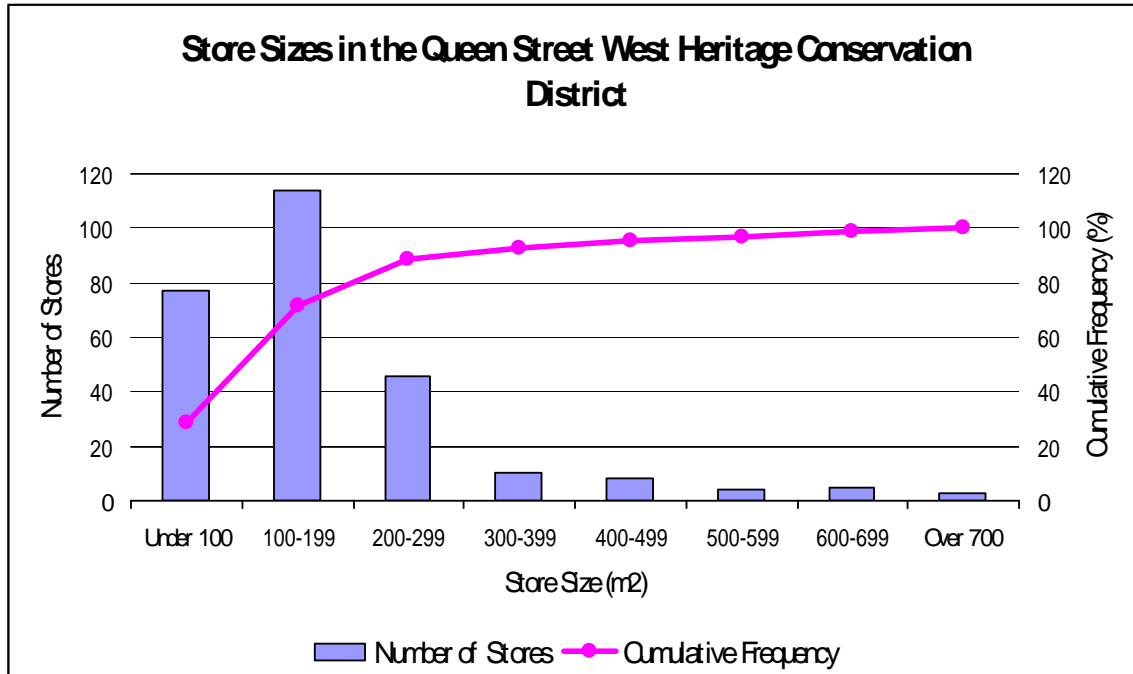
The HCD plan lays out the objectives, policies and guidelines required to conserve the cultural heritage values and heritage character of the HCD. The Queen Street West HCD Plan is adopted by By-law. As such, where the requirements of the Queen Street West HCD Plan come into conflict with any other municipal by-law, including zoning by-laws,

the provisions of the HCD plan will prevail to the extent of the conflict (*Ontario Heritage Act*). Therefore, although it would be beneficial, it is not necessary that the zoning be ‘fine-tuned’ to implement the HCD Plan. The HCD guidelines may, however, provide guidance to help implement the Official Plan.

Sizes of existing stores in the area

Most of the stores in the area are small, with 72% under 200m², 89% under 300m² and 96% under 500m² (see Figure 1).

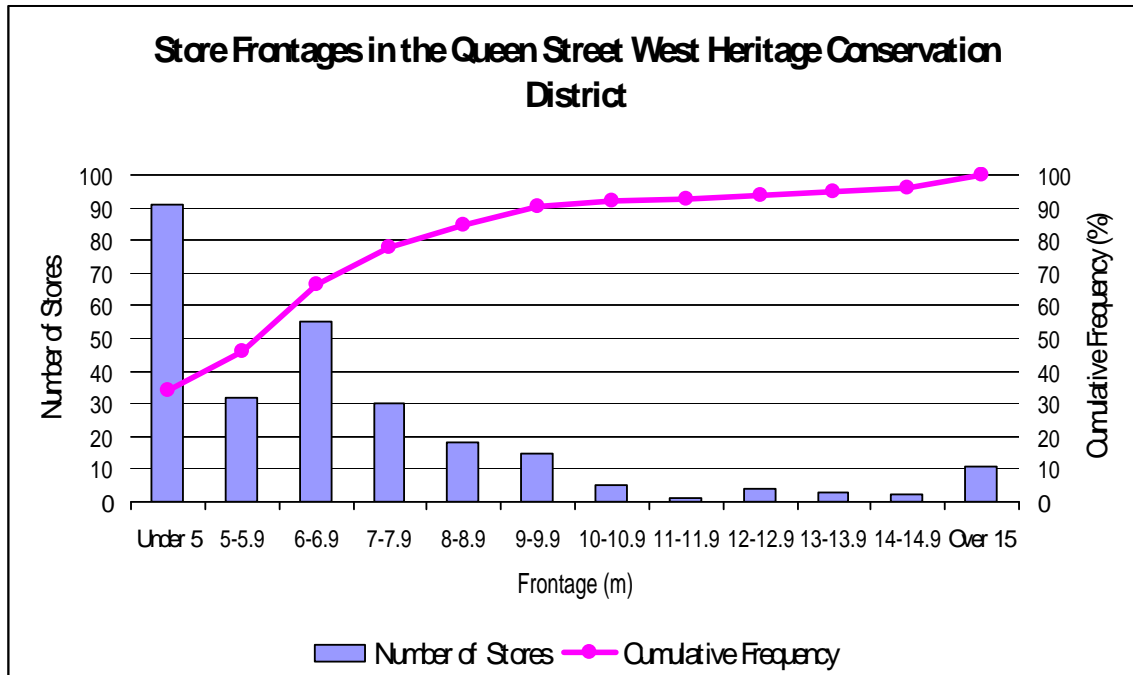
Figure 1



Store frontage is also an indicator of store size. As the HCD study pointed out, most stores are relatively narrow, with 67% under 7 metres (23ft) wide, 90% under 10 metres (33ft) wide and 96% under 15 metres (49ft) wide (see Figure 2). The HCD Plan specify an ideal bay width of 4.5 metres (15ft) which when added to an upstairs entrance would produce a building width of about 5.5 to 6 metres (18 – 20 ft). Forty-six percent (46%) of existing stores are under 6 metres wide. The guidelines within the HCD Plan are more nuanced – they require that original storefront widths be retained in existing stores and that new or renovated buildings recognize the existing / prevailing rhythm’ of storefronts.

Preliminary research to-date has not provided a clear methodology for determining an appropriate retail floorplate size.

Figure 2



CONCLUSION

Based on feedback from the community, business and property owners, a longer time period for completion of the study to allow for greater consultation is recommended. Staff recommend that a working group be established to assist staff with the study and that a final report be targeted for the first quarter of 2011. The final report should also consider implementing the zoning changes requested by City Council when it adopted the Queen Street West Heritage Conservation District Plan in July 2007.

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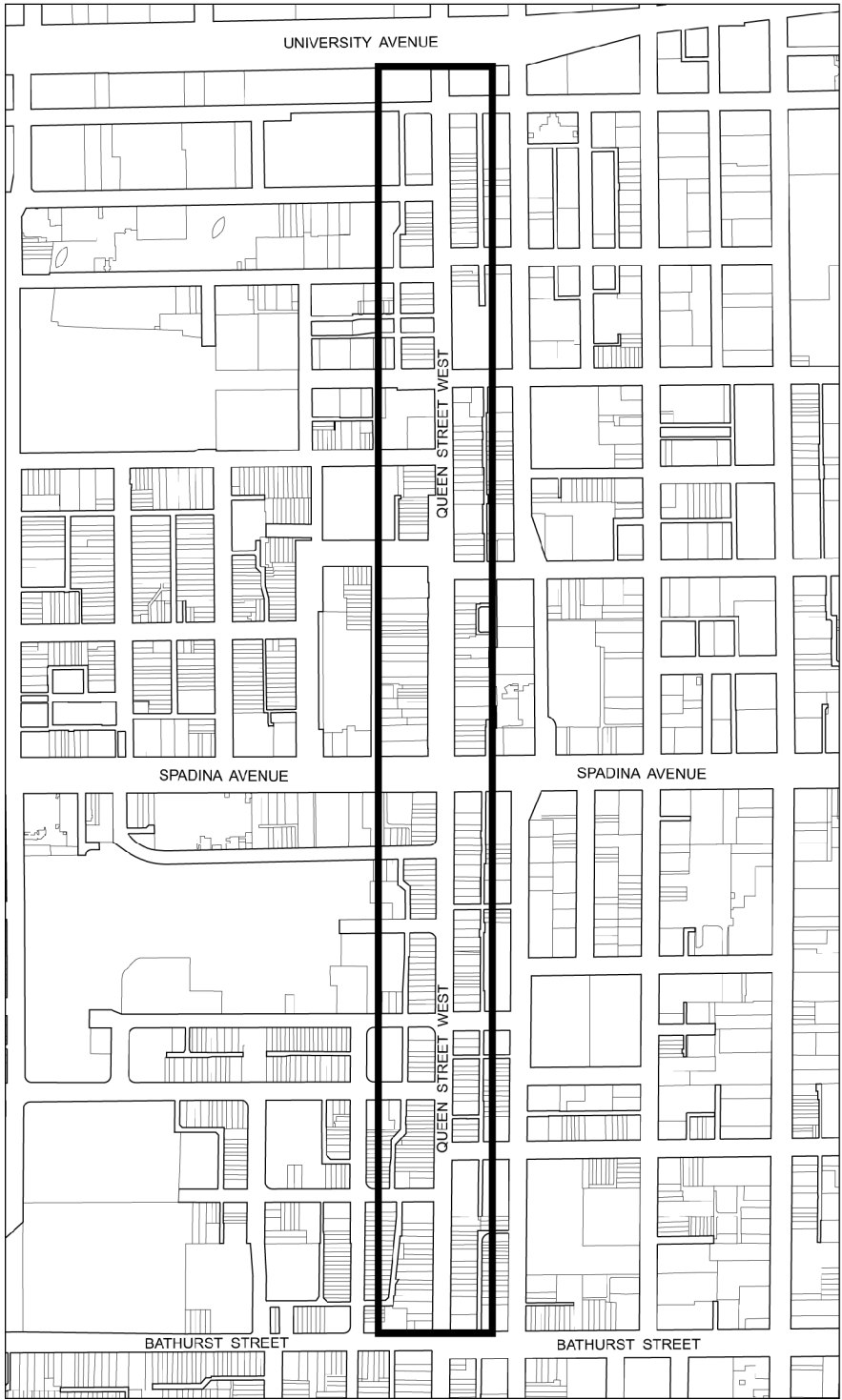
Community Planning, Toronto and East York District

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Study Area

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Queen Street West Retail Floorplate Study

Toronto City Planning
Map of Study Area



Not to Scale
06/18/2010