

Etobicoke Centre Public Space and Streetscape Plan – Consultant's Report

Date:	October 13, 2011
To:	Etobicoke York Community Council
From:	Director, Community Planning, Etobicoke York District
Wards:	Ward 5 – Etobicoke-Lakeshore
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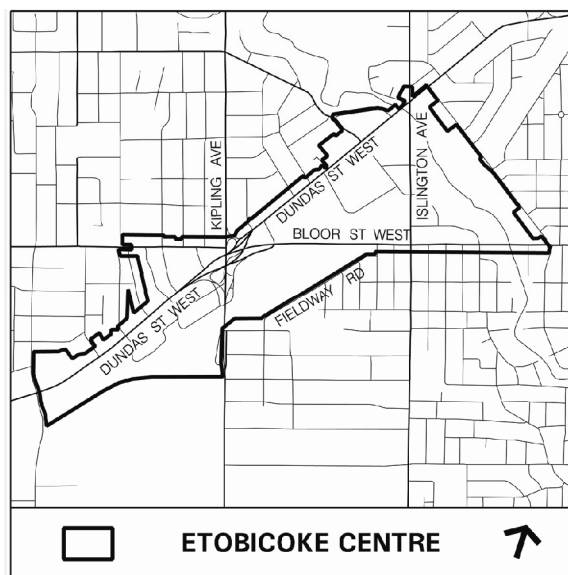
SUMMARY

This report presents the conclusions and recommendations of the Etobicoke Centre Public Space and Streetscape Plan. City Planning commissioned this study in 2011 as part of a joint Request for Proposal for the Etobicoke Centre and Scarborough Centre. The firm of Urban Strategies was retained to undertake the Etobicoke Centre Plan. The consultant's work program included a series of walking tours, site visits, stakeholder interviews and an open house to get feedback on draft findings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that City Council:

1. endorse the vision put forward in "The Etobicoke Centre Public Space and Streetscape Plan" (September 2011) and support, in principle, the projects and initiatives identified in this plan to incrementally improve the quality and character of public space in the Etobicoke Centre.
2. direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, along with other relevant City



officials, to pursue the implementation of the incremental improvements identified in "The Etobicoke Centre Public Space and Streetscape Plan" at every opportunity, including those presented through the development approval process and the City's capital works program.

Financial Impact

The recommendations in this report have no financial impact.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of October 13, 2009, Etobicoke York Community Council considered a final report on a rezoning application to permit the proposed Toronto West Provincial Courthouse on a portion of the City-owned Westwood Theatre Lands. As part of its approval of the application, Community Council directed that a report be prepared on a Streetscape Plan for the Etobicoke Centre.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/ey/minutes/2009-10-13-ey30-mn.htm>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

City Council approved the Etobicoke Centre Secondary Plan in November 2002. One of the objectives of the Plan is to promote "architecture, public art and common physical elements (that) will visually unify Etobicoke Centre and develop a district character for the area". A consistent treatment of streetscape elements will help to foster "a greater sense of community identity...that will allow the area to be known as a well-defined and prominent place within the western part of Toronto". The Secondary Plan suggests that this kind of place-making could assist in promoting reinvestment in the area.

Urban Design Guidelines were also approved for the Etobicoke Centre. These Guidelines call for distinctive sidewalk treatments, streetlights and related streetscape components but do not provide actual designs and details which can be implemented when redevelopment occurs.

Since the Etobicoke Centre Secondary Plan and implementing zoning were approved in 2002, over 3,600 residential units and 5,650 square metres of non-residential development have been proposed, approved or constructed. A significant amount of development has occurred and is underway, however improvements to the streetscape and public space are outstanding. The Public Space and Streetscape Plan provides direction on strategies and projects to improve the streetscape and public space in Etobicoke Centre consistent with the objectives of the Official Plan.

COMMENTS

The consulting firm of Urban Strategies, with MBTW and GHD, were selected to undertake the Etobicoke Centre Public Space and Streetscape Plan. The study was undertaken in two phases. Phase One included background research and analysis of the

study area, walking tours and site visits with City staff, and a number of interviews with local stakeholders. Phase Two was the preparation of a recommended Plan and included an Open House on June 1, 2011 to present draft study findings.

The purpose of the Plan is to recommend a coherent vision for Etobicoke Centre and identify strategies and projects to improve its streetscape and open spaces. Key objectives of the Plan are to:

- Unify the diverse conditions and characteristics of the Centre;
- Encourage a pedestrian friendly environment;
- Improve sidewalk details and lighting conditions; and,
- Identify specific improvements that can be undertaken incrementally.

The Plan is based on broad themes of mobility, identity, liveability and sustainability. From these themes, general strategies were developed followed by detailed projects for implementation. The general strategies are summarized below, followed by an overview of the six character areas identified as collectively forming Etobicoke Centre, and identification of some of the projects identified for each of the areas. The consultant's final report is available on the City Planning web page at:

<http://www.toronto.ca/planning/urbdesign/etobicokeplan.htm>

Strategies

General strategies are identified which apply to the entire Centre and are intended to unify the diverse conditions and characteristics of the Centre. These general strategies are supported by detailed and specific projects that support and achieve the goal of a improved and distinctive public space. The seven general strategies which are summarized below are supported by detailed projects in the Plan.

1. Grow the Urban Forest

This is the leading general strategy recommended in the Plan. Today, the Centre has few trees and poor tree diversity. The introduction of street trees, including a double row of trees at strategic locations, will create a green canopy for the centre and a more desirable and dynamic street condition.

2. Improve Pedestrian Environment and Street Linkages

The existing pedestrian environment in the Centre is poor as a result of the historic focus of the major streets on vehicle movement. As development continues in the area, the pedestrian environment needs to be improved to be easier, safer and more comfortable. The provision of new streets, removal of turning lanes when and where possible, and the introduction of informal pathways through green spaces all present real opportunities to improve and better connect the pedestrian environment.

3. Balance the Transportation Network

As development continues in the Centre, new streets will be established that will improve connectivity and movement through the centre for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. As this occurs opportunities to improve safety for pedestrians and connect both sides of Dundas Street West is encouraged.

4. Create a Sense of Entry

The sense of entry to the Centre needs to be improved, and can be marked by public art, distinctive landscape treatments, or smaller gestures such as paving treatments. These initiatives will enhance the sense of arrival to the Centre.

5. Encourage Public Art

Public art presents an opportunity for the stories of the Centre to be told through sculptures, murals and other forms of art installations that contribute to and define the Centre's identity. Potential locations for public art installations are identified and include major entry points to the Centre and major destinations such as the Kipling Mobility Hub, which is a Metrolinx initiative.

6. Build the Bicycle Network and Integrate Cycling Facilities

The Centre does not have identified bicycle routes or paths. The Plan recommends the creation of a continuous boulevard bike lane along Dundas Street West, south of Bloor Street West as an important measure to promote bike commuting to transit and provide a safe transportation alternative in an area of growth.

7. Develop and Enhance Public Spaces

The Plan recommends that gathering places are needed in the Centre, in the form of plazas at the Islington and Kipling stations/mobility areas and in the Westwood/Civic Centre character area to support pedestrian volumes and movements in and around these important public spaces.

Specific projects are recommended that support the general strategies. These include a tree planting location map and planting bed options, recommended boulevard treatments for districts within the Centre, and lighting, streetscape furnishing and utilities strategies.

Character Areas and Projects

Although intended to unify the Centre, through the study it was determined that Etobicoke Centre was really comprised of six character areas (see Attachment 1: Etobicoke Centre Character Areas). A total of 50 potential projects to improve the public space and streetscape were identified, organized by character areas. Each of the

identified projects supports the general strategies and will contribute to the achievement of the key objectives of the Plan. Following are the six character areas and representative projects identified in the Plan:

1. Dundas West (Shaver Avenue/Shorncliffe Road to Kipling)

- Create a new public road system to create a fine grain of blocks
- Create an entryway feature with a combination of plaza, lighting, public art
- Create connections linking Cloverdale Park to Dundas Street West and Shaver Avenue

2. Kipling Mobility Hub

- Maintain and extend the hydro corridor as a greenway with a dedicated bicycle path
- Widen sidewalk and special paving areas within the Kipling Mobility Hub area
- Improve pedestrian crossings and the connection with the Kipling overpass

3. Westwood/Civic District

- Create a pedestrian connection and improve the connection with the Kipling overpass
- Develop a 'Six Points Park'
- Encourage a multi-use trail parallel to the rail corridor

4. Mabelle/Cordova

- Improve the relationship between front lawns/courtyards and the street
- Support Mabelle Park as a cultural destination and facilitate the addition of lighting and traffic calming measures in and adjacent to the park
- Improve access to Islington Avenue and Islington subway station

5. Islington Village

- Mark entryway to the Village with special public art or lighting
- Where possible, reclaim portions of the centre turn lane and widen the sidewalk
- Select areas for public art and special paving features

6. Bloor/Islington

- Improve connections between Kenway Park, Fieldway Road and Bloor Street
- Improve the Islington station streetscape by adding a public plaza, widening the sidewalk and incorporating a double row of trees
- Introduce new streets as part of the future redevelopment of the Islington station site

Implementation

The Public Space and Streetscape Plan clearly defines a vision for the area and identifies projects to incrementally improve the quality and character of public space in Etobicoke Centre.

It is expected that improvements will be undertaken primarily in association with private development in the Centre, but also as part of regular sidewalk and roadway work undertaken by other Divisions and local Business Improvement Areas. For example, implementation of work recommended by the Six Points Environmental Assessment can incorporate recommendations in the Plan. Section 37 community benefits present a possible funding contribution source to implement the strategy and specific projects within character areas. The Plan should be used to inform Section 37 discussions with applicants and should also be referenced and considered in evaluating the timing and scope of work for projects to be implemented through the capital budget.

Conclusions

The completion of the Public Space and Streetscape Plan for Etobicoke Centre is an important step in achieving improvements in the Etobicoke Centre consistent with the goals and objectives of the Etobicoke Centre Secondary Plan and the Official Plan.

The Plan will function as a detailed reference guide and direction document for streetscape and open space improvements in Etobicoke Centre and should be used to inform and prioritize improvements undertaken by private developers and City Divisions.

CONTACT

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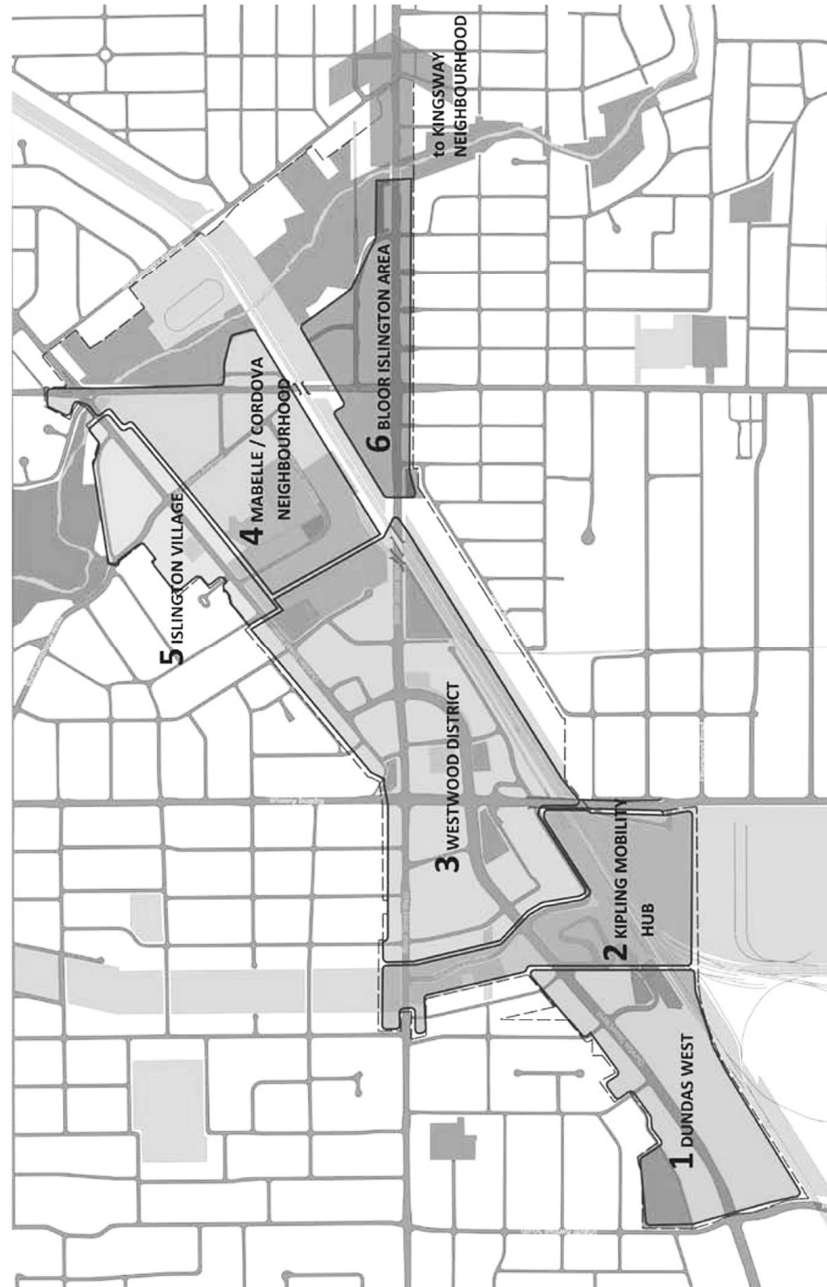
SIGNATURE

Thomas C. Keefe
Director, Community Planning
Etobicoke York District

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Etobicoke Centre Character Areas

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Etobicoke Centre Character Areas