

Local Area Study – Lands along the CN rail tracks from Queen Street West to Dupont Street – Ward 18 - Final Report

Date:	November 4, 2013
To:	Toronto and East York Community Council
From:	Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District
Wards:	Ward 18 - Davenport
Reference Number:	11 170983 SPS 00 TM

SUMMARY

In March 2011, Toronto and East York Community Council requested City Planning to conduct a review of lands abutting the CN railway, which form the western boundary of Ward 18. The Study did not look at land use as this was being considered through the Municipal Comprehensive Review, but focused on opportunities to improve this area and better connect it to the surrounding neighbourhood. The result will help the City to proactively respond to any development proposals in the area and plan for the long-term investment and revitalization of these lands. The Study responds to a unique combination of factors including relatively large industrial sites lacking local infrastructure immediately bounded by stable neighbourhoods. In addition, the area is under increasing development pressures.

City staff, the Ward Councillor and members of the community have worked together to develop a vision for new development and direct infrastructure investment within the Study Area. In addition, an inter-divisional staff team worked on the project and were involved in developing the recommendations. The Study outlines short-term and long-term recommendations pertaining to parks, the transportation network (including new roads, bikeways, parking and walkways), heritage



buildings, urban design and community services and facilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. City Council adopt the Study, entitled "Besides the Tracks: Knitting the Rail Corridor Back to the Community", attached at Attachment 1 to the report (November 4, 2013), from the Director, Community Planning Toronto and East York District.
2. City Council direct City Staff to use this framework to review development applications as well as infrastructure investment in the long-term for the lands within the Study Area.
3. City Council request the Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District, in consultation with appropriate City Divisions to report back in the first quarter of 2014 on an implementation strategy, including quick hits to move forward with elements of the "Besides the Tracks" Study.

Financial Impact

The recommendations in this report have no financial impact.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on March 22, 2011 Toronto and East York Community Council (Agenda Item No. TE5.53) requested City Planning to carry out a study for the lands abutting the CN railway that forms the western boundary of Ward 18, which would include a review of parkland, the transportation network (new road, bikeways and walkways), heritage buildings, urban design and community services and facilities.

The motion can be found through the following website link:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.TE5.53>

A webpage has been created for this Study. It is found at the following website link:

<http://www.toronto.ca/planning/ward18-study.htm>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this Study is to set priorities and develop a framework to help guide future development applications and infrastructure investment within the Study Area.

Community Consultation

The community consultation strategy that was implemented for this Study included a combination of community meetings and community walks. The community meetings were held on June 6, 2011 for the northern portion of the Study Area and on June 13, 2011 for the southern portion. The community walks were held on July 18 and July 19, 2011. The purpose of using a

variety of consultation means and multiple meetings was to ensure interactions with the varied groups of residents, local business owners and developers.

The community meetings featured 'working maps' which highlighted different aspects of the Study Area, such as open spaces, heritage buildings, bike paths, pedestrian routes, community facilities, and road network as well as new developments and relevant planning applications. The attendees were asked to indicate their concerns and desires for the Study Area using these 'working maps' which were placed around the room in an open house format. Appropriate staff were at each map to answer questions and comments were placed on the maps using post-its and coloured markers. All public comments and notes were compiled and reviewed by Staff to formulate priorities that the Study should focus on. The following is a summary of suggestions that came out of the community consultations:

- **Parks:** Increase the landscaping and furnishings such as benches, garbage receptacles etc. and improve the general maintenance of existing facilities and parks.
- **Transportation:** A number of new roads and crosswalks were suggested, as well public transit shelters and streetcar stops needing improvement were indicated. The West Toronto Railpath Extension Study Environmental Assessment will determine the preferred route to extend the recreational path and is schedule to be completed in Spring 2014.
- **Heritage:** The heritage buildings existing in the Study Area, such as the Toronto Hydro-Electric System Substation, Gladstone Hotel, should be preserved and other buildings that have heritage features should be considered for listing or designation.
- **Urban Design:** New development should have underground parking, green roofs, commercial uses at grade where appropriate, and should incorporate the "Front Porch character" of the Study Area.

The above public comments were reviewed by an inter-divisional committee for the Study, which included Staff from Parks, Transportation Planning, Strategic Initiatives and Policy Planning, Urban Design and Heritage. The comments were then analyzed and distilled to form recommendations. An additional public meeting was held on October 19, 2011 in order to report back to the community on the final recommendations. Final reporting on the "Besides the Tracks" Study was timed to allow City Planning Staff to ensure that these recommendations are informed by the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR), which is being reported to Planning and Growth Management Committee on November 21, 2013.

Final Recommendations

The following recommendations that are being put forward for the Study Area:

Parks Forestry and Recreation Recommendations

Short-term Recommendations:

- Improve the general condition and maintenance of all facilities.

- Build and maintain convenient amenities such as washrooms and waste receptacles at all parks.
- Increase tree coverage and shaded areas for Dovercourt Park.
- Increase seating at Perth Parkette.
- Maintain sport facilities such as tennis courts at West Toronto Collegiate and basketball court at MacGregor Park.
- Change the hours the McCormick Park wading pool is available to the public.
- Establish a green network by planting more street trees and landscaped areas to extend the natural heritage system.
- Continue to encourage the provision of green roofs in new developments in order to increase open space amenities.

Long-term Recommendations:

- Increase access to large outdoor facilities that serve the community.
- Further investigate the prospect of a land swap in order to relocate the Dundas– St. Claren's Parkette to the southwest corner of the Dundas Street and St. Claren's Avenue intersection.

Transportation and Public Realm Recommendations

Short-term Recommendations:

- Introduce stop signs and painted zebra stripes at select intersections to improve safety measures and visibility, such as the Florence Street and Brock Avenue.
- Upgrade and/or replace transit shelters that are in a state of disrepair.
- Maintain informal pedestrian pathways such as the trail behind West Toronto Collegiate and ensure adequate lighting is provided.
- Ensure parking permissions are consistent on all streets through signage and enforcement.
- Install post and ring locks for bicycles especially along Dupont Street and Gladstone Avenue.
- Encourage new development to incorporate underground parking into the design of the buildings.

Long-term Recommendations:

- Redevelopment of large blocks of lands in the Study Area should include the provision of new public roads.
- Realign some streets to help foster a more pedestrian friendly and safer environment, such as the Bloor, Symington and Sterling intersection.
- Install street lights and improve access to pedestrian crossing areas and sidewalks, for example at the Bloor Symington and Sterling intersection.
- Revitalize Lansdowne subway station.
- Upgrade sidewalks and extend/alter the widths of the pavements in the Study Area that are lacking.
- Investigate the introduction of sharrows on select streets with narrow widths in the Study Area.
- Extend the bike network in the Study Area and include informal bike pathways.
- Create more connections over the rail corridors.

Heritage Recommendations

Short-term Recommendations:

- Ensure that new developments protect and conserve heritage resources.
- List or designate all properties with heritage or historical value.

Urban Design Recommendations

Short-term Recommendations

- Implement policies and guidelines that encourage landscaping.
- Encourage commercial uses at grade on main streets that are in keeping with the uses and character of the area.
- Recognize the prevailing pattern of front porches as an established feature in the Study Area and retain or replicate wherever possible.
- Promote and secure funds for public art through new development.

Conclusions

The Study for lands along the CN rail tracks from Queen Street West to Dupont Street in Ward 18 presents a number of opportunities for investment, some of which may be implemented in the short-term and others that can be achieved in the long-term. Future redevelopment in the Study Area should occur in a way that respects the existing characteristics, such that the "Front Porch" character, while accommodating new growth.

The Study of the lands along the rail corridor at the westerly limit of Ward 18 has identified a number of short and long-term opportunities for the area. The framework outlined in the attached "Besides the Tracks: Knitting the Rail Corridor back to the Community" Study provides a blueprint against which new development applications and planning for infrastructure can be proactively assessed and begin to knit these areas into the surrounding community.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: "Besides the Tracks: Knitting the Rail Corridor back to the Community"

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