

Question & Answer Session following the presentation at the September 18th Open House for the Avenue Road (between Lawrence Avenue & Wilson Avenue) Avenue Study

Answers provided by Anne McIlroy, Principal (Brook McIlroy/Pace Architects), Paul Bain, Project Manager (City of Toronto), Neil Cresswell, Planning Manager for North District (City of Toronto) and Leo DeSorcy Program Manager Urban Design for North District (City of Toronto)

Q1: Who decided which sites would be “larger exception sites” and how many there would be?

A1: The larger exception sites were determined by looking at the property data maps and identifying which sites were 1) deeper (from Avenue Road to the rear property line) and wider than the typical lots, 2) are owned by (at most) 1, 2 or 3 owners and 3) are likely to consolidate. There are no applications with the City on any of these sites at the moment.

Q2: Why haven’t we talked about density yet?

A2: The City & Consultants are taking a “form based” approach, since applying density is somewhat abstract. The first question to ask is “what do we want the area & buildings to look like?” Many of the current and previous Avenues Studies haven’t dealt with densities at all.

Q3: What about traffic counts? Will traffic be considered comprehensively?

A3: We will not be doing a full traffic study as part of this process; it just isn’t in the budget. The traffic counts show the numbers have been stable over the last 20 years, but traffic on the side streets is up. We can mitigate traffic infiltration with turn restrictions and design of curbs. Nick Poulos is on the consultant team and will make recommendations based on potential densities.

Q4: Thank-you to the City, consultants & volunteers. Brookdale at Bathurst Street is an example of the possibility to overdevelop. There were houses on this ravine site and now that they have been torn down, the site will be consolidated. Are there going to be limits on encroachment into the neighbourhood?

A4: The new City Official Plan has given stable residential neighbourhoods a “Neighbourhood” designation. Within this designation, no encroachment of commercial uses into these areas will be permitted.

Q5: Want to highly commend this effort by the City. It is obvious that development is going to happen, the question is "what do we want it to look like?" Have these principles been applied elsewhere? Surely, the RioCan utilized similar principles, how can the community be assured this won't happen again?

A5: The City started doing Avenues Studies in 2000. The scale of developments throughout these areas is varied, there is no "one size fits all" solution for the Avenues. For example, Bloor & Lansdowne is almost built out, and some buildings are 40m+ in height. Development is likely to be gradual. In the case of Avenue Road, the LAC has made some very good, realistic and feasible recommendations. Recommendations about trees, green spaces, and art - these are all things that will contribute greatly to the streetscape.

Q6: The output is very thoughtful, but there is concern that the output will be compromised by the time it is implemented.

A6: City Planning staff has not yet had any issues with Council approving studies. It really is a function of money required for these recommendations and so far, the recommendations developed by the City, LAC and consultants are cheap, but effective.

Q7: Happy to hear that developers cannot buy the residential sites in the rear of properties. Without this plan, the community has no "fight", but what is to stop a developer from proposing 9+ storeys (even if the Study recommends shorted buildings)?

A7: The City cannot prevent developers from applying for increased heights. But if we have council, the community and staff in support of this document, it will build a better case at the Ontario Municipal Board to stay within the study's recommendations.

Q8: With regards to traffic infiltration on the side streets, the turning restrictions don't work, the signs are consistently ignored.

Q9: Police don't or won't monitor compliance with the turning restrictions. Parking is also infiltrating on the side streets. There should be a full scale traffic study done.

Q10: Haddington Avenue is one of the few streets that connects Avenue Road to Bathurst Street with no traffic calming. Traffic studies within the neighbourhoods need to be conducted.

A10: Unfortunately, this process will not be able to study the traffic within the neighbourhoods. The traffic and transportation consultant on this project will look at the impacts of the larger sites GFA.

Q11: Request made that the LAC members stand up and introduce themselves.

Q12: Traffic issues are critical to the evolution of an area. The design of Oriole Parkway has helped to mitigate through traffic in that neighbourhood. The physical design of streets, curbs and bump-outs are as important and useful as turning restrictions.

Q13: Parking on the side streets is becoming more difficult. Has been paying attention to taller buildings, for example, in the Yonge & Sheppard/Finch area. Does not feel comfortable with 6-storeys.

A13: North York Centre (Yonge & Sheppard/Finch area) has the highest densities/buildings in the City outside of the financial centre. There are 100m height limits and no angular planes. There are some examples of buildings that apply the principles discussed in other Avenue Study areas, for example, Bloor West Village and Royal York at Bloor Street.

Q14: It is impossible to cycle in this area, along Avenue Road in particular. Proposes that there be a "war chest" to fight the political process, because that is the only way to get the plans implemented.

Q15: Thinks that nine/ten sites between Lawrence Avenue and Wilson Avenue is too many and there should be a height limit of 4-storeys. Bus service in the area is limited and new residents will be driving. We need to limit the number of larger sites.

A15: The number of larger sites is based on property ownership. These are sites that are already larger than the average commercial storefront on Avenue Road. The City and consultants are considering these sites, so that the future of these sites can be anticipated and so that we can make recommendations where future development pressures might be. Again, no developer has approached the City about any of these sites.

Q16: This has been a successful and open process and would like to thank Paul Bain and Anne McIlroy for their efforts. Not going to advocate the larger sites with the use of the planning principles. Want to consider how we can better mesh a village feeling with new developments.

Q17: Chose to live near Avenue Road because it is a safe neighbourhood. Is concerned that more people will make it unsafe because of traffic and having people from outside the community coming to Avenue Road.