

Question & Answer Session following the presentation at the November 6th 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), Shawna Bowen, Planner/Urban Designer (Brook McIlroy/Pace Architects) and Councilor Stintz.

Q1: There are considerations that have not been part of this process. First, an area-wide traffic study needs to be done and is critical to understanding how new development would impact traffic throughout the neighbourhoods. The development of the nine sites will definitely have an impact on traffic. A traffic study must predate any development on Avenue Road.

Other considerations that have not been resolved, is the overall development capacity of Avenue Road. We do not know how much development the avenue can accept and therefore it is hard to understand what the impact of 539 units would be on the street and the community.

The Toronto School Board information regarding the capacity of area schools does not correspond with the information that the school trustee has provided.

It has been stated that 5-storeys buildings are an unlikely model to be built on Avenue, which seems to indicate that it is more likely that mostly the larger 7-storey buildings would be built among the existing 2-storey buildings which is a drastic difference in scale.

Just because this is the last Open House, the community can still provide input to the ratepayer representatives.

A1: A comprehensive planning process is important and the kind of growth that is anticipated is incremental, and will likely occur over the next 5, 10, 20 years. It is highly unlikely that the larger sites will not develop all at once.

Q2: Now that the RioCan will be developed, is the new benchmark 5 – 7 storeys? We acknowledge that the area is changing, but 5 – 7 storeys is too high. It is important for more residents to keep up with the process.

Q3: Why is all the density in concentrated in the centre of the study area? Why are the sites at the corner of the major intersections (Wilson/Lawrence) not included in the larger sites?

The study appears to include a lot of assumptions - will the public be informed as to what all the assumptions are?

A3. Many of the assumptions are used frequently by the City (i.e. 1.8 people per dwelling unit, 100 sq.m. per condominium unit) and will be included in the consultant's report. Most assumptions used for our calculations are very conservative. For example, this is a high-end area and therefore condominium units would likely be larger than average, which would result in fewer residents.

Density is somewhat of an abstract concept because it doesn't regulate what buildings will look like. A 2-storey building could have the same density as a 20-storey building depending on the size of the lot. This study started by looking at the form and the size of the lot first – determining what buildings should look like and then determining an appropriate density number. The massing envelopes in the study are simply envelopes within which buildings can be built; real buildings would not be constructed to look like the envelopes presented here.

Q4. The study sections through the site do not reflect changes in elevation. On the east side of Avenue, the grade drops down from the level at Avenue Road. This grade difference will make higher buildings feeling even higher from adjacent residential.

A4. The grade change between the first few houses on the side streets and Avenue Road does not appear to be that dramatic. This condition exists on the west side where the grade rises, lessening the impact of building height.

Q5. The dimensions of the TD Bank site indicate an encroachment into the adjacent residential property.

A5. This will be looked into. **UPDATE:** *The dimension on the November 6th presentation have been corrected to reflect the accurate lot depth as per the property data. This site is meant to reflect property of the TD Bank only.*

Q6. The school trustees indicated that all of the schools are full and will likely be full for the foreseeable future. Specific development applications should provide documentation on all of the impacts of the development.

There is a traffic study being done on Rosewell Avenue, but is being done after the condominiums have already been built. Police statistics indicate that the number of accidents on the side streets has increased significantly.

A6. There is a disconnect between the information from the School Board and the principals and trustees regarding school capacity. We will have to confirm the information from the school principals.

UPDATE: *The Toronto District School Board considers a school to be 'full' when it hits 80% of capacity. There is capacity for the 540 potential units on the nine larger sites.*

Q7. When studies are prepared, there will always be assumptions. The massing envelopes project the “worst case” scenarios and the maximum number of units. The LAC has looked at all of the issues that have been discussed tonight. While there has not been any consensus among the group, the impacts of development, such as height, traffic, etc. have all been discussed at length. There is no one on the committee that wants to see the area degrade, and all the members are working hard to develop a study that benefits the area.

Q8. Who are the members of the LAC and who appointed them? Who are the developers that the team is working for?

A8. There was an open sign up sheet for the LAC at the first public meeting and there were twenty-five people who were interested. This was more members than the City anticipated, but everyone was enthusiastic so all twenty-five people were appointed to the LAC. There are no developers involved in this process; the consultants are working for the City to produce the Avenue Study.

Q9. What is the increase in property tax that is being recommended by this study?

A9. This process is not considering property taxes.

Q10. Avenue Road and Dufferin Street are two of the most dangerous roads in the city. Aggressive drivers dominate Avenue Road; there are many drivers going over 80km and making illegal left turns. Avenue Road is not a safe place to drive, walk or cycle.

This study is putting form before function by looking at taller buildings before actually finding out if the area can accommodate more people. The Councillor should take remedial action before moving ahead with any developments. (comments from Mike Colle, Area MPP)

Q11. There is some good information in the presentation, but there is still an issue with the height. Why is the City undertaking this study if they are not being lobbied by developers to increase permitted heights? No one in the community wants 5, 6, or 7 storeys. Where is the pressure coming from and why are we recommending 6 and 7 storeys?

A11. We need to reflect on why we are here - at the beginning of this process the community was still very upset about the negative process that they went through on the RioCan project. The community was asked if they wanted to go forward with the Avenue Study process so that there could be a more positive and transparent process and outcome that the whole community could understand. The RioCan divided the community because no one new the rules. The zoning allowed for 1 storey, and the OP allowed for 4 storeys.

The Toronto Official Plan designates this part of Avenue Road as a growth area. There are other higher level policy documents like the Places to Grow Act that identify intensification as a priority.

The choice the community needs to make is between fighting every development that comes forward, or to put in place zoning that is acceptable and that is understood by the community. The community is not seeing an influx of development, and to-date, the RioCan is the only taller development, and the others, such as the LCBO (former Palma Brava site) and Shopper's Drug Mart are only 1 and 2 storeys. We do not want a divided community, divided council and planning department. Hopefully, the outcome is an Avenue Study that outlines clear rules for developers. (Response from Councillor Stintz)

Q12. It is great that green roofs are being encouraged for new developments, but what is the City doing about environmental sustainability? The onus seems to be on the property owners and not the City.

A12. The City does need to work on its green initiatives.

Q13. There is a difference between accepting that the city is growing and that there will be taller buildings on Avenue Road and actually wanting to see taller buildings on Avenue Road.

Q14. This community was desirable for many residents because there is easy access to the 401, and Avenue Road as a major vehicular thoroughfare. There are many great initiatives that have taken place on the street, such as the widened sidewalks and the parking bump-outs. If the consultants had said 5 storeys was the maximum building height, the community would have said it is too high. The lack of attendance at this meeting also indicates that many people accept the realities of living in this city and accept that Avenue Road will change and that there will be taller buildings along Avenue Road. It is a good thing that Councilor Stintz is trying to bring a process to an adversarial situation.

Q15. How were people informed of this meeting? Some just saw flyers on hydro poles along Avenue Road.

A15. Nine thousand meeting notices were delivered door to door and hundreds more were mailed out.

Q16. Is the "curb appeal" material just a smoke screen for increasing density and height? Is the community being asked to trade-off increased heights and densities for the parks and design features?

A16. We have not discussed the design guidelines or parks at great length in this presentation because it has been discussed in great detail at previous meetings. There is no attempt to "trade" design guidelines for density or height, the design guidelines are integral to the Study.

Q17. The crossing guard at Fairlawn Avenue estimates that there are children crossing 900 times per day (300 in the morning, 300 at noon and 300 after school) at this one location. The impact of more traffic on Avenue Road poses a danger to children crossing the street.

Q18. Vehicle emissions cause many health problems. The priority should be on providing fewer spaces for cars and more places for people. Although, the problem with providing places for people along the street, such as parkettes and patios, is that the people using these spaces will be inhaling the fumes of all the cars using Avenue Road.

Q19. Would like to thank the LAC, the consultants and the City for all the hard work.