

Local Advisory Committee (LAC) Meeting #3

Date & Time: November 5, 2008 @ 6:30 pm
Location: Loyola Arrupe Centre (1709 Bloor Street West)
Attendance: Eight members of the Local Advisory Committee and general public
Councillor Gord Perks, Shana Almeda
City Staff: Corwin Cambray, Lynda Macdonald, Kevin Edwards
Consultant Team: Shawna Ginsberg Bowen & Shima Mirkarimi, Brook McIlroy Planning & Urban Design/Pace Architects

The meeting began at 6:30 at the Loyola Arrupe (1709 Bloor Street West). The group of about 25 people met in the main floor dining area. Councillor Perks began the meeting with an introduction to the study. There were three opportunities for discussion, with questions and points of clarification throughout. The following are questions and comments that came up during the presentation. Answers are indicated in italics and represent answers from the consultants, City Staff as well as LAC members.

1. Bloor Street West R.O.W. Long Term Options - Discussion

- Are the bicycle lanes marked?
 - *Yes – in some options bicycle lanes are separated with a curb and in some they are denoted with a painted stripe. One option shows “sharrow lanes”*
- Is there room for passing? Or can two cyclists ride side by side?
 - *Yes - the wider 2.5m separated lanes have room for cyclists to pass in the same direction, but not for riding side-by-side.*
- Has there been discussion with forestry to see how well the trees will grow in the narrow medians? The bike lane median is too small. There should be something under the bike path to allow for trees to survive.
 - *Forestry has not seen the street sections, only Planning & Transportation staff has reviewed them. Soil volume will affect the viability of trees growing successfully in an urban environment.*
- Have you considered two way bicycle traffic on one side of the road? Paris and Montreal have that.
 - *That would be difficult because the study area is not a very real long stretch of road, and this would need to tie into Bloor Street to the east and west.*
- Sharrows are not safe, and are not implemented unless there is a pre-existing narrow lane. How big are the travel lanes in the diagrams?
 - *They are about 3.3 – 3.6m.*
- Folks are worried about people driving fast through the area. The lanes should be narrowed to 3.0-3.3m, to reduce traffic speed. This is what’s happening in other parts of the city.
- Why not consider starting by designating the travel + parking lanes 3.0-3.3m and 2.0m for the bicycle lane and everything that is left should be given to the sidewalk. That way we would have generous sidewalks.
- Take pieces of the sidewalk and make it a tree pit with floating pavers.
- What’s being planned along the rest of Bloor Street? Which proposals fit better here?
 - *There are no plans for the adjacent stretches of Bloor Street West, so this would be completely new.*

- In each of these options we'd like to know how wide the sidewalks are. Narrow sidewalks vs. wide sidewalks. What are the standards in the City? How wide are sidewalks in Roncesvalles vs. those in downtown vs. those on Bloor Street?
 - *Sidewalks have to be a minimum of 2.1m for accessibility.*
- Sidewalks need to be generous. Keep it clean and simple. Cars shouldn't be rushing to go any where. Keep travel lanes narrow.
- A median has no purpose. Shrink everything and widen sidewalks as wide as possible.
- The north side of Bloor Street is more attractive. There is a lot of sunshine on that side. The south side is better for cyclist as they prefer shade. The north side is better for pedestrians as they prefer sun.
 - *The options represent the reallocation of the lanes and asphalt width. We can revise all the options here.*
- Does the bicycle network connect with anything?
 - *The City is currently conducting a study of bike lanes from Kennedy to Kipling along Bloor Street, but at the moment, a bike lane along this stretch would not connect to any other bike lanes. The lane should connect to the West Toronto Rail Path.*
- The BIA has a number of points to raise with respect to the R.O.W.:
 - Traffic moves extremely fast.
 - Street is much wider west from Dundas Street West.
 - Pedestrian crossing is dangerous. North-south streets do not align making harder for people to cross.
 - The BIA's previous solutions included putting in a crosswalk at Indian Road that is now a traffic light.
 - The BIA tried to put in a median but it was cost prohibitive. Medians will slow down traffic because it will make the street same width as the rest of Bloor Street West. A green median would also be an appropriate entrance into High Park. Along the Kingsway the medians make the area look richer and more pleasing to the eye. Medians can also take away from the size/heights of buildings being built. Pedestrians are less likely to cross at non designated crossing points because the median creates a barrier.
 - We could have parking on both sides but not during rush hour which is only from 4 pm to 6 pm. But that is not as important as having a narrower street.
- Sidewalks along the whole stretch are fairly good size, but along Dundas Street West and at the corners they are too narrow. The rest are wider than Bloor Street West village.
 - *Ideally the sidewalks could be as wide as 4.0 – 4.5 m which is consistent with recommendations in other Avenue Studies. College Street west of Bathurst is about that wide.*
- The bump-out option won't work during winter time as the snow doesn't get cleared. The bump outs cause parked cars to stick out all over the road during the winter and it narrows the bike or travelling lane. Examples of this are along the Kingsway or St. George Street.
- If the bike lanes are next to parking they have to be extra wide, otherwise you are in the "door zone". They should at least be 2 metres wide. Currently bicycle lanes next to parked cars are 1.5 metres.
- The travel lanes should be squeezed to make room for wider pedestrian sidewalks and bicycle lanes.
- What are the minimum lane dimensions in the city?

- *A minimum of 3m along main streets in the former City of Toronto.*
- If the traffic lanes need to be widened because of fire trucks, they can use the bike lanes to maneuver. Suggest 3m traffic lane + 2 metre bicycle lane = 5 metres for the fire truck.
- Are there other areas in the city with an asymmetrical street layout (i.e. larger sidewalks on the North side than the South Side)?
 - *There are some plans for this type of street layout, including Fort York neighbourhood.*
- Medians are not very useful, plans for Bloor should take the space and allocate it to a widened sidewalk.

2. Character and Built Form & Emerging Area Framework – Discussion

- How high are low-rise, mid-rise and taller?
 - *Low-rise is 1-3 storeys, mid-rise is 5-8 storeys and anything taller than 8 storeys we are referring to as "taller"*
- The taller buildings diagram was not the consensus during the workshop.
 - *This slide indicates that if larger buildings were to be built in this area, the locations on this plan would have the least impact because they are farther from the residential neighbourhoods and could be suitable for the taller buildings.*
- Why is Bloor Street West and Indian Road identified as a problematic intersection?
 - *We've heard many times from the public that the street should be aligned.*
- Thank you for considering our comments regarding street network. The intersection at the south end of the study area – Roncesvalles and Dundas Street West - pedestrian crossing needs attention.
 - *There doesn't appear to be a safer solution. The transportation engineer feels that the two-stage crossing is the safest solution at the moment.*
- It would be helpful to show more pedestrian connection through the playing field / school property (a foot path) to make that site accessible from Bloor Street.
 - *We have heard that people want a connection through this site out to Bloor Street West, and we will recommend that.*
- A subway entrance on the east side of Dundas Street West is necessary.
 - *The consultants and the City have brought this up with the TTC and this will continue to be part of our recommendations.*
- The diagrams have shown that the Loblaw's site is being taken up by buildings and apartments with corridors. The city has endless sites where these kinds of buildings can be built. The city is short of sites that can be developed with buildings that have direct at-grade entrances, also known as "Front Door Neighbourhoods". They don't have to be low density. If we want opportunities for families with kids in the city (and in this area), we need to provide a variety of housing. These should be accommodated on these large sites wherever possible, possibly on the interior of the Loblaw's site. We shouldn't put highest buildings furthest away from where we all live. We should seize opportunity to building front door neighbourhoods so children have access to grade and not have to negotiate corridors.

- *The Emerging Framework doesn't represent building footprints but they are areas where there would be the least impact on low-rise neighbourhoods. Mid-rise buildings can have access at-grade for individual units.*
- The tallest buildings (on the Loblaw's site) should not be so far from the TTC entrance.
- Twenty storey buildings are too high. Mid-rise buildings should be along main streets.
- The open space north of Bloor Street West should be part of the community focal points.
- If Bishop Morocco is considered a development opportunity the open space is hidden. It only works now because it is a school. But that would be the worst place to put an open space. If the school is redeveloped, the open space should be shifted to a place that would have more meaning in terms of successful public realms.
 - *Bishop Morocco is not part of the opportunity sites.*
- New open spaces on the Loblaw's site should be a large space. From the workshop, the essence was the public space, there are more opportunities for public space than illustrated.
 - *We will further refine the framework and include additional public space.*
- Green space at the high school works with the school there. It is so hidden from Dundas Street that it would not work if it was left as an open space with development to the west of it.
- The space needs to be expanded and integrate passive/active uses or a wading pool. That would encourage lots of users.
- There should be a green border on the east side of Dundas Street West. There can't be much done on the west side because of the houses. Some improvements or green space will encourage people to walk on the east side. Introducing treed boulevards to enhance walking and make it a pedestrian-friendly area.
- How much green space is needed in the centre of the Loblaw's development? There are other places that are higher priorities. We have to get people to feel comfortable walking down towards Roncesvalles.
- Other layers that should be included are family and affordable housing, smaller condos, mixture of housing, and adequate community services.
- North side of streets should match. Unbalanced when high buildings are on the north side, there should be uniformity. There is some argument to have height near the train tracks. But the Loblaw's site should also have lower buildings and be much more open.
- Bloor Street West should be mid-rise. How will you present to the general public? There has been talk of energy overlay grid or geothermal. The green space near Loblaw's is the worst open space, it's under a bridge and no one walks there. It needs improvement.
- The streetscape on Bloor Street West, east of Dundas Street West has to be different than the rest of the street given the underpass. Murals are small improvements. Cars start driving very fast to get under these bridges.
- What is happening at Indian Road and Bloor Street?
 - *The available corners (NW and SW) are the preferred locations for a green element or community gathering space.*

3. Built Form & Urban Design Plan - Discussion

- Could the buildings step-back after the second storey? Buildings built in the last 10-15 years, both have step-backs at the top of the second storey.
 - *The important aspect of step-backs is maintaining the pedestrian scale. A little bit of variation for where the step-back occurs is often not such a bad thing. Two-storeys can feel very low, three or four feels more “urban”. Architectural details can also make reference to the main street height.*
- There are only a few sites that are very deep.
- It’s only at the end that you calculate how many new residential and business that these developments would create. Is there a way that you work from both ends?
 - *The process is iterative. We are starting by looking at the built form and determining an appropriate built form for the area, and then we look at the impacts from a transportation and services aspect. We can go back and revise the built form based on this analysis.*
- Avenue studies are mostly about built form. But because two large potential redevelopment you are planning a large community. They can’t just be attached to an avenue study. Can we figure out how many people we are planning for, what kind of community services, different housing, types and different families? There is a real need for green spaces. The community is generally accommodating of intensification in this area. We want public spaces that are useable. There should be significant attention paid to Dundas Street West south of Bloor.
 - *There are 3 components to an Avenue Study: Built form, public realm, and community services and facilities. Today we know the existing capacity of the services in the neighbourhood.*
- There must be diversity of housing and income levels, ensuring that we maintain the same diversity the area has now.
- This area has low employment, the area north of Bloor Street West might be a good place to have employment.

4. Other comments

- Visual angular plans are just one tool that can be used.
- A street cross-section of Dundas Street West needs to be provided.
- For the public meeting, we should start with the overall framework and then work on specific streets / components.

At the end of the meeting Councilor Perks thank everyone for coming and reminded everyone that the next public meeting would be November 18th 2008.