

Finch-Warden Revitalization Area Study
Notes from Walking Tour Saturday, November 15, 2008

Comments/discussion at Stop #1: standing outside L'Amoreaux Collegiate

Trees, green, setbacks, street lights

- Like to see: grass, trees, setback from street to buildings – calming to walk
- Setback, trees make the community more interesting.
- Wide lawn, sidewalks – feel safe
- For mixed use, commercial at grade, need sidewalk and setback and windows on street side, otherwise the storefronts will die; gave example of development at Kennedy & McNicoll
- Lives in townhouse – likes green in backyard, good transition after move from house
- Councillor: everyone here wants setbacks including himself, wants the openness that is already here
- Mike Mestyan: He'll take the opinions he's hearing and will come back to the community with report that acknowledges their opinions [about setbacks], although there may be other factors that will be included in the report that will impact the recommendations.
- Want park-like setting around buildings with trees and shrubs; want that green spacious, not crowded feeling
- Seniors will enjoy sitting out in that setting
- Trees are good for people
- Concern about proper planting of trees so they'll survive;
- Mike Mestyan described new standards for installation of street trees
- Liked the before & after slides [shown at presentation at working group meeting], with shops at lower level, inviting green, people friendly
- Robert Stephens explained about setback:
 - curb to building space is important; seniors are frightened by traffic speed
 - urban designer looks for balance, relationship across the street
 - setback depends on curb to building distance; not “setback standard” that is defined in terms of road right of way (ROW) width;
 - looking for comfortable pedestrian situation
- Councillor asked about raised traffic medians (better for trees), boulevards
- Robert Stephens: amazing effect; will see if feasible here
- Robert Stephens: Question: Would they like to see more trees along boulevards? Yes, they'd like them. He'll look at option for adding urban trees, including on boulevards, in parking lots, etc.
- Wide boulevard typifies Scarborough neighbourhood, with grass median on both sides of sidewalk
- Mike Mestyan: re lights: will look at more street lighting directed to pedestrian.
- Utilities, e.g., green hydro vaults are an eyesore. Robert Stephens: in other situation they were painted to coordinate with adjacent building. Mike Mestyan: they may be buried
- Question about bike lane. Robert Stephens responded that it would cut into space for boulevard with trees. Balancing all the needs within Right of Way is a challenge, vehicle lanes, bike lanes, street trees, width sidewalk, etc. only so much space exists.

Building heights

- Biggest change 30 years ago was height of Tridel building(s) – should never be higher than that 23 storeys. Anything higher is a problem since it would be change in character for the Mall. Must maintain the character of the community, protect it.
- No high buildings with continuous wall, fence
- A little higher [would be] o.k. Sleek slim 20 storey, [can] see the sky between.
- Mike Mestyan: podium can help with wind issues or canopies deflect wind, see through canopies can help.
- Buildings, high, turned sideways helps, e.g. on Warden
- Likes to see brick as material to be used,
- Angle [building], wide lawn, sidewalks – feel safe
- Woman: 3 buildings on Huntingdale: all parking on one level underground – nice space around, trees, spaced well

Traffic and safety concerns

- Concern about traffic on Huntingdale
- Gave example of traffic impact of new development at Bayview & Sheppard area after new development introduced on former Maclean-Hunter property at Hwy 401 & Yonge, up to Sheppard.
- Safety: setbacks help; concern about accidents when too close to road and cars.
- Robert: curb to building space is important; seniors are frightened by traffic speed

The Mall/Commercial Uses

- Mall declined when Fairview and Bayview Village took over as [the “destination” malls]. Now shops in Bridlewood cater to smaller purchases, became convenience stores, lost anchor stores.
- Councillor: need medical building; he’d promote adding more commercial for the mall [rather than needing to add more residential to increase activity in the mall]; he told the mall owner that; commercial employees will help the mall
- Another comment: Likes strip malls; accessible; park and get to store without going through huge parking lot
- Jennifer: dollar stores and family restaurant would help revitalize the mall.

Comments/discussion at Stop #2

- Mike Mestyan: “soft sites” more likely redeveloped in short term; at this intersection (Finch & Victoria Park) less likely to redevelop recently remodelled gas stations.

Traffic/access/parking

- Councillor Del Grande: many accidents here, especially on Finch Ave.
- Demetra: driveway on the east side has the most accidents
- Mike Mestyan: Therefore should consider access issues for Bridlewood Mall
- Councillor Del Grande: driveway without light will be problem for the mall
- Jennifer: Seniors come across the mall to get to St. Paul’s facility
- Mike Mestyan: continued Mall parking for St. Paul’s is an issue

- Councillor Del Grande: medical centre building – they park in church lot; Mike Mestyan: medical building has acquired lot next door for parking
- Jennifer: Question: parking standard; Mike M. – based on unit type; Mike gave e.g. of some parking standards
- Councillor Del Grande: everyone has at least one car here; “car culture”;
- Mike Mestyan: parking standard depends on transportation situation
- Councillor Del Grande: He gets complaints from people about street parking from condo owners looking for second space; in this area, there’s the issue with widened driveways and more cars – therefore the standards won’t work here
- Lai Chu: maybe those expert standards don’t work here. Mike needs to be able to present these issues back to the working group. He needs to listen to us and report back
- Jennifer: not about no development; listen and take our suggestions, try to work with us; hope we can take as gospel what planners say.
- Demetra: City’s philosophy is reduce cars e.g. by building Condos along transit routes. Developers offer extra spaces to two bedroom units in the city but here [this approach] doesn’t work since don’t have the transit, therefore we need to convey the reality here – need more parking or better transit.
- Robert Stephens: city parking standards are the “minimum”, but specific study will address local situation; people don’t realize how large the distances are in Scarborough
- Councillor Del Grande: tell TTC people about these issues; this is still a car community.
- Helen: in this area, they need a car to access everything; there’s too much residential vs commercial and retail
- Mike Mestyan: that’s why the city is trying to protect employment lands – don’t want residential conversion in an area without other uses [to serve new residents]

Stop at Downtown Markham development site at Warden and Hwy 7:

- Demetra: admired the architectural style of street lamps. Would like to see attention to style of street lighting, not just the industrial look.
- Mid-rise community with 14 storey maximum, 9500 residents; minimum 1 parking space per unit; following Andres Duany master plan for Markham.
- Had brief presentation by staff at sales office.
- Finished up study around 2:00pm.