

Community: Westwood Theater Lands and Six Points Interchange

Community Consultation
Wednesday May 30, 2007

Valhalla Inn - Scandia Room
Valhalla Inn Road (Hwy 427 and Burnhamthorpe Road)
7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

SUMMARY NOTES / MEETING MINUTES

1. Introduction

The third community consultation meeting regarding the Westwood Theater Lands and the Six Points Interchange was held on Wednesday, May 30th, 2007, at the Valhalla Inn, Scandia Room – 1 Valhalla Inn Road, in the City of Toronto. This was the third of three meetings in a series initiated and hosted by Councillor Milczyn, entitled “Reinvesting in Our Community – Vision, Connection and Community”.

The format was a presentation by City staff, introduced by Councillor Milczyn, followed by a question and answer period. Approximately 100 participants attended the event.

The following representatives from the City of Toronto were at the Public Consultation Session to present the preferred Six Points option, and a draft master plan for the Westwood Theatre Lands, and to answer related questions from the public

Councillor Peter Milczyn
Anne Milchberg, Andrea Oppedisano (Facilities & Real Estate)
Uwe Mader, Al Smithies (Transportation Services)
Lorna Day, David Oikawa, Richard Beck, Gregg Lintern, Brian Gallagher (City Planning)

2. Welcoming Remarks and Overview

Councillor Milczyn began the meeting at 7:10. The Councillor thanked everyone for attending and noted that this was the third of three meetings held to consult his constituents on redevelopment of the Westwood Theater Lands and the reconfiguration of the Six Points Interchange.

3. Presentation: Westwood Theater Lands and Six Points

Anne Milchberg began with background information and noted that the site is part of the Etobicoke Centre Secondary Plan, and is zoned for Mixed Use, f.s.i. 3.5, with a 60m and 72m height limit.

Lorna Day provided details about the Westwood Theater Lands Charrette Work that was undertaken on November 30th, 2004. At the Charette, participants were divided into groups of four and were charged with the task of producing an urban design vision for three City-owned properties.

Anne Milchberg noted that resulting from the charrette, two common ideas emerged:

1. The need for connections (pedestrian, road, and bike)
2. The need for community amenities

Uwe Mader noted that one of the goals of the Etobicoke Centre Secondary Plan, adopted by City Council in 2002, is to reconfigure the Six Points Interchange. Doing so will simplify road network, free up land for development, increase the develop-ability of the site, remove the physical barrier between Bloor Street East and Bloor Street West of Kipling Avenue, improve North/South visibility and to promote pedestrian and bike access.

Uwe Mader presented **Option 3: Fully At-Grade Dundas Street Loop**. This is the, preferred option (out of four options) that resulted from the work undertaken for the Six Points Interchange Reconfiguration Class Environmental Assessment Study.

Uwe Mader explained that this option had already been formally presented to the public during the Environmental Assessment Study public meeting held on June 20, 2006. Minutes from that meeting are available on the City of Toronto's website.

Anne Milchberg presented two master planning options for the Westwood Theater lands that were based upon the preferred option for the reconfiguration of the 6 Points Interchange. Both options were similar, except one had a new civic centre on the south-west corner of Kipling and Bloor, and the other one did not.

Councillor Milczyn introduced Steve Boone of the YMCA to the attendees, and advised that the YMCA was considering locating on Westwood.

4. Summary of issues raised during the question and answer period

- Some participants questioned the efficiency of the road configuration in Option 3: Fully At-Grade Dundas Street Loop and expressed interest in re-examining the Six Points reconfiguration options.

- There were concerns about turning the residential section of Bloor Street West, west of Kipling Avenue, into an urban center and the associated potential increase in vehicular traffic in the area. Residents want to avoid making Bloor Street West look and feel like Dundas Street.
- Dissatisfaction was expressed about the perceived lack of advertising for these community meetings held by Councillor Milczyn, and for the 6 Points Interchange Reconfiguration Environmental Assessment Study public meetings that were held on March 2nd, 2004 and on June 20th, 2006.
- Many participants noted the need for cultural amenities and in particular a space for the arts in the community and thought that the redevelopment of Westwood was a great opportunity to meet that need. It was suggested that the cultural/arts facility be combined with the YMCA facility that potentially could be located at the Westwood Theatre lands.
- Some participants expressed concern that the proposed park on the Westwood Theatre lands was too small. City staff noted this concern.
- Many participants saw this project as an opportunity for community building and for making the area more pedestrian friendly.
- A few participants stated that they did not want to see high-rise condominiums built on the Westwood Theatre land. Staff advised that the Official Plan and zoning by-laws for Westwood do permit high rise condominiums. Councillor Milczyn noted that the goal for this site is to have as much office development as possible.
- Many participants identified a need for a grocery store in the area. City staff noted this concern.

5. Detailed list of Question, Answers and Comments

Question: Is the police station included in the site?

Anne Milchberg:

Yes, and they are open to the possibility of moving from this location.

Comment:

The 401 is not pleasant but it's efficient, the present intersection is efficient whereas the preferred option has too many intersections.

Uwe Mader:

Regarding the 6 Points Interchange, one of the goals outlined in the Etobicoke Centre Secondary Plan is to redevelop the interchange to move it towards an urban centre. With respect to the Preferred Option, the City recognizes that vehicular and

transit traffic travel times will increase, however, the intent is to move away from a freeway system to an urban centre.

Question: How are decisions made?

Uwe Mader:

Through the process of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment two public meeting were held. These three subsequent meetings held by Councillor Milczyn will be factored into staff recommendations.

Councillor Milczyn:

Once the report by staff is written it will be considered by the Planning and Growth Management Committee. This will occur in either September or October. The committee makes a recommendation to council, during that time the public can provide feedback in writing to the Standing Committee. Councillor Milczyn will inform community when this issue will go to standing committee. Once Council makes a decision, there is a notice of completion where there is a 30 day period where the community can respond.

Question: Will the future use of the Westwood Theatre Lands effect the road reconfiguration? [Participant only wanted a yes or no answer]

Anne Milchberg: Yes

Question: Then how can we reconfigure the roads when we don't know what the lands are being used for?

Anne Milchberg:

This is a comprehensive study, the zoning on the site determines to some extent the form and use of the building. We know that the community would like community amenities and there has been formal interest by the YMCA in the site. Beyond that, the site would be put to mixed commercial-residential use.

Question: Will the bus depot be moved from Islington Avenue and Bloor Street West to Kipling Avenue?

Councillor Milczyn:

Yes, the Islington station parcel has been declared surplus. SNC Lavalin will be building 350,000 sq. ft. of office space and create 12,000 jobs. This will take up 1/3 of the land area.

Question: Will parking lots be moved too?

Councillor Milczyn: Yes

Question: Where will the Mississauga buses go?

Councillor Milczyn:

They will use Dundas Street, Highway 427 and the East Mall.

Question: How did we come up with the options for the Reconfiguration of the 6 Points Interchange?

Uwe Mader:

During the EA process there were 33 options developed. These underwent an initial screening and the remaining options were then categorized into 6 groups or families. From these a short-list of four options was developed and these are:

- 1. Do nothing**
- 2. Modified Existing-Improved Westwood Lands Access**
- 3. Fully At-Grade Dundas Street Loop**
- 4: Dundas Street Underpass.**

There were 160-200 participants at the June 20, 2006 meeting. They were asked to provide comments on these four options. Their comments were then used in determining the preferred option. [Minutes from that meeting indicate that approximately 180 people were in attendance]

Comment: A few people complained that they did not know about the previous meetings and were dissatisfied with the advertising for community meetings.

Comment: There was interest in re-examining the question of what to do with the reconfiguration. People also expressed concern with turning the residential section of Bloor into an urban center

Comment: Clarification needed about the Six Points Reconfiguration

Uwe Mader:

The Preferred Option has two new intersections: one at Bloor Street West, Dunbloor Road and Dundas Street and the other at Dundas Street and Kipling Avenue. Once again, it was noted that vehicular traffic travel times will increase, but speed will decrease. The goal is also to make the area more pedestrian/cyclist friendly.

Question: Does traffic warrant 6 lanes on Dundas Street?

Uwe Mader: Yes

Question: Where is destination traffic going?

Uwe Mader:

An Origin/Destination Study was undertaken and this provided information on where cars enter and exit the study area, (not their home location). This data

provided information on the roads used by vehicles in the peak period within the study area.

Question: There is a lack of performance/arts space in the community. What can community members do to bring awareness to this issue?

Anne Milchberg:

Your feedback is noted in the minutes, and will be contemplated in the master planning of Westwood. Please contact us with the details of what you are looking for. Continuing to attend meetings, contacting City staff to outline your needs, and organizing yourselves around this common cause will all be helpful.

Comment: The park is too small; emissions from adjacent intersection will be high and have an impact on park users.

Staff noted this, and will look into the matter further.

Question: Where will TTC Parking go?

Councillor Milczyn:

Once Kipling Station is complete, the TTC's plan is to have the same net number of parking spaces as they do today. New parking will be provided off Fieldway. The TTC is in the process of obtaining lands from Hydro One for parking.

Comment: Pedestrian improvements are a welcomed addition to the community

Comment: The 1992 Etobicoke Arts Council Study indicated that there was a need for an arts center in the community. At that time two sites were identified 1. Michael Power 2. Westwood Theater Lands.

Anne Milchberg:

City Staff would like to obtain a copy of the study. Could you assist in providing staff with a copy?

Comment: Other participants agreed that this project provides the opportunity to introduce cultural amenities to the area. The community needs space for cultural amenities and there are a variety of people looking for such space in the neighbourhood.

Question: How long is the construction process?

Anne Milchberg:

Everything will be phased, the phasing of the infrastructure determines when and what buildings will be developed.

Comment: One participant expressed support for the preferred option, and saw this as an opportunity to make the area a community.

Question: Is there the option to make the entire Westwood Theatre lands a park?

Councillor Milczyn:

Westwood covers 19 acres of land, and a park is not a good use for such a large piece of land in its entirety.

Question: Does the redevelopment need private funds?

Councillor Milczyn:

Funds from sale of land will be more than enough to pay for the infrastructure.

Comment: Mr. Boone from the YMCA noted that the YMCA is a registered charity; this is a unique model from other Y's. The YMCA is looking at a one acre parcel of land and is willing to work with the City and Developers to ensure that the building is mixed use, being approximately 60,000 sq. ft., with a licensed child care facility.

Comment: A number of Bloor Street West, west of Kipling Avenue residents are concerned about increased traffic in their neighbourhood.

Question: What's going to keep Bloor Street West from looking like Dundas Street?

Councillor Milczyn:

Mississauga buses will not travel along Bloor St.

Al Smithies:

There is the perception that this initiative just came along recently, but planning for Six Points begun in the 1980's with the former City of Etobicoke. There is a Kipling/Islington Secondary Plan which calls for a new civic centre.

Council Milczyn:

With regards to the Westwood theatre, we are now in the implementation stage; the decision to do something has already been made.

Question: The bridges were just repaired. Why is the City spending unnecessary tax dollars to replace them?

Al Smithies:

The bridges were repaired shortly after amalgamation. They were badly in need of repairs, which cost approximately \$3 million dollars. The City didn't have a choice at the time.

Comment: We are concerned that Bloor Street West. will get busier. The design of Dundas Street should be straight through and the main traffic from Dundas Street should be diverted to the railway lands.

Question: What will keep these lands out of the hands of big developers who want to develop high-rise condominiums?

Anne Milchberg:

High rise condominiums are permitted on the Westwood Theatre lands through the Official Plan and zoning by-laws, so, strictly speaking, nothing can keep them out of such developers hands - unless the City expressly wants them excluded from an Request for Proposals (RFP) for the development of the lands.

Councillor Milczyn:

The lands are City owned and city controlled. How to develop them will be part of the RFP process. The new City of Toronto Act allows the City to provide tax incentives to attract office development. SNC Lavalin will house 1200 employees. There is more than enough residential development on private lands.

Question: Does the City support building an arts centre?

Councillor Milczyn:

There is a possibility of adding an arts facility to the YMCA. The money from the sale of land should be reinvested in this community.

Comment: The local arts community does not have the money but will support and seek funding opportunities for an arts centre.

Comment: The site needs a food supermarket. This was agreed upon by a number of participants.

Comment: The turn from Dundas Street west on to Bloor Street West is too sharp.

Question: Why does Bloor Street West have to be reconnected? Spaghetti junction is used to separate uses, it serves its purpose.

Al Smithies:

This goes back to the secondary plan in the 1980's, which had a vision to simplify the road network and produce arterial connections. The worst thing would be not to reconnect; this will cause traffic to divert into surrounding residential area.

Comment: Change for a community is scary, traffic will increase, that is a given. King/Bathurst is an example of a busy intersection that is joy for pedestrians.

Question: Will the number of lanes on Bloor Street West increase.

Uwe Mader:

No, Bloor Street West is four lanes now and will be after the reconfiguration.

Question: Will land from the church or houses across from the church need to be expropriated?

Uwe Mader:

No, the preferred option does not require land from the Church or houses across from the Church.

Comment: We need a space for the arts which will serve as the heart of the community. There are not too many opportunities for a new arts facility. Space which was once rented out from the school boards is difficult to obtain, for both funding and scheduling reasons

Question: Can we move St. Albans north?

Uwe Mader:

One of the objectives of reconfiguration the 6 Points Interchange is to free up surplus land for development. Moving St. Alban's north will reduce the amount of surplus land for development.

Question: Was a traffic circle considered? There are a number of examples in Paris of traffic circles.

Al Smithies: The issue is normalized interactions. Geometric aspects cause questions and traffic circles need a great deal of land to function properly. They work in a very narrow context. There are none in North America that operate in this type of environment. They also did not meet the criteria set out in the EA Study which was to minimize impact to development, and a round about did not meet the criteria.

Comment: There is a need for cultural/arts facility in the area. Community facilities will not attract outside communities because other communities have their own arts facilities (such as North York Centre for Performing Arts) therefore, there will not be as much of an increase in traffic as expected.

Closing

The question and answer period ended at 9:30pm, after which members of the public were able to meet with City staff for further discussions.