

**Forest Hill Village – Urban Design Guidelines – Final Report**

<b>Date:</b>	May 22, 2015
<b>To:</b>	Toronto and East York Community Council
<b>From:</b>	Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District
<b>Wards:</b>	Ward 21 – St. Paul's Ward 22 – St. Paul's
<b>Reference Number:</b>	15 106811 STE 22 TM

**SUMMARY**

In February 2014, City Council directed City Planning staff to study Forest Hill Village located along Spadina Road and prepare Urban Design Guidelines to protect the small town feeling of this distinctive area.

The mandate for the Forest Hill Village Urban Design Guidelines is to maintain the small town character of the area by identifying the appropriate urban character, materials and building rhythm and articulation for future developments and/or renovations within the study area.

This report reviews and recommends approval of the Forest Hill Village Urban Design Guidelines.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The City Planning Division recommends that:**

1. City Council adopt the Urban Design Guidelines attached as Attachment No. 1 to the report (May 22, 2015) from the Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District.



## **Financial Impact**

The recommendations in this report have no financial impact.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

At its meeting of February 19, 2014 City Council requested City Planning to prepare urban design guidelines for Forest Hill Village along Spadina Road between Montclair Avenue and Thelma Avenue, and report back to Toronto and East York Community Council in the third quarter of 2014.

City Council directed that the mandate will be to develop appropriate design guidelines to maintain the small town character of the area and determine the appropriate urban character, materials and building rhythm and articulation to be used on future developments/renovation within the study area.

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

### **Reason for the Study**

The study and resulting urban design guidelines seek to maintain the small town character of the area and provide clarity for both the community and potential developers regarding the appropriate urban character, materials, and building rhythm and articulation for new developments. The area is a small mixed-use pocket which dates to the early 1920's, providing walkable local retail and service uses to the surrounding community.

### **Study Area and Surrounding Area**

The study area as set out by City Council included the properties fronting onto Spadina Road between Montclair Avenue and Thelma Avenue. The study area was expanded to include properties on Spadina Road up to Strathearn Boulevard so as to allow for the inclusion of Suydam Park to the north of the Forest Hill Village.

The study area consists of a mix of residential and commercial land uses. The area from Montclair Avenue to just north of Thelma Avenue is predominantly made up of commercial and mixed-use buildings ranging from one to four-storeys in height. This area has a "Main Street" feel and encompasses the historic centre of the village at the commercial intersection of Spadina Road and Lonsdale Avenue.

The northern portion of the study area is a stable residential area made up of walk-up apartment buildings, and detached and semi-detached dwellings ranging in height from two to four-storeys.

There are two parks that are located at the south and north ends of the study area. Montclair Avenue Parkette is located at the south end of the village at the northeast corner of Montclair Avenue and Spadina Road. Suydam Park is larger and is located at the north end of the study area at the southwest corner of Strathearn Boulevard and Spadina Road.

The following uses surround the study area:

- North: low-rise neighbourhood consisting of two to three-storey detached dwellings;
- South: low-rise neighbourhood consisting of two to three-storey detached and semi-detached dwellings;
- East: low-rise residential neighbourhood consisting of two to three-storey detached and semi-detached dwellings. Along Lonsdale is an *Apartment Neighbourhood* consisting of three and four-storey walk-up apartment buildings;
- West: to the west of the southern half of the study area is an *Apartment Neighbourhood* consisting of apartment buildings 5 to 8-storeys in height. To the west of the northern half of the study area is a low-rise neighbourhood consisting of two to three-storey detached and semi-detached dwellings.

### **Provincial Policy Statement and Provincial Plans**

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), 2014 provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. These policies support the goal of enhancing the quality of life for all Ontarians. Key policy objectives include: building strong healthy communities; wise use and management of resources; and protecting public health and safety. The PPS recognizes that local context and character is important. Policies are outcome-oriented, and some policies provide flexibility in their implementation provided that provincial interests are upheld. City Council's planning decisions are required to be consistent with the PPS.

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe provides a framework for managing growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe including: directions for where and how to grow; the provision of infrastructure to support growth; and protecting natural systems and cultivating a culture of conservation. City Council's planning decisions are required to conform, or not conflict, with the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

### **Official Plan**

The City's Official Plan designates the southern portion of the study area, from Montclair Avenue to just north of Thelma Avenue, as *Mixed Use Areas* on Map 17 - Land Use Plan. The *Mixed Use Areas* designation in the Official Plan provides for a broad range of commercial, residential and institutional uses, in single-use or mixed-use buildings, as well as parks and open spaces and utilities.

Development in *Mixed Use Areas* is subject to a number of development criteria. In *Mixed Use Areas*, developments will: locate and mass new buildings to frame the street with good proportion and provide a transition between areas of different development intensity and scale; provide appropriate setbacks and/or stepping down of heights, particularly towards lower scale *Neighbourhoods*; locate and mass new buildings so as to adequately limit shadow impacts on adjacent *Neighbourhoods* particularly during the spring and fall equinoxes; provide good site access and circulation and an adequate supply of parking for residents and visitors; provide an attractive, comfortable and safe

pedestrian environment; locate and screen service areas, ramps and garbage storage to minimize the impact on adjacent streets and residences; and, provide indoor and outdoor recreation space for building residents in every significant multi-unit residential development.

The Official Plan designates the lands just north of Thelma Avenue to Strathearn Boulevard as *Neighbourhoods* on Map 17 - Land Use Plan. *Neighbourhoods* are considered physically stable areas containing a full range of residential uses within lower scale buildings, as well as parks, schools, local institutions and small-scale stores. Lower scale residential buildings in *Neighbourhoods* consist of detached houses, semi-detached houses, duplexes, triplexes and townhouses, as well as interspersed walk-up apartments no more than four-storeys in height.

The stability of *Neighbourhoods'* physical character is one of the keys to Toronto's success. Physical changes to established *Neighbourhoods* must be sensitive, gradual and generally "fit" the existing physical character.

Spadina Road is not identified as an Avenue on Map 2 – Urban Structure of the Official Plan. Map 3 in the Official Plan shows that the anticipated Right-of-Way width of Spadina Road is 20 metres.

## **Zoning**

The majority of the southern section of the study area, Montclair Avenue to just north of Thelma Avenue, is zoned Commercial Residential (CR) under Zoning By-law 569-2013. This is a mixed-use zoning which permits both residential and non-residential uses. The maximum permitted height is 12 metres with a maximum permitted density of 2.5 times the area of the lot.

There are two properties that are exempt from Zoning By-law 569-2013 and are subject to former City of Toronto Zoning By-law 438-86. These properties are located within the southern portion of the study area and have zoning permissions comparable to the Commercial Residential (CR) zone under Zoning By-law 569-2013.

The remainder of the study area is zoned Residential (R), Open Space (O), Open Space Natural (ON) under Zoning By-law 569-2013. The residential zoning permits a residential use in a range of building types including detached dwellings, townhouses, and apartment buildings. The maximum permitted height in the Residential zone is 11 metres with a maximum permitted density ranging from 0.35 to 1.0 times the area of the lot.

## **Community Consultation**

A community meeting was held respecting the Forest Hill Village Urban Design Guidelines on February 17, 2015. Approximately 40 members of the public, including property owners and area stakeholders, attended the meeting. The area Councillors and City staff were also in attendance. The following items were raised at the meeting:

### Character

Residents raised concerns regarding the preservation of the existing character within Forest Hill Village including materiality, scale, size of commercial units, and a desire to maintain independent stores. Residents identified recent developments such as the LCBO building as not fitting in with the existing character of the area.

### Height

Residents stated that the existing height limit of 4-storeys should be kept in order to preserve the character of the village.

### Streetscape and Pedestrian Realm

The need for improvements to the sidewalks and pedestrian realm along Spadina Road was identified as an issue by residents. Residents stated that smaller details such as lighting, plantings, and pavement should be looked at and improved. Residents also expressed the need for improvements to Montclair Parkette including the lack of usable space within the Parkette.

### Traffic and Parking

Residents raised concerns about existing and future traffic levels along Spadina Road and potential increases in traffic due to new development. Sufficient on-site parking for new developments was identified as necessary by residents.

Various improvements to the Spadina Road right-of-way were suggested, including removing and/or rearranging on-street parking, making space for bike lanes, changes to the pavement within the village, and encouraging alternative modes of transportation.

## **COMMENTS**

### **Provincial Policy Statement and Provincial Plans**

The proposed guidelines are consistent with the PPS and conform and do not conflict with the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

### **Urban Character**

Forest Hill Village displays the character elements of a "Main Street" while not being an Avenue, with elements such as appropriate street enclosure, bustling sidewalks with meeting places, and human scale. It is unusual in Toronto in its brevity while succeeding in providing a local walkable small town feel.

The low-rise scale of the village creates an urban landscape that displays a generous amount of sky view at a pedestrian level. This character is experienced along Spadina Road when walking on either sidewalk, with buildings framing the street edge while still allowing for a significant amount of sky view and sunlight on the street.

The southern portion of the study area has a strong commercial presence with retail uses at grade. The retail units are characterised by small storefronts with individual entrances, creating visual diversity along the street.

The Forest Hill Village Urban Design Guidelines address the urban character of the study area by defining the appropriate street enclosure, sky view, setbacks, and signage. The guidelines state that the maximum height should be 12 metres, equal to 60% of the right-of-way width, in order to maintain the human scale of the village. A minimum height of 2-storeys ensures that gaps are avoided and helps to reinforce the street edge. Access to sky view from the opposite side of the sidewalk should be maintained to preserve the pedestrian experience along Spadina Road.

The proposed maximum height of 4-storeys (12 metres) will permit some intensification and growth within Forest Hill Village in keeping with the *Mixed Use Areas* designation, while also acknowledging the local context and that not all *Mixed Use Areas* will experience the same scale or intensity of development.

New buildings should have setbacks that generally match those of adjacent buildings, and should be built to the side property line in order to help frame the street edge. In order to maintain the dynamic character of the village, a variety of store signage is encouraged.

## **Materials**

The study reviewed the materiality of Forest Hill Village and identified the use of traditional materials such as brick and stone as part of the distinct character of the village. The commercial portion of the village has ground floors with a greater amount of glazing allowing for large storefront displays, while the upper levels are characterised by solid walls with "punched-windows".

The guidelines direct that new buildings should use brick and stone as the main building material with a colour palette that complements the existing context. At the ground floor a change of materials is recommended to emphasize the retail at-grade. The glazing in new buildings should be limited to a maximum of 80% at the ground level and 40% on the upper floors in order to maintain the existing character of the village.

## **Building Rhythm and Articulation**

The study reviewed the vertical and horizontal articulation as well as the architectural details of the existing buildings within the study area. At prominent corners, such as the intersection of Spadina Road and Lonsdale Avenue, a pattern of chamfered corners facing the intersection was identified. In the commercial portion of the study area, store entrances have been recessed allowing for deep display windows, weather protection, and an uninterrupted sidewalk zone.

The guidelines address the building rhythm and articulation of new developments by directing that buildings taller than two-storeys should have vertical articulation to break up the buildings massing and create a finer grain façade that fits with the existing context. Retail at grade should be broken up and articulated to appear as smaller individual store fronts. In order to maintain the existing character of the village the guidelines also address the façade height of commercial uses on the ground floor, use of bay windows, corner treatments, and recessed building entrances.

## **Conclusion**

City Planning staff have reviewed the existing character of Forest Hill Village and identified the appropriate urban character, materials, and building rhythm and articulation for new developments. The Forest Hill Village Urban Design Guidelines address these matters and provide direction for new development in order to maintain the small town character of the village.

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## **SIGNATURE**

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## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Forest Hill Village Urban Design Guidelines

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