

Bloor West Village Avenue Planning Study



Heritage Focus Group Meeting Summary

Monday, January 23, 2017, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Runnymede United Church, 432 Runnymede Rd

City Planning Division with Study Consulting team organized a meeting with stakeholders to gain a deeper understanding of the history and heritage of the study area.

Participants:

Stakeholders

Allan Killin (High Park Residents Association Inc.), Bob Roden (Swansea Historical), Brian Mooney (Chair Etobicoke York Community Preservation Panel), David Howitt (BIA), Linda Symczyk (Swansea Historical), Madeline McDowell (Local Heritage), Nick Singh (Swansea Area Rate Payers Association), Steve Dewdney (Bloor West Village Residents Association), Susan Zalepa (Swansea Historical)

Absent: Mark Warrack (HCD Nominators Working Group)

Consultant team

Brent Raymond, Ellen Kowalchuk, David Deo

City of Toronto

Tamara Anson-Cartwright, Gregory Byrne, Allison Reid, Ragini Dayal, Pourya Nazemi

Through the discussion and comments received following the meeting via email, the comments received can be broken down into the following board categories:

General Characteristics

- Bloor Street is unique:
 - o Optimum proportions of building streetwall
 - o Wide sidewalks
 - o Visual and physical connection across the street - Visual connectivity along the street
 - o Side streets offset to form view termini
 - o Properties orientation: the east-west orientation of properties is one of the characteristics of this main street.
 - o Walkable neighbourhood
 - o North side has sunshine in winter.
 - o Street width to height ratio
- The character of the area located on the west side of Jane and its relationship with Baby Point: How would you characterize that area? There is no specific and recognized name for that area.
- Intentional adaptability over the course of time is one of the key attributes of the area.
- The idea of parking behind the shops which leads to a more walkable area.

- There is great potential to enhance the parking areas to the north of Bloor, as this is perceived as public space and could easily flow from the green spaces to parking in a more fluid manner, enhancing the public and walking experience. This area would be prime for public art and expressions of historic interpretation.
- Streetscape concept as a character of the area: the main street is as the heart and pulse of the community; we have to pay attention to the importance of north streetscape.
- The development of the area was intentional. It was planned and executed, rather than a more organic evolution. This is evident in the road construction which brought in tons of clean fill to raise the level of the road.
- BIA foot traffic Bluetooth counts: data collection traffic is surprisingly higher on the south side than the north.
- Note morphology of traditional forms along the corridor.
- Heritage doesn't end at 1945; it continues.
- The area, in general, is a regional draw and therefore its lure and interest goes beyond the residents of Bloor West.
- Fine grained makes the village: max 20ft shop front, stairs up to dwellings above, rhythm of entry doors
- Bloor West Village is the anchor to the neighbourhoods.
- There is a consistent set-back along the commercial core which provides for a clearly defined street edge.
- Some exceptions to set-back provide interesting private open spaces, usually related to the low-rise apartments. These spaces spill into the public realm and may be perceived as public.
- The restaurants add to the character of the area.

Natural Features

- The importance of Humber River as a designated Canadian heritage river:
 - o Humber gateway: it should be acknowledged as a border of the study area; the river is an important part of the area.
 - o There are archeological resources in this part of the area.
 - o Indigenous aspect: the rich history of indigenous peoples as well as Euro-Canadians in this area
 - o It is a significant part of the Bloor West Village: because of the importance of the nature in the area; is an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI); watershed is under threat.
 - o View from west of Jane Street to the river while walking west: in this part of the area, views to river have lost; in the past people could watch sunset.
- Humber River and High Park are important for the residents:
 - o The importance of these two natural resources of the community should not be underrepresented.
 - o Because of the archaeological and indigenous significance of these sections
 - o High Park is not adequately celebrated and protected: is an ANSI; watershed is under threat.
 - o Considering north side of High Park as part of the Study Area including the Chess House (Answer: We cannot extend the boundary to the High Park | no policy for park).
 - o Indigenous peoples in northwest of the High Park (in Harcourt Road; it is an archaeological area)

Historic Overview of Commercial Activities

- Invention of BIA in the 1970s as the world's first BIA (four people: Neil McClelland, Cecil Ward, the Alderman)
 - o There is continuity of trying to adapt and maintain.

- BIA was very successful in creating vibrant retails in the area. Before that there were some gas stations and vacant lands in the area.
- Size of businesses changed in the area.
- Transformation of larger stores to small scale storefronts: lots of gas stations and parking lots break into smaller shops.
- Bloor BIA has over 400 members; 50% are Doctors, Dentists, lawyers etc.
- The number of Ukrainian businesses in the area has been decreased.
- Mix of entertainment with retail: night light lacking
- Post-war era - mom & pops established:
 - A character that resonates today (work downstairs and live upstairs).
 - Brings people back, vibrancy to the strip adds to the area as a whole.
 - This character of the community needs to be conserved and upgraded.
 - Prices are relatively reasonable.
- Trip Advisor rank #45 in Toronto
- There is a variety of food stores, delacatessens, banks, pharmacies in the area that provide things and services you would need for daily living.
- Anchor stores 10,00 sq ft to draw - this is not currently the character of the main street but the large No Frills store does mark the eastern end of the busy shopping character area.
- We could see sidewalk sales in the 1970's - legacy of "Dry" street in the area
- Legacy businesses/family: next generation no wanting to continue; property values; there are empty storefronts; rents are too high.

Social and Community Values

- Ukrainian Festival:
 - Community is still very important to business.
 - Full street closure - Jane to Runnymede since 1996: police chose the festival's dates – there are TTC and bus access issues.
 - The area is very busy during the Ukrainian Christmas. Ukrainian community is around the village.
- Kids Festival which is held in July since 5 years ago.
- High Park Cherry Blossom festival and its effect on the area: around 10,000 visitors during the festival come to the area.
- Halloween since 3 years ago: street closure; moving to TPA lots
- Santa in the Village: Turner and Porter parking lot
- Demographic pattern in Bloor and Durie segment study: the Irish are the 1st generation; the Polish, Ukrainian and Russian are the 3rd and 4th generation.
- There are a lot of elderly shoppers in the area: for many years people still live in the area.
- Connection to individuals and shop owners: e.g. people like old food and vegetables stores in the area
- The Bloor West Villager newspaper has been published since 1971.

Historic Overview of Transportation

- Streetcar line opened in 1917. It was extended to Jane Street in 1921:
 - o 1923 Bloor Danforth Highway, streetcar established the width.
 - o Jane and Bloor streetcar loop and bus terminal eventually consolidated with subway construction to the north.
- The purpose-built bridge on Humber River for subway station is located in the end of the Study Area.
- TTC lands are very important to the community: subway corridor; laneways and lands above the subway corridor should be included in the Study Area; the Green P parking and laneway on these lands just north of Bloor; they are key to success of Bloor West Village.

Building Typology

- Midrise is not sufficiently fine grained:
 - o It subverts the nature of the village.
 - o Characteristically we do not have a Midrise Typology in Bloor West. Midrise is an invasive species that was introduced as an idealistic concept of what intensification should look like when applied to a blank planning canvas. Bloor West has its own character and building typology.
- New buildings must maintain and extend the character.
- Those issues related to the building types are important elements: in this way we can support the character of the area; OP indicates the maintaining and extending the character.
- Essential character of narrow shopfronts with paired and triple entrances to max 1000sf mixed use tenancies at street and lower levels, and up stairs.
- The majority of structures along Bloor and within all of Bloor West are clad in brick which is dominant material of choice.

Specific Areas and Properties Contributing to Character

- The Swansea Secondary Plan has an overlap with the Study Area in west of Jane Street.
- When the subway went through, area changed.
- Pride of getting rid of car dealerships and gas stations to change the form to the fine grain village. It was intentional adaptation.
- Kingsway is important. Its character is different with the Bloor West Village.
- The importance of theatres in the area: theatre was an anchor; there are 4 theatres along the strip.
- Specific buildings and sites:
 - o Carrying Place – high ground route near Armadale – 150 oak trees – lake to Dundas St. W. Permission from Mississauga New Credit Plaques for Trees
 - o West of Jane Street – Home Smith design, York township; what is the name? Riverside? Old Mill side "Old Orchard"
 - o West edge of the bridge commemorating River designation, Five Nations - Old Mill Subway bridge – purpose built station
 - o Quicksand and landfill at Humber Cinema, underground water flows and springs

- Woolworth's and Kresge's - north side, IGA/A&P, Car Dealerships, Scotia Bank, Post Office South Side - "Wet" large restaurant redevelopment proposed, never happened, subsequent 200 m2 limit to manage size of restaurants.
 - Durie and Bloor – Laura Secord ground floor, Royal Conservatory of Music
 - Kennedy Public House – old Sharkey's Village Café restored – It was nightclub in 1954.
 - 1954 Loblaws
 - Body Shop – previously a pharmacy
 - Bassens? (small west end chain) – green grocer – now Carload?
 - HWY 5 – Gas stations – No Frills parking lot, Jane Texaco, Ellis Joy Oil, Shell Station
 - Eastern boundary of the Main Street? Library
 - View corridor to the Lake - No frills opened in 1954
 - Forest School – outdoor school was larger than today – outdoor platforms, fresh air
 - Mineral baths
 - High Park, especially the portion of the park that comes out to Bloor at Clendenin.
 - Joy Co. Station at Ellis – new condos blocked views to the park, stairs to the park.
 - Small apartment buildings across from park, small scale street fronts, businesses on ground floor, driveways that slope to parking at the rear, transition to towers behind, setback from sidewalk – ERA defined character area - Daniel's project – the land assembly for some time.
- There are specific properties along the Bloor West corridor which warrant further study to be either listed on the City's Heritage Register and perhaps elevated to Part IV heritage designation status.

Proposed properties to be added to the City's Heritage Register:

- The Kennedy Public House – 2199 Bloor Street West
- Rental Apartment Building - 2010 Bloor Street West
- Dr. Generosity – 2197 Bloor Street West
- Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce - 2219 Bloor Street West
- Bloor West Terrace Apartments – 2373 Bloor Street West
- Armadale Apartments – 254 Armadale and 2190 Bloor Street West
- Village Gate Apartments – 2001 Bloor Street West
- Runnymede Arms – 117 Runnymede Road
- A Dark Horse – 2401 Bloor Street West
- Turner and Porter – 2333 Bloor Street West
- Toronto Dominion Bank – 2440 Bloor Street West
- St. Olave's Anglican Church – 360 Windermere Avenue
- St. Pius X Church – 2305 Bloor Street West
- The Campbell Apartments - 2407 Bloor Street West
- 2487 Bloor Street West
- 2326 Bloor Street West
- 2454 Bloor Street West
- 308 South Kingsway