

Bloor West Village Avenue Study
Meeting Summary — June 2017 Local Advisory Committee Meeting
Monday, June 12, 2017
7:00 – 9:00pm
Swansea Town Hall, Rousseau Room
95 Lavinia Avenue

Overview

On Monday, June 12, the City of Toronto hosted the second Local Advisory Committee (LAC) meeting of the Bloor West Village Avenue Study. The LAC is a non-political advisory body with a mandate to provide a forum for feedback, guidance, and advice to the City Project Team and the Consultant Team at key points during the process of the Bloor West Village Avenue Study.

The purpose of the second LAC meeting was to present and seek feedback on the emerging draft built form and land use recommendations, and street design explorations for the Avenue Study.

12 members of the LAC attended the meeting, including representatives of residents' associations, the local BIA, ratepayers' groups, historical groups, natural environment groups and local property owners. City of Toronto staff, members of the Consultant Team and Councillor Sarah Doucette also attended and participated in the meeting (see Appendix A – Participant List).

The meeting began with introductions and a review of the agenda by Ian Malczewski, Swerhun Facilitation. Following the agenda review, Greg Byrne from the City's Planning Division provided a brief update on the overall study process as well as the process the City is developing to assess impacts on Natural Heritage features and functions in the area, including High Park. Following the updates Brent Raymond from DTAH gave presentations on the built form testing, the emerging built form and land use recommendations, and the street design explorations. After each presentation, members of the LAC asked questions and shared feedback (see Appendix B – Meeting Agenda).

Matthew Wheatley and Ian Malczewski, third party facilitators with Swerhun Facilitation, facilitated the meeting and wrote this meeting summary and shared it with participants for review before being finalized. This summary is meant to capture key themes and feedback from the meeting; it is not intended to be a verbatim transcript.

Key messages

The following key messages emerged from the discussion. They are meant to be read along with the more detailed summary of feedback that follows.

Concerns about 60-degree angular planes. Members of the LAC raised concerns about the possibility of allowing 60-degree angular planes. LAC members were particularly concerned about the impacts 60-degree angular planes would have on the south side neighbourhood of Bloor Street. Members of the

LAC also wanted to know why 60-degree angular planes and six storey building heights are being considered.

Midblock connections and laneways should be safe and comfortable. Members of the LAC generally supported pedestrian access in laneways and said that safety and comfort should be top priorities. Some LAC members said that laneways should be designed to protect and support the natural environment.

Considerations for sky view and sun/shadow impacts. Members of the LAC said the study team should clearly explain if and how the built form recommendations will consider sky view and sun/shadow impacts.

Safety should be a top priority for the street design explorations. Members of the LAC said that the safety of all should guide the design of any future cycling infrastructure in the area.

Detailed summary of feedback

Following each presentation, participants asked questions of clarification and shared feedback about the natural heritage update, built form testing and emerging recommendations, emerging land use recommendations, and the street design explorations. The detailed summary below organizes participants' feedback within these different topics. Participants also shared feedback in writing at the meeting and by email after the meeting, which has been incorporated in the summary and included in full in Appendix C – Written Feedback.

1. Questions of Clarification

Participants asked questions of clarification after the presentations, responses from the City and/or study team follow each question in *italics*.

- Is it still possible to send recommendations to the City for the Terms of Reference being drafted for the natural heritage assessment? *Yes.*
- Will the natural heritage assessment only look at High Park? *The City is still determining the scope of work and if/how the Humber River and ravines will be looked at.*
- How far down the Humber River will the Hydrogeology study be looking? *We will be looking at potential impacts as they relate to this Avenue Study. We will be looking at the impacts of development on ground water to make sure it doesn't have a negative impact. The City has updated policies for ground water that every development must follow.*
- Will the natural heritage assessment reinforce existing protections? *It's too early to speak to the outcomes, we need to see what comes out of the study.*
- Can the data from the gap analysis be made available / posted somewhere? *It has been completed and is currently being reviewed by various City departments. The analysis will be included in the Phase 1 Report, which will be posted online. Note added after the meeting: The City is currently reviewing the request to make the raw data available online.*

- Can the presentation from this meeting be made available online? *We will email you a copy of the presentation tomorrow and post an accessible version on the website, when ready.*

2. Feedback about the built form testing and emerging recommendations

Concerns about 60-degree angular planes. Members of the LAC raised concerns about the possibility of allowing back-of-property 60-degree angular planes. Specific concerns members raised included: sunlight impacts; neighbours having to “face a wall”; transitions to neighbouring residences; and developers being able to achieve even greater angular planes through appeals, as is currently the case for 45-degree angular planes.

Provide rationale for angular plane and building heights being considered. LAC members wanted the study team to explain the rationale for considering 60-degree angular planes versus 45 degree angular planes and six storey building heights.

Explain where mechanical penthouses will be located in new developments. LAC members said that mechanical rooms are often located on the top of buildings (i.e. mechanical penthouses) and are often excluded from the calculation of height. They were concerned that these penthouses would add an extra storey (e.g. increasing a maximum height from six to seven storeys) and further impact both sky view and shadowing. LAC members suggested including mechanical rooms in the built form illustrations shared at the upcoming Community Meeting to provide an accurate picture of building heights. They also suggested encouraging developers to incorporate mechanical rooms into the top floor or basement of their building.

Considerations for sky view and sun/shadow impacts. Members of the LAC said the study team should clearly explain if and how the built form recommendations will consider sky view and sun/shadow impacts.

Midblock connections and laneways. LAC members said they liked the idea of having pedestrian access between buildings and said that safety and comfort needs to be a priority in the design of these spaces. Some LAC members questioned the viability of retail in mid-block connections in the short-term and said it will likely take several years before retail spaces are feasible. Some said laneways should be considered “green fingers” and designed to enhance and protect the natural environment with a Garden City approach, as opposed to increasing an urban style / look. They said the narrower “green fingers” should not include paving, retail, bright lights, or loud music. There was also a concern that a property owner who gives up their laneway to the City could apply the surrendered Gross Floor Area from the laneway to enlarge the remaining portion of their property or another property they own in the study area.

Existing developments and built form directions. There was an interest in understanding if existing development and/or precedents in the area are influencing the development of the built form directions, or whether the mid-rise guidelines will have more influence. A member of the LAC restated a desire to see consideration of economic impacts associated with restricting building heights to 6 storeys and the potential to deter any real intensification in the area. They also said that the study must include the development community to achieve a realistic outcome.

3. Feedback about the emerging land use recommendations

Interest in controlling large retail with maximum floor plates. LAC members were interested to know if the team is looking at recommending minimum/maximum floor plates to restrict larger retail. *The study team said, the current zoning allows for 8500 square metres for one development and they are still in the process of determining if this is appropriate.*

Support for the removal of the Avenue designation from the Humber Gateway Character Area. Some LAC members were glad to hear there is consideration being given to remove the Avenue designation from the Humber Gateway Character Area.

4. Feedback about the street design explorations

General preference for options which put the bike lanes next to the sidewalk. LAC members discussed the different street design explorations presented and generally supported those that put the bike lanes next to the sidewalk. They felt this would be the safest option for cyclists.

Parking in the middle of the street. One LAC member asked if parking in the middle of street could be considered? *The study team said, this is unlikely because it is not safe for pedestrians crossing the street to and to/from their parked car.*

Putting cycling infrastructure in rear-laneways. There was a suggestion to put bike lanes / space for cyclists in the laneways behind buildings on Bloor Street. *The project team said this is unlikely to work because they are not continuous and significant portions are privately owned.*

Concerns about pedestrian/cyclist conflicts and potential impacts of cycling on natural heritage. Members of the LAC said the introduction of any cycling infrastructure should consider potential conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists. Others raised concerns about the impacts of cycling on wildlife, specifically in High Park.

5. Other feedback

Suggested manuals / processes for the City to use in developing the Terms of Reference for the Natural Heritage Study. A member of the LAC suggested the City look at Ontario Nature's "Best Practices Guide to Natural Heritage Systems Planning" and guidelines developed by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to assist in the development of the Terms of Reference for the Natural Heritage Study.

Use of Context in Framing the Guiding Principles. A member of the LAC restated a desire to change the use of context in the guiding principles to a more appropriate descriptor that would preserve the intent of protecting the character of the village.

Next steps

The City and consulting team thanked members of the LAC for their feedback and committed to sharing a draft summary of feedback in the coming weeks. The City reminded LAC members of the upcoming Community Consultation Meeting, on June 26th, and asked that they share the invitation with their members and others.

Appendix A. Participant List

Stakeholders

Bloor West Village BIA / Property Owner. David Howitt
Bloor West Village Residents' Association. Jay Zimmerman
Bloor West Village Residents' Association. Steve Dewdney
High Park Natural Environment Committee. Lenka Holubec
High Park Natural Environment Committee. Leslie Gooding
High Park Residents' Association. Lorraine Cramp
Old Mill Humbercrest Neighbourhood Association. Cameron Carver
Swansea Area Ratepayers' Association. Veronica Wynne
Swansea Area Ratepayers' Association. William Roberts
Swansea Historical Society. Susan Zalepa
Property Owner. John Marion
Property Owner. Taylor Morassutti

City of Toronto and Consulting Team

Councillor Sarah Doucette
Councillor Ward 13 Executive Assistant. Chris Haskim
City of Toronto City Planning. Sarah Henstock.
City of Toronto City Planning. Greg Byrne
City of Toronto City Planning. Allison Reid
City of Toronto Transportation Planning. Garvin Tom
DTAH. Brent Raymond
DTAH. Robert Allsopp
MMM/WSP. Jim Gough
Leah Birnbaum Consulting | Urban Planning. Leah Birnbaum
R.E. Millward + Associates. Bob Millward
Swerhun Facilitation. Ian Malczewski
Swerhun Facilitation. Matthew Wheatley
Swerhun Facilitation. Khly Lamparero

Appendix B. Meeting Agenda

Bloor West Village Avenue Study

Local Advisory Committee Meeting 2

Monday, June 12, 2017

7:00 – 9:00 pm

Swansea Town Hall, Rousseau Room

95 Lavinia Avenue

Meeting Purpose: To present and seek feedback on the emerging draft built form and land use recommendations, and street design explorations for the Avenue Study.

Proposed Agenda

- 7:00 Welcome & introductions**
Councillor Sarah Doucette & Swerhun Facilitation
- 7:05 Review agenda**
Swerhun Facilitation
- 7:10 Overall Study Process and Natural Heritage Update**
City of Toronto
- 7:20 Presentation: Built Form Testing and Emerging Recommendations**
DTAH
- 7:40 Discussion: Built Form Testing and Emerging Recommendations**
1. What do you like about the draft built form testing and emerging recommendations?
 2. Do you have any suggested changes to the draft built form testing and emerging recommendations?
- 8:00 Presentation: Draft Land Use Recommendations**
DTAH
- 8:10 Discussion: Draft Land Use Recommendations**
1. What do you like about the draft land use recommendations?
 2. Do you have any suggested refinements to the draft land use recommendations?
- 8:25 Presentation: Street Design Explorations**
DTAH & MMM
- 8:40 Discussion: Street Design Explorations**
1. What do you like about the street design explorations?
 2. Are there any other street design explorations you would like to see considered?
- 8:55 Wrap Up & Next Steps**
- 9:00 Adjourn**

Appendix C — Feedback submitted after the meeting

- Email from North Drive
- Email from High Park Residents' Association
- Email from Swansea Are Ratepayers Association

Email from North Drive

I want to thank everyone for the 2nd LAC meeting.

I am writing to address some of the items discussed during the built form component of the meeting.

In my opinion, there is really no sense in having these discussions if the economic merits of development are not taken into consideration. If the intent of the study is to delineate heights of no taller than 6-storeys and the potential for an extra 1- to 2-storeys if you are immediately adjacent to a TTC station, I do not believe any development will take place and even if it did it would not be of a high caliber of architecture. The study is currently not addressing any of the heights and densities achieved by currently completed and approved projects or recently applied for developments. The recently completed and approved projects are generally taller than 9-storeys. I firmly believe that the study must reach out to the development community in order to establish a study that will have a realistic outcome. The reality is that if you establish 6-storey heights and the potential for slightly taller if you are directly beside TTC stations, no real intensification will be spurred and you are sterilizing the neighbourhood. Albeit a lovely concept, the idea that a developer who is constructing a 6-storey building on a half-acre site wherein part of their site is allocated as green space is simply not going to be built even if the land is in at no cost. However, if a developer was to meet with the planner, councillor and residents' association and the community response back to the developer was such that they would like to see green space or a daycare incorporated into the project the only way to do so is to provide some form of density bonus to maintain the economic viability of the project whilst delivering a public good.

In closing, I think it is imperative that the development community forms part of the discussion.

Email from High Park Residents' Association

I wish to mention some aspects of neighborhood character which are found in this area. I don't remember these being mentioned at the charrette, at least not in my little group.

- When this area was originally surveyed, the lots were narrow, and the houses built on them were large. Consequently, the side-to-side distance between houses is often very narrow -- sometimes only a couple of feet. On a sunny summer day, when you look down that narrow corridor between two houses, the effect is of a dark passage, at the end of which is a tantalizing beautiful, bright green space.
 - The walls of some buildings are completely covered in vines. During the summer months, the vines are full of little chirping birds.
 - "This area is not downtown." Some developers and architects have come to this area, arrogantly telling us that they have a "vision" for our neighborhood. Invariably, they see this as a "downtown area". In spite of our protests, they force on us buildings which do not belong here. For example, the lobby of 1990 Bloor West is quite impressive, but it does not belong here. People choose to live here because it is not downtown. We want to get away from downtown, with all of that density, noise, and bright light.
 - I moved here because I had been living downtown, and I felt that I was suffocating. There was not enough open green space.
 - Many of the people who live in the apartment buildings would dearly love to live in one of the Victorian houses, if they could only afford it. They identify with that neighbourhood characteristic, even though they live in an apartment.
 - Before 1844 Bloor West, and that awful Rabba sign, the **identity of this area was "quiet, peaceful, dark at night, and lots of open green space"**. The built form kept a respectful distance from the park. The north-west and north-east corners of Bloor St. and High Park Ave. are the best examples I can give of that "flavor" -- in terms of both built form and open space.
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Following on the July 12 LAC meeting, here is how I could see the above three aspects of neighbourhood character being used:

I love the idea of the "in-between spaces". This seems to have grown out of Mid Rise Performance Standard Number 8A. If we want to use these in-between spaces as green fingers,

we need to be careful to make them as quiet and peaceful as possible. We want to attract the birds and butterflies, not scare them away. Most human activities have a negative impact on biodiversity.

So, no lot-line to lot-line paving, no retail, no restaurants, no outdoor cafes. no bright lights, no neon signs, no loud music. And the local merchants should never be allowed to set up "sidewalk sale" tables in the green finger corridor or directly in front of it.

In one of the wider green fingers, I could see a narrowish paved path running through the centre, probably meandering a bit. Three or four park benches placed next to the path. Several trees. Closer to the side walls of the buildings, long grasses, dotted with long-stemmed flowers. The flowers would attract bees and butterflies. This grassy area would probably need to be in a raised bed, in order to discourage people from allowing their dogs and small children from digging and trampling.

Some full-cut-off lights, to provide subtle lighting at night.

As I said at the charrette, I am less concerned about the height of the buildings than I am about avoiding continuous street walls.

I'm not sure what would qualify as a "narrow" space between two Mid Rise buildings -- maybe five to ten feet?

In one of the narrower green fingers I could see both building walls being vine-covered. This corridor would receive sunlight for part of the day. There might also be reflected light from other buildings. Hopefully, that would be enough light for the vines, or perhaps the vines could be shade-tolerant plants. At other times of day. the corridor would be in shade, and you would see the enticing bright green space at the other end.

I hope that these ideas are useful.

Email from Swansea Area Ratepayers Association

Bloor West Village Avenue Study
Local Advisory Committee Meeting #2
Monday, June 12, 2017

Feedback on the LAC Presentation
Veronica Wynne, Swansea Area Ratepayers Association

'Study will consider (but not make recommendations for) adjacent Neighbourhoods, Apartment Neighbourhoods, Parks, Open Spaces, and Natural Systems'

-Guiding Principles Page 4 BWV Avenue Study - April 24 LAC Presentation

'Protect Adjacent Neighbourhoods, Parks and Open Spaces

Principle: All new development should be sensitive in scale and impacts to the surrounding established Neighbourhoods, Parks and Open Spaces.'

-Guiding Principles Page 23 BWV Avenue Study - April 24 LAC Presentation

In the initial **BWV Avenue Study - April 24 LAC Presentation** by DTAH, we were promised the protection of consideration and sensitivity of scale and impacts to the surrounding established Neighbourhoods. In the LAC presentation of June 12, 2017 these guiding principles were severely challenged by the suggestion of the replacement of the 45° angular plane with a 60° angular plane to reflect the transition of the Mixed Use Developments to the adjacent neighbourhood. This feedback will provide a brief summary of some of the egregious impacts of these proposed discussions on the adjacent neighbourhoods.

60° Angular Plane Impact in Context and Transition to the Neighbourhood

- The south side neighbourhood of Bloor is defined by the Swansea Secondary Plan and the angular plane measurement starts from this line. The north side has parking lots, subway stations and parks separating the Neighbourhood from the Mixed Use Properties.
- There are very few laneways or easements separating the Mixed Use frontage from the Neighbourhood on the south side.
- Balconies are often permitted to penetrate the angular plane measurement giving the effect of a possible 70° angular plane and this Study's presentation suggests that the first setback occurs at the fourth storey – at a possible 13 metre height.
- Even the new 0.8:1 ratio of the Mid Rise Addendum for the Character area is often seen as an 'as of right' height (21.6) instead of a guideline to manage the existing angular plane.
- The new reality facing the Neighbourhood could be seven/eight storey buildings, a possible 70° angular plane with the first setback after the fourth floor and a slab wall of 'fat' buildings facing the neighbourhood on the south side of Bloor Street.
- These are the highly inappropriate 'scale and impacts on the surrounding established neighbourhoods' which will be realised with the investigation of this option. The rationale for this investigation is based on the outcomes of the St

Clair/Bathurst Avenue Study (2009) which allowed for enhancement areas and other zoning attributes which have been removed (in 2010) from the permissions of the Mid Rise guidelines in the Official Plan.

Six Storey Buildings with a 45° angular plane

The suggestion of 6 storeys was raised in order to increase density. It would be appreciated by our communities to know how this number came to be decided as an option as acceptable for all sites and in the interest of protecting the unique character of The Village.

Given that the Study team is investigating 6 storeys as reasonable, this option can be achieved by maintaining the 45° angular plane and reconsidering the setback below the indicated 4th floor in the presentation.

Feasibility of Laneways

The idea of laneways is good and would definitely add to the character of the Village.

In response to my question as to how we would find space to create laneways during a post presentation conversation, I was informed that there would be a 'quid-pro-quo' for the owner who gave up the GFA for the laneway. This means that this GFA could be applied to enlarge the remaining portion of the property. My concern remains that this replacement GFA could be applied to another property where the owner has multiple properties in the Village.

The Use of Context in Framing the Guiding Principles

In reading the outline of this presentation, the description of the Guiding Principles remains the same with no reference to changing the use of Context to a more appropriate descriptor that would preserve the intent of protecting the Character of the Village.

Having put a lot of time into helping describe better alternatives to the use of Context in my first feedback, I am disappointed that such efforts to provide positive support went unaddressed in this second presentation. The use of Context has had negative impacts on the Village development and should not be used in a Study that purports to bring improvements to the development of the Bloor West Village and surrounds.

The Swansea Area Ratepayers Group has contributed to the development of many city-wide zoning improvement initiatives with the City of Toronto that has included the Midrise Guidelines Review. In particular we are currently a Party to both the Harmonized City-Wide By-Law 569-2013 and the OPA 320 Appeals. We have worked with the City to develop the original OPA 320, Healthy Neighbourhoods, and are now a Party to its Appeal in support of the City.

These suggestions are presented in the interests of the success of the Avenue Study in allowing the Village and the Adjacent Neighbourhoods to live in harmony with new developments.