

Bloor West Village Avenue Study

## Meeting Summary — April 2017 Local Advisory Committee Meeting

Monday, April 24, 2017

7:00 – 9:00pm

Swansea Town Hall, Rousseau Room

95 Lavinia Avenue

### Overview

On Monday, April 24, the City of Toronto hosted the first 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 first LAC meeting was to provide members of the LAC with an update on the study process and confirm direction for the next stage of work by presenting and seeking feedback on the draft guiding principles and built form and street design options being tested.

14 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 welcoming remarks from Councillor Doucette and introductions and a review of the agenda by Ian Malczewski, Swerhun Facilitation. After the welcome and introductions, Greg Byrne from the City's Planning Division provided an update on the process being developed by the City to assess Natural Heritage features and functions, including hydrogeology and the potential cumulative impacts of future development on High Park. Brent Raymond from DTAH then gave presentations focused on the draft guiding principles and options being tested for the development alternatives. 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 a draft 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.

**The draft guiding principles and options for testing are on the right track.** Members of the LAC showed support for the draft guiding principles and options for testing, identifying features they liked as well as suggested changes and additions.

**Ensure sunlight and sky views are maintained on Bloor Street.** LAC members suggested adding a guiding principle and/or a special performance standard that protects several hours of sunlight on Bloor St. throughout the entire year.

**Strengthen the protection of natural heritage.** Members of the LAC suggested strengthening the language of the natural heritage guiding principle from “should” to “shall” or “will” to reflect language in the Provincial Policy Statement or Official. LAC members also restated their desire to have environmentally sensitive areas considered in all aspects of the Avenue Study.

**Carefully consider cycling infrastructure options on Bloor Street.** Some LAC members said they would like to see bike lanes in Bloor West Village on Bloor St. to promote active transportation and make cycling a safer experience. Others said it would be important for the City to understand and consider any impacts on businesses on Bloor St. from installing bike lanes and potentially removing on-street parking.

**Development on Bloor St. should be sensitive to the adjacent neighbourhoods.** Members of the LAC said that in addition to being sensitive to existing development along Bloor St., future development should be sensitive to established neighbourhoods and the planning policies that guide their development.

## Detailed summary of feedback

Over the course of the meeting, participants asked questions of clarification and shared feedback about the draft guiding principles, the options being tested for the development alternatives, the Study process and other feedback. The detailed summary below organizes participants’ feedback within these different topics. Participants also shared feedback by email, which has been incorporated in the summary (see Appendix C — Written Feedback).

### 1. Questions of Clarification

Participants asked questions of clarification after the presentations. The questions have been organized by presentation topic and include responses from the City and/or study team, which follow each question in *italics*.

## Natural Heritage

Greg Byrne explained that City Planning will be meeting with staff from Toronto Water, Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry, Ravine and Natural Feature Protection and the Toronto & Region Conservation Authority to discuss potential cumulative impacts of intensification on the natural environment, in particular around High Park. Greg also explained that City Staff are looking at developing a Terms of Reference to assess Natural Heritage and Hydrogeology. Questions from the ensuing discussion are below, with responses from the City and/or study team follow questions in *italics*.

- Is the list of Divisions and Agencies shown in the presentation (Toronto Water, Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry Ravine and Natural Feature Protection and Toronto & Region Conservation Authority) a complete list of staff City Planning will be meeting with to discuss cumulative impacts on natural heritage? *These are the groups we are currently planning to meet with. If they recommend we meet with others, we will.*
- Will the findings from the natural heritage assessment be ready to present at the October Community Council presentation, along with recommendations from the Avenue Study? *This is yet to be determined, it will depend on the outcome of the natural heritage meetings being held with the various City departments.*
- Will you be meeting with a geo-hydrologist? *Yes, they will be from Toronto Water.*
- Will the City be looking at the geohydrology impacts of underground parking? *We will be looking broadly at the incremental development impacts on High Park and groundwater that feeds into High Park. Toronto Water has a separate process to examine development applications on a site-by-site basis.*
- Can we supply additional information for the meeting City Planning is going to hold with other city staff? *Yes, the meeting date has not been set but you can send in information as soon as it's ready. Councillor Sarah Doucette will also share any information she has received / receives from residents with City staff.*

## Draft Guiding Principles

- Does the guiding principle, “protect and preserve natural heritage areas” refer only to parks? *No, it refers to all natural areas, including the Humber Valley, High Park, and Ravine Lands.*
- Will the City’s Midrise Performance Standards still apply to Bloor West Village once the Avenue Study is complete? *No, once we have a site-specific planning policy for the area approved by Council it will replace the Midrise Performance Standards. We are using the Midrise Performance Standards as background information for the Avenue Study.*
- There are some large active applications in the Apartment Neighbourhood, what is happening with these? *Councillor Doucette said they anticipate these coming before Council in the second quarter of 2018. City staff said the Apartment Neighbourhood will be subject to some area-specific analysis as result of preliminary applications in the area.*

## Options being tested

- What do you mean by testing? Were the examples shown of Bathurst St. visual representation of tests? *We develop a 3D digital model that will show examples of the different options being tested. Yes, the Bathurst St. examples showed specific options that were tested in this area.*
- Could we have a computer animated fly-through of Bloor West Village to give a comprehensive example of the different options / levels of development? *We usually pick specific sites as opposed to doing a complete fly through because we don't want to agitate property owners by showing their properties publicly.*
- Will the testing include a review of the City's various planning policy documents? *Yes.*
- Will you be looking at both the existing and planned built form context when testing different options? *Yes.*

## 2. Feedback about the draft guiding principles

### General feedback about the draft guiding principles

**Support for the draft guiding principles.** Several members of the LAC showed support for the draft guiding principles and felt they will help to create a good vision for Bloor West Village.

**Appropriate intensification.** LAC members suggested that more of the guiding principles include language that explicitly supports and encourages appropriate intensification. It was noted that "Support Main Street Economic Vitality" is the only principle that directly mentions intensification.

**Encourage a full range of housing types.** Members of the LAC suggested the study team and City use the guiding principles and other planning tools to encourage a full range of housing options for the area. Some LAC members raised concerns about having too many "tiny boxes in the sky" and not enough housing for families.

**Allowing for greater flexibility on Bloor Street.** Some LAC members suggested modifying the language in the "Build a Clear and Consistent Planning Policy" principle. There was concern that the principle as worded could be used to justify developing both sides of Bloor in the same way, which could result in greater-than-desired development (especially on the south side).

**Protecting sunlight and skyview.** LAC members suggested adding a guiding principle or language under and existing principles that calls for the protection of sunlight and skyview. There was also a suggestion to develop a special performance standard to ensure several hours of direct sun on the north side of Bloor St. throughout the year (including the winter months).

**Economic impacts of prescribed building heights and setbacks.** A member of the LAC raised concerns about the economic impacts associated with delineating building heights and setbacks in the study area, noting that sites may not develop if their current use is worth far more than their inherent land value. They suggested it would be more worthwhile to ensure a high quality

at-grade experience and community improvements that could be attained through development.

**Architectural Heritage.** Some LAC members said they would like to see buildings with potential architectural heritage value evaluated before the Avenue Study modelling is completed for these sites. There was also a suggestion to identify architectural heritage preservation as a guiding principle.

#### [Feedback about specific guiding principles](#)

**Encourage a Context Sensitive Built Form.** There was a suggestion to change the principle's title to: "Encourage Development that Complements, Emulates or is Compatible with its Adjacent Built Form". Additionally, there was a suggestion to remove the word "context" from the principle's description to avoid it being used to give permissions to do the opposite of the principle's original intent, e.g. exceed height requirements.

**Preserve and Protect the Natural Heritage Areas.** There was a suggestion to change the word "should" in the principle's description to "shall" or "will" to strengthen the principle by using language reflected in the Provincial Policy Statement or Official Plan.

**Protect Adjacent Neighbourhoods, Parks and Open Spaces.** There was a suggestion to revise the principle's title to: "Protect the Structures and Eco Systems of Adjacent Neighbourhoods, Parks and Open Spaces". It was also suggested the principle's description state that new development should: be sensitive to surrounding established neighbourhoods, provide a hydrological study, and prohibit underground parking that immediately impacts neighbourhood homes.

**Build a Clear and Consistent Planning Policy.** There was a suggestion to revise this principle to include clear policy language that ensures the zoning and existing planning policies of the adjacent neighbourhoods are respected, including the Swansea Secondary Plan, Mid-Rise Guidelines and Character Attributes of the Village. A rewrite was suggested as follows: Build an Area Specific Amendment/By-Law to be incorporated into the Official Plan with Consistent Planning Policy that respects and compliments the appropriate zoning of the BWV and its adjacent neighbourhoods.

### 3. [Feedback about the options being tested](#)

#### [General feedback about the options being tested](#)

**Support for the proposed options being tested.** Several members of the LAC said they generally like the proposed options for testing

**Midblock connections and laneway access.** There was a suggestion to test options for different midblock connections, including access through laneways. There was a concern that allowing development to extend to the property line will prohibit midblock connections and laneway access.

**Properties volunteered for testing.** A few of the LAC members said the team could use their properties to test different options for midblock infill. *The team thanked the LAC members and said they would look in to whether their properties are appropriate for testing midblock options.*

**Cycling infrastructure.** There was a request for separated bike lanes, or at a minimum painted bike lanes, on Bloor St. to encourage active transportation and make cycling along Bloor safer and more comfortable.

There were some differences of opinion about the economic impacts bike lanes could have on local businesses. Some said bike lanes would require the removal of a lane parking, which would be problematic for local businesses that rely on parking on Bloor St. for many of their customers. Others referenced a survey completed by the Clean Air Partnership that says more people walk to Bloor West Village than drive (and that merchants overestimated the percent of people who drive to Bloor West Village). There was a suggestion to put the short-term parking in the centre of the street with bicycle lanes at the curbs.

#### [Feedback about specific options](#)

**Roadway zone and bike lanes.** There was a suggestion to combine the Roadway Zone and Bike Lanes options and explore an additional option that would include: short term angled parking in the middle of the street; longer term parking in adjacent parking lots; and protected bike lanes (with bollards) adjacent to sidewalks. (See appendix C for a full description and sketch of this option).

#### 4. [Feedback about endangered species and the natural environment](#)

**Chimney swifts.** Some LAC members reiterated their concerns about chimney swifts. They said that development could destroy the habitat of chimney swifts, which are a Threatened Species and abundant in the Bloor West Area. They suggested the team consider ways the Avenue Study and/or other planning tools could be used to protect chimney swifts.

**Environmentally Sensitive Areas.** Some members repeated their suggestions from previous meetings that environmentally sensitive areas, including High Park, Humber River and ravines that run through the area be considered in all aspects of the Avenue Study.

## 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 committed to sharing a digital copy of the presentation. Brent explained that the City and study team will be testing options during May and will come back to the LAC to present and seek feedback on a preferred design alternative in June, before going back out to the public.

## Appendix A. Participant List

### Stakeholders

**Bloor West Village BIA / Property Owner.** Alexandra Marion  
**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.** Tara Christie  
**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  
**DTAH.** Brent Raymond  
**DTAH.** Chris Veres  
**MMM/WSP.** Jim Gough  
**Leah Birnbaum Consulting | Urban Planning.** Leah Birnbaum  
**Swerhun Facilitation.** Ian Malczewski  
**Swerhun Facilitation.** Matthew Wheatley

## Appendix B. Meeting Agenda

Bloor West Village Avenue Study

### Local Advisory Committee Meeting 1

Monday, April 24, 2017

7:00 – 9:00 pm

Swansea Town Hall, Rousseau Room

95 Lavinia Avenue

**Meeting Purpose:** To provide an update on the study process and confirm direction for the next stage of work by presenting and seeking feedback on the draft guiding principles and options being tested.

#### Proposed Agenda

- 7:00 Welcome & introductions**  
Councillor Sarah Doucette & Swerhun Facilitation
- 7:10 Review agenda & Terms of Reference**  
Swerhun Facilitation
- 7:15 High Park Natural Heritage Update**  
City of Toronto
- 7:25 Presentation: Parallel Initiatives, Key Messages to Date & Draft Guiding Principles**  
DTAH
- 7:40 Discussion: Parallel Initiatives, Key Messages to Date & Draft Guiding Principles**
1. What do you like about the draft guiding principles?
  2. Is there anything you would change about the draft guiding principles? If so, what would you change and why?
- 7:55 Presentation: Testing of Options**
- 8:15 Discussion: Testing of Options**
1. What do you like about the options being tested?
  2. Are there any other options you would like to see tested?
- 8:55 Wrap Up & Next Steps**
- 9:00 Adjourn**



## Appendix C — Feedback submitted after the meeting

- Email from North Drive
- Email from Swansea Area Ratepayers Association
- Email from High Park Natural Heritage Committee
- Email from a Property Owner
- Email from Bloor West Village Residents' Association and Old Mill Humbercrest Neighbourhood Association
- Letter 1 from High Park Natural Environment Committee
- Letter 2 from High Park Natural Environment Committee

## Email from North Drive

Hi All,

I trust all is well.

I wanted to re-introduce myself as I attended your LAC meeting for the Bloor West Avenue Study last night. I am a Partner at a condominium development group, North Drive, who is quite active in this area, we are currently occupying an 11-storey building (The High Park) and are two-levels underground at our 9-storey project (Picnic – The High Park Phase II). We also own an investment property in the area.

I would like to caution the group if the intent of the study is to delineate heights and setbacks throughout the study area. I believe that if the intent is to do such a study one has to assess the economics of these projects. For example, the economics of building a 6-storey building on a 15,000 sf site for which you had to purchase the land instead of having owned it for decades is not practical unless you're fetching \$1,000+ psf.

In my opinion, a more worthwhile endeavour when focusing on the new built-form is to ensure that the at-grade experience in terms of materials, retail and landscaping are done to a high quality. A discussion on allowing for more height when a developer uses higher end exterior finishes would be good. Or focusing on how community improvements could be attained through development. For example, if the Daniels site at 1844 Bloor could have been developed as a 30-storey tower with a public park instead of a U-shaped 14-storey building taking up the whole block (similar to Lanterra on Wellesley). Or if the community feels that they need more daycares/schools, how could we potentially give more density to a site and ensure such a public good is incorporated.

Obviously, my perspective is different from most of the people in the LAC, but I firmly believe that the study must incorporate the economic realities of the built-form if you are to prescribe heights to sites. Otherwise, most sites will not be developed as their current use is worth far more than their inherent land value.

If the intent is ultimately to place a height on stretches of the study area I would ask that you definitely place more weight on the recent precedents such as Tridel (two Old Mill projects at the South Kingsway), the previous OMB approval at the Odeon Theatre, our two sites (1990 and 2114 Bloor) and Daniels (1844 Bloor Street West) than solely on the midrise building guidelines. These sites don't adhere to all the guidelines, but attempt to adhere to many of them. Also, I would like to personally be involved if the study evaluates our investment property if a height is to be prescribed.

Cheers, and I look forward to the next meeting.

Email from Swansea Area Ratepayers Association

Bloor West Village Avenue Study

Local Advisory Committee Meeting #1

Monday, April 24, 2017

## **Feedback on the Draft Guiding Principles and Testing Options**

**Veronica Wynne**, Swansea Area Ratepayers Association

### **Draft Guiding Principles – Changes for Success**

#### **1. Page 21 – Built Form Principle Suggested Rewrite**

- **Encourage Development that Compliments, Emulates or is Compatible with its Adjacent Built Form**

**Principle: New development should be appropriate to its adjacent built form along Bloor Street West which contains a number of distinct areas and segments**

**Rationale:** The use of the word **'Context'** has become loaded with permissions to do the opposite to what is intended by the original description for this Built Form guiding principle. In Bloor West, Developers have already used **Context** to compromise the height requirements of the Mid-Rise Guidelines. At 2 Old Mill and in the application for the Humber Odeon, the entitlement of context has produced disastrous implications and potential impact on the neighbourhood behind them. They have used context to the disadvantage of the BWV with the Planning Dept. seemingly unable to do anything about it because of OP requirements. Best to leave the word **'Context'** out of the writing of the Avenue Study!!

#### **2. Page 25 – Planning Policy Suggested Rewrite**

- **Build an Area Specific Amendment/By-Law to be incorporated into the Official Plan with Consistent Planning Policy that respects and compliments the appropriate zoning of the BWV and its adjacent neighbourhoods.**

**Principle: Land use and built form permissions shall respect the zoning, Swansea Secondary Plan, Mid-Rise Guidelines and Character Attributes of the Village and be applied with appropriate consistency throughout the BWV and Adjacent Neighbourhoods except where clear differences arise e.g. newly created Public Green, height provisions (lower) for skyview and sunlight access etc.**

**Rationale:** Policy planning for the Avenue cannot be done in isolation or without consideration of its impact on the Neighbourhoods adjacent to the Village. The priority of good planning should be on people and how they can live in harmony with their neighbourhoods and the Village as a commercial centre. Without the certainty of policy definition such as described,

creativity in arriving at the necessary balance will be clouded by the suspicion that we are playing one against the other.

### **3. Page 23 – Protect Adjacent Neighbourhoods Suggested Rewrite**

#### **Protect the Structures and Eco Systems of 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. It should also provide a hydrological study of the site and adjacent neighbourhoods in consideration of the underground aquifers and pre-existing ponds and their impact on the structure of the 100 year old homes in the Neighbourhood. This protection should include the prohibition of underground parking in any new development immediately impacting the neighbourhood homes.

**Rationale:** Historically in Swansea, Tall Buildings have experienced \$1.5 million in damages as a result of the hydrological impacts of the underground water systems and the dewatering process. Other areas in Toronto have experienced neighbourhood homes imploding as a result of in-depth drilling for underground parking.

#### **Testing of Options**

Pages 49 & 50 - Options for Testing Street – Roadway Zone & Bike Lanes

#### **Roadway Zone and Bike Lanes Combined – Suggested Rewrite**

##### **Page 50A - Roadway and Bike Lanes Zoning**

- Short term parking will be located in the middle of the street instead of a median
- Parking will be short term to a max of 30 mins
- Longer term parking goes to the adjacent parking lots
- Cars parked horizontally with lines going north to south
- Cars will enter parking going west and exit going east and vice versa – no backing out!
- Bike lanes will be closest to the sidewalks protected by bollards
- This should allow for one to two traffic lanes going each way – no truck stoppages
- Space for Turn lanes can be facilitated at each end of the short term parking

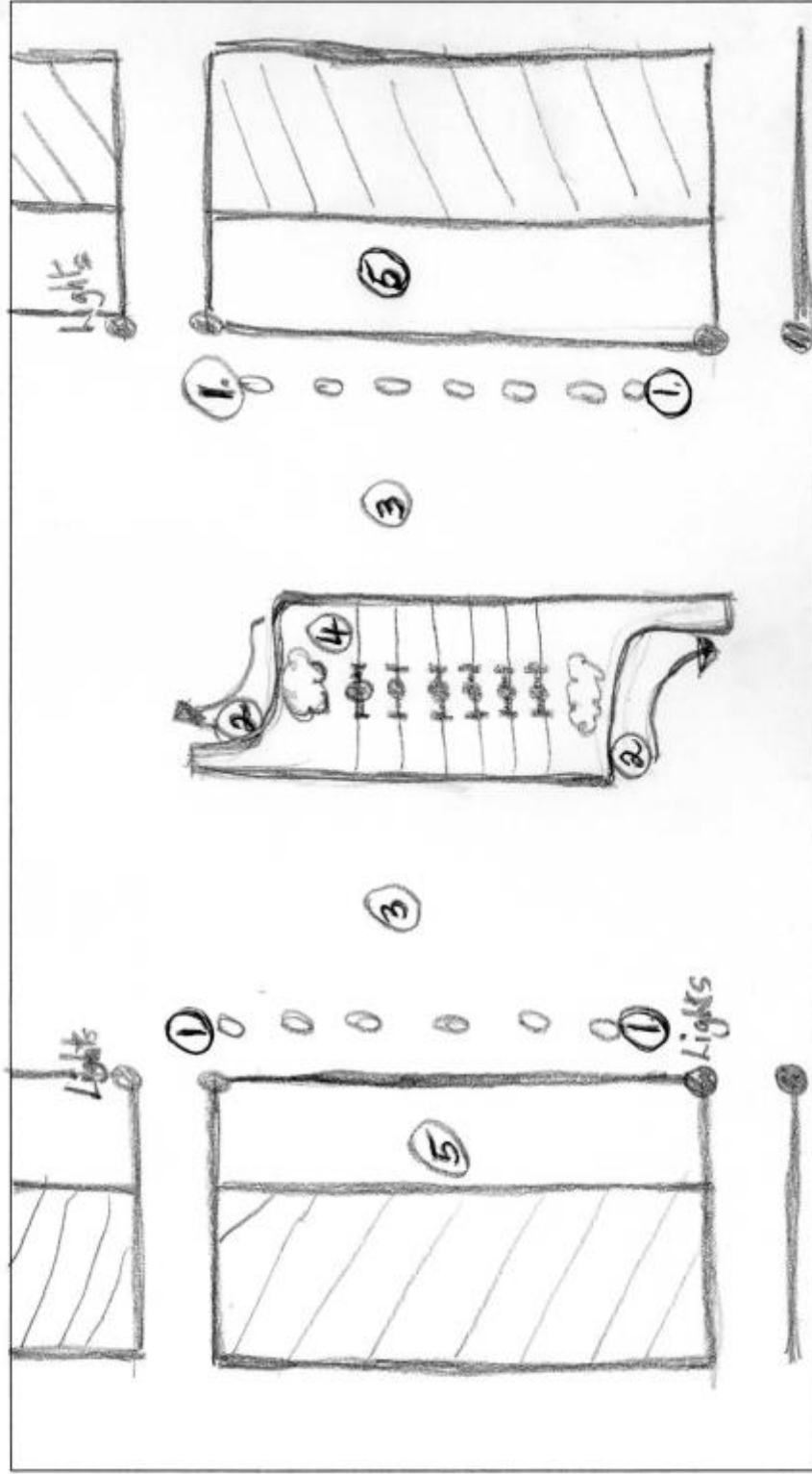
I have attached a drawing for further clarification – more artistic than graphic design!!

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.

**Options for Testing Street Design**  
**BWV Avenue Study LAC Page 50A**

**Roadway Zones & Bike Lanes Combination**

Legend: 1. Bike Bollards 2. Turn Lanes 3. Roadway 4. Short Term Park 5. Sidewalks



### Email from High Park Natural Heritage Committee

On slide 24, natural heritage, the word "should" should be changed to "shall" (to reflect the language of the PPS) or "will" (to reflect the language of the Official Plan). The province has used its strongest provisions to ensure that development shall not be permitted unless it has been shown there is no negative impact on natural heritage features and their ecological functions.

### Email from a property owner

I wanted to share the following link regarding the feasibility of bike lanes on Bloor. It was a survey completed by the Clean Air Partnership, funded in part by Transport Canada:[http://www.cleanairpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/BikeLanes\\_Parking\\_Business\\_BloorWestVillageNewCover.pdf](http://www.cleanairpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/BikeLanes_Parking_Business_BloorWestVillageNewCover.pdf)

I thought this document would be helpful as during our discussion last Monday, the owner of Marlboroughs cautioned against bike lanes and the importance of parking for their patrons. This document actually shows that more people walk to BWV, than drive and that "Merchants overestimated the percentage of people who drive to Bloor West Village..."

We all have a part to play in the growth of the city and encouraging active transportation is critical, instead of maintaining and allowing status quo for car use. We cannot grow to the extend the City has projected and allow the car to be dominant - all of the planning documents published by the City and Province all stress the importance of Active Transportation (less stress on infrastructure, better air quality in the city, reduced gridlock, etc). This means that we all need to change our behaviours for how we get around the city, residents and business owners included.

I look forward to the next meeting.

Email from Bloor West Village Residents' Association and Old Mill Humbercrest Neighbourhood Association

Thank you for forwarding the presentation material from the first LAC meeting on April 24. It is gratifying to see how quickly the study is progressing and that the key principles now identified, accurately reflect (for the most part) the interests of our community. That said, we would like to elaborate on the following on-going issues :

**Shadow Impacts**

Although there has been some recognition of the importance of micro-climate and particularly sun-access to the on-going vitality of the study area, we are concerned that the current City guidelines on shadow studies do not adequately address our situation. As we understand it, the requirement originally intended for the Central Area (and now apparently applied City-wide), prescribes only that a minimum of five hours of sunlight be provided at street level for the Spring and Summer months from March 21 to September 21. This may have proven to be a realistic standard in the Central Area where high-rise buildings are the accepted norm; however, along the Avenues (such as our study area) beyond the core, we would strongly suggest that the standard doesn't sufficiently protect the key attribute of sun exposure, especially along the north side of our East-West streets.

Perhaps, Carl Blanchaer of the Design Review Panel recently summarized it best in his comment that upon reflection, he is a frequent visitor to Bloor West Village because it is "*sunny*", particularly during the colder seasons. And his experience is likely reflective of the hundreds of other locals and visitors who flock to the north side of Bloor Street on those bright days in January and February. The difficulty with the current standard is that it provides no protection during these or the other months between September and March.

At this point, our concern about the potential impacts of taller buildings along the south side of Bloor Street is mainly based on our recent experiences at the OMB with 2265/79 Bloor Street. We know that if that site is re-developed at 25 m as agreed to at the Board, and in the worst case the same height is replicated along most of the south side, then the north side will be mostly in shadow during November and February, and entirely in shadow for all of December and January. We would respectfully suggest that this is an entirely unacceptable result for the community with unknown negative impacts on the vitality of the retail strip during the Fall and Winter months.

In our view, what is needed is a special performance standard similar to that which now applies to parks and public spaces in the Toronto, or some other variation thereof, which ensures at least several hours of direct sun on the north side of Bloor Street throughout the year. We would request that this suggestion be given all due consideration before any modeling of built form alternatives proceeds during the next phase of the study.

## **Architectural Heritage**

Within the study area, a number of buildings with potential architectural heritage value were identified in our HCD nomination document. It was our expectation that these would have been evaluated as to their heritage merits by now, either as part of this or the HCD study. However, As there has been no information forthcoming, nor has architectural heritage preservation been specifically identified as key guiding principle, we are concerned that the built form modeling work will proceed without due consideration of these buildings. More specifically, it would be premature and therefore inappropriate in our view to superimpose any modeling on the affected sites until their existing merits have been evaluated and understood. The affected buildings are all referenced in the Appendix to the HCD nomination document.

We thank you and the study team in advance for your consideration of the concerns outlined above and look forward to your response.



## Letter 1 from High Park Natural Environment Committee

Bloor West Village Avenue Study – feedback LAC session on Apr 24, 2017 and Meeting Summary, LAC

Hello everyone,

First of all, let me express my appreciation for participating in LAC and this opportunity for community input as a part of the Secondary Study. I truly value this experience and working with all of you. Learning from each other, communicating and sharing with other stakeholders of the relevant input is absolutely of the essence if we want to make this process frugal.

### **Important role of BWV Avenue Study in respect to Toronto’s vision of building of a sustainable city to remain viable and achievable**

BWV Avenue Study, Local Advisory Committee and city staff developing the Terms of Reference for assessing the Natural Heritage may play a pivotal role in respect to Toronto’s vision of building a sustainable city remaining viable and achievable.

*“Our own urban-region recently surpassed 6 million people and in this rapidly urbanizing world, questions are being asked as to how we can design our urban regions to be more sustainable and resilient for all species that inhabit them.” (The Chief Planner Roundtable Biodiverse TO).*

The fact, that this Avenue Study covers a city-wide resource-High Park-Jewel of parks, together with Humber Park and both parks representing some of the city most vital natural heritage systems, including the Humber River corridor puts a critical importance on making right decisions to preserve and protect this heritage for a long time, enhance it and increase the connectivity.

Experts say how cities handle rapid urbanization in the coming decades will be critical to protecting biodiversity and human health, as well as combating climate change.

The recent **The Chief Planner Roundtable Biodiverse TO** on May 12, stressed the crucial importance of preserving biodiversity in Toronto and integration of *Design for Biodiversity or Biodiversity in Design* into “all aspects of city-building, including land use planning, urban design, transportation, parks and natural heritage management, energy production, waste management and public health, we will begin to design truly sustainable cities.” (**The Chief Planner Roundtable Biodiverse TO**).

The reasons for critical importance of any current or future decisions in the area of the Avenue Study regarding development are also based on the fact that over the past few years the north of Bloor was significantly developed already, including the impacts of the development at the Grenadier Square (51 high Park) and two major active rezoning development applications submitted in the High Park Apartment Neighborhood Area.

**Change has been happening in the city of Toronto and the area of Study too fast**

Change has been happening in the city of Toronto and the area of Study too fast and so far the impacts on the Natural Heritage were not fully assessed. Not addressing of cumulative impacts regarding Natural Heritage can lead to significant degradation of the attributed features and further undermine the ecological function of designated area. Degradation and a loss of ecological function are a manifestation of the cumulative effects of piecemeal planning and the siloed approach to decision making about impacts on land, water, species, and ultimately people) “in regard to other *natural heritage features and areas*, degradation that threatens the health and integrity of the natural features or *ecological functions* for which an area is identified due to single, multiple or successive *development or site alteration* activities.” (PPS 2005)

### **Natural Heritage Impact Studies relevant to the recent past and current developments and development proposals in the area**

In the past years, the area north of High Park has been developed significantly. This includes 70 High Park Avenue (former Scientology Church), Gothic Ave., 1884 Bloor St. W. The Grenadier Square, 1990 Bloor St. W, 2114 BW St. are being built or just about to be finished. Thousands of people were added to the existing population already in respect to all density markers such as infrastructure, sewers, hospitals schools and increase use of high Park by the local residents.

Two major rezoning application are in the process, yet through this time none NHIS submitted on behalf of any development proponents has resulted in assessing of the cumulative impacts whether direct (e.g. watershed) or indirect impacts such as the increased use of the park by local residents.

Some aspect of HP’s designation and the attributed natural features as per NHIS for all above mentioned developments were based on the insufficient, outdated and incomplete information. Grenadier Pond’s information is based on 1976 study, not even mentioning that Grenadier Pond is one of the areas within High Park that has been designated as an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI) by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources based on a report by Steve Varga in 1989 and significance of this report. Also, rehabilitation and storm water management work done to Grenadier Pond is left out.

The peer review for Grenadier Squire done by Golder and Associates mentions several areas where NHIS done needed clarification or contacting of other agencies such as TRCA or MNRF (“lacking clarification in sections where the proponents has responsibility to clarify as recommended by PPS 2005, NHRM 2010, TRCA Environmental Impact Statement Guidelines 2007 and the city of Toronto Natural Heritage Impact Study terms of Reference, 2006. It also mentions that the agencies such as TRCA and/or MNRF should have been contacted.)

In terms of assessing the impacts of the increased use of the park by the local residents, relevant NHIS for the past development are unanimously stating in respect to 35 High Park development proposals which information is consistent in other NHIS from the area:

*"4. ANSI Impact on significant features and functions*

*Additional Park use not an issue*

*Objections to prescribed burns now minimal.*

*5.4 ANSI Impact*

*"...It should also be noted that the redevelopment required a cash-in-lieu contribution to the City to offset the increased recreational parkland demands by the extra residents.*

*"... the development will increase the use of the Park as additional residents will be in the vicinity. However, the Park now receives a million visits a year (City of Toronto, 2008) and has a management plan (City of Toronto, 2002) to protect and manage its features, including a trail system and delimited sensitive zones where foot traffic is discouraged. The Park is urban and for people and the additional local population from the redevelopment should not be an impact issue."*

This is based on almost 10 years old information not taking into consideration the impacts that have occurred over that time period and/or assessing degradation due to overuse of the park. Conclusion that "the park is urban and for people and that the additional local population from redevelopment should not be an impact issue" is not compatible with the intent of the policies protecting Natural Heritage and the ecological function for a long term (PPS 2005, Natural Heritage Reference Manual 2010, the City Official Plan, 2015 and relevant guidelines such as TRCA Environmental Impact Statement Guidelines, 2007)

Also, included assumption above regarding Management Plan for High Park based on 2002 data is not relevant.

**BWV Avenue Study crucial task to remedy what was not addressed so far in respect to the Natural Heritage**

Consequently, the potential mitigation in respect to the impacts has not been attempted. In this respect BWV Avenue Study crucial task is to remedy this situation accumulated from the past developments and in respect to the pending rezoning applications and the potential development ensuing as a result from BWV Avenue Study.

The reasons for degradation of the Natural Heritage are complex, including growing density all over the area and climate change but the most profound impacts in terms of cumulative disturbance and stress are the consequence of a chronically high use by the local residents. We also need to take into planning decisions and considerations that High Park is a destination for

the city wide public visitations, which is adding to the local use. If we overdevelop the area locally, there will be no mitigation to remedy the overall cumulative impacts.

During already mentioned **The Chief Planner Roundtable Biodiverse TO**, Richard Ubbens, Director of the PF&R TO presented some very valuable notions in respect to preserving designated areas for a long term, thus enhancing Toronto biodiversity:

**“Determine thresholds of use and develop criteria and measures to protect parkland from excessive use.**

*“Natural environments have a threshold (or "tipping point") for disruption beyond which severe and possibly irreversible damage is done to ecological health. Knowing where thresholds exist and when they are reached is important for understanding and managing the impacts of use. It allows for the development of early warning systems to identify at-risk locations so that timely action can protect them.”* Parks Plan 2013 2017

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/pe/bgrd/backgroundfile-57282.pdf>

**The BWV Avenue Study offers a perspective on the intensification in the area and beyond regarding human health, quality of life and preserving of the Natural Heritage for a long term**

The BWV Avenue Study is important for many reasons in terms of creating an opportunity to arrive to a much needed perspective on the impacts of intensification in the area and beyond regarding human health, quality of life and preserving the natural heritage for a long term.

*“Even though higher urban density may correlate with the increased carbon-efficiency of transportation and housing services, recent research has demonstrated that, in several cases, urban density is not a valid indicator for overall carbon-efficiency, let alone sustainability. Recent research has demonstrated that, in several cases, management and planning strategies that aim to increase urban density seem to counteract environmental objectives for regional GHG emission reductions (Heinonen 2012). Cities and towns can be regarded as the demand and consumption centres of the global economy, and also as the hot spots of waste generation (Ramaswami et al. 2008; Grimm et al. 2008).*

*Satterthwaite (2011) sums up that in terms of future worries about resource constraints and GHG emissions, it is not the growth in population but the growth in consumption that is the primary concern. When it comes to social sustainability, high urban density is not necessarily something that is desirable to populations”* (see **the Urban Density and Local Sustainability - a case study in Finland, 2013**)

Human health and quality of life directly correlate with density as numerous recent studies are pointing out. “A monumental Swedish study of over four million Swedes examined whether a high level of urbanization (which correlates with density) is associated with an increased risk of developing psychosis and depression.” (**Health, Happiness, and Density by Dr. Tony Recsei 2013**)

## **BWV Avenue potential**

BWV Avenue Study and connected activities such as LAC and Terms of Reference to assess the Natural Heritage have a great potential to remedy what was not done well in the past and enhance one of the city's most significant Natural Heritage, High Park. Let's use this to its fullest potential.

Smart Growth was never meant to disregard the Natural Heritage in GTA or exploit the most attractive or in demand locations. Urban sprawl can be as much a problem in the Green Belt as in GTA when affecting the areas adjacent or near the Natural Heritage intended to be a part of GTA green veins.

*"A balanced approach to the wise use and management of all resources, including those related to water, natural heritage, agriculture, cultural heritage, and mineral aggregates, will be implemented in the GGH."*

**This Plan recognizes and supports the role of municipal policy in providing leadership and innovation in developing a culture of conservation and addressing climate change."**

**The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, released on May 18, 2017, will come into effect on July 1, 2017.**

## Letter 2 from High Park Natural Environment Committee

Bloor West Village Avenue Study - Draft Meeting Summary April 2017 Local Advisory Committee Meeting

Lenka Holubec, Comments:

### **Guiding Principles:**

#### **1. Support Main Street Economic Activity**

In my opinion, this activity is very strong and growing without any additional support of intensification in the area.

Moreover, it seems that especially on the weekends, BWV area is too hectic, occasionally totally overwhelmed. This is increasingly distracting from “the village” character, which made this area popular and special. Once we overbuilt, we cannot bring back what was lost.

Many recreational areas have experienced this.

If we keep adding more, we may lose “the special” which is common phenomena happening in attractive areas targeted for development all over the world.

#### **2. ADD words: Protect, Preserve and Enhance Natural Heritage and Connectivity**

#### **3. ADD 12. Guiding Principle: Designs for Biodiversity or Biodiversity in Design**

**This applies to buildings, density, low height, streets, and “fingers” of green as wide as possible. Keep “the built form” to minimum and prioritize green spaces. Built green spaces into street design.**

**Increase the buffers for the Natural Heritage as much as possible. Currently High Park has only minimum 30m and that is paved road, which accordingly to Buffers guidelines is not really buffer.**

<https://www.london.ca/business/Resources/Consultant-Resources/Documents/EM-setbacks-2007.pdf>

GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINING SETBACKS AND ECOLOGICAL BUFFERS

Council Approved April 20, 2004

CITY OF LONDON GUIDELINE DOCUMENT FOR THE DETERMINATION OF  
ECOLOGICAL BUFFERS AND DEVELOPMENT SETBACKS

*This document has been prepared to set out recommended criteria and parameters to facilitate the identification of Ecological Buffers (15.3.6.iv). Impacts generally expected from urban development can often be avoided or mitigated if a very broad area of land is maintained in an undeveloped state or as green space. This area of land, called a setback is defined as the physical distance separation measured from a rear lot line or edge of developed area to an identifiable natural heritage feature. Examples of natural features include, but are not limited*

*to, Environmentally Significant Areas, woodlands, wetlands, river, stream and ravine corridors, watercourses, aquifers and ground water recharge areas. The purpose of a setback is to separate two different land uses to minimize the impact of development on natural heritage features and functions, to protect individuals and property from natural hazards, and to control access and encroachment within adjacent natural areas. The ecological buffer is an important part of the setback (Figure 1).*

*Ecological buffers serve to protect the ecological function and integrity of the Natural Heritage System (15.3.6.i). The purpose of a buffer is to minimize impacts on natural heritage features and functions and to maximize the long term viability of native species and natural systems (Riley & Mohr, 1994).*

#### **4. ADD to 10 Guiding principles:**

##### **11. Improve Life Quality and Health of the residents via Design**

The area needs not more people but conserving its unique character under changing city circumstances and the Natural Heritage for a long term.

If this is useful BWV will provide this benefit to the visitor, whether shopping or relaxing in High Park.

If this is not achieved and just more “housing is crammed” into the area the danger of losing it all is very real.

#### **Natural Heritage**

Greg Byrne

- Will the findings from the natural heritage assessment be ready to present at the October Community Council presentation, along with recommendations from the Avenue Study? *This is yet to be determined, it will depend on the outcome of the natural heritage meetings being held with the various City departments*

[To make this relevant EIS needs to be done and the results to be available for the recent development applications \(111 Pacific, 35 High Park, BWV Avenue Study\)](#)

- Will the City be looking at the geohydrology impacts of underground parking? *We will be looking broadly at the incremental development impacts on High Park and groundwater that feeds into High Park. Toronto Water has a separate process to examine development applications on a site-by-site basis?*

[How about surface water? How about cumulative impacts of the past developments?](#)

#### **General feedback about the draft guiding principles**

**Appropriate intensification.**

LAC members suggested that more of the guiding principles include language that explicitly supports and encourages appropriate intensification. It was noted that “Support Main Street Economic Vitality” is the only principle that directly mentions intensification.

**Related to this is Guiding Principle 11. Improve Life Quality and Health of the residents via Design**

The area **needs not** more people but conserving its unique character and the Natural Heritage under changing city circumstances for a long term is essential.

If successful BWV will provide this long term benefit for all residents and the citywide visitors, whether shopping in BWV or relaxing in High Park.

If this is not achieved here and just more development is allowed in, the danger of losing it all is very real.

**Economic impacts of prescribed building heights and setbacks.**

A member of the LAC raised concerns about the economic impacts associated with delineating building heights and setbacks in the study area, noting that sites may not develop if their current use is worth far more than their inherent land value. They suggested it would be more worthwhile to ensure a high quality at-grade experience and community improvements that could be attained through development.

LH: I am more concerned here about the impacts of development and intensification on health and life quality of residents and public in general as much as about the impacts on the natural heritage than about the economic impacts on a particular developer.

*“Even though higher urban density may correlate with the increased carbon-efficiency of transportation and housing services, recent research has demonstrated that, in several cases, urban density is not a valid indicator for overall carbon-efficiency, let alone sustainability. Recent research has demonstrated that, in several cases, management and planning strategies that aim to increase urban density seem to counteract environmental objectives for regional GHG emission reductions (Heinonen 2012). Cities and towns can be regarded as the demand and consumption centres of the global economy, and also as the hot spots of waste generation (Ramaswami et al. 2008; Grimm et al. 2008).*

*Satterthwaite (2011) sums up that in terms of future worries about resource constraints and GHG emissions, it is not the growth in population but **the growth in consumption that is the primary concern. When it comes to social sustainability, high urban density is not necessarily something that is desirable to populations**” (see the Urban Density and Local Sustainability - a case study in Finland, 2013)*