



DANFORTH



AVENUE
PLANNING
STUDY

Community Consultation Meeting #3 Summary Report

November 2017



Danforth Avenue Planning Study Community Consultation Meeting #3 Report

This meeting summary report was prepared by Lura Consulting, the independent facilitator and consultation specialist for the Danforth Avenue Planning Study. If you have any questions or comments regarding the report, please contact either:

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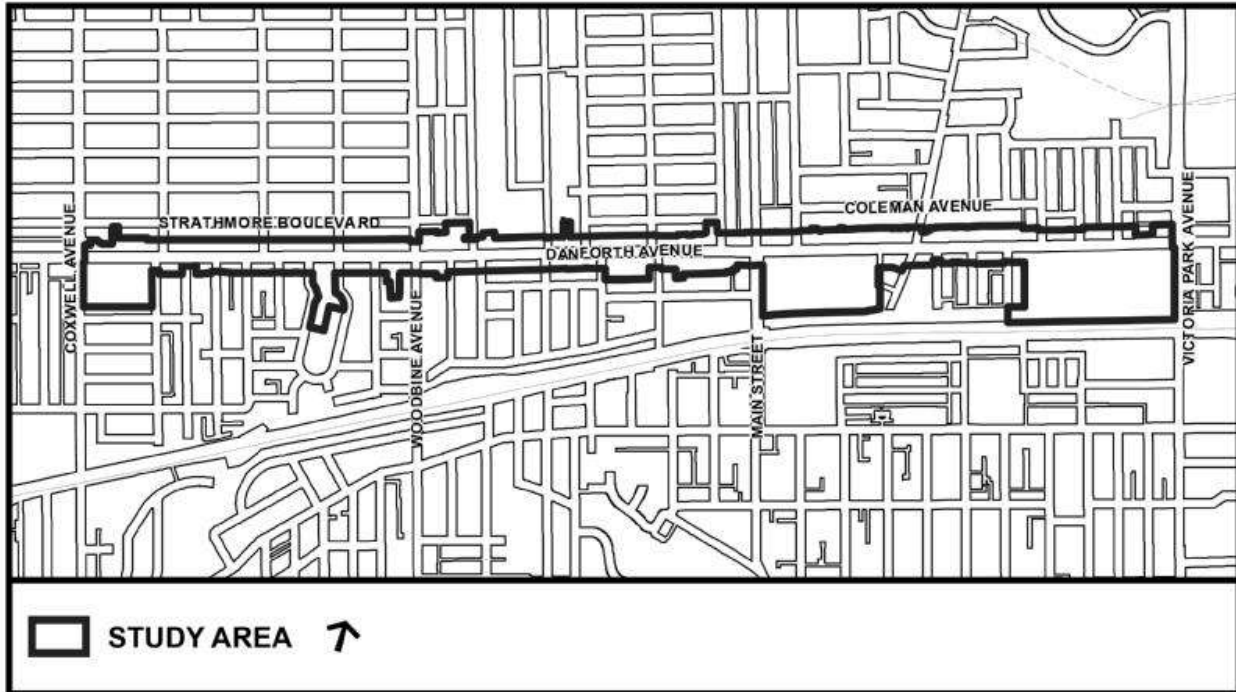
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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Danforth Avenue Planning Study is to supplement the City of Toronto’s Avenue and Mid-Rise Building Guidelines and to bring a lens of local character to the development guidelines. A key outcome of the study will be new Urban Design Guidelines and/or an Area Specific Official Plan Amendment that will help guide future development in the study area (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Danforth Avenue Planning Study Area



Community Consultation Meeting #3 – September 14, 2017

Facilitator Liz Nield of Lura Consulting welcomed community members to the third Danforth Avenue Planning Study Community Consultation Meeting. Ms. Nield described Lura’s role as the neutral facilitator for the project, which includes facilitating community consultation and stakeholder advisory committee meetings and preparing reports on the feedback received. She reviewed the agenda (Appendix A) and noted that the purpose of this consultation meeting was to:

- Provide an update on the study process and timeline; and
- Obtain feedback from the community on the built form analysis, provision of parks, and other work done to date.

Ward 31 Councillor Janet Davis and Ward 32 Councillor Mary-Margaret McMahon provided welcoming remarks.

One-hundred and twenty participants signed in at registration, but attendance at the meeting was estimated at close to 150 individuals. A total of 51 feedback forms were returned in person, via mail or online.

2. PRESENTATION

A presentation was provided by Daniel Woolfson (Community Planning), Caroline Kim (Urban Design), Pourya Nazemi (Heritage Preservation Services) and Tatum Taylor (ERA Architects Inc.). Daniel Woolfson provided an update on the study timeline and presented an overview of community and stakeholder feedback collected to-date. Daniel Woolfson presented the built form analysis, which included explaining the criteria used to determine which lots on Danforth Avenue in the study area are considered appropriate (and not appropriate) for mid-rise development. Caroline Kim identified the lots on Danforth that the City considers suitable to accommodate mid-rise development, as well as the lots recently constructed, and lots with applications under review. Daniel Woolfson identified existing and potential park and public realm spaces in the study area. Pourya Nazemi and Tatum Taylor provided an update on the Danforth Avenue Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment.

A copy of the presentation can be found on the City's Community Planning webpage at www.toronto.ca/danforthstudy.

3. QUESTIONS OF CLARIFICATION

Participants were given an opportunity to ask questions for clarification following the presentation. A summary of the discussion is provided below. Participants' questions are identified with a 'Q', comments with a 'C', and responses from the Project Team in *italics* are identified with an 'A'.

Q1. Do the Danforth Avenue setback options incorporate balconies? For example, with Option 2 would we see a projected balcony?

A1. *We are looking at having recessed or Juliet balconies, but we are here tonight to collect your feedback. If you prefer recessed balconies, please share that feedback tonight.*

Q2. Given that the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) has a history of overruling local planning decisions, how do we know our feedback will be relevant?

A2. *We are here tonight to collect your feedback. The OMB is currently still part of the planning process in Ontario, but we are here tonight to hear your opinions and incorporate those into the recommendations put forward by City staff.*

Q3. Does this study consider things like air quality?

A3. *We are not looking at specific air quality issues as part of this study, but it is common for City staff to request the submission of air and noise quality studies as part of individual development applications.*

Q4. Is it common for buildings to be demolished as part of a redevelopment project?

A4. We are showing examples of how the sites might change. There might be demolition as part of a development application, and there might not be. We don't know the specifics until a development application is submitted. It is typical that there are changes to the built form as part of a development application, and sometimes that includes demolition.

Q5. Why does intensification have to be so intense? 7-storeys cast a lot of shadows. Why can't we keep 4-storeys as currently permitted in the Zoning Bylaw?

A5. The Official Plan designates Danforth Avenue as an area to accommodate intensification. We are using this study to identify sites that might be appropriate to accommodate additional height. We are not suggesting that every site on Danforth is appropriate for a mid-rise building. We are here tonight to collect your feedback.

Q6. We already have a congestion and parking problem along Danforth Avenue. I was informed that new buildings would have less than 20% of their own parking. This will cause more parking problems. These developments have to have a certain amount of parking built in.

A6. We were asked to look at parking issues in the area and that work is ongoing. All buildings are required to provide parking on site and usually that happens below-grade. There are specific standards that are applied to each property. We are looking at parking at a high-level for this study, but parking is examined in detail at the individual application level. 20% parking is not typical for new developments along Danforth Avenue.

Q7. How many new buildings are proposed for Main Square?

A7. Two buildings were approved about 10-years ago. The site plan applications are currently being reviewed by City Planning staff.

Q8. Are there any affordable housing units included as part of these plans?

A8. We do have City policies that speak to our goals for affordable housing. Although we are not speaking about affordable housing tonight, it is a consistent goal of City Planning.

4. SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Feedback on specific questions was obtained both by providing a Feedback Form that individuals could complete at the meeting or submit by mail, email or online by Oct. 23, and through facilitators leading a discussion of an abridged version of the form at roundtables at the meeting.

Following the presentation, participants worked in these groups to identify top priorities and opportunities for improvement with regards to the built form and public realm.

Approximately 51 individual feedback forms were submitted (hardcopy, email, mail and online).

The entirety of the submitted individual answers is included as Appendices B and C and the complete record of the facilitated roundtables is included as Appendix D. A general summary of what was heard at the roundtables, and through individual responses, is provided below.

BUILT FORM

QUESTION #1: Do the proposed building heights and proposed massing scenarios respect the character of the area and support our community vision? What about stepback options 1 and 2?

- With regards to the stepbacks, there was a greater preference for the tiered Option 1 amongst roundtable participants, with several respondents mentioning balconies should not be able to hang out beyond the frontage.
- While roundtable participants seemed to favour Option 1, the online responses are inconclusive. Many participants do not give a clear preference of one option or the other. Rather, participants discuss more generally whether the proposals support the community vision.
- Most respondents to the online survey, in particular, felt the proposed changes were appropriate to the character of the area, so long as they do not become new minimums that encourage development applications for buildings beyond the 8-storey threshold. General concerns were raised about excessive heights, with many voicing a preference for the existing 4-storey height, saying that higher buildings don't support the community vision. A few suggested exempting the area from the city's Avenues designation.
- Residents who were more amenable to seeing 6, 7 or 8-storey buildings wanted assurances they would be situated properly, include family-sized (2-3 bedroom) units and affordable housing and provide adequate parking as well as designs that respect the existing scale of the streetscape, reducing the overall visual mass.
- They also were less concerned about seeing such heights at select sites than with the cumulative effects of having 6-8 storeys become the new normal on the Danforth and/or having tall developments on shallow lots transition properly to the low-rise development to the rear, limiting the total number of high rise buildings per city block.
-

QUESTION #2: What feedback or advice do you have for staff on the criteria used to establish "lots large enough to model mid-rise buildings?"

- Residents expressed some concerns about trying to squeeze tall buildings onto narrower lots. The criteria should also include a consideration for minimum frontage width.
- In regards to widths, residents said they did not want to lose the varied street wall and narrow properties that currently define the street, and that proper proportions of height, width, and depth are maintained.
- Some residents indicated that frontage should not be the only consideration. Other concerns included access (i.e. laneways), parking, and the general capacity of existing infrastructure to handle intensification.

QUESTION #3: Will the proposed sidewalk zone categories and sizes provide a more walkable, pedestrian-friendly street?

- Attendees generally liked the size of the proposed sidewalks, with some calling for even wider sidewalks, especially if a growing population was to be accommodated.

- In addition to making the street more pedestrian-friendly, participants also liked the idea of having more space for outdoor seating, deeper store frontage, and greenery.
- Safety and accessibility were also concerns. Participants want to make sure that the pedestrian environment is safe and enjoyable for all users.
- Online survey respondents expressed consistent support for wider sidewalks with some adding that including bike lanes as well would further serve to buffer foot traffic and create a better walking environment.
- There was a range of opinions, however, on how best to create spaces for patios and “merchandise zones” and how to properly accommodate all users within the ROW (e.g. adding sidewalk space without reducing road lanes).

QUESTION #4: What features of active, ground floor spaces should be reproduced in new developments to ensure a more walkable and pedestrian-friendly street?

- There was consistent agreement it was important to preserve the existing articulation and widths of storefronts.
- Suggestions for improvements included awnings, recessed doors, and bigger windows, adding benches and patios, animating laneways, advancing existing streetscaping efforts by the BIA and maintaining the use of traditional materials (e.g. brick, masonry) that exemplify the character of the street. Participants reiterated suggestions for wider sidewalks.
- Other suggestions included providing bike infrastructure (e.g. rings/racks, secure bike parking), increased accessibility, street trees and planters and encouraging diverse small-scale, boutique retail, community services and, offices, rather than large-scale chain outlets.

PARKS

QUESTION #1: What features (e.g., paving materials, landscaping, etc.) and amenities (e.g., benches, drinking fountains, playgrounds, etc.) of parks/open spaces do you like/dislike and why?

- Respondents were supportive of having more greenspace, including street trees, parkettes and community parks.
- Benches were the most cited feature that is needed but other prominent suggestions included fountains and water features (E.g. splash pads), permeable surfaces, public art, dog parks, playgrounds and sports facilities (E.g. tennis courts, swimming pools).
- Some participants expressed concerns about maintaining design features both in parks and on the sidewalk (E.g. planters, paving material).
- There was also some concern for safety and accessibility, with participants expressing a need for more lighting, safe sidewalks, and separated bike lanes.
- A few residents specifically mentioned the parkette at Danforth and Logan, centred around a fountain, as an example of a desirable location.

QUESTION #2: Where do you see the greatest need and opportunities for potential improved and new parks/open spaces/POPS (privately owned, publicly-accessible spaces)/public art? Does this work with the vision shown on the proposed “Opportunities for New Parks, Open Spaces, POPS, Public Art” map?

- Main Square and Shopper’s World were cited as places with potential for greening/revitalization. Areas 2 and 3 are most obviously in need of parks and public spaces.
- Residents also mentioned the need for more benches, animated spaces, parkettes and other smaller places to rest along the street.
- Alleyways and surface parking lots were mentioned as potential spaces for future green spaces and others mentioned the opportunities north of the Danforth for dog parks and for connecting to the ravines.
- The TTC barns at Coxwell were also mentioned as a site with potential and some also saw an opportunity to create rooftop green spaces.
- Again, there was some concern around the safety and maintenance of these spaces, with requests for more lighting.

HERITAGE

QUESTION #1: How would you describe the experience of Danforth Avenue as a historic main street? What do you value about the buildings on Danforth?

- Participants had mixed views on the area’s heritage characteristics and historic nature beyond a general appreciation for the scale and age of its buildings, urban form, and walkability. Even if it was not a “Historic Main Street,” many still appreciated the small-town feel and variety of the low-rise streetscape. The scale of the streetscape and storefronts were cited again.
- Several cited the brick and old churches and general preservation of its 1920s character while also saying it was in need of revitalization and potential as a hub.

QUESTION #2: What buildings in the study area would you consider to have special meaning, such as gathering spaces or community landmarks?

- The TTC’s Coxwell Barns, the old Hydro building (at Morton Road), the churches (Hope United and Mennonite), and the public library were the most frequently mentioned sites with potential heritage value.
- Other suggestions included the Bus Terminal Diner, Trace Hardware, Main Square, Hakim Optical, and local banks.
- Though not a building, East Lynn Park was often referenced as a community landmark.

METROLINX CONNECTIVITY STUDY

QUESTION #1: What feedback do you have for Metrolinx on the ongoing connectivity study?

- Participants strongly agreed on the need to improve the connection between the Main Street TTC station and the Danforth GO station, with many supportive of a covered passage or tunnel.
- However, there was a range of opinions on how best to accomplish it in a cost-effective and accessible manner.

- Other issues raised addressed better coordination of service, improved pedestrian and bicycle connections and ensuring there is adequate capacity at Main station to handle an upsurge in population/ridership. Participants were also concerned about a lack of parking near stations, as well as safety and accessibility for pedestrians.
- Though it is not directly related to the Study, several participants expressed support for the Downtown Relief Line.
- A number of participants mentioned that they did not know enough about the Metrolinx study, and were looking for further information.

LAND USE - AUTO

QUESTION #1: Staff have heard that members of the community do not like auto-related uses (i.e. car washes, auto-repair, and gas stations, etc.) in this area. What is the concern around auto-related uses in this area?

- Residents were very divided on the appropriateness of continued auto-oriented land uses in the study area.
- While some felt strongly that they encouraged low-density development, broke up the streetscape and were visually unappealing; however, others argued they were important for providing jobs and needed services for drivers, who would otherwise have to drive further for gas, repairs, etc.
- Some were emphatic that auto-uses (especially dealerships, which do not directly serve the neighbourhood) were a “waste of space”; however, others cited examples such as the Leslieville Pumps, where an old auto-centric use was integrated into the new character of the streetscape.

QUESTION #2: What auto-related uses are appropriate in this location?

- Participants were generally less concerned with specific uses than the quantity of those uses within the area. Some participants suggested limiting the number of auto-related businesses, with a focus on smaller, local businesses, and encouraging overall density.
- Gas stations were the most accepted use, while car dealerships (with their large footprints and lack of street presence) were the least desired. Participants were also supportive of parking for use of local amenities.

QUESTION #3: If all or some auto-related uses weren't permitted on Danforth Avenue, how would that improve your neighbourhood?

- Several residents were adamant that the neighbourhood would *not* be improved through the removal of these services as it would result in a loss of employment and local services. It would, for example, remove a venue for local residents to leave their car for repair and walk home.
- Other residents appreciated that everything from air quality and noise, to the streetscape and feel of the neighbourhood, would improve with fewer or none of these uses present. It would

make the streetscape more appealing and safer for walking, cycling, shopping and other family-friendly activities.

- Furthermore, without the auto-related uses, there would be more space for other land uses and a wider variety of businesses.

OTHER FEEDBACK

QUESTION #1: Do you have any additional feedback or advice?

- Participants took the opportunity to reiterate previously made comments and also to mention other issues including:
 - Ensuring a mix of employment and residential uses through intensification and increased density.
 - Ensuring adequate parking and transit access for a growing population with increased traffic.
 - Ensuring there is adequate and affordable housing.
 - Ensuring there is adequate community programming and schools.
 - Ensure connectivity and accessibility between transit hubs, including bike lanes.
 - Ensure there is adequate community and public space, including greenspace.
 - The potential value of expanding the study area north and south of the Danforth itself and considering the overall context of intensification.
 - Remembering to consider the infrastructure needs of the existing neighbourhood.
 - Preserving the human scale of the streetscape, aiming for a more people-oriented street.
 - Focusing on resident and pedestrian safety. Certain participants were concerned about poverty, homelessness and crime in the area.
 - Requesting that guidelines do not become new minimums, which developers can exceed.
 - Given the dominance of small lots in the area, the opportunity should be taken to provide a large-scale development on the Coxwell Barns site.
 - The importance of listening to comments from residents and incorporating them into the process. Some participants expressed that they wanted further opportunities to provide feedback (i.e. discussion period was too short). A few participants also noted that consultations should target various cultural groups and recent immigrants within the neighbourhood.

APPENDIX A: Agenda

Community Consultation Meeting #3

Thursday, September 14, 2017

6:30 pm – 9:00 pm

Hope United Church, 2550 Danforth Avenue

Meeting Purpose: 1) Provide update on study process and timeline; and 2) Obtain feedback from the community on the built form analysis, provision of parks, and other work done to date.

AGENDA

- 6:30 pm **Open House**
Staff from the City of Toronto, ERA Architects and Metrolinx will be available to respond to questions and provide information about the Planning Study, Heritage Study, and Metrolinx Connectivity Study.
- 7:00 pm **Introductions, Agenda Review and Welcome**
Liz Nield, Facilitator – Lura Consulting
Councillor Janet Davis, Ward 31 – City of Toronto
Councillor Mary-Margaret McMahon, Ward 32 – City of Toronto
- 7:10 pm **Presentation**
Daniel Woolfson, Community Planning – City of Toronto
Caroline Kim, Urban Design – City of Toronto
Pourya Nazemi, Heritage Preservation Services, City of Toronto
Tatum Taylor – ERA Architects
- 7:40 pm **Questions of Clarification**
Liz Nield, Facilitator – Lura Consulting
- 7:45 pm **Small Table Exercise**
Mapping exercise to identify top priorities and opportunities for improvement with regards to the built form and public realm.
- 8:45 pm **Small Table Report Back**
Liz Nield, Facilitator – Lura Consulting