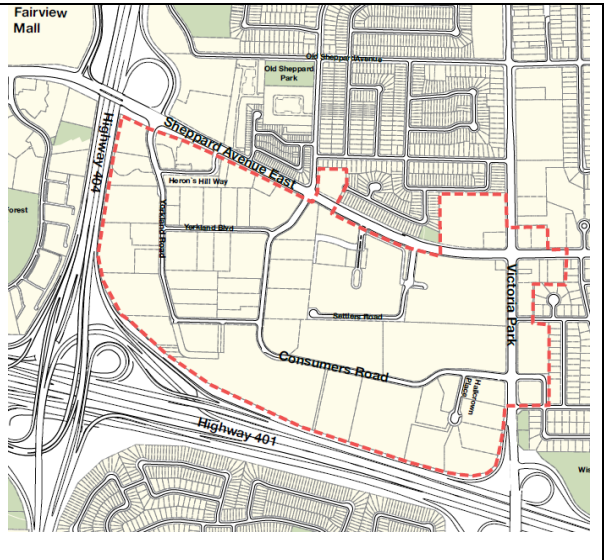


ConsumersNext Study: Consumers Road Secondary Plan	
Design Team	DTAH - Brent Raymond Millward & Assoc – Melanie Melnyk
Review	First Review
Application	City Study
City Staff	Christian Ventresca, Policy Planning Dawn Hamilton, Urban Design
Conflict of Interest	one
Vote	No Vote



Introduction

City staff outlined the project history and the purpose of the review: to introduce the ConsumersNext study to the Panel, receive early comments on the study approach, and explore key design themes emerging from the background review, inventory and analysis done to date. Specifically City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

- Creating an identity for the ConsumersNext study area as a place for people and business;
- How to weave the ConsumersNext area into the fabric of the City of Toronto; and
- The study approach necessary to delivery on these issues.

Staff commented that the project is intended to return to the Panel in the future for a Workshop of options as it progresses.

The consultant described the background information, context for the study, inventory and analysis and feedback from the various public engagement sessions.

Chair's Summary

The Panel appreciates the proponent team's sharing of preliminary concepts early in the design process; and the team's goal of setting a strategic vision for the Study Area. Given the size, location and use mix of the area this is an excellent opportunity to create a precedent-setting strategic vision and benchmark for responsible redevelopment. The Panel encourages "outside the box" design development; including the following:

- A complete work/live/enjoy mixed-use community; with a pedestrian-first environment, optimized right to natural light and view, and sensitively-scaled urban character.

- An Area-wide holistic inter-dependent sustainability strategy.
- Building upon Silicon Valley precedents for environments enabling of new work styles and operations for all sizes of organizations and enterprises.
- Introduction throughout the Area of an interconnected variety of publically accessible green/open spaces and related amenities.
- A phasing strategy that anticipates change over time; including thoughtfully staged responsible densification.

Related Commentary

Panel appreciated the opportunity to provide early commentary on the study before design options have been established. They noted the existing challenging conditions ranging from a "hostile" public realm to significant traffic issues. In addition to improving traffic and connectivity issues, the team was urged to improve the pedestrian realm "in every possible way". Key recommendations were as follows:

Urban Design Strategy Specific to the Site

The Panel noted the success of the area in attracting employment uses important to the city, and urged the design team to be careful not to disrupt the success of the area. It was advised that the team develop a strategy tailored to the site, and to be cautious in assuming typical urban design strategies used in the downtown.

The opportunity for a landscape urbanism on the site (a landscape-focused approach as an organizing element) was encouraged to address site-specific issues. In addition, it was advised to develop a particular landscape strategy to address the reality of surface parking and existing economic conditions preventing underground parking.

Specific comments were as follows:

-When looking at employment numbers of 18,000 and parking availability...the city is so in need of employment and this area is incredibly successful. Maybe we should be careful about disrupting something so successful despite everything we think about urbanism. Success may be not relying on everything we usually know... we must doubt our first assumptions about urbanism.

-Look at all the orange [surface parking lots] on page 8: In solving parking supply issues and traffic management issues, is there possibility of a combination of strong landscape and surface parking – some kind of landscape urbanism and a strong solution to make the space more habitable before we overlay a european form of urban design?

- We've seen landscape take an inhospitable space and transform it – Claude Cormier for example, has been successfully released powerful ideas we have never considered before.

Open Space as Focal Point

The provision of open space as an essential focus for the area was recommended as a key goal. The Panel encouraged the design team to address the importance of outdoor amenities to service residents and workers, and consideration of indoor amenities for winter use. Specific comments were as follows:

- Create open space as the drawing card for new visions - this can accommodate stormwater, parks and linkages.
- Keep people here by reinforcing a significant open space vision.
- There are good examples in the U.S. that suffer from isolation but still have wonderful landscape amenities. This is a wonderful opportunity to get something that provides both.
- The Ron Thom building [2255 Sheppard Ave E] may be a way of introducing internal amenity that relates to outdoor amenity and has winter use.
- With single owner or single company buildings, maybe they can have shared amenities for small businesses.

Pedestrian Realm

The Panel noted the existing challenging conditions and recommended a primary focus on improving the pedestrian realm, and securing walkable developments. Specific comments were as follows:

- First steps should be finer pedestrian comfort – then after that do the rest.
- I have walked in winter from Sheppard Station...how can you journey to this place and make it better?
- Enhance the pedestrian realm in every possible way. It will be more appealing to younger employees.
- Sheppard will be serviced but not the destinations. We should have walkability in the big developments
- The area must outperform the financial district because of transit, internal connections, and the path system – It's deceptive if we look at streets only. [diagrams on page 7 of document]

The design team was also advised to specifically address pedestrian and employee safety so that "when people leave, how will you make it so they won't feel threatened? This is a really big deal."

Parking Strategy

It was observed that for the non-residential areas, surface parking or structured parking garages are likely an economic reality to be competitive with other suburban areas. The design team was encouraged to address parking and develop guidelines.

Traffic

Panel members commented that heavy traffic is a significant issue for the 'landlocked' study area that should be addressed as one of the first issues. It was noted that there are transportation problems in the larger area, on Sheppard and the 404, which could become a factor in discouraging non-residential development and should be part of the transportation study.

Sustainability

In addition to the water infrastructure opportunities outlined in the study package, it was advised that an energy strategy for the study area should be a goal, particularly appropriate due to the presence of Enbridge in the area. The design team should consider the appeal of sustainable infrastructure to attract and retain employees. Specific comments were as follows:

-The site has the headquarters of a major utility – it seems right for district [energy] perspective. Encourage low consumption... create partnerships with Enbridge for example near their headquarters.

-In a Silicon Valley example of a 2-3 storey widespread buildings: There were employee retention strategies with net zero energy, water performance, and more outdoor amenity to employees.

-From a business perspective – what is going to keep office use there in the future? Employers have to work hard to retain particularly younger staff.