



Bloor West Village Heritage Conservation District Study Meeting Summary: Community Advisory Group Meeting 1

Runnymede United Church, 432 Runnymede Road, Lower Memorial Hall
May 14, 2018, 6:30-8:30 pm



BLOOR WEST VILLAGE HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT STUDY, MEETING SUMMARY FOR COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP 1

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Introduction

1.0 Introduction

Community Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting 1 for the Bloor West Village Heritage Conservation District (HCD) Study was held on May 14, 2018 at the Runnymede United Church, Lower Memorial Hall, from 6:30-8:30 pm. The meeting consisted of a one-hour presentation followed by a one-hour guided discussion. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the Bloor West Village HCD Study and Process, review the draft CAG Terms of Reference, and provide an overview of work completed to date. Stantec presented the key messages/results from Community Consultation Meeting (CCM) 1, history and evolution, built form and landscape survey, and archaeological potential in the Study Area. The preliminary results of the character analysis were also presented. Stantec took notes throughout the meeting to record the feedback received from the CAG.

The meeting was well attended with seven out of nine CAG members in attendance. Member attendance is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Meeting Attendance

Group	Summary of Attendance
Community Advisory Group	<p><i>Present:</i> Stephen Dewdney (Vice President, Bloor West Village Residents' Association), Joseph Guzzi (Municipal Planner - Fasken Martineau, DuMoulin LLP), Allan Killin (High Park Residents' Association), Nick Singh (Former President, Swansea Area Ratepayers' Association), Natalie Sydoruk (local property owner), Mark Warrack (Former Director of Culture, Mississauga; local resident) Nick Eddy (alternate for David Howitt)</p> <p><i>Absent:</i> Alexa Wing (local resident), David Howitt (Chair, Bloor West Village BIA), Marc Chretien (local resident)</p>
Consultant Team	David Waverman, Heidy Schopf, David Kielstra
City of Toronto	Councillor Sarah Doucette, Christopher Haskim, Tamara Anson-Cartwright, Pourya Nazemi, Greg Byrne

Feedback from the CAG was gathered during the guided discussion period where four discussion questions were presented to the CAG. The four discussion questions were:

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Key Messages

- 1) Is there a sense of community in the Study Area? *What factors contribute to the community?*
- 2) How do you define Bloor West Village? *Where does Bloor West Village begin and where does it end?*
- 3) How has Bloor West Village evolved? *What changes do you perceive as positive or negative?*
- 4) What are your thoughts on the material presented?

Key messages received during the discussion period are provided in Section 2.0 and a detailed summary of feedback is provided in Section 3.0. Next steps for the CAG are presented in Section 4.0.

2.0 Key Messages

The following key messages were gathered during CAG1:

- **History and Evolution:** The urban fabric and architectural forms within Bloor West Village were influenced by the historical and physical differences between the north and south sides of Bloor Street West. The north side of Bloor Street West is typically busier than the south side due to the presence of the TTC stations and natural sunlight that warms this side of the street. The historical presence of gas stations on the south side of Bloor Street West created some larger property parcels on the south side of the street that were subsequently filled in with development during the 1970s and 1980s. Other themes that were noted as being historically significant to the area include the influence of the Business Improvement Area (BIA) and the Polish/Ukrainian population.
- **Sense of Community:** Bloor West Village is a walkable neighbourhood that is accessible to many groups of people. The local community supports local stores, and social interaction between shop keepers and community members happens on a regular basis. Residential and commercial properties are well-kept in general, which contributes to a sense of pride for Bloor West Village.
- **Boundaries:** The CAG reported that Bloor West Village is considered to extend from Keele Street to the Humber River. High Park and the Humber River were identified as “natural bookends” in the Study Area.
- **Evolution of Bloor West Village:** Bloor West Village has evolved throughout the 20th century and continues to evolve in the present day. Recent changes in the Study Area include: BIA initiatives to install solar/pedestrian lighting and provide

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Detailed Summary of Feedback

visitor data to local shopkeepers; intensification in the east and west ends of the Study Area; and rising rents for residential and commercial space.

- **Streetscapes:** The north and south sides of Bloor Street West have different characters for historical and physical reasons. There are many T-intersections in Bloor West Village, which are relatively rare for Bloor Street and which form views to the Study Area from side streets. Mature trees in the vicinity of High Park and the Humber River were noted as significant since these possibly formed historical views and may form landmarks within the Study Area.
- **Terminology:** It was noted that transportation engineering terms (i.e. Major Arterial Road) should be used with caution since these terms do not capture the experience of pedestrian users of Bloor West Village. It was further noted that the term “commercial core” does not capture the dynamic nature of the central section of the Study Area.
- **General Comments:** Several general comments were received during CAG1 related to property taxes, property values, and non-heritage buildings with community importance in the Study Area. Feedback was also received regarding landmark buildings in the Study Area and it was noted that ‘A Dark Horse’ pub at 2401 Bloor Street West should be added to the list of landmark buildings.

3.0 Detailed Summary of Feedback

3.1 History and Evolution

Several specific points regarding the history of Bloor West Village were raised during the CAG1 meeting. The difference between the north and south sides of the street, the role of the BIA, the role of the streetcar, and the population history of the neighbourhood were all raised as themes that could be explored in the HCD Study.

Comments related to the history of the Study Area include:

- During prohibition, the north side of Bloor Street West was “dry” and the south side was “wet”
- The history section of the report should include the Polish and Ukrainian population history of the area
- The BIA is the oldest in the world, not just the oldest in Canada
- It was questioned if the 1950-1980 historical period is too broad and if it accurately captured the rate of construction that occurred after the conclusion of the Second World War and the influence of the BIA on built form
- It was noted that gas stations played a role in the history and evolution of the south side of Bloor Street West

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- The influence of the BIA should be explored, including the role of the BIA on land use and infill development throughout the 1970s and 1980s
- Streetcars were integral to the historical development of Bloor West Village. The role of the streetcar system should be explored in the HCD Study
- The influx of displaced people after the Second World War helped the population of the area grow.
- The CAG asked if population history could be included in the HCD Study

3.2 Sense of Community

One of the key discussion questions asked the CAG if the Study Area has a sense of community. The CAG reported that the Study Area is walkable and accessible to many people. It was also noted that there is a sense of community pride and that both the residential areas and village core are well kept and contribute to the community's pride of place.

Comments related to the sense of community in Bloor West Village include:

- The neighbourhood is very walkable and this contributes to a sense of community
- Stores in the neighbourhood offer a variety of goods. This makes Bloor West Village accessible for seniors and families since they do not have to walk far to get what they need.
- People know each other and will interact in stores and cafes. Social interaction between local residents and shop keepers happens regularly in Bloor West Village.
- Local residents are loyal to local stores
- High Park contributes to the walkability of the neighbourhood
- Store owners are proud of their businesses and keep their store frontages neat, clean, and decorated with flowers
- The surrounding residential communities animate Bloor West Village

3.3 Boundaries

The CAG was asked where Bloor West Village begins and ends. There was general consensus that Bloor West Village extends from Keele Street to the Humber River. High Park and the Humber River were described as “natural” anchors, or bookends, to the village.

Comments related to boundaries include:

- High Park is historically connected to Bloor West Village, but the park is not included in the Study Area. The exclusion of the park from the Study Area was questioned by the CAG.
- It was asked if the High Park Chess House should be included in the HCD Study since this building is visible from the street

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- Old Mill Station is not in the Study Area. References to the number of subway stations in the Study Area may need to be adjusted.
- It was asked “Where exactly is Bloor West Village?” It was then noted that the BIA has signs at the northeast corner of South Kingsway and Bloor Street West that read “Welcome to Bloor West Village” and “Come Again”
- It was generally recognized that the new development in the vicinity of Old Mill Drive results in a gap in Bloor West Village and cuts off views to the Humber River, which was previously visible from the edge of the village core
- There was consensus from the CAG that Bloor West Village extends from High Park to the Humber River
- High Park and the Humber River serve as “natural” bookends to the Study Area.
- The Study Area does not need to be uniformly one style or type. It may be that the High Park and Humber River bookends could “talk” to each other despite being interrupted by buildings in the middle

3.4 Evolution of Bloor West Village

The CAG was asked if Bloor West Village has evolved over time. The CAG was asked to provide examples of positive and negative change in the Study Area.

Comments received regarding the evolution of the Study Area include:

- There is a current BIA initiative to install solar pedestrian lighting along the street that will respond to pedestrian movement. The lighting in Bloor West Village is presently focused on vehicular traffic so this will improve the pedestrian experience in the village.
- The BIA records information on visitors in the area to better advise small business owners of appropriate opening hours. This is viewed as a positive initiative that will help small business owners make informed decisions regarding operations.
- There was discussion regarding potential new uses for larger sites in the west end of the Study Area (i.e. Humber Cinemas) and how new use (i.e. a large supermarket) would affect Bloor West Village.
- Intensification in the Study Area seems to be concentrated at the east and west ends. This is somewhat positive since the central village remains largely intact.
- The area has evolved – more pressure on properties/commercial space due to rising rents.
- Some stores have maintained the fine grain urban fabric of Bloor West Village by expanding the interior space (i.e. removing walls) but maintaining the exterior, fine grain, store fronts. This is generally viewed as a positive way for stores to gain more space.

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3.5 Streetscapes

Streetscapes in the Study Area were discussed during the CAG1 meeting. It was noted that the north and south side of Bloor Street West have different characters and that the T-intersections in the Study Area are of significance. It was also noted that trees in the Study Area could be considered landmarks since mature trees and landscape have been part of the Bloor West Village viewscape for some time.

Comments regarding streetscapes in Bloor West Village include:

- North side of Bloor Street West receives direct sunlight
- The north and south sides of Bloor Street West have different characters
- The Study Area includes numerous T-intersections that create views to and within Bloor West Village from the site streets
- The architectural typologies did not include a description of door types. Street level doors in commercial properties connect private property to the streetscape and should be described.
- Billboards are now limited in size by a recent by-law, but some large billboards remain, which detract visually from Bloor West Village
- It was noted that there is no central meeting spot or gathering place in Bloor West Village
- It was asked if trees should be considered landmarks in the Study Area. There was general enthusiasm for this idea since the trees and natural areas in the vicinity of High Park and the Humber River are highly valued by the local community.

3.6 Terminology

A couple of comments were received regarding terminology used in the Bloor West Village HCD Study Area, including:

- The terminology used to describe circulation in the Study Area is very engineering oriented and does not capture the pedestrian or user experience of the “village”
- It was noted that the term “commercial core” does not capture the character of Bloor West Village. Instead, it was suggested that the term “village” be used to describe the central section of the Study Area.

3.7 General Comments

Several comments were received that were of importance but did not fit any of the above themes. General comments received include:

- The No Frills property is an important resource to the community
- Commercial property taxes are high, which forces landlords to charge high rents. This does not foster independent stores along Bloor Street West. The issue of

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taxation is important in the HCD Study since this directly affects the viability of small businesses in the area.

- Larger chain stores are moving into the area, which detracts from the presence of small businesses along the street
- The *High Park Apartment Character Study* has a lot of useful information on the area and could be used as a reference in the HCD Study
- The CAG agreed with the list of landmark buildings but noted that 'A Dark Horse', a pub located at 2401 Bloor Street West, should be added to this list
- Conservation can be at odds with individuals purchasing their properties for investment purposes

4.0 Next Steps

The results of CAG1, in the form of this summary, are to be posted online on the City's *Bloor West Village Heritage Conservation District* [website](#), when ready. The next CAG meeting will be held on June 14, 2018 at Runnymede United Church. Details regarding CCM2 will be shared when available.