

Bloor-Sterling Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment

Heritage Focus Group Meeting #1

Thursday, January 7th, 2021

Cisco Webex

7-8:30pm

Meeting Summary

Attendance

Heritage Focus Group Members: Scott Dobson (Friends of West Toronto Rail Path); Phillip Share (South Perth Sterling Residents Association); Sandra De Carvalho; Mark Hazelden; Irmina Ayuyao (Junction Triangle Community Action Network); Kevin Putnam; Kris Erickson; Kristen den Hartog; Jasmine Frolick (Castlepoint Numa); Brett Rycombel; Adam Wynne (Toronto East York Community Preservation Panel)

City Planning Project Team: Gary Miedema (Project Team Lead, Heritage Planning); Zoi de la Peña (Heritage Planning); Nathan Bortolin (Heritage Planning); Dan Nicholson (Community Planning); Diane Silver (Community Planning); Ran Chen (Urban Design); Setareh Fadaee (Urban Design)

Common Bond Collective: Ellen Kowalchuk; David Deo

Representing Deputy Mayor Bailão: Nicholas Gallant, Senior Advisor

Meeting Purpose

Heritage Focus Groups are advisory in nature. This meeting was the first of two meetings to inform an understanding of the historical development of the Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment (CHRA) study area, including its social and community values.

Meeting Outline

HFG members began logging in shortly before 7pm.

The meeting started at 7pm.

Gary Miedema welcomed participants and explained meeting procedures. Gary gave a land acknowledgement.

Gary facilitated a round of introductions, and then introduced the purpose of the meeting, the agenda, and the roles & responsibilities of the Heritage Focus Group.

Gary introduced the purpose and methodology of a Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment, including the outcomes of both a Historical Overview and a list of properties considered to have heritage potential, that may later be recommended for inclusion on the Heritage Register. Gary also reviewed the Provincial criteria contained in Regulation 9/06 that are used to evaluate properties for cultural heritage value.

Ellen Kowalchuk presented a summary of the draft Historical Overview of the Bloor-Sterling study area, which was distributed in full prior to the meeting.

Gary facilitated a discussion (results summarized below).

The Project Team invited HFG members to submit written feedback on the Historical Overview, as well as supplementary materials following the meeting.

Discussion Questions and Comments from HFG Members

1) What people, organizations, communities, or events in the study area's history do you think are important to understand as part of the Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment?

Heritage Focus Group participants identified the rail lines and manufacturing, as well as the housing associated with those, as being of fundamental importance to understanding the neighbourhood. In particular, participants provided the following key points:

- The timing of the subdivision plans was related to the promise of nearby railway stations. For example, the opening of the Credit Valley Rail Line in 1884, with a stop at Dupont and Dundas, was cited as having spurred the development of the first residential neighbourhood along Franklin Avenue. In 1887, advertisements of the subdivisions in and around the study area related them to the opening of a station at Bloor St W.
- Understanding Bloor-Sterling as a working-class neighbourhood related to industry was cited as critical.
- Understanding the history of the industrial buildings, including what was manufactured in each, was identified as important. An emphasis was also made that the industrial history of this neighbourhood extends to the history of the city as a whole, and is part of what made Toronto what it is today.
- Participants mentioned that a large percentage of residents who worked in the area also lived in the area.

2) What buildings, areas, or features of the Study Area do you think have heritage value in relation to the neighbourhood's history?

- Construction of the railway lines (see response to Question 1).
- Immigration tied to the manufacturing industry in the area was identified as a major event. Several participants shared stories of family members immigrating from Portugal and other countries specifically to Sterling Road to work in manufacturing. Toronto was a major stop for

immigrants due to manufacturing. One participant stated that Sterling Road is famous in the Azores because everyone from there came to Sterling Road to work.

- One participant illustrated the significance of industry to the area by sharing that during his dad's time, it was possible to start a new job at a factory in the morning and switch to another factory in the afternoon if the first wasn't to one's liking.
- Churches in the area were also cited as being representative of the patterns of immigration that took place.
- Small businesses such as barbers and tailors were also cited as important.
- James Lochrie was identified as a major landholder in this area in the late 19th and early 20th century. He manufactured bicycles and a few other products and may have installed the first bike lanes on Bloor Street West (c. 1896), which were also some of the first purpose-built bike lanes in Toronto. He also built and lived in 1411 Bloor Street West.
- More recently, businesses and organizations related to the arts were mentioned as being significant to the area, with references to the dance studio within 221 Sterling Road and MOCA.

3) What buildings, areas, or features of the Study Area do you think have heritage value in relation to the neighbourhood's history?

- The significance of Sterling-Perth as a working class neighbourhood related to nearby industries was emphasized, with comparisons made to other areas in the City already having properties on the Heritage Register.
- Buildings and spaces connected to artists were raised, due to the ability of former industrial buildings to provide large spaces at low rents. 221 and 227 Sterling Road were specifically mentioned. Belief that the abundance of creative and cultural practice in the area is what attracted MOCA, whose presence in turn helps to preserve and amplify this energy.
- A number of factories were identified as being significant, including: Arthur Jones; Fairbanks-Morse; Alcan Aluminum; SPAR-Marathon; and the chocolate factory. Reiteration that these factories are part of the city's history and what made Toronto what it is today. The factories themselves are also interesting architecturally. The need to understand the history of these buildings was emphasized.
- The houses that served as workers' cottages were identified as having value, due to their connection to the industry that was here and the living that it provided to residents.
- With respect to the rail lines, the Bruce line was specifically mentioned, with a desire to see the line commemorated through the naming of a Parkette in the vicinity.
- The commercial buildings relating to the retail history of the area along Bloor, formerly composed of tailors and a clay shop for example, were identified.
- The village character of the area was mentioned, with specific references to the houses on Bloor St W.
- There was reference to 1411 Bloor Street West as a significant building. This was the residence of James Lochrie (see response to Question 2). Lochrie lived here until his death in 1930, and had a manufacturing facility immediately to the east and south of the house.
- Participants also shared stories of the people that lived at their homes in the past and their relationships with local industries.

Other Thoughts

- Participants highlighted the need for oral histories to be recorded in the neighbourhood, and identified the need for support to be provided, perhaps from s.37 agreements related to new development.

- Participants also spoke to the need for commemoration and interpretation of what the factories produced, including through public art
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Written Feedback and Submissions

Some members followed up after the meeting with further information, including historic advertisements for industries in the area and promoting land sales following subdivision, and including photographs of properties. A written submission was also received from Rui De Carvalho providing his memories of growing up in the study area in the 1960s and 1970s.