

Bloor-Yorkville Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment

Heritage Focus Group Meeting #1

Wednesday, April 21st, 2021

Cisco Webex

6:30 – 8:00 pm

Meeting Summary

Attendance

Phillip Cote (Artist, Activist, Historian and Traditional Wisdom Keeper); Paul Farrelly (Toronto Preservation Board); Nicholas Jennings (Author); Briar de Lange (Bloor-Yorkville BIA); Alan Baker (GYRA); Corinne Barr (ABCRA); Mary-Helen Spence (ABCRA); Linda Brett (Bloor East Neighbourhood Association); Paul Smith (Bloor East Neighbourhood Association); Jonathan Demers (Toronto Public Library); Zoe Johnstone (Toronto Public Library)

Regrets: Gee Chung (Bloor-Yorkville Heritage Conservationist)

City Planning Project Team: Shelby Blundell (Project Team Lead, Heritage Planning); Gary Miedema (Heritage Planning); Zoi de la Peña (Heritage Planning); Dan Dibartolo (Heritage Planning); David Driedger (Community Planning); Corinna Prior (Community Planning)

Common Bond Collective: Ellen Kowalchuk; David Deo

City Council: Councillor Mike Layton; Aviva Coopersmith (Constituency Assistant)

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. The focus of this meeting was on reviewing the Historical Overview.

Timeline

HFG members began logging in shortly before 6:30pm.

The meeting started at 6:30pm.

Shelby Blundell welcomed participants and explained meeting procedures, and opened the meeting with a Land Acknowledgement.

After a round of introductions, Shelby introduced the purpose of the meeting, the agenda, and the roles & responsibilities of the Heritage Focus Group.

Shelby and Gary provided an overview of what a Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment (CHRA) is and how it is related to Community Planning's planning studies. Gary explained what a Historical Overview is and how this informs the survey of properties that will take place in the second phase of this project.

Corinna provided an overview of the Bloor-Yorkville Secondary Plan. This included an overview of the process and timelines for this study as well as how Community Planning and Heritage Planning's projects work together.

Ellen Kowalchuk, Common Bond, then reviewed the Historical Overview for the study area, including the periods of development and draft themes that helped shape the study area.

Gary facilitated a discussion (summarized below).

Discussion Questions and Comments from HFG Members

1) What specific themes or aspects of the Study Area's history do you think are important to understand as part of the Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment?

- Many members noted that the music scene was an important part of Yorkville's history but the art and gallery scene was an important aspect as well that should be included in the Historical Overview further. Some participants noted that this gallery history stretched over to Yonge Street and includes Roberts Gallery.
- The literary history of the area was also highlighted as being important as was the film and festival history associated with the Toronto International Film Festival in Yorkville.
- The grouping of an interior design community in remaining historic buildings along Davenport and Avenue Roads and Hillsboro Avenue.
- One member cited the TV headquarters of CBC being in the study area (Jarvis Street; and were also at Marlborough and Yonge for quite a number of years and this was where Front Page Challenge was developed) and CTV at one point were here.

2) 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?

- A member offered to provide a contact within the art gallery community in Yorkville that could provide some context for the history of art galleries in the study area.

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

- Participants during and following the meeting noted the significance of former burial grounds in the area and their importance to settler and indigenous communities, mainly Potter's Field and Sandhill. The project team will be researching these areas further.
- It was also noted that the site is also a depository site of the ice field the materials of which were used to construct a lot of buildings in downtown Toronto. The south side of the ridge is where people were hunting for hundreds of years. That whole ridge is edge of what was Lake Iroquois shoreline.
- The Yorkville branch of the Toronto Public Library was noted by one participant for having historical value and being a cultural centre for over a century.

4) What else should we know about the Study Area as we complete a heritage survey?

- Members noted they may have more information and feedback following the meeting that they could provide to the project team.

5) General Feedback

- Some members commented that the Historical Overview is only focusing on historic Yorkville and not other places in the study area such as Bloor east. It was emphasized that the Historical Overview must provide an understanding of the entire study area, and not just focus on the core of the old Village of Yorkville which is widely known and popular. The project team acknowledged that more work needs to be done in this regard.
- Some members expressed an interest in having Ramsden Park included in the study area and reviewed as a possible cultural heritage landscape. The project team responded that this may be beyond the scope of this study, but that it could be considered by Heritage Planning. It should also be noted that following this meeting the ABCRA made a submission to have Ramsden Park included in the CHRA and there was a Toronto East York Community Council May 19th decision that requested the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning to give consideration to the area of Ramsden Park as part of the CHRA for this area.
- There was a request to show the existing heritage properties in the Neighbourhood areas outside the scope of the CHRA study area to acknowledge

their significance. Staff agreed that all the listed and designated buildings in the areas referenced will be shown and labelled on all maps going forward.

- Comments from participants suggested interest in an HCD for the core of the old Village of Yorkville, on Cumberland and Yorkville avenues.

Written Feedback and Submissions

Some participants followed up after the meeting with further information, feedback, and suggestions for properties to consider.

- One participant provided information and resources about the literary history of the study including the Book Cellar.
- Some participants provided information on properties and periods of history in the CHRA study area for the purposes of the Draft Historical Overview.
- Some participants submitted by email further information pertaining to specific properties and requesting their consideration as heritage potential properties, some of which have been previously communicated to City Planning (this does not include suggested properties that are already on the City's Heritage register):
 - 55 Avenue Road
 - 69 Bloor Street East
 - 89, 89A & 91 Bloor Street West
 - 120 Bloor Street East
 - 638-640 Church Street
 - 642-644 Church Street
 - 8 Cumberland Street
 - 106, 108 & 108A Cumberland Street
 - 115 Cumberland Street
 - 116-118 Cumberland Street
 - 120-126 Cumberland Street
 - 138-142 Cumberland Street
 - 156-158 Cumberland Street
 - 142-202 Davenport Road (Davenport Terrace)
 - 22-30 Scollard Street
 - 32 Scollard Street
 - 116, 122, 124 Scollard Street
 - 83-85 Scollard Street
 - 97-101 Scollard Street
 - 107 Scollard Street
 - 105 Scollard Street
 - 17 Yorkville Avenue
 - 75 Yorkville Avenue
 - 86-90 Yorkville Avenue
 - 101 Yorkville Road
 - 110 Yorkville Avenue
 - 111 Yorkville Avenue
 - 115 Yorkville Avenue
 - 119 Yorkville Avenue

- 121 Yorkville Avenue
- One member and their organization requested the City Council authorized Belmont-Hillsboro Heritage Conservation District (outside of the Bloor-Yorkville CHRA study area) be prioritized.
- Some participants provided background information on their community associations as context for the Historical Overview if appropriate.
- One participant provided information on past institutions in the study area.
- One participant provided information on past music clubs and coffee houses.
- Some participants provided contacts with other people that could be consulted through this process.