

Local Advisory Committee (LAC) Meeting #4

Date & Time: March 18, 2009 @ 6:30 pm
Location: Ukrainian Hall (1604 Bloor Street West)
Attendance: Nine members of the Local Advisory Committee and approximately 15 members of the general public
Councillor Gord Perks
City Staff: Corwin Cambray and Andrea Old
Consultant Team: Anne McIlroy, Shawna Ginsberg Bowen & Shima Mirkarimi, Brook McIlroy Planning & Urban Design/Pace Architects

The meeting began at 6:30 pm at the Ukrainian Hall (1604 Bloor Street West). Councillor Perks began the meeting with an introduction. The consultant team gave a presentation that responded to feedback at Public Meeting on January 26, 2009 and a subsequent meeting with the Golden-Ritchie community group. This included four of the “Opportunity Sites”:

1. Northeast corner of Keele Street and Bloor Street West
2. Southeast corner of Alhambra Avenue and Bloor Street West
3. The Shopper’s Drug Mart and Price Chopper’s site
4. The Loblaw’s site

The presentation is posted under the “Local Advisory Committee Meeting – Wednesday, March 18, 2009” section on the study’s web page at www.toronto.ca/planning/bloordundas.htm

Five themes emerged from the meeting and were discussed in detail after the presentation. The following is a summary of questions and comments that came up during the presentation. Answers are indicated in italics and represent answers from the consultants, City Staff as well as LAC members.

Podium Heights

Q1: During the presentation you make reference to a three-storey podium. During the Visioning Study we identified Bloor Street West as being a “village” or precinct with two-storey podiums. How do you reconcile the feedback regarding two-storey and three-storey podiums?

A1: *The height of the podium could reference the local fabric.*

Q2: *How does the LAC feel about a range of two- to three-storey podiums?*

Comment: Starting from the east, along Bloor Street West, there are a lot of two-storey podiums, then a dead zone, and further west, buildings that violate the two-storey principle. We need to have consistency. We want to retain the “village” feel if we can.

Comment: Allowing for a variety of two- to three-storey podiums is appropriate for this part of the study area. There is a lot of change along the street and we need to mimic the existing fabric.

Comment: If there is a two-storey podium with a six-storey mass stepped back from the podium the proportions will look strange.

Comment: The design has to be conscious of the surrounding built fabric and could reinforce the two-storey look.

Comment: A three-storey podium with step-backs for the remaining mass will keep a pedestrian scale.

Comment: The podium height keeps changing over the years. In the past the City thought two-storey was appropriate. Now we say it should be three-storeys. Next time it might be six-storeys. In the end we don't achieve uniformity which is a desirable design principle.

Comment: Lots of villages are built at three-storeys (e.g. the Junction).

Comment: Do we want to be a village? We're in a city. Maybe we need to celebrate the fact we're in the city.

Comment: A range of two- to three-storey podium heights can be acceptable. Some environmental benefits could make it look more consistent, such as green roofs visible from the street.

Comment: The report should recommend a podium height of three-storeys, but there should be some commentary in the report that speaks to keeping the step-back space for green initiatives, such as green roofs, that will mitigate impacts. The recommendations should be tied to the expected environmental benefits.

Comment: When you walk along Bloor Street West, there is so much change from one block to another. Consistency within the short block is more important than a consistent look along the length of Bloor Street West between Keele Street and Dundas Street West.

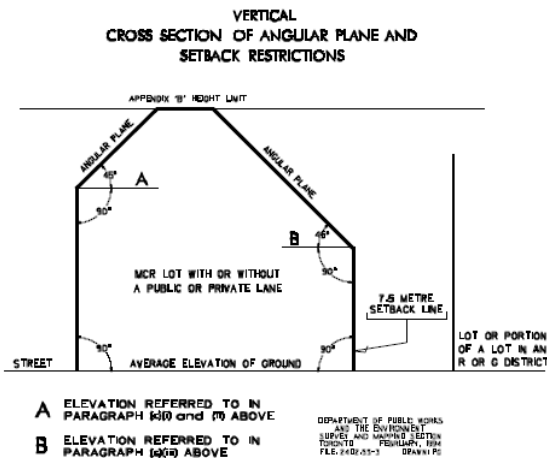
Q3: Does a two-storey podium minimize wind tunnel effects at a pedestrian level more than a three-storey or not?

A3: Tall buildings catch the wind and push it down to the pedestrian level. If there is a podium at the base of a building, the wind is caught and bounced back. It isn't likely that there would be a perceivable difference between two- or three-storey podiums when it comes to wind tunneling.

Alhambra Opportunity Site

Q1: What is the actual distance from the back of the building and the residential houses?

A1: We're using the MCR regulations that exist now. There is a 7.5 m setback from the property line to the face of the building. We then apply a 45-degree angular plane from a 10 m height above the setback line.



Q2: The opportunity sites that face Alhambra Avenue - municipal addresses are 61 and 63 Alhambra Avenue. That means that the rear of any new development would be facing east and not south. It would

help to develop two scenarios: one where they would deal with side-yard setbacks and another where they deal with rear-yard setbacks. The implications will be very different.

A2: *A mid-rise building would not be feasible in this location without consolidating the 61 & 63 Alhambra Avenue because the sites facing Bloor Street West are too shallow. Therefore, there would always be a rear condition at the lane.*

Q3: Have there been any development applications for these opportunity sites?

A3: *No*

Q4: Can you compare this opportunity site to the Glenlake condominium development?

A4: *The development at Glenlake conforms to the setbacks and the developer has landscaped the area in the back. But the site is deeper than the properties fronting on to Bloor Street West.*

Comment: The design of the development at Glenlake was compromised due to access / parking issues from surrounding neighbours. Sometimes conflicting interests do not always lead to good design.

Comment: It is important to realize that the City is not proposing any development. This exercise is about changing and updating the rules so that development can respond to rules that the community has considered.

Comment: These massing models are building envelopes. Buildings can be shaped a number of ways to fit within these envelopes.

Q5: Where buildings wrap around streets adjacent to residential buildings, will there be guidelines so that blank walls are not permitted?

A5: *Yes.*

Q6: The laneway on the south side of the Alhambra site is a tight space that requires careful manoeuvring. If any development occurs on the north side the width of the laneway needs to be kept to allow for passing cars.

A6: *The laneway width would need to be increased up to 6.0m to allow loading and use by retail uses fronting on to Bloor Street West. The lane would have to be widened within the setback of the opportunity site.*

Loblaw's Demonstration Plan (Demonstration Plan 3)

Comment: The demonstration plan shows a lot of responsiveness to the feedback. I really like it. What we don't want is to isolate the old community from the new community, so I'm glad you have moved the public space to the southern edge to mitigate some issues with the new development.

Q1: The green space behind the backyard of the three-storey built forms at the southern boundary of the plan will lose its public quality over time as residents claim that space as their own.

A1: *The space behind those buildings is intended to be private backyard space for those residential units. The public green space is to the west of those residential units.*

Q2: Is the street network on the east side of the plan one-way or two-ways?

A2: *The width is shown to allow for two-way travel. These details could be worked out when a developer comes in with an application.*

Q3: There is a lot of retail and office space in the plan. There is no indication of how parking issues will be resolved.

A3: *There are three options for parking: underground parking, above ground but wrapped with usable space, or some on-street parking. Parking solutions would need to be tested at the time of a development application.*

Q4: Will there be street lights at the intersection?

A4: *Likely, and this would be part of the transportation study done as part of the any future development applications for this site.*

Q5: Where will the parking be for the rest of the buildings in the development plan?

A5: *Any building at a mid-rise height would likely address parking needs though below-grade structured parking. This would include public parking, shared parking, car-share opportunities or a combination of all three.*

Q6: What is the footprint for the large retail building located at the northwest corner compared to the existing Loblaw's store?

A6: *It is slightly bigger than the existing Loblaw's site but not as big as the one on St. Clair Avenue. The Super Centre Loblaw's sites are usually between 140,000-150,000 square feet; however, Loblaw's is looking at smaller formats from the very large format in urban areas. For example, newer Loblaw's sites can range from 60,000-80,000 square feet and can be arranged over multiple storeys. The building envelope on the northwest corner is large enough to accommodate a Loblaw's site on multiple storeys.*

Comment: While the new Loblaw's stores work on one or two frontages they don't work on all four frontages and this will be a problem with the location for the new Loblaw's in the demonstration plan. The Metro grocery store at Church Street and Front Street works well on three frontages. They're surrounded by high density buildings so there is a lot of foot traffic and don't really rely on the underground parking. I can't envisage Loblaw's working where it's located on this plan.

Q7: Loblaw's currently has a lot of truck traffic on-site. How will they navigate within the site?

A7: *This is just a demonstration plan. The finer details will have to be discussed if a development application is ever submitted. Placing a Loblaw's use on the site's Dundas Street West frontage will also remove the need for trucks to drive across the site to its east limit, as they currently do. This will improve the situation for the neighbourhood to the south.*

Comment: What I like about the demonstration plan is that you've introduced an east-west street far away from the existing Bishop Marrocco service lane.

Comment: We need to balance the uses on both sides for the north-south street next to the (potential) Loblaw's location. The building across from this façade could locate their services there as well.

Comment: Three examples of larger retailers that are good are: Wal-Mart at St. Clair Avenue and Runnymede Road, the Loblaw's at Dupont Street and Christie Street and the Home Depot at Keele Street and St. Clair Avenue, in terms of being located on the street frontage.

Comment: There are a number of things you can do to mitigate the loading issues. A good example is the Shoppers Drug Mart at Dupont Street and Spadina Avenue. They have integrated loading space within the interior part of the building.

Comment: We should create more of a town square that would be accessible from all directions. We should consolidate the park space to get one bigger park. The park location in the demonstration plan doesn't feel central or visible enough.

Comment: There was a desire to fold in the high school's playfield into neighbourhood design. Right now there is no connection between the spaces.

A: *The public space is directly connected to the school field through the green space adjacent to the rail corridor setback and a street. There is also a walkway in between the buildings that leads to the playing field. As well, pedestrian access from Bloor Street West to the playfield can be improved so it assists in moving people from Bloor Street West down through the green space / playfield into the new neighbourhood.*

Comment: I wouldn't reconfigure the green space. The demonstration plan has located the green space centrally to both the (potential) new community and existing community to the south.

Comment: Opportunity to do a shared use agreement of the playfield between the Toronto Catholic District School Board and the City, as has been done elsewhere.

Comment: The two worst parks (in terms of usage) in the ward are the ones where people walk by them and don't notice them because they are hidden.

A: *The central park in the demonstration plan is different than those parks. There are buildings on all side that will create a visible park with "eyes on the park" from residential and retail uses surrounding it.*

Comment: There should be guidelines that buildings have a façade on the street.

Comment: There should be a feature at the north edge of the park space that draws people from Dundas Street West.

Comment: Opportunity for improving access to GO station and walkway along rail corridor

Comment: I like the concept of a central park surrounded by buildings. But the plan dissipates the public parks into too many smaller green spaces. The parks should be consolidated along the rail setback to maximize the dimension of the space so you can get recreational uses (i.e. soccer fields) in there. The City ends up with small parks but you can't use them as recreational spaces.

A: *The demonstration plan shows a variety of green spaces such as a public park, publicly accessible but privately owned space such as walkways / courtyards leading to the park and playfield, and private green amenity space. The public park in the centre is approximately 15% of the total site, which is the maximum we can secure using the parks by-law. All the other green spaces have are a lower order in terms of public accessibility. We are trying to give you a realistic look at what 15% might look like.*

Comment: The demonstration plan creates shadows on the playing field. You should move the taller buildings closer to the high school.

Comment: If you have retail along the park, it relates to the square so it's not just for people who live near the park.

Comment: I would disagree with the notion of shifting the park. You might get an extra strip of 1.0 or 2.0 metres. It would be a residual space and not very useful.

Comment: The first priority is the integration of the street network. Because the park is surrounded by street it is automatically visible.

Comment: The park is completely surrounded by streets. Could we design it so it's just one street instead of two making it safer for children, and put retail adjacent to the park so people can sit and look over the park?

Q9: Can the streetcar stop at the south side of Bloor Street West be moved to the new intersection shown on the new demonstration plan?

A9: *As a principle that is a valid point, but we don't put TTC stops into Avenue Studies. It would come later in the discussion.*

Dundas Street West north of Bloor Street West

Q1: Has there been any thought of narrowing Dundas Street West north of Bloor Street West?

A1: *We can set guidelines for buildings to be set back from the property line to allow for more space for sidewalks. We haven't asked our traffic engineer to look at options of narrowing Dundas Street West north of Bloor Street West. Dundas Street West is different from Bloor Street West because there are streetcar lines on Dundas.*

Other

Q1: Can we suggest that left turns be allowed on to Bloor Street West. This would help to eliminate traffic going through the neighbourhood to the north.

A1: *Once we have got the built form recommendations we will give that information to the traffic engineer and he can take that information and generate traffic counts. Impacts on TTC operations are also a factor.*

The meeting was closed with remarks from Councillor Perks who thanked everyone for coming and their dedication to the study. Corwin reminded the group that this was not the last opportunity for comments. Comments can be sent to Corwin Cambrey and/or Councillor Perks' office until April 3rd 2009.

Meeting Notes produced by Brook McIlroy Planning & Urban Design.

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