

# 2500 Bloor Street West

Prepared by OU September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## Working Group Meeting One – September 4, 2008: Meeting Notes

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Working Group Meeting One concerning the lands at 2500 Bloor Street West was held at Runnymede United Church in Toronto, Thursday the 4<sup>th</sup> of September, 2008, at 7:00 pm.

### Introduction and Housekeeping

Toronto City Councillor Bill Saundercook of Ward 13 acted as Chairman, with Jennifer Keesmaat of Office for Urbanism facilitating, and Natalie Walliser of Office for Urbanism taking minutes.

Councillor Saundercook provided a brief introduction, welcoming the Working Group participants and observers to Meeting One, and outlining what has been done to date, and summarizing the summer meeting schedule. Steve Upton spoke on behalf of Tridel, providing newcomers with some background on Tridel's involvement and projects in the GTA. He spoke about the chosen method for this process, which is to undertake community consultation and get community feedback prior to submitting an application to the City. This process and the importance of keeping the project moving forward was emphasized.

It was also noted that specific concerns of Working Group members would be addressed at the end of the meeting.

### Policy Context and Existing Conditions Presentation

A PowerPoint presentation by Jennifer Keesmaat outlined Policy Context and Existing Conditions. The process of the Working Group as well as the City statutory process was reviewed, followed by relevant policy frameworks which included provincial (Provincial Policy Statement Growth Plan, Draft Regional Transportation Plan), municipal (Official Plan, Transit City), and area specific (Bloor West Village Urban Design Study, Avenue Studies or Segment Studies).

The existing conditions presentation defined the segment study area, reviewed area photos, and explored building heights, active street walls, setbacks, heritage landmarks, circulation, existing uses,

### OfficeforUrbanism

457 Richmond Street W, Suite 200, Toronto ON, Canada M5V 1X9  
info@officeforurbanism.com  
t: 416 971 7521 f: 416 971 7287  
www.officeforurbanism.com

character areas, gateways, view & terminus sites, areas for revitalization and enhancement, and grading.

Finally, the objectives, expected outcomes, workshop structure, and next steps were presented to the group.

### **The Workshop**

Working group participants and observers divided into three groups to discuss the existing conditions and its surrounding context. Participants were encouraged to share their understanding of the opportunities and constraints presented by the area. Antonio Gomez-Palacio, Gail Shillingford and Jennifer Keesmaat of Office for Urbanism facilitated the workshop and illustrated the ideas presented by participants on large base maps. Traffic, points of transition, aesthetic improvement, pedestrian priority, built form and cohesive development were among numerous topics brought to the table by participants.

### **Report Back**

Following the workshop, a representative from each group presented a synopsis of key ideas discussed.

Group 1 emphasized that new development should enhance the character of the village. The flow of traffic was a major concern, and the group suggested that sidewalks similar to those existing in Bloor West Village would promote pedestrian activity and maintain a great street, while still allowing for a unique identity for the area. There are service needs which aren't currently being met within the community, and consideration should be given to recruiting those services to this new building.

Group 2 felt strongly about the flow of traffic, which is currently failing under the current intersection configuration. Group 2 stated that the resolution of these traffic problems was crucial to the success of the area. Parking to service commercial spaces was also identified as an issue, and the group felt as though the fine scale shops and spaces would be more desirable than larger financial institutions or chain stores. It was also noted that there could be a division in future tenants of the area in terms of travel patterns – some may travel via TTC, eastbound for work, while others would own vehicles and commute in a westerly direction.

Group 3 stressed the importance of developing a working partnership between Tridel and the Bitton Holdings, in order to design a creative and cohesive plan that would address the movement of traffic at reasonable speeds, and enhance the village atmosphere which currently gets lost at Jane Street. Group 3 wanted to see a development that would extend that strong character area westward.

### **Outstanding Issues and Closing**

Prior to adjournment, outstanding issues were addressed, including a proposed date for Meeting Three, which is still to be determined. It was noted that there would be change of location, and that those observers who were present for the first time that evening were encouraged to leave their name and contact information in order to stay informed.

One of the working group participants felt strongly about the discussion that was taking place in an online forum that was linked from the project website (<http://www.2500bloor.ca>). Members of the consultant team will address this issue and take appropriate action.

Another working group participant inquired about Tridel's intention to consider the ideas that will be put forth by the working group. Jennifer Keesmaat pointed out that everyone involved should be participating in good faith. Tridel is still in its due diligence phase. However, all working group participants, consultant team members, City representatives, and Tridel staff should be participating in good faith.

Councillor Saundercook also mentioned that it is challenging to respond to issues regarding traffic or zoning without a detailed development application in front of them. Compromises can be proposed to resolve issues; however, it is important for all sides to work together in a meaningful way to foster an effective process.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:24 pm.