

2500 Bloor Street West Meeting Two Discussion Summary

September 22, 2008



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Working Group Meeting Two was held on Thursday, September 18th, 2008 at the Old Mill Inn and Spa.

A series of four large panels were displayed depicting the Emerging Themes from Meeting One: Pedestrian-Vehicular Interventions, Mid-Block Pedestrian Linkages, Fine Grain Character, Transition of Scale, Grade Related Issues and Pedestrian Oriented Public Realm. Corresponding photos were displayed to solicit feedback and preferences from participants. Working Group Members and observers were given red, green, and yellow stickers and encouraged to indicate their preferences on each of the panels, based on the themes and criteria specified. **Visual Preference Survey Outcomes** comprise part one of the Discussion Summary.

Working Group members were then divided into three groups to embark on a discussion that would form principles based on the themes that were identified in Meeting One. Using the City of Toronto Official Plan as a guiding tool, Antonio Gómez-Palacio, Jennifer Keesmaat and Gail Shillingford of Office for Urbanism facilitated the discussion which shapes part two of the Discussion Summary; **Emerging Principles**.

These principles were subsequently synthesized into ten **Guiding Principles and Their Implications for Design**, which can be found in the final part of the Discussion Summary.

Visual Preference Survey Outcomes

Panel 1 Summary



PEDESTRIAN-VEHICULAR INTERVENTIONS

- existing conditions illicited a poor response
- upgraded streetscapes are desirable
- high quality materials (paving treatments) were strongly preferred
- generally positive responses to the example depicting strong organization of an intersection
- minimizing the pedestrian crossing distance is viewed positively - either for narrowing the Bloor Street crossing, or for narrowing the crossing distances of side streets
- idea of on-street spill-over of activity (café patios, for example) has broad appeal



MID-BLOCK PEDESTRIAN LINKAGES & PARKING TREATMENT

- enhancement of the parks/green spaces is desired
- preference is for a useful open space condition - not just residual green space
- green space should be attractive, and animated to some degree
- mixed responses regarding improvements to the parking areas - in some instances this was due to a preference for underground parking

Panel 2 Summary



FINE-GRAIN CHARACTER

- existing fine grain character of Bloor West Village is liked a lot
- negative reaction to flat façades
- general dislike for single use at-grade, including residential that comes to grade
- a preference was indicated for fine-grain
 - fine-grain use at grade
 - fine-grain articulation of built form
- examples depicting mixed use commercial/retail were preferred
- larger format retail uses are not desired
- single point of entry with inactive frontages is disliked
- preference is to maintain the active/fine-grain flavour/character of Bloor West Village at grade

Panel 3 Summary



TRANSITION OF SCALE

- abrupt transition of scale is strongly disliked
- service laneway condition is also not preferred
- both depictions of gradual transitions received more favourable responses



GRADE RELATED USES

- mixed use commercial/retail is preferred
- dislike for residential units accessible at grade
- positive response to physical articulation of uses at grade

Panel 4 Summary



PEDESTRIAN ORIENTED PUBLIC REALM

- typical Toronto streetscape condition received a negative response
- strong preference expressed for an enhanced streetscape condition, including:
 - high quality paving materials
 - large, well-tended trees
 - canopies and awnings
 - attractive street furniture
- mix of responses regarding more animated vs. quieter streetscapes
- examples depicting spillover uses (restaurant/cafe patios) activating the streetscape received very positive responses
- not much response to the idea of an expanded sidewalk with a double row of trees

Emerging Principles

Emerging Principles

RED GROUP

The Red Group, led by Jennifer Keesmaat, responded positively when asked whether or not the Emerging Themes were correctly identified following Meeting One. Based on the themes, the principles created are as follows:

1. The site design should be respectful of the need to transition to the residential uses to the west (for example, outdoor patios may not be ideal, as they could be bleak in the winter.) A grocery store may be better suited.
2. The site development should be designed to support the pedestrian experience both visually and physically, consistent with the Bloor West character.
3. The site development should also consider its function as a gateway, by a) incorporating the highest quality design and materials, and b) relating to the character of Bloor West Village while also doing something special.
4. The built form should offer some kind of way to mitigate weather – such as an overhang or awnings, or variance in the depth of frontages/entrances.
5. Open space on the site, or associated with it, should be active... places that people can use (as opposed to just look at).
6. Priority should be given to planning how pedestrians move through this area, as opposed to focusing on vehicular traffic (roundabout).
 1. Simplifying traffic movement should be considered.
 7. Parking lots should be greened to be as appealing and as park-like as possible.

Emerging Principles

GREEN GROUP

The Green Group, led by Gail Shillingford, did a thorough examination for the Official Plan Policies and the group members were generally satisfied that they provide sufficient guidance to produce concepts that are reflective of their ideas. There were a few principles that they wanted to elaborate on as key guiding principles, mainly related to vehicular access and circulation, the pedestrian experience, and achieving a harmonious fit with the surrounding context. There were varying opinions about improvements to traffic circulation and about the streetscape character. The discussion led to the following principles:

1. The site design should consider the consolidation of vehicular access and egress points to reduce existing and potential pedestrian conflict, to ensure safe pedestrian circulation and a comfortable pedestrian environment.
2. The site design should also consider an improved vehicular circulation pattern that discourages the infiltration of traffic into the neighbourhoods.
3. The group emphasized the OP policy which states that services and utility functions should be integrated within buildings where possible, in order to have a double frontage to Bloor Street and to the existing park and lane.
4. The site development should be designed to be respectful of the adjacent residential neighbourhood and should ensure a level of privacy for the existing residences as well as the residences proposed within the new development.
5. The park should be enhanced as a privacy buffer between the residences, existing and proposed.
6. The building(s) should transition appropriately in scale, and specifically, should transition down to the park and neighbourhood, both south and west of the site.
7. The at-grade street related character of development should be a fine-grain mix of commercial uses along Bloor Street with residential above.
8. The type of at-grade commercial use should be small scaled with multiple access.
9. The streetscape character should be active in general, and should be a merging of the Humber character and the existing Bloor Street West character, but there were differing opinions as to the degree of hardscaping versus softscaping, and active use versus passive use. The opinions included the following:
 - The streetscape should be more reflect of a “cafe-in-the-park” character, having widened sidewalks to allow for cafe spillover, enhanced landscaping, and a healthy street tree canopy to mitigate the weather. The street related uses should be more conducive to the predominant residential character of the area, providing places to enjoy a coffee and a meal within a “green” environment. A green median should be considered as part of the street cross section.
 - The streetscape should be more active in character, much like Bloor Street of Jane, but having widened sidewalks to allow for healthy cafe spill-over, as well as retail related activity, canopies, market stalls, etc., to accommodate active uses. The trade-offs would be to have less landscaping to accommodate active use.

Emerging Principles

YELLOW GROUP

The Yellow Group was facilitated by Antonio Gómez-Palacio, and included participants from a variety of perspectives and interests. The Yellow Group spent most of its time reviewing the Built Form policies from the Official Plan, which were affirmed and expanded upon. The following is a reflection of the conversation and the principles generated by the group, under each OP header:

1. New development will be located and organized to fit with its existing and planned context.
 - Much importance was given to ensuring that the development contribute to the sidewalk and public realm by facing the park and streets with an animated frontage (i.e. doors and windows), with “eyes-on-the-street”.
 - Protecting existing mature trees near the park, and contributing to the health of the neighbourhood’s tree canopy was also deemed important.
2. New development will locate and organize vehicle parking and vehicular access to minimize their impact on the surrounding properties.
 - It was acknowledged that given the scale of development, most of the bulk of the parking on the site would be located underground, and that street-side presence of access to parking and servicing should be minimized.
3. New development will be massed to fit harmoniously into its existing and/or planned context
 - It was considered that the massing of new development should transition, through scale, height, and stepbacks, towards the existing residential homes (west and north).
 - Ensuring adequate light penetration and privacy was also an important principle.
4. New development will be massed to define the edges of streets, parks and open spaces.
 - Using the new development to help define both the street edge and the public park was seen as a significant opportunity.
 - Ensuring sky views, from public spaces (including the streets) was also an important consideration.
5. New development will provide amenity for adjacent streets and open spaces.
 - Several opportunities are available on these sites to make a public realm contribution, especially as they relate to the sidewalk along Bloor Street and the parkside.
6. Significant new multi-unit residential developments will provide indoor and outdoor amenity space for residents.
 - Given the topography changes, the group identified an opportunity for outdoor amenity spaces to be located in rooftop gardens and elevated courtyards (above servicing and parking areas).

Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR DESIGN

- 1. Bloor West Village Identity** - New development facing Bloor Street should extend the character, look, and feel, of Bloor West Village (BWV), especially as it relates to the sidewalk animation and frontages, as well as defining the identity of an emerging South Kingsway character area.
 - Buildings must front directly onto Bloor Street and the side streets, with active, grade-related uses.
 - Building mass should incorporate a podium, which can relate in form and scale to the “main street” character of BWV.
 - The overall streetscape design should strive to create a seamless connection, for pedestrians, with the rest of BWV.
 - A mixed-use building is consistent and desirable, incorporating commercial uses close to grade and residential uses above.
- 2. Grade relation** - New development should extend the Bloor West Village (BWV) character of small commercial uses, that are animated, vibrant, and directly related to the public sidewalk.
 - The ground floor of new buildings should include “eyes-on-the-street” with active uses (doors and windows) that are directly accessible from the street, at the sidewalk level.
 - The ground floor of new buildings facing Bloor Street should incorporate retail uses.
 - The building’s facade should reflect the small-scale rhythm of commercial uses along Bloor West Village.
 - An opportunity exists for street-side spill-over uses, such as cafes and patios, on an expanded sidewalk and public realm.
 - No blank wall should face the street or the park.
 - Canopies, awnings, and other forms of weather protection are desirable.
- 3. Transition** - New development should recognize adjacent uses by articulating a transition in scale and use.
 - Retail uses at grade should articulate a transition towards the residential uses fronting Bloor Street, to the west.
 - Building mass should articulate a gradual transition through height, scale, and stepbacks, towards residential uses to the west and to the neighbourhoods to the north.
- 4. Pedestrian priority** - In all aspects of design, the experience and safety of pedestrians will be paramount.
 - A high quality streetscape and landscaping surrounding the buildings (street and park sides alike) is key.

Guiding Principles

- 5. Pedestrian vehicular conflicts** - New development and streetscaping should, where possible, contribute to resolving pedestrian/vehicular conflicts in the immediate vicinity.
 - As conflicts are most prominent at street intersections, new development may contribute to City's initiatives, such as crosswalks, traffic-calming, and improved street sections.
 - Opportunities for simplifying traffic movement should be considered.
 - Consideration should be given to vehicular circulation patterns that discourage infiltration of traffic into the neighbourhoods.

- 6. Building placement** - New development should be placed and oriented to frame the park and streets, recognizing significant views and view termini, and contributing to the experience of the public realm.
 - Buildings should be placed to frame the street and the park.
 - Significant view termini should be recognized through architectural design.

- 7. Gateway condition** - New development should recognize its significant location as a gateway by considering its visual prominence and architectural quality.
 - All building elevations, which will be seen from adjacent streets, should be designed and finished with high quality architecture and materials.

- 8. Tree canopy** - New development should assist with the conservation of the existing tree canopy, most prominent in the park, and contribute to an enhanced tree canopy along the park and street edges.
 - Opportunities for new trees can be found along the sidewalk.
 - An enhanced park edge should be landscaped and beautified.

- 9. Massing** - Urban design objectives can be achieved by redistributing the building mass.
 - Several opportunities for an improved public realm can be explored, by redistributing the building mass.
 - Rooftop gardens and terraces should be incorporated as an amenity for new residents.
 - Any new public space should be accessible directly from the Bloor Street sidewalk, and fronted by active retail uses.
 - Skyview, light penetration, shading, privacy, and wind conditions, relative to adjacent properties should be considered when sculpting the building mass.

- 10. Parking and servicing** - new development should minimize the streetside presence of parking and servicing areas, and of vehicular entrances.
 - Parking should be accommodated underground.
 - Service areas should be integrated within the building mass, and hidden from view.
 - Entrances to parking and servicing should be consolidated, designed to have a minimal streetside presence, and incorporated in the building mass.
 - Entrances to parking and servicing should be accommodated on the side streets.

