

2500 Bloor Street West

Prepared by OU September 22nd, 2008

Working Group Meeting Two – September 18, 2008: Meeting Notes

Working Group Meeting Two concerning the lands at 2500 Bloor Street West was held at The Old Mill Inn & Spa in Toronto, Thursday the 18thth of September, 2008, at 7:00 pm.

Introduction and Housekeeping

Toronto City Councillor Bill Saundercok of Ward 13 chaired the meeting, with Jennifer Keesmaat of Office for Urbanism facilitating.

Jennifer Keesmaat welcomed those in attendance and reviewed the agenda for the night. Participants were asked to make note of key issues so that they may be addressed following the meeting. An informal poll was taken among participants after a concern was voiced in regards to digital photos being taken during the meetings; one person specified that they did not want to be photographed.

It was emphasized that the format of Working Group Meeting Two would differ from that of Meeting One, involving both participants and observers in such a way that observers would now have the opportunity to provide feedback, regardless of their prior engagement in the process.

Precedent Survey on Interactive Panels

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.

Working Group Members and observed reconvened as Jennifer Keesmaat briefly reviewed panel outcomes and the preferences that had arisen.

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A summary of the outcomes from these panels will be provided on the project website.

The Workshop

Working group participants were divided into three groups facilitated by Jennifer Keesmaat, Antonio Gómez-Palacio, and Gail Shillingford of Office for Urbanism. The goal of the workshop was to discuss the emerging themes and develop principles based on these themes.

In setting up the discussion, three assumptions were emphasized. Firstly, the discussion was not to be about design, but rather to generate principles to inform the concepts for Meeting Three. Secondly, the principles were to be created based on the themes that have been identified, and lastly, the City of Toronto Official Plan was to be used as a guide for the discussion.

During the discussion, the emerging themes were reviewed within the group. Built form and massing were broached, in relation to the Official Plan. A series of Theme Related Discussion Topics, which can be reviewed on the project website, could be used by facilitators during the discussion.

Report Back

Following the workshop, a representative from each group presented a synopsis of the principles they defined. Details can be found in the Meeting Two Discussion Summary document.

Outstanding Issues and Closing

Councillor Saunderson thanked everybody in attendance for a successful meeting. Jennifer Keesmaat confirmed that the only thing that has changed from the Meeting Three Objectives outlined in the Work Book was the date of the meeting – which will be held on Thursday, October 16th. Hand rendered sketches of the site will be provided at Meeting Three.

Jennifer Keesmaat invited those Working Group members with concerns to remain after the meeting to voice them.

One of the Working Group Members expressed their support for the process, and while there were some concepts and issues that needed to be addressed, such as traffic, they were appreciative of the opportunity to be involved.

Conversely, several representatives felt as though the voices of their resident groups were not being heard through the Working Group process. While representatives have to be accountable to the greater public, the members felt as though it was difficult to bring work back to the community.

Jennifer Keesmaat invited those members to arrange a meeting time with her to discuss the issues at hand.

Another participant felt as though Working Group sessions were too directed, and that representatives needed an opportunity to speak on behalf of the community's greater opinion. An opportunity to give feedback from each group would be appreciated.

A second liaison expressed that some of the Working Group Members are representing large bodies (perhaps several hundred community members) and that it was very challenging as a volunteer to engage the community in a very limited time frame. This theoretical process to be able to report back to the community is difficult and ineffective. The reality for most is that emails would be sent to inform their larger memberships. Above all, people want to see what is going to take place on the site.

In response to the participants concerns for not having sufficient time to meet with their communities, and the difficulty in communicating with large bodies, Office for Urbanism suggested a few items that would help the process:

- That the outcomes of the workshop would be put on the website in an accessible and readable format, giving sufficient time for the community to review and respond to their representatives.
- For those representatives that want to meet with their community, they should pre-schedule a meeting well in advance in order give sufficient time for people to respond and make arrangements to meet.
- Others can communicate via e-mail as the information will be publicly accessible on the web.
- That the materials for the website would include: panel outcomes, principles from each of the worktable sessions, the resultant emerging principles, a discussion summary of the residents issues, and Office for Urbanism's responsive actions.

A third representative felt as though there was a misunderstanding in terms of what the report back should be – the idea not being a general feedback, but rather, something more specific and focused.

Office for Urbanism clarified the purpose of the report back, pointing out that the report back was not simply a download of the community's wish list in terms of what they would want on the site or a report of issues, but that their community meetings should be working sessions to discuss the issues and make recommendation in the same format as the workshop sessions. This would allow the representatives to come to the breakout tables with the community's issues and recommendations at hand and be able to make informed decisions in relation to the workshop tasks.

A fifth representative suggested that they would like to have a booklet of materials to canvas to their respective community organizations.

In response to all of the above comments, a representative from Tridel suggested that in at the next meeting, Workshop 3, Office for Urbanism would provide a package of the conceptual scenarios presented which could be taken back to the community, such that the community can evaluate the

scenarios against the emerging themes and principles. Working Group Members would then be required to get the evaluation feedback, and to report back in a fourth meeting. Office for Urbanism, and participants, were in agreement with this suggestion.

Lastly, a Working Group Member requested that website materials be posted in a smaller format to simplify downloads for the public. Office for Urbanism will ensure that future materials posted on the website will be made available in a smaller format.