

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting: City Working Group Meeting #1

Date: Tuesday April 20th 2021

Time: 6pm-8pm

Place: Online (Webex)

Project: 334-350 Bloor Street West & 2-6 Spadina Avenue

Participants:

Councillor Mike Layton (ML)	Andrea Fresolone (AFr)
Barry Brooks, Community Planning (BB)	Angela Cole, 13 Annex Lane (ACo)
Robert Ursini (RU)	Corinna Li, HSRO (CL)
Daniel de Moissac (DdM)	Danae Engle, HSRO (DE)
Anne Fisher (AFi)	Edward Leman (EL)
Kevin Lee (KL)	Harriet Wichin, ED Miles Nadal (HWic)
James Parakh (JP)	Henry Wiercinski (HWie)
Daniel Reynolds (DR)	James Jennings, 23 Annex Lane (JJ)
Gino D'Ambrosio (GD)	Ron Soskolne (RS)
Jay Brown (JB)	Sue Dexter, HVRA (SD)
Kareem Sethi (KS)	Zach Roher (ZR)
Peter Venetas (PV)	Call-in 61
Mansoor Kazerouni (MK)	Call-in 94
Aamer Shirazie (AS)	Darnel Harris (DH)
Amanda Chih (ACh)	Mike Dror, Bousfields (MD)
Claudia Sanchez (CS)	
Alun Lloyd (AL)	
David Leinster (DL)	
Philip Evans, ERA (PE)	
Samantha Irvine, ERA (SI)	

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION:

The following outlines the general topics of discussion at the meeting:

1. Introduction to the Working Group
2. Massing and built form
3. Public Realm
4. Heritage
5. Closing Remarks

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKING GROUP

- ML
 - Thank you to everyone because the willingness to come to the table and start the discussion is an important step. Commitment of time is important so if you are a designate from your organization, find someone that can maintain the level of commitment.

2. MASSING AND BUILT FORM

- BB
 - Asked PV or MK to give a quick explanation regarding their thoughts behind the building and its height in relationship to the neighbourhood buildings to the north, townhouses to the west, the apartment buildings and to the east in terms of the other side of Spadina and the JCC.
- PV
 - Engagement process was started in advance of the application and looked at what the opportunities and constraints were.
 - Looked at existing City policies.
 - Convened a series of working group meetings with many of the rate payors on the call.
 - Design principles were defined.
 - In parallel, there was an LPAT appeal that looked at height and how it related to the Knox View Corridor. There was a settlement agreement that talked about a range of heights governed by that view corridor. The application and how the building was designed was intended to respect that settlement as well as looking at existing planning framework and design principles that were procreated with the stakeholder group pre-application.
- MK
 - Asked AS to put up copy of site plan on screen
 - Started with Knox College View Corridor Study and commitment to stay out of the silhouette of those view corridors from the defined vantage points
 - This put us middle of the block and away from the intersection at Bloor/Spadina
 - Tower wasn't as close to corner as traditionally seen
 - Notched corner at Bloor/Spadina to open it up for pedestrians walking by while others are waiting to cross the street
 - Urban Living Room is a single tall volume of space. Very permeable visually. Treated as a publicly accessible space. Celebrates transit in this key corner.
- EL
 - Asked for more transition to the north.
 - Doesn't see the "two little setbacks" providing much of a transition, in the context of the tower.

- Asked for a section through the townhouses to see the implications in terms of transition
- RS
 - Trying to transition between two quite extreme massing conditions.
 - Not an issue of the built form of the tower itself.
 - More of an issue in the first 3-4 levels above grade.
 - Thinking of the interaction of space, built form and use between the various elements in the transition between the townhouses, public space between the two buildings and then into the building itself.
 - Ground level is most important for achieving integration.
 - What are the uses and what is the spatial arrangement as they interact with the building to the north?
- MK
 - Upper two floors above ground floor are occupied by office space.
 - Office hours coincide when most people aren't home so evenings and weekends are lightly used if used at all.
 - Office floors would face the townhouses and then apartments above them.
 - Ground floor has primary vehicular access into the site.
 - Effort was to not interrupt Bloor Street's sidewalk from a vehicular perspective.
 - At the very north end, adjacent to the property line, has been created a dedicated pedestrian connection that goes east-west.
- RS
 - Optimize connectivity between the building and the neighbourhood and the walkway may achieve that.
 - Question about connectivity to the west. How does that work and where does it go?
- MK
 - Linkage facilitates movement at the north end of the block to get to transit and hopefully allows for future connections in a similar manner west into the larger neighbourhoods.
- JJ
 - Annex Lane is a street of 24 townhomes, totalling about 50 residents.
 - Concerned about impact from construction but also future years of operating conditions (future residents, move-ins, move-outs, taxis).
- ACo
 - 21 years in the area, 4 kids.
 - There will be lots of impacts.
 - They have one way to enter and exit their homes.
 - Worried about increased density especially with the north lane sharing their south fence
 - Their residence is adjacent to the south fence.

- Safety risk with density when inhabited by shop owners, condo owners, rental, office workers, sheer density will be increased significantly.
- More trucks, cars, pedestrians, activity.
- Only way to enter and exit is through east side, it doesn't give them much opportunity to safely move about in their small community.
- Want to address lots of losses that will ensue. Loss of enjoyment due to reduced privacy. Incredibly weary about proposed laneway. Lack of safety.
- JJ
 - Everyone has a rooftop deck and garden
 - Lots of traffic, servicing and taxis on the driveway. Want to discuss impacts in detail.
 - What comes off balconies?
 - Loss of view. Loss of sun.
 - Absolutely not opposed to development. But their development is a high-density development.
 - Wants to work to ways to mitigate these impacts and losses in a way that these mitigations stay.
- ACo
 - Everyone has backyards, decks, windows, rooftop terraces.
 - Loss of privacy, sunlight.
 - Debris, dust, materials with respect to safety and use of outdoor spaces.
- JJ
 - Lane has very little turnover.
 - Extend invitation to ML to visit the townhomes.
- ML
 - Would be happy to visit the townhomes but would need to be done when in-person meetings resume in following with COVID-19 public health guidelines
 - Even a 10-storey building would have impacts. Most of impacts would be on the Annex Lane residents. But need to understand it and improve as much as possible.
- BB
 - Even a 10 to 15-storey tower, or 20-25, would have a shadow impact on their backyards and windows.
 - Have had discussion with applicant about mitigating impact at the north by reducing height of podium so that it matches the townhouses; maybe move some office units further into the tower itself.
- PV
 - Suggested setting up a Construction Liaison Committee to Annex Lane residents. That morphes into a relationship that's longer term between the building and the townhouses to the north where we can deal with issues around maintenance and operations and dealing with debris.

- First step is figuring out the design in terms of massing and also at grade; the quality and feel of the laneway; what the interface is with the existing fence and how that can be improved, but there is also a need to access it.
- MK
 - During SPA process, items such as security, lighting, landscape, and conditions that impact grade and impact safety are reviewed at a very detailed level of design.
- EL
 - Shared west elevation on screen.
 - Believes that laneway and interface need to be addressed at the re-zoning stage.
 - KPMB did a good job of addressing this issue on 300 Bloor.
 - Get more detailed info on the townhouses.
 - For the next meeting, develop it further, not quite at site plan detail, but more than what was done so far.
 - Look at 76 or 80 Yorkville near Scollard and Yorkville; almost a 4m separation that separates the driveway into the condos from the retail on Yorkville; look at fence condition and walkway where driveway separates it with screening, sidewalk, becomes an interesting space.
- ML
 - Have taken your point on working on laneway enhancements now and will get into it.
- JJ
 - All the townhouses have 4 storeys, with a rooftop and garden, all have a backyard.
 - Want to maintain a constructive relationship.
 - Agreements – This is an opportunity to put something substantial behind the mitigation measures. Need some teeth behind the commitments. Be collaborative but now naïve.
 - Worried about stuff being thrown/falling off balconies or someone looking down on children the way they shouldn't
- ML
 - Not sure that the City has a good measure of debris coming off buildings as it relates to people and patios.
 - Lots of midrises are done with close proximity to people's backyards and almost all start with concerns about overlook and privacy, but very few complaints end up coming from that as a result.
 - Would caution about comment regarding people leering over backyards. Wouldn't jump to that stage but the safety issue of stuff potentially come off of any open spaces is a real issue.
- JJ
 - Understands that some issues cannot be mitigated 100 percent.
- BB

- Lots of experience to use various forms of screening to limit at lower heights, but once you get to a certain height above the lower buildings, you are looking straight out, not looking into windows.
- More critical at the podium level which is primarily office spaces.
- Suggest planters being used for screening as a form of mitigation.
- HWic
 - Very interested in being involved, mitigate three years of construction and issue of privacy and overlook.
 - They have a Ministry of Education licensed rooftop playground for 250 children in their building.
 - Worried about playground and overlook and privacy.
 - Interested in screening, prevention of debris.
 - Need to work together.

3. PUBLIC REALM:

- SD
 - Treatment of walkway/promenade.
 - On a global sense, trying to do a green thread-through all the way to Christie north of Bloor Street over TTC easement. Opportunity to have relief to walk away from traffic and crowds on Bloor Street.
 - Look at Estonian Centre as well.
 - How to deal with the back end of a building? Not much but can hide it. This is what the people at Annex Lane will be looking at. Should look at trees, intense vegetation, lighting treatments, viewed from their rear windows. Let's give them something beautiful to look at.
- MK
 - Creating visual screens that filter out some of the impacts as a means of mitigating them.
 - There are design measures to mitigate some of the concerns heard today that are typically done later but will need to start it earlier.
- EL
 - Several points to raise on the Public Realm:
 - 1. cut-out at corner i.e. the POPS is a good start. What you do here sets the precedent for the other corners. More attention needs to be given to the cut-out.
 - 2. Sidewalk widths – effective width is questioned due to location of planters, etc. What do you see those sidewalks being (right now they're a way of getting from Point A to Point B)? In contrast to the southeast corner which on a Friday or Saturday night is a very different type of sidewalk environment.
 - 3. Granularity of retail on Bloor. Right now the facade is very undifferentiated.
 - 4. Linkages between subway, Urban Living Room (ULR) and the street.

- RS
 - Main moves are potentially very good but need to look at the details.
 - Look at Queen and Yonge and how they hook into the subway, quite unsuccessfully, where the buildings have a very corporate feel to them, with very little animation in terms of retail or restaurant uses, and have very little relationship to the street.
 - Two main things would like to know more about and encourage to develop:
 - 1. Ways in which ULR is designed to actually be a living extension of the public realm rather than a corporate lobby. I.e. the activities that go on there like retail or performances, exhibitions, etc. Critical for the building to be designed to accommodate those uses. Need to start focusing on that.
 - 2. Experience that people have when walking from subway station through the building to Bloor and Spadina. Look at other precedents in Toronto. Matter of design, retail, etc.
 - 3. In terms of granularity, there is an opportunity to do some really good retail along Bloor Street. Like to know more about thinking in terms of what the actual interface is going to be like between what goes on in retail stores and what goes on along the sidewalk. Also about the architecture and position of entrances and opportunities for retail to spill out onto the sidewalk.
- JP
 - Very interested in granularity and how the building meets the street.
 - Have asked applicant to go to the Design Review Panel (DRP) in one month.
 - Panel is virtual so you cannot attend, but they are recorded.
 - One thing they will ask panel is about the public realm.
 - Also envision a pocket park at the NE corner of this intersection so how the Public Realm and how the corners relate to each another is very much part of their thinking.
- ML
 - Understands the aspirations and believe they are aligned with our aspirations.
 - Traditionally the ground floor on such a scaled condo development would have significant lobbies and residential-oriented spaces but we have been given that up to integrate more public spaces, more communal spaces and more retail. We've moved the lobby to upper levels of the building.
- PV
 - Were looking to replicate the Annex Gardens on Spadina.
 - Waiting on results of the City's pilot project around what is planting on Bloor Street.
 - Animation from the building to the public realm

- CL
 - Strongly agree with RS and EL about creating vibrant space on ground floor, pay attention to granularity.
 - Look at widening the sidewalk.
 - ULR as public realm and importance from design, operations and management perspective that the ULR becomes a truly educated space and made accessible to a diverse group of people.
- DE
 - Echo what RS, EL, SD and CL have said.
 - Thinking about population mix, and who is going to be using the spaces. Particularly student population.
- ML
 - ULR and how we have envisioned it is a completely accessible space.
 - RS made some good points that a lot of the success of it is how we program it.
 - Have contemplated things like café, high tables with benches in terms of workspace, WIFI connectivity.
 - Move to engage and understand the demographics and curate space in manner that is appealing to the demographics.
- JJ
 - Annex Lane contribution to public realm would be to focus on pedestrian traffic and bike traffic.
 - Congestion and conflicts between their lane and the proposed lane.
 - Any thoughts on how to manage those increased traffic flows
- ML
 - This will jump us into a transit conversation that will be ongoing for the next couple of meetings.
 - Finalize public realm and then speak on heritage piece and see what time is left to touch on transportation
- DH
 - Is the intention to use soil cells for trees to ensure they're successful?
 - What is the intention of the management of the public realm spaces?
 - Look at Corus Quay – where planters were eliminated entirely.
- PV
 - On Spadina we are working on existing infrastructure with Enbridge.
 - Typically there is a City detail that provides a certain soil volume that trees need in order to be successful. This gets more detailed within Site Plan and Streetscape drawings.
 - Want the trees on the west side of Spadina to be as successful as possible.
 - Want the building to be clean and tidy and managed well.

4. HERITAGE

- AFi
 - City has to consider whether or not a property has significant heritage resources as part of any application.
 - Just because a property is not currently on the heritage registrar does not meant it's not significant.
 - Heritage staff have done a preliminary review of this property and the building at the corner was built in 1914 and is of an Edwardian classical style.
 - The building does contribute to the character of the area.
 - Its massing makes it a bit of a landmark at this intersection and we are concerned that it is being demolished with no conservation and they consider this to be a resource that needs to be conserved.
- SD
 - What are you thinking is conservation?
- AFi
 - Right now, nothing is being conserved, the whole building is being removed.
 - Would want to explore what can be conserved in terms of its heritage value.
 - Plenty of examples where facades are conserved to retain legibility and integrity.
 - Conservation doesn't preclude additional massing, it just means the design is taking into account the character of the neighbourhood and the existing resources that are there.
- PV
 - Explained that HIA wasn't initially required at time of submission but it came through after initial rezoning application but are working towards providing one as part of the resubmission process.
- SI
 - Looking at it, might have some nominal value. Not sure yet.
 - Are looking at it in context of what this property can offer.
 - When talking about conservation, trying to take a broad view and understand the stories that this site can tell.
- ML
 - Three potential scenarios: 1. Say bye to the (potential) heritage asset; 2. Keep heritage asset and lose some of the advancements that have been made regarding the public realm; 3. Mixture of 1 and 2.
- SD
 - Has a presence on corner for sure.
 - Been kind of neglected and looks kind of tacky.
 - But would want to be made aware of its importance.

- ML
 - It's a pretty big trade off if we lose some of what has been advanced with respect to the public realm improvements if we were to retain the building.
- SD
 - Can you move some walls? Retail some walls? Need to give it some respect. Local commerce is important.
- MK
 - Have started to think about it.
 - If you think of the people who have traversed the site, it would be to access transit.
 - Believe that heritage asset of this site is all about transit connectivity, unique intersection where two major lines intersect.
 - Have chosen to celebrate transit and put it at the center of this development.
- SD
 - What are the reference points?
 - Example: Sussex-Spadina Student Residence – retained two of the walls.
- PE
 - Takes SD's comments very seriously and wants to take time to dive into the comments and come back to discuss.
 - Going through a process to follow the Province's guidelines on establishing value.
 - What value this has in the community?
 - Physical resource evaluation, intangible conversation.
 - This is a very changed part of the City in the last hundred years.
 - There is a story here that we've trying to understand.
- SD
 - Mindset can be very different and changed if you think about these things.
- EL
 - Hearing that everyone will use their best efforts between the public realm and heritage asset.

5. CLOSING REMARKS

- ML
 - We have accomplished the three topics in the allotted time but does not mean that any of the three are resolved.
 - Hopefully next time we meet there will be revisions to review, particularly around the height and massing, streetscaping pieces, further thinking on heritage protection.
 - Thank you for contributions today, good positive first step.