

brian graff

From: Ute Lehrer [lehrer@yorku.ca]
Sent: September 12, 2012 5:54 PM
To: brian graff
Cc: 'James Parakh'; mmcmaho3@toronto.ca; nswerhun@swerhun.com; wayne.clutterbuck@rogers.com; ilovemybeach@gmail.com; 'Suzanne Giblon'; 'Jan Hykamp'; chris.howling@rogers.com; 'Skopek, Jiri (Canada)'; 'Jason Self'; 'Uwe Sehmrau'; ellisjohn@rogers.com; carolewilson@sympatico.ca; w_burrows@hotmail.com
Subject: Re: Queen East Visioning Study: Materials for tomorrow's SAC meeting
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Red

Dear James,

Thank you for providing us with a draft for Urban Design Guidelines for Queen Street East one day before the meeting.

I have reviewed the document and my comments below are based on both my involvement in several community groups and my professional perspective as a Professor in Urban Planning at York University, teaching students about the democratic processes of planning (Public Participation) and the implications of OP, PPS, Places to Grow Act, etc. for planning situations. In addition, my opinion is based on my ten years of research on the condominium boom in Toronto, on neighborhood activism, on gentrification as well as on my experience as expert witness at the OMB.

Thanks for your work on this draft. Unfortunately, I don't share much of what you have put forward here.

Overall the guidelines are EXTREMELY UNIMAGINATIVE! Apart from what Brian already has pointed out in regards to the original mandate that morphed under your leadership into an exercise of intensification, and which will open the door to **fundamental** changes along Queen Street in the Beaches – **It clearly lacks imagination.**

More specifically:

The history section is not yet written and its absence might be a good indication of the main problem of this document (isn't the history of a place where good planning starts, particularly when the entire exercise is about the character of this neighborhood?).

The section on Beach and Tourism is entirely based on a quote from a website of Toronto's Tourism office. That the quote of the website not only is used to present the Beach's "feel" but repeated almost fully in the previous paragraph is unfortunate. Why not ask the participants of the Visioning Study what they think and then write something original instead of using a text that has the purpose of selling Toronto as a tourist destination?

The section on sustainability has a title only, it doesn't even have a picture as placeholder (like the history section does). Sustainability, however, is at the core of the Places to Grow Act that drives the numbers for intensification in already built-up areas, the mandate that you seem to have submitted to the entire design guideline exercise. The reader of the draft would like to know what you mean by sustainability, given that there are so many different ways of defining it.

10/08/2012

The lack of carefulness with which this document was written doesn't allow me to have trust in the proposal overall.

Which leads me to my overall criticism of the process (for which others, including the local Councillor, also need to take responsibility).

The kind of public involvement that was chosen, didn't allow any frank discussions. In spite of some good efforts, the public process followed here would still rank under "tokenism" in Arnstein's *Ladder of Citizen Participation*.

As someone pointed out in the last Visioning meeting, the agenda was completely set. There was no real input from the community possible. The process focused too quickly on technical matters, such as building masses, shadow lines, etc. It was completely missed to use this opportunity to develop an idea for a community that provides a positive environment for a range of people. There was no room for the question "What kind of community do we want to be?"

While I understand that design guidelines are just that – they focus on design, and they are only guidelines, hence they are not absolute – I would have preferred that you and the local Councillor had seen this exercise as a unique opportunity to deal with development pressures on a larger scale. It would have been a fabulous chance to come up with some fundamental and forward looking points on how to deal with urban development pressures along major roads in already well established neighborhoods, a framework that could have become exemplary for the rest of the City. Instead we are left with the question that the media and other councillors ask me on a regular basis: why does the Beach neighborhood think that they need special treatment? The Visioning Study didn't come up with an answer for that.

A missed opportunity, indeed!

It was assumed that we all want to have the same: make sure that the new heights and volumes don't have an impact on our surrounding houses and that the new buildings don't appear out of context. It was also assumed that the invited participants of the visioning study represent all interests of the community. We don't! And we can't. In several conversations with Beach residents who are not part of the visioning study it became clear to me that there is a strong, socially informed opinion about effects that an intensified development along Queen Street would have, particularly for people on a modest income.

The importance of a building structure that would allow a healthy mix of people of different incomes and circumstances, a condition that is more and more lacking not only in the Beach, was mentioned by participants but never picked up by the workshop leaders. With the proposed guidelines the hyper gentrification that we have seen in the local residential real estate market over the past ten years (see Alan Walks' work on that) will continue and soon the Beach neighborhood will have lost all of its working class history. This might be good for those who want to make a profit from their real estate but it has been proven that economic homogeneity is not good for neighborhoods within an increasingly polarized city (see Hulchanski's report on the three cities).

The current proposal will lead to retail gentrification along Queen Street. In the community meeting that took place in the Kew Beach School this past Spring, acting Chief Planner of Toronto at that time, Gregg Lintern, assured me in public that stores would not be wider than 8 metres, which is already quite large for the majority of the existing retail along Queen East. The new guidelines would allow storefronts of up to 12 meters! Given that this is the equivalent of up to 3 houses, this is not a fine-grained scale of urban redevelopment; it works to the advantage of larger, chain-like stores, but not to the "quaint and quirky stores" of small business owners that Toronto Tourism is promising the visitor.

To sum it up, the proposed draft is a rather technocratic, unimaginative and surprisingly imprecise document.

There is good reason to support what one neighborhood group was asking for during the last meeting, namely to continue with using the old guidelines. In their words: “What’s wrong with them?”

Yours truly,

Ute Lehrer, PhD
Associate Professor
CITY Institute and Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University

On 12-09-12 11:01 AM, brian graff wrote:

<!--[if mso 9]--> <!--[endif]-->

Oh, and remember one thing... west of Woodbine on the south side, the middle 3 buildings (out of the 5) do respect the existing 12m height limit – only the ones on either end are taller, but the zoning on the books still says 12m even for these!

And nobody (Tine, or the buildings department) has been able to explain to me how the other 2 buildings managed to exceed 12m as the rezoning of the racetrack had 12m on all these sites.... Though there was a Committee of Adjustment ruling to allow “parapets” that might have been a Trojan horse.

And I believe that the 2 Streetcar Developments condos on the north side are completely within the 12m height limit with the streetwall being lower on at least one of the 2.

Brian

From: brian graff [<mailto:briangraff@sympatico.ca>]
Sent: September 12, 2012 10:52 AM
To: 'James Parakh'; 'mmcmaho3@toronto.ca'; 'nswerhun@swerhun.com'
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Subject: RE: Queen East Visioning Study: Materials for tomorrow's SAC meeting

Hi James:

I do appreciate your offer and will take you up on that.

That being said, I already did a first run-through of the new Draft – while in some ways it is not as bad as I had feared, I am very disappointed in many of provisions (height and angular planes) and that there is still just one set of height and angular planes for each precinct – in particular, the “Woodbine to Bellefair” part of the Kew Beach Area is quite different from “Bellefair to Glen Manor” as per the old Western and Central Districts.

In the old central district, for example, it makes no sense to widen the sidewalks by pushing new buildings back from the front lot line – which will create a zig-zagging streetwall, whereas in the Western District there are at least some areas where the current house-form buildings are set back and the setbacks should really be mapped out.

There needs to be a hierarchy that does things like protecting the group of houses across from the

fire hall, and there needs to be maps showing a block-by-block set of rules, much like the excellent 1988 du Toit study.

The is the problem with “3 precincts” approach is that this reflects how people view the community as really “3 neighbourhoods” – this has little to do with the built form as such and more to do with social ties and where people shop or walk – the built form itself is very accurately detailed in the 1988 du Toit study around pages 38 where blocks are classified A, B, C, D, or E based on built form.

My main concern is that you still seem to be applying this idea that this exercise is about intensification and the formula of “Height = width of ROW” and that the OP requires Queen to be intensified...

it takes a PROPER AVENUE STUDY to recommend changes to height or zoning (AKA “reurbanisation”) which is likely less than 20m, as on Avenue Road or College Street (Bloor is not an Avenue but in the Downtown, so actually the pressure on Bloor east of Bathurst to intensify under the OP would have been greater yet they recommended keeping the zoning and height “as-is”)

In fact, in 1.0 (page 3) you misquote the motion setting up the study – you wrote “balance the intensification policies of the Official Plan” when the motion does not mention intensification and just says “balance the policies of the Official Plan” – see the attached Agenda Item from TEYCC - the background paragraphs did not mention intensification AT ALL and only “growth” – which is only mentioned twice.

This is the problem I have had with Jamie McEwan (and Gregg Lintern) – they say “we are just following orders” but the orders they say they are following are not what is actually IN WORDS, ON PAPER!

And by setting the streetwall in Woodbine Beach at 12.5m (instead of even 12.0m) and that buildings can be 20m tall you are saying that the existing zoning is 100% “null and void” for all properties and contradicting the 2010 motion removing Queen from the Avenues & Midrise Buildings study, and the Official Plan.

This whole exercise should be more about “INFILL” and how to make things fit into the existing context or the “planned context” – with the “planned context” clearly being defined in the OP itself as the *existing zoning* and not a *20m height limit*.

Brian

From: James Parakh [<mailto:jparakh@toronto.ca>]
Sent: September 12, 2012 9:01 AM
To: brian graff
Subject: Re: Queen East Visioning Study: Materials for tomorrow's SAC meeting

Brian,

I did review the chart and took things into consideration but will be Happy to go over your chart after the meeting tonight. Consider yesterdays draft something that will be added to with more details and revisions.

Regards

James

James N. Parakh, O.A.A.

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>>> brian graff <briangraff@sympatico.ca> 9/12/2012 1:36 am >>>
 James – did you ever review the attached – when I look through your guidelines I didn't notice any of this being an influence.

Brian

From: Green, Kate [<mailto:kgreen@swerhun.com>]
Sent: September 11, 2012 2:19 PM
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Subject: Queen East Visioning Study: Materials for tomorrow's SAC meeting

Hi SAC members – as promised yesterday, attached for your review are additional materials for tomorrow's SAC meeting, including:

- <!--[if !supportLists]-->1. <!--[endif]-->Proposed Meeting Agenda (note that all agenda suggestions will be covered, though not all are detailed on the one page agenda)
- <!--[if !supportLists]-->2. <!--[endif]-->Draft Presentation (there are a few additional slides - including built form visuals and infrastructure information - which are being finalized and will be incorporated into the presentation at the meeting tomorrow)

Looking forward to a good discussion tomorrow

Kate Green, BURPI.
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