

WEST BEND COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
Minutes of March 21, 2007

Chair: Hilary Bell, Minutes Hilary Bell

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Attending: approximately 45 residents, Richard Decter (Councillor Perks' office)

Presentation re former McBride site (2797 – 2803 Dundas Street West)

Guests: Robert Chang, Architect, and Justin Garak, Owner/Developer

Proposed vision for the site

Robert Chang stressed that the plans for the site are at a very preliminary stage. The general direction for the development is for a residential condominium with retail/commercial at street level. The plan is to follow the City of Toronto guidelines to step the building back from the street frontage above the fourth storey. If possible, the building will be stepped away from the residential neighbourhood to the rear by terracing the building from the first floor upward. Preliminary plans presented at the meeting show a building with two levels of parking below ground, one level of retail/commercial and seven levels of residential condominiums, with a much smaller amenities “cap” adjoining a green roof area.

The architect also noted that Dundas Street West is designated as “an Avenue” under the City’s new Official Plan, meaning that it is a desirable site for residential intensification (well served by transit, neighbourhood commercial main street, etc.) The zoning has not yet been updated for this area, so previous zoning is still in place but will change. An “as of right” development would be about four storeys under the old zoning but would not be in the spirit of the Official Plan.

Richard Decter confirmed that the process is at a very early stage. The councillor’s office investigated preserving the existing building but was told it wasn’t possible. Commercial buildings do not have the same protections and processes as residential buildings. The architect and developer met with Councillor Perks and then with a member of the Junction BIA and two West Bend Residents. It was agreed that an early preliminary meeting would be useful (hence tonight’s meeting). The development will either go to Committee of Adjustment (if the Planner considers that the variances required are minor variances) or to re-zoning (if the variances required are major). The Committee of Adjustment process is the faster process.

Comments and questions

The following points reflect the comments, questions and concerns expressed at the meeting.

<p>Question, comment, concern</p>	<p>Response (from architect, owner, resident)</p>
<p>Nearby residents expressed some concerns about wind currents, especially given the height of the building</p>	<p>This will not likely be a problem, as the tapered shape of the building should absorb the wind currents better than if it were a straight-sided building. Wind study may be needed.</p>
<p>Shadowing may be an issue.</p>	<p>Shadows fall mainly west and north along Dundas Street in the morning and north and east in the evening, catching the corner of Indian Grove and Dundas.</p>
<p>Concerns were brought forward by several people about the size of the alleyway. While this portion of the alleyway will be widened, the rest will not.</p>	<p>The plan is to widen the alleyway from xx (need number) to yy (need number) by not building all the way out to the lot line on the north side of the alleyway. The parking garage entrance will not use the alleyway – it will go straight off Indian Grove beside the alleyway. Service bays (for the building and for the retail space) will be provided on the southwest corner of the building. The City will be reviewing these questions once the detailed plans are developed and the building will have to meet the City’s requirements.</p>
<p>Comments were made that providing 69 parking spots seems counter to the City’s green initiative. Since the city is putting in a bike path, couldn’t we somehow encourage bike use or provide a spot for Autosshare or Zip Car like Options for Homes is doing?</p>	<p>That is what the site can support, not necessarily what will be used. If less parking is provided than the city requires, there may be objections about problems with too many people using the existing on-street parking.</p>
<p>A wish was expressed for this to be a building that can accommodate families (larger units, please) as people renting in the neighbourhood would like to stay but need family space not just single/couple space. (Note: Options for Homes has had more interest in two-three bedroom units than usual for their project.)</p>	<p>The composition of the units is very open at the moment. On a standard condominium template, the building would be about 70 units with about half as one-bedrooms but a lot depends on the type of interest that is expressed.</p>

<p>Retail businesses in this area are struggling and a few comments suggested that a 100% residential building would be better.</p>	<p>The architect and several residents agreed that it is important to maintain continuity in the commercial character of the street. We need to be thinking of the next 20-50 years, not the next 5 years. Intensification will bring more people into the neighbourhood (this site plus Options for Homes will bring more than a thousand new residents).</p>
<p>People are concerned about the look and feel of the Indian Grove side of the building. It should address the street in a lively way and might perhaps need some appropriately softening landscaping to blend with the porches and trees on the rest of the street to the south.</p>	<p>The detailed elevations for the building are still a work in progress. Comments were noted.</p>
<p>People expressed interest in the aesthetics of the building (some not wanting a poured concrete look or a lot of glass)</p>	<p>The plans are not that far advanced yet – no decision has been made about those details yet. Building can look contemporary while still fitting into the aesthetic of the neighbourhood. There are many different building styles along Dundas.</p>
<p>There was some discussion about building height – some were opposed to anything above four storeys while others had no problem with five or six storeys as long as the building did not “loom” over the neighbourhood.</p> <p>Most nearby buildings are three storeys but some are four and one is five-and-a-half.</p>	<p>A lower building might seem to loom more than a higher one, as the additional height allows for more terracing at the back. To a certain extent, there are economic factors at work as the developer can only go forward if there is a prospect of some profit on the building.</p>
<p>What will be the setback from the building immediately to the west?</p>	<p>The detailed plans will show that when the plans are further developed.</p>
<p>There are people walking on nearby properties without permission to take photos.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p>Increased traffic north- and southbound on Indian Grove may be an issue. Will there be a traffic study?</p>	<p>Noted but no definitive answer recorded.</p>

Other Business

1. **Minutes of February 21, 2007** – Copies of the minutes were distributed for information and comment. Minutes were incomplete (awaiting some information from GO-Transit) so were deferred till April.
2. **Committees and Reports**
 - 2.1 **Keele Street Traffic Committee** – no meeting held since last update.
 - 2.2 **Communications** – Aileen Scott reported that she is working with Matt to do the web design and expects to have something in a few weeks.
 - 2.3 **Baird Park Improvement Committee** – Aileen suggested that we invite all the interested parties to our April meeting to help plan this year’s event. Bonnie Mackenzie mentioned that the 11 Division CPLC might be interested in taking part and suggested – with all the dog owners associated with Baird Park – that a “police dog trial” would be a great addition to the event. We also might push for at least one improvement to be done in time for the event.
 - 2.4 **Treasurer’s Report** – deferred.
 - 2.5 April Meeting agenda will be Baird Park event planning **plus** a presentation from Kate Duncan from West Toronto Initiative for Solar Energy (WISE). Aileen to contact Baird Park groups and Hilary to contact Kate.
 - 2.6 We discussed topics for May and June but did not set a firm agenda. Potential topics are:
 - Powers under the New City of Toronto Act
 - electoral reform in preparation for the October referendum
 - potential federal all-candidates meeting (hope not)

4.0 Announcements –

- 4.1 Bonnie Mackenzie reported an issue with the Acme Candy Store at Dundas and Pacific. The store is selling “adult items” (“Hot Sex Pills” and sexually suggestive playing cards) as well as candy items that will appeal to kids. The BIA would like our support in encouraging the store to use appropriate signage or segregate its stock so that children’s and adult’s items are not in the same area. We will send a letter to the store manager to that effect.
- 4.2 Massimo Rovazzi (Li Limited, Price Chopper landlord) was at Councillor Perks’ office. He has bought out the interest of another member of the Li Limited consortium and has expressed his intention to go ahead with landscape improvements. Amy Johnson at Councillor Perks’ office will be following up diligently to make sure that his good intentions come to fruition.

5.0 Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.