

DESIGN CHARRETTE¹– NOVEMBER 8, 2007

The City of Toronto initiated a project review to update the existing Urban Design Guidelines, and to develop the Public Realm Plan for the Humber Bay Shores Area to shape the long-term vision of the area. Humber Bay Shores Condominium Association (HBSCA) was invited to attend the meeting to provide the neighbourhood perspective, along with project consultants, architects, owners of lands from the Monarch developments west to Park Lawn Road. Also present at the meeting were Councillor Mark Grimes, Mike McCart (Planning Department), Mike Wehkind (Traffic and Transportation), other city staff and representatives from the Toronto Regional Conservation Authority. The meeting was held on November 8, 2007, at Palace Place

Several guiding principles emerged through the analysis of the existing conditions:

- plan vibrant pedestrian-oriented streetscapes;
- balance taller and more slender buildings with low-rise buildings facing streets and sidewalks;
- create well-articulated transition zones between public and private areas;
- encourage at-grade residential uses with multiple front entrances along public streets and private courtyards;
- create a connected community framework through public streets, private sidewalks, and mid-block connections between Lake Shore Boulevard West and Marine Parade Drive;
- support a diversity of building forms and activities;
- make energy efficient and sustainable design a priority;
- provide reasonable access to sunlight and sky views;
- optimize opportunities for retail and restaurant uses along critical points of Marine Parade Drive;
- provide on-street parking wherever possible to promote retail viability; and,
- build on Humber Bay Shore area heritage.

Mike McCart, City Planner, presented a history of the past plans for the area, including residential, commercial, schools, and parkland development, all of which put on hold until the park was completed, at a cost of \$20 million. The plan approved 3500 new units. The current buildings (1800 units) were constructed according to this plan. Each parcel of land was planned individually by its owners, without collaboration among the owners. As a result, no overall plan for the design of the area was followed. Buildings were constructed right up to the limit of the lot lines, resulting in buildings being very close together, three- and four-storey townhouses sandwiched between towers, and no public pedestrian walkways. Sight lines between buildings are not ideal; heights of the buildings are not compatible; and green spaces were not designed well.

Mike Wehkind (city Traffic and Transportation department) presented an overview of the current traffic and transportation problems, and plans for the future, which include a streetcar right of way from Park Lawn to the Humber Loop, and the relocation of the Humber Loop to the corner of Lake Shore and Park Lawn. The tracks, constructed in 2002, are compatible with "right of way" TTC access. The loop will not be constructed until 2009, and the right of way is not planned until after that time.

The five HBSCA members stated the view that the lack of transportation infrastructure is the most serious problem facing the community, now and in the future. The current infrastructure does not support the present development in the area, and the congestion problems will only become worse as more condominiums are built.

¹ A charrette consists of an intense period of design activity, and may refer to any collaborative session in which a group of designers and others drafts a solution to a design problem.

Future Developments

The remaining lots from Brookers Lane to Park Lawn are owned by five different companies. Some of these lots are very narrow, making private vehicular access to both Lake Shore Blvd. and Marine Parade Drive impossible. Several plans for access roads and/or laneways to service this area were presented.

The owners of these lots presented their site concepts:

- Greywood Developments has acquired the Silver Moon Motel land; their plan is to work together with Monarch, the owner of the adjacent lot, to construct a four storey/100 room hotel (Marriot/Ritz Carlton) on the Lake Shore side of their two lots.
- Waterview 4 was originally approved for two towers of 29 and 17 storeys, respectively, presenting a mirror image of the current development. This original plan resulted in poor sight lines from the second building, and the plan for Waterview 4 has now been revised to only one taller, more slender tower of 37 storeys, and will 25,000 sq. ft of retail, and 140 public parking spaces.
- The Conservatory Group owns the Hillcrest and North American Motel lands. Their plan is for commercial use along Lake Shore, with mixed use on the rest of the lot.
- The owner of the Shore Breeze Motel has a plan for 10,000 sq. ft of retail on Lake Shore, with a 40 storey, 346-unit condominium building to the south.
- The property behind the Esso station has been designated for an elementary school, but the use could possibly change at some time in the future.

The developers are attempting to improve on the current look of the area by using podiums, step-down terracing, slender towers and public green spaces.

The preliminary results of the meeting will be presented to the Design Review Panel, and the revised Urban Design Guidelines are to be completed by the end of February 2008.