

**YONGE-STEELES WORKING GROUP
MEETING NOTES
September 26, 2007**

Attendees:

Yonge-Steeles Working Group Members

Mara Canale
Evelin Ellison
Scott Harris
Chi Hing Ma
Marion Matthias
Nancy Miller
Bill O'Donnell
Rod Snyder
Jeff Stone
Lance Taylor

Consultant Team

Bob Allsopp, duToitt Allsopp Hillier
Joe Lobko, duToitt Allsopp Hillier
Brent Raymond, duToitt Allsopp Hillier
Jim Bacchus, Cansult Limited
David Butler, Butler Consultants
Mark Conway, N. Barry Lyon Consulting

Town of Markham

Jim Jones, Regional Councillor
Valerie Burke, Ward 1 Councillor
Valerie Shuttleworth, Director of Planning and Urban Design
Ron Blake, Development Manager, West District
Elizabeth Wimmer, Senior Landscape Planner, West District
Prasenjit Roy, Senior Transportation Engineer
Allen Wu, Senior Development Engineer
Sabrina Bordone, Planner, West District

Ron Blake (Town of Markham staff) began by thanking everyone who was in attendance and providing an overview of the meeting's agenda. Ron Blake reviewed the intent of the study ("to guide the form, intensity, and character of future redevelopment within study area") and provided a summary of the first Working Group Meeting that was held on August 2, 2007.

Ron Blake then introduced Bob Allsopp (duToitt Allsopp Hillier), lead consultant for the study. Bob Allsopp presented the key proposals of the study including:

- Proposed densities (2.5 FSI for properties fronting onto Yonge Street, 3.5 FSI at the northeast corner of Yonge Street and Steeles Avenue, and 2.0 FSI for the block north of Steeles Avenue, east of Dudley Avenue);
- Proposed land use plan (simplified designations) and detailed more specifically the land use plans proposed for both north and south of the CN Rail Line;
- Recommended setbacks for Yonge Street (9.5 m south of the Rail Line and 15 m north of the Rail Line);
- Built form envisioned for Yonge Street and the proposed building transition to the existing residential to the east of the study area; and,
- The three demonstration plans currently being contemplated, which incorporate the same densities, but vary in the amount of park space and building height.

A copy of Mr. Allsopp's presentation is available at:

http://www.markham.ca/NR/rdonlyres/972BB842-5D62-48FE-9624-193D38165C4B/0/Presentation_070926_Consult.pdf

Members of the Working Group were then presented with the following three questions. The discussion was moderated by Joe Lobko (duToitt Allsopp Hillier):

1. Do you agree with the proposed densities?
2. Do you agree or disagree with the proposed setbacks on Yonge Street?
3. Which demonstration plan do you prefer?

The following is a summary of the discussion that took place:

- YSWG Member: Last time we spoke about densities and the various built forms available. We do not want development to look the same along the Yonge Street frontage. I like the idea of 'pulsing' development, so that there is not a constant built wall. I think the proposed demonstration plans allow for a fair amount of variety. Although the densities are the same in all three scenarios, there are very different built forms for each option with lots of variety.
- YSWG Member: We want something that is easy on the eyes (visually). The Town should recommend maximum building footprint sizes. In North York (City Centre) I find the buildings to not only be high, but also very bulky.
- YSWG Member: I would like to know more about the impacts that the proposed developments will have in terms of sunshine and shadowing?
- Consultant Team: This is another reason why it is good to keep building footprints small. Generally speaking though, we have not done sun/shadowing studies, but 20 storey buildings are really not that tall.
- YSWG Member: I think the question regarding sun/shadowing impacts is an important one, because this will have an impact on the enjoyment of public spaces.

- Councillor Valerie Burke: Consideration should also be given to wind, as this can create a very hostile environment. Thought needs to be given as to how these impacts can be mitigated.
- Consultant Team: The best pattern for development, with respect to mitigating wind impacts, is a consistent build-to-zone, so that all buildings are more or less in line. In this regard, a uniform urban fabric would be best, as opposed to one characterized by a variety of setbacks.
- Consultant Team: Just to add, there are three very important things that can help mitigate wind impacts: i) stepping back the building face as the height increases, ii) smaller building floor plates/footprints, and iii) providing a double row of trees along Yonge Street.
- YSWG Member: One of my continuing concerns is the Liberty site. It is the highest piece of land (topographically) and its potential impacts are one of the biggest concerns that the community has. If the Liberty development was being proposed on another site then maybe it could be contemplated. In my opinion, it is just a monstrosity.
- YSWG Member: In fear of the “monster” that is to come, I would prefer Option A (linear park with lower built form).
- Councillor Valerie Burke: Can you elaborate on the demonstration plans and how they differ in terms of park space.
- Consultant Team: The amount of park space is essentially a trade off for the built form (Option A: linear open space with low built form, Option B: three parks with moderate built form and Option C: five parks with high built form).
- YSWG Member: I like Option B. It provides the best balance.
- Consultant Team: There is a demonstrated need for park space in this area. Option C provides the most opportunities for activities/programming.
- We would like your opinion on the proposed setbacks (i.e. 9.5 m build-to-line with retail at street level south of the Rail line and 15 m build-to-line with predominantly residential uses north of the Rail line). The space along Yonge Street is a real important one.
- YSWG Member: Liberty Developments are exceptionally good negotiators. I think we have to be really careful in our decisions regarding proposed land-uses, densities, building heights, setbacks, etc. All of our decisions need to be defensible at the Ontario Municipal Board and Committee of Adjustment.
- YSWG Member: My only concern is that we will ask for these setbacks along Yonge Street and then the Region of York will come in and ask for road widening.
- Consultant Team: Neither we or the Town can tell you what the Region of York’s plans for future expansion of Yonge Street are at the moment. We can always mandate that the setback is taken from the face of the curb, so if that changes over time, we will always get a minimum setback of 9.5 m south of the Rail line and 15 m north of the Rail line.

The meeting then continue with a presentation by Jim Bacchus (Cansult Limited), who provided information on transportation and parking options. The following is a brief summary of the key findings presented:

- Existing Yonge Street corridor is effectively operating near/or at capacity during the peak AM southbound direction and that some ‘reverse flow’ capacity is available;
- Some local intersection/corridor capacity exists at Yonge Street to accommodate minor redevelopment in the study area;
- Substantial transit improvements are required to accommodate significant additional development in the study area;
- There are various options for mitigating traffic infiltration in the existing residential area, including: the introduction of York Region Transit BRT System, revised local street patterns, and traffic calming measures;
- The Town will initiate a neighbourhood wide traffic calming study, which will require public input in determining the most appropriate traffic calming measures for this area
- Examples of traffic calming measures, including: speed humps, one-lane chicanes, and one-way streets, raised features, curb extensions and traffic circles; and,
- Proposed parking strategy for the study area. At the first Yonge-Steeles Working Group Meeting, there was support for accommodating the needs of non-residential land uses without large surface parking through alternatives such as structure, below grade, and on-street parking on side streets.

NOTE: Jim Bacchus’ presentation formed a component of Bob Allsopp’s presentation (link previously provided).

The following two questions were then presented to the Yonge-Steeles Working Group for their consideration:

1. Which traffic infiltration measures would you like to see implemented?
Which ones do you dislike?
2. Do you support reduced parking standards and the provision of on-street parking in the redevelopment area?

The following is a summary of the discussion that took place:

- YSWG Member: I can tell you that I do not want any on-street parking on my street. While it works well in some areas of the City (i.e. Little Italy and the Annex), I do not think it will work in this area. Even if there is a limit on the amount of time when can park on the street, it will never be enforced. There is no way I would support it.
- YSWG Member: I would definitely support one-way streets being implemented. Even though they are an inconvenience, I am willing to live with them. What I would prefer not to see implemented is on-street parking.

- YSWG Member: I am concerned about where people will park if, and when, the subway comes?
- Consultant Team: There is no definitive answer to that question. Some people are suspecting that there will be a commuter lot on the lands owned by Centrepoint Mall (southwest corner of Yonge Street and Steeles Avenue), but nothing is certain at this point.
- YSWG Member: I prefer one-way streets as well. I also wanted to add that we should give some thought to the parks being proposed and whether these will be local neighbourhood parks or larger community parks. Larger community parks draw more volume and will also require parking.
- YSWG Member: I would not support on-street parking on the streets east of Dudley Avenue, maybe I would support it for the streets west of Dudley Avenue. I also think that we should place a maximum on the amount of parking new developments get in the study area in order to encourage transit use.
- YSWG Member: The municipality can try to force developers to produce less parking, but retailers in the area want and need it. If you want people out of their cars, then you have to wean them off their car dependency.
- YSWG Member: I actually like the idea of traffic circles, but my question is who will maintain them, will it be the Town?
- Consulting Team: That is a good question. We will have to speak with the Town and give that some thought.
- YSWG Member: I think underground parking is good, but I do have safety concerns with it. Visitor parking should be provided at-grade.
- Consultant Team: I think that a lot of the ideas/suggestions being brought forward tonight are valid, but I want to remind everyone that redevelopment is not going to happen over night. It is going to take 15-20 years for the area to be built out. A lot of land assembly is required and will be difficult to achieve (i.e. hold outs). Fine tuning of all these options/recommendations will come out in due time. Please do not be afraid that is going to happen tomorrow. We still have time to give it a lot more thought.

Ron Blake (Town of Markham staff) concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for attending and advising members that a link will be posted on the web-site for them to provide additional comments on tonight's meeting. He advised the Working Group of next steps and stated that Open House 3 is scheduled to be held on October 3, 2007. Ron Blake also stated that the date of the next Yonge-Steeles Working Group is unknown and that Town staff would advise members of any future meeting dates.

Before formally closing the meeting, one member stated that they were disappointed in the amount of time that was allocated for discussion. A member of the consultant team asked if there were any additional topics for discussion. The following discussion then took place:

- YSWG Member: I am just frustrated because I feel as though we do not have enough time to speak and we are the eye-witnesses in this area. We have to

take this project seriously. The size of Liberty's (proposed) development is extremely intimidating. We need more time for discussion.

- YSWG Member: I also find the timing and location of these meetings to be an issue. Often the meeting dates conflict with holidays and it is hard to get people to come out to the municipal offices. What about having the meetings at another venue, like the Thornhill Community Centre, Henderson Avenue Public School or Thornhill Secondary School?
- Consultant Team: We tried that with our first Open House Meeting, which was held at the Heinzman House. It was a logistical nightmare. We can give your suggestions some more thought though. We are open to alternative meeting locations.
- YSWG Member: My concern is the Ontario Municipal Board and whether this study can be defended.
- Consultant Team: The intent of this study is to base all its findings on sound Engineering, Planning, and Urban Design. We also want to be able to defend our recommendations. Our goal is to develop a plan that is responsible and sustainable, not one that is simply a knee jerk reaction to an incoming development proposal.
- Consultant Team: No one can account for what the Ontario Municipal Board does/says. The important thing here is to think about building height and really how it feels in an area, do not just focus on number of storeys. Take for example the new buildings going up in the Yonge Street and Eglinton Avenue area. The Ontario Municipal Board approved some of them and the residents were furious.
- Consultant Team: I am always at the Ontario Municipal Board and I can tell you that what the Town is doing, by engaging the public in this study, is the best thing to do.
- YSWG Member: To me though, a Working Group is more about working together collaboratively, not just reacting to presentations.
- YSWG Member: For our next meeting, perhaps we can send in our questions beforehand so that the consultant team and Town staff can look at them and think about them. What I find is that a lot of the same concerns/issues are being repeated. When someone makes a point, we should take note of it and move on.
- Consultant Team: We will certainly take into consideration all of the recommendations for future meetings. We appreciate the feedback.

Next Meeting: Date TBD

Meeting Adjourned: 10.10 PM