

UPDATE

July 2012

Hello friends and members!

We are pleased to provide a quick update on GBNA activities since our May newsletter.

Queen Street development

Not surprisingly, most of our focus was on Queen Street development, in particular the 'Licks' proposal that came before Toronto East York Community Council (TEYCC) on May 15th. Our GBNA board had a chance to meet with Councillor McMahon and Gord Perks (chair of TEYCC) in advance, at which point it was clear that a TEYCC vote in support of the development was to be expected.

The 'Licks' development illustrates the broken process of site-by-site re-zonings without a completed overall plan. This is made worse by confusing interpretations of the details that govern Queen Street development, providing developers with more leeway to argue their interests in front of the Ontario Municipal Board.

Many groups, most notably 'Friends of Queen Street', have exposed the incredible level of community concern. From standing-room-only community meetings to coverage on CBC, CTV, Global TV, Globe and Mail and all local publications, their volunteers deserve nothing less than the highest praise including the many deputations they delivered at the May 15 TEYCC meeting.

Outside support

GBNA contributed to the issue in several ways. Firstly we secured written support from the Federation of North Toronto Resident Associations ('FoNTRA') and the Coalition of Residents and Ratepayer Associations ('CORRA') for the underlying principles that we believe are wrong in this case. The attached GBNA deputation delivered at TEYCC highlights these concerns.

Rezoning pause

Secondly, GBNA strongly requested the adoption of a motion to pause re-zonings prior to completion of the Queen Street East Visioning study. We thank Councillor McMahon for rushing our proposal through City legal and planning departments within one day, resulting in the closest equivalent to an Interim Control Bylaw for our section of Queen Street during the 'Visioning' period.

The legal and other realities facing a community in contesting the planning and appeal process are amply demonstrated by this case. The City has generally determined not to make appeals to the OMB, in preference to negotiate "best deals" with developers. This places an enormous burden on the community to be the only and last party to object to inappropriate development.

Where GBNA member associations may entertain an OMB appeal of the 'Licks' decision, GBNA recommends that expert opinion be sought beforehand to understand anticipated outcomes versus outlay. GBNA will continue our effort in challenging the current framework for badly needed changes over time.

Neighbourhood Associations reorganization

Several organizational developments are taking place in the 'Licks' aftermath. For example, the future direction and name of 'Friends of Queen Street' is under review and Beach Residents Association (BRA or 'BRAT') has emerged as a new organization. Some time may be needed for the respective organizations to outline their future direction. In the meantime, GBNA will continue to play a supportive role and provide a forum where local organizations can coordinate their common interests for greater leverage at City Hall.

Queen Street Visioning study

One immediate opportunity for change is through the Queen Street Visioning study. Throughout the past months, we have been in close communication with the Councillor's office, have established the GBNA Visioning work group with highly qualified leadership (Uwe Sehmrau - President of TBERA and Jeffrey Levitt - board member of the Beach Triangle RA) and are Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) members.

The Visioning study is managed under the guidance of an independent external facilitator. The primary intent of the study is to clarify how the Toronto Official Plan applies to Queen Street east of Coxwell through updated Beach Urban Design guidelines. The study is expected to take approximately four months with a council vote on its recommendation during November.

Three questions

The GBNA Visioning work team is attending the SAC meetings (most recently on July 16) with three questions in mind: how will the new Beach Urban Design Guidelines which may result from the Visioning Study be enforced in respect of new developments in the Beach; secondly how will the study address the key neighbourhood concerns of height and massing along this section of Queen Street; and thirdly how the potential heritage value recognized by Council is accommodated.

The next Community Workshops on the Queen Street Visioning Study are Wednesdays July 25th and September 19th both at 6-9pm at the Toronto Fire Academy, 895 Eastern Avenue. We strongly recommend attending these workshops.

Ravine Protection policy

Toronto has only two natural resources unique to our city: the Lake and our ravines and watercourses. These resources should rank culturally and politically as important to the current and future definition of the City of Toronto.

There are no effective by-laws with teeth to protect our ravines. Ravines are not sacrosanct as are our parks. The "Ravine and Natural Feature Protection" By-law does not preserve ravines and ravines are not protected in the Official Plan from intensification.

GBNA has delivered a ravine protection policy recommendation to select councillors including Councillor McMahon and will continue to champion this policy issue through political and media efforts.

Heritage Consation District analysis.

This ongoing study is capably led by Wayne Clutterbuck (Wayne is also a cross-member on the BRA team) with several public meetings completed. HCD is a two step process, in which an application is submitted first followed by actual study only upon approval by the City based on priorities. With constrained City resources and many applications in the queue, our HCD focus is on understanding if and when a study might actually take place, its scope and its draw on community resources.

Other items*Harmonizing bylaws*

Since amalgamation, the City has lived with different and incompatible sets of by-laws used by the various municipalities within the former Metro Toronto. These bylaws are being harmonized under the guidance of the city's Planning and Growth Management Committee ('P&GM'). Some of the pending changes in existing local by-laws will have impacts that local residents may not fully appreciate. GBNA is following this development through its association with CORRA and will provide updates as details become available.

Supporting local Committee of Adjustments decision

Regarding local development, we are aware of an attempt by the owners of the Queen Street / Leuty Avenue corner property to overturn a Committee of Adjustment rejection for a sidewalk patio along Leuty. We agree with the TBERA team that the CoA decision was correct and should be adhered to.

Basement flooding

We also continue to monitor the extent of basement flooding in our area, in particular where they are the cause of construction mishaps or irregularities.

What next?

Over the summer, GBNA will continue to work with and support local associations and to collectively provide the best community response to matters of urban development in our area. The Visioning study is a high priority and interim updates on our inputs in the study can be expected. One consideration is a survey to capture community inputs for our representations.

Thank you for your interest in GBNA and the community at large. Please contact us if you are interested in joining one of our core groups or can contribute in even a very small way!

Best regards,

Jan Hykamp and Chris Howling, on behalf of the GBNA team
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