

Greater Beach Neighbourhood Association - Newsletter, February 27, 2013

This edition provides the traditional highlights of development related topics in our area. We have added a new 'Part 2' to the newsletter to share contributions from neighbourhood associations for greater awareness and interest across our area.

Part 1: Developments in the Beach

Queen Street / Woodbine Avenue development

(Jan Hykamp and Jeffrey Levitt)

On February 14, City Planning Staff held a Community Meeting to present two separate rezoning applications for developments at Queen and Woodbine. The meeting was attended by a capacity crowd of well over 100 residents

The two rezoning applications are the first development proposals to be evaluated against the new Urban Design Guidelines (UDG), which both proposals exceed in some significant ways. City Planning Staff and Councillor McMahon expressed strong support for the UDG and their application to the two proposals, receiving broad support from the audience. A commitment was also expressed to support the UDG before the OMB, in the event of an appeal.

The groups participating in GBNA support the position of Councillor McMahon and City Planning staff regarding conformance of the proposed developments with the UDG. GBNA will remain in active contact with the City to follow further developments.

“Licks” Lakehouse condo development - OMB appeal

(by Scott Bell, President Beach Residents Association Toronto)

The Beach Residents Association appealed the Lick's Lakehouse condominium plan to the OMB on Feb 5-7th 2013. While a written decision is pending, the Board Member verbally indicated her denial of our appeal stating that the building would be a “good fit for our area”. The development may therefore proceed as approved by City Council.

Beach Residents Association, like GBNA, oppose development of this size and character on Queen Street. Many area residents spoke before the hearing on the issues: hyper-densification of our already crowded area, little or no traffic or parking planning, impacts on sewers and infrastructure, and general loss of quality of life.

Planner Anne McIlroy, a contributor to the city's Avenues and Midrise Guidelines under which this proposal was planned, testified for the developer. She stated that the old Beach Urban Design Guidelines were "out of date" and that this six story design fits the "scale and character" of Queen St E. This view was echoed by counsel for the developer, who referred to the proposed design as a "poster child" for our area. With these comments we believe it is clear that the push to retain our community values must remain on guard.

Our new Urban Design Guidelines (a result of the Queen Street East Visioning Study) have been unanimously adopted by City Council. These Guidelines set out urban design standards to create a consistent and manageable built form and public space on a go-forward basis. City Planning Staff has been directed by Council to use the guidelines, which include attributes such as height and massing limits and setbacks on angular planes above a certain height, in the review of new development applications along Queen Street in the Beach.

Developments in the pre-approval stage at 200 Woodbine and the former Shell Station lands are attempting to push these policies back. Among reasons, they reference 'Gateway' consideration for Queen and Woodbine as per the older Beach Urban Design Guidelines. As other developers have made the case in front of the OMB that these older Guidelines are no longer valid, they could not logically be further apply to these proposed developments.

For further information, please contact Beach Residents Association - Toronto at beachesresidents@gmail.com or scottcbell@yahoo.com

GBNA Water Management Committee

(by Chris Howling)

Following the community meeting held on December 3 regarding Water management issues, the GBNA Water Management Committee (GWMC) has been working with Councillor McMahon's office to establish communication lines on two fronts:

1. City Water Works to track the proposed remediations outlined in the Ward 32 Basement Flooding Environmental Assessment, and
2. City Inspectors to track compliance with water management requirements at new developments.

GWMC will provide further updates in upcoming newsletters.

Traffic, Transit and Parking in the Beach

(John Hope and Adam Smith)

Given its mandate of urban design standards, the Queen Street East Visioning study did not directly address community concerns related to traffic, parking, waste and storm water management. Following the Visioning Study, Councillor McMahon has facilitated additional community meetings to review these concerns, such as the Storm Water Management meeting that took place on December 3.

On February 4th, an evening meeting was held at the Balmy Beach Club to discuss Traffic and Parking. Senior City staff presented a variety of topics, including Parking enforcement, “Green P” parking, Parking permits, Traffic calming, parking ratios for new developments, TTC and rush hour parking limitations.

Approximately 30 area residents participated in a wide ranging discussion on what appeared to be four distinct issue areas:

- Afternoon rush hour traffic on Queen Street
- Parking for visitors to the Beach
- Potential effect of new developments on existing parking resources (fewer parking spots per unit; potential elevator queuing)
- Parking enforcement, scope for permitted parking, traffic calming, etc.

Following the meeting, GBNA concluded that more detailed discussions are warranted and a “Traffic and Parking” focus group has been formed within GBNA. We have scheduled an initial meeting with City Staff on February 27, to discuss the four items above. Further updates will follow, in the meantime anyone interested in participating in the focus group should contact GBNA@Bell.net

GBNA Community Info Session: Urban Design Guidelines

(Uwe Sehmrau, Patrick Shipton, Jeffrey Levitt)

What shapes our neighbourhoods? Which policies determine what development is appropriate? These questions are answered in the context of a system of Acts, Policies, Guidelines, Official Plans, Zoning By-laws and more, which can make the system, and the principles applied, seem confusing.

One of the founding GBNA objectives is to raise awareness and help residents understand these topics through a light, conversational style that takes a big picture approach. Our first topic is “Urban Design Guidelines – what do they mean?” tentatively planned for April.

Stay tuned for updates!

City of Toronto "Chief Planner Roundtable" series

(by Jan Hykamp)

The City of Toronto Chief Planner, Jennifer Keesmaat, has launched a series of three "Chief Planner Roundtable" discussions focused on city building themes. The first of the roundtables took place at Toronto City Hall on Tuesday, February 26, under the title "Our Urban Fabric: Designing and Creating Public Places".

GBNA was among approximately 75 attendees at the first meeting, which featured an open discussion among six City staff and six external experts in various fields. The discussion was 'robust' with a good number of challenges made about the current state of Public Realm in Toronto: squeezed public spaces in the downtown core; serious underfunding for the magnitude of the task, but also highlighting underappreciated opportunities: better interconnecting parks with the general street scape, ravines (ravines are to Toronto what canals are to Venice" - Richard Ubbens, Toronto Parks), etc

Chief Planner Keesmaat summarized five recurring themes from the many comments that were aired:

- underfunding in many areas
- the need for more open spaces in Toronto, coupled with higher quality design (plantings, 'furniture', pavings)
- a need to tackle City Hall 'silos': more 'Can Do'; improving the 'how' experience with City Hall
- shift from a mostly technical/budget focus on project priorities to a value driven process
- more 'design quality', 'excellence', 'beauty'

By setting up the initiative, by having first rate independent experts participate, by encouraging a frank interchange and by being able to net-out a wide ranging discussion, the Chief Planner has taken impressive steps that are promising for Toronto.

Upcoming Roundtables are scheduled for March 5 : "The Resilient City" and April 2 : "Transforming the Suburbs".

Further information, presentation copies and more:

<http://www.toronto.ca/planning/chiefplannerroundtable>

Part 2 reports from Neighbourhood Associations

Beach Triangle Residents Association

(by John Ellis, BTRA board member)

In addition to the regular monthly tasks of monitoring the urban forest, residential zoning applications, Ashbridges Bay Treatment Plant, community liaison, and website maintenance, the BTRA Board is busy with:

- Monitoring development applications for the condos at 200 Woodbine and 1884 Queen East, as well as OMB appeals.
- Working through CORRA (Coalition of Resident and Ratepayer Associations) on the proposed Harmonized Zoning By-law.
- Joining the revived East Toronto/Beaches Historical Society.
- Planning text and advertising for the next bi-annual BTRA newsletter, to be distributed to every Triangle household in April.
- Planning the BTRA Annual General Meeting to be held on June 5th.
- Revising the BTRA By-laws to better reflect today's realities.

Balmy Beach Residents Association

(by Carole Wilson, President BBRA)

The main challenge for the BBRA in 2012 was the re-incorporation of the association, which had been dormant for several years. This process took more than six months, and thanks to several residents in our area (east of Glen Manor), our biggest accomplishment was the official re-incorporation of the Balmy Beach Residents Association. This gives our residents their own association as a contact for information on development and other issues in their neighborhood. Our focus for 2013 will be ongoing communication.

Norwood Park Residents Association

(by Patrick Shipton)

NPRA met in the late fall with Councillor McMahon regarding improvements to the facilities in Norwood Park. Along with residents bordering on the park, there was strong representation from professional dog-walkers who use the enclosure in the park.

Among the proposed improvements are paving upgrades to paths, additional benches, additional screening for the dog walking enclosure and drainage improvements.

We look forward to other improvement opportunities for the area and are exploring use of "section 37" funds ("Section 37" is a section in the Planning Act under which some developments provide contributions to the community).

For the GBNA team, thank you for your continuing interest in our area!

Chris Howling, Jan Hykamp, Hans Looije, Uwe Sehmrau, Neil Sinclair.

www.gbna-toronto.com

GBNA member or participant associations:

Beach Triangle Residents Association (BTRA)

Beach Waterfront Community Association (BWCA)

Kew Beach Neighbourhood Association (KBNA)

Toronto Beach East Residents Association (TBERA)

Friends of Glen Davis Ravine (FOGDR)

Norwood Park Residents Association (NPRA)

Beach Residents Association - Toronto (BRAT)

Balmy Beach Residents Association (BBRA)

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