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## MIRVISH VILLAGE WALKSHOP SUMMARY NOTES

**Date:** September 19, 2015

**Time:** 1 p.m.

**Route:** The walk began in the backyard of Markham House. From here, it proceeded to the backyard for the first stop of the walk. The walk then moved to the rear loading doors of Honest Ed's. The third stop was located at the entry point for the Honest Ed's underground parking lot, located roughly fifteen metres from Lennox Street. The final stop was approximately half way up the laneway between Palmerston Boulevard and Markham Street. At the conclusion of the discussion, the group returned to Markham House.

**Participants:** There were roughly ten university students taking part in the walk.

**Independent Facilitator:** Jane Farrow, MASS LBP

- Resource Person, Jake Tobin Garrett, Park People

**For Westbank and Brook Pooni + Associates:**

- Jonah Letovsky, Westbank
- Corey Bialek, note taker

### Stop 1: Backyard of Markham House

The walk began with introductions by the facilitator, organization and company representatives, and participants.

- The Westbank rep gave a broad overview of the proposed redevelopment, massing and built form.
- Participants asked a few questions about height and density but had come already familiar with the outlines of the proposal

### Stop 2: Honest Ed's Alley loading zone

In Honest Ed's Alley, a discussion on the public realm was initiated, using Markham Street--where a street fair was animating the sidewalks--as a starting point. Although the street was still technically open to traffic, few cars were on it and those that were present moved slowly, allowing people to feel safe while walking on the street.

The Westbank representative explained the proposed public spaces and design approach on the site, including the new east/west connection and open public market spaces. Discussion ensued:

- One participant noted that the concept of permeability feels new. They went on to say that it felt good to be surrounded by people on the street
- Another participant added that they enjoyed the unique things in the Honest Ed's storefront

windows.

- Another participant voiced an appreciation for the iconic flashing lights of Honest Ed's to be reflected in the design, though acknowledged it was not an appropriate exterior treatment for a residential building.
- One participant inquired into the affordability of shops that will be replacing Honest Ed's. They expressed concern that new shops may not be financially accessible for the current users of Honest Ed's.
- One participant stated that more rental housing is desirable in downtown Toronto since they have found it very hard to locate a unit themselves.
- Another noted that there should be a range of units to cater to different tenants, including seniors, students, those of a lower socioeconomic status, etc.
- Building on the issue of affordability, another participant noted that social mix has the potential to segregate where "poor doors" and separate elevators are incorporated into building designs. They did not support this approach to housing and prefer a mix of units blended together.
- One participant requested that whomever manages the affordable housing component of the development they should have experience and a 'good track record in the city of Toronto.'
- Participants expressed appreciation for the vibrant, multi-coloured vernacular visual environment, and expressed a desire for the developers to maintain this bright and vibrant approach to the public realm.

### **Stop 3: Entry into Honest Ed's parking lot on Lennox Street**

Participants moved through the alleyway, which opens onto the parking lot at the rear of Honest Ed's. This is the confluence point of the proposed market, Honest Ed's alley, and the east-west laneway connecting Bathurst to Markham Street. The Park People rep used the topic of public space as a springboard into the potential advantages and disadvantages of privately owned public spaces (POPS).

- One participant expressed a desire to see the alleyway connect to the public space and market area.

## Stop 4: Laneway between Markham Street and Palmerston Boulevard



The conversation in the Honest Ed's parking lot was interrupted by rain so the group walked to Lennox Street, and the laneway between Markham Street and Palmerston Boulevard. Here, the group continued the discussion on POPS and public space.

- One participant noted that although these spaces are publically accessible, they are typically uninviting spaces lacking a public atmosphere.
- Another participant remarked that they are highly controlled spaces that do not allow for spontaneous uses. They suggested that POPS created on the Mirvish Village site be barrier free and inviting to the public.
- One participant shared concern around the presence of security guards in POPS and expressed a desire for Mirvish Village POPS to feel inviting and not 'surveilled'.
- One participant noted that WIFI would be desirable in POPS, but not something they would specifically request.
- Another participant suggested that WIFI would take away from the natural elements.
- Picking up on this, another participant worried that it would invite too many people into the space.

- The Park People rep explained the benefits of parkland. A discussion on hardscape versus green space was then initiated.
- One participant asked if the green space might be presented as something other than a park, citing green walls and planters as potential elements to be included on site instead of grass which might not do well under the circumstances.
- Another cited dog feces on grass as an annoyance when using park space.
- One participant voiced concern for potential shadow impacts, noting that they would prefer the park to remain sunlit throughout the day.

On the back of this discussion, participants were asked about the way they use parks, and what components they would like to be included in a potential park space.

- One participant voiced desire for sporting infrastructure and flexible open space.
- Another participant noted a need for playgrounds, especially in light of the apartment unit mix proposed for the redevelopment.
- One participant suggested that any potential green space should be programmable for cultural events.
- Another participant noted that they enjoy picnicking in parks, given that food is such an important part of culture.
- The need for a “variety of seating and chilling spaces” was noted by one participant as an important component of any potential green space.
- Responding to this, another participant suggested putting seating on the hardscape to keep people off the grass.
- To this, another participant suggested that any seating be accessible to all users.
- Water fountains that could be used to fill water bottles was also identified as a desired park feature.
- Participants were asked about park use in the winter time.
- All participants agreed that they would like to be able to use parks year round, however most did not want electric heating.
- One participant suggested the presence of warming huts would be a welcomed addition.

After these questions were addressed, the group walked back to Markham House, entering from the laneway into the backyard.