
MIRVISH VILLAGE WALKSHOP SUMMARY NOTES

Date: September 19, 2015

Time: 3 p.m.

Route

The walk began in the backyard of Markham House, at 610 Markham street. The original planned route would have taken the group along Bloor St W to Honest Ed's Alley, but the sky looked a bit foreboding, so we opted to stay closer to the house. From the yard, we headed south on the laneway between Markham and Palmerston Streets. It was there that the rain started, but we were fortunate enough to find shelter underneath a neighbour's garage eaves trough. The 'walk' remained in the laneway for the rest of the conversation, and a lively discussion was still had regarding the future of Mirvish Village. The walk is broken down into topic areas that found the greatest expression of concern and excitement by the participants.

Participants: The walk was more intimate in size, with approximately five community members.

Independent Facilitator: Jane Farrow, MASS LBP

- Resource Person, Jake Tobin Garrett, Park People

For Westbank and Brook Pooni + Associates:

- Ian Duke, Jonah Letovsky, Westbank
- Matt Hilder, note taker

Public Realm & Park Space

- One participant emphasized that we should define parks by what people actually do in them, or what their use is. When we start from this definition, we see that parks can take many shapes, sizes, and forms
- A participant mentioned the piazza at Bloor and Spadina as a good example of less- green park space
- The representative from Parks People mentioned that Oregon has a classification system, that separates person-to-person, person-to-nature, and nature-to-nature parks. The crowd thought this was a great system for evaluating parks
- The representative from Parks People then commented on the kind of public space in the plans – privately owned publicly-accessible spaces (or POPS). These are a supplement to the public space system, and come in many varieties
- A participant noted that POPS also have limits: there are issues of access and signage, such as the Village by the Grange, which has become de-facto private space because people feel unwelcome

- Another participant pointed out the importance of good signage and lighting
- It was also stated that while lighting is welcome, it can be excessive – need the lights to be of a pedestrian scale, as they are on Markham street today
- A participant added that POPS need a balance – they can't be taken over entirely by commercial activity, need a balance between animation and room for spontaneous activity
- Ideas were suggested for furniture in open spaces: one participant pointed out that movable furniture is very popular, and should be included alongside fixed furniture
- A local resident cited concerns about the lack of public parks in the area, mentioning that one at Harbord and Bathurst is no longer publicly accessible. Parks are important because they absorb sound, and act as buffers between different kinds of uses. It was mentioned that the festivals in Honest Ed's parking lot are nice, but they generate a lot of noise – need to buffer this
- The Westbank representative mentioned that they were exploring using the Markham street laneway as a site for a park, and the group felt this was a good opportunity to buffer the neighbourhood, and to complement the kinds of public space on Markham St and in the public market

Heritage & Public Art

- A participant pointed out that art in public spaces requires consultation, and that given the history of Mirvish Village there is a need to pay homage to the City with local artists
- Another guest said they like other public art provided by Westbank at the Shangri-La on University Avenue
- There was agreement amongst participants that Honest Ed's is known for its kooky vibe, and that public art in the new development should pay tribute to this
- A participant mentioned their support for the Honest Ed's Alley, which tries to draw on the history of small business in Mirvish Village. But they stressed that there's a need to get input from small businesses about the micro-retail space – what do they need to incentivize them to locate there, to help them succeed? Property taxes are often very high in new buildings, and the proper supports need to be there

Streets, Traffic, and Noise Concerns

- A neighbourhood resident was concerned that the area had already seen increased traffic due to the success of businesses. This has effected the experience of living there, with people always walking the streets, more cars on the road, and noise a bigger concern. He was concerned about the impact of construction on the experience of the area, citing noise and dust, and questioned the ability of the developer to mitigate the impacts of construction
- A participant mentioned having experience with a construction liaison group, and found they work when there are regular check ins provided, and the construction management is responsive to residents. Waterfront Toronto was cited, as they provide weekly alerts and monthly meetings with residents
- The Westbank representative concurred that good communication is crucial
- A resident then described the issue of noise from the CSI building, stating that they were in the

end good neighbours who responded to resident concerns by putting in sound mitigation measures. Communication between residents and the developer was agreed to be among the most important ways to deal with construction's effects

Density & Rental Housing

- A participant asked how Westbank arrived at the density numbers for the site, with the effect of making this the most densely populated block on Bloor Street west of Bay.
- The Westbank representative noted that given the proximity to the subway station and downtown, this site was appropriate for higher densities
- One participant noted that it was exciting to see change happening to the area, and mentioned she hadn't seen the inside of 610 Markham street, opened today, since the 1970s
- The facilitator inquired as to why rental housing was being proposed
- The Westbank representative stated that the economics of rental housing have changed recently, after being unaffordable for developers for a long time. He noted that developers want to build rental, and see the need for a cultural shift around the idea of ownership versus rental

Affordable Housing

- Participants felt that affordable housing should be a top priority when it comes to allocating community benefit funds – one person stated that desirable places to live downtown are more and more out of reach for young people and even those on moderate incomes. To have the option to live in a place like this was seen as important for equity reasons
- At another moment, a participant stated that the mix of uses and affordable housing components would be the most exciting features of the project