

Notes on North Campus walkabout

Circulated to University of Toronto Area Liaison Committee, June 17, 2017

Yesterday, members of the Liaison Committee and representatives of the University, its planners, City Planning and Heritage as well as the councillor's office toured potential development sites on the north end of campus from Queen's Park to Spadina.

Overall, we do not support the approval of discretionary heights. We believe the new plan should be specific. We were astonished at the number of sites identified for tower infill. We are not comfortable with defining the terms for development of virtually every space, vacant or not, and are concerned by the selection of comparables only from those sites which are already more highly developed: the University Women's Club is referenced to developments on Bloor, not its sister mansions on St. George, and the setback on the ROM using the smaller setback on the east side of the street.

Greening:

The preservation and enhanced protection of Philosopher's Walk is important to the community. In the past, proposals encroaching on the walk at the Varsity Arena site and at the Conservatory and ROM have been turned back.

Flanking buildings need not create a sense of rear door. Animation is not an objective. Incursion into the walk by entranceways to potential new buildings must be discouraged both because it would destroy the ambience of the walk and stress the trees. It is not the front address, rather it is a corridor that runs between building sides.

The walkways into the new Law Building are a significant and deleterious imposition on Philosopher's Walk on the south. We need the new secondary plan to ensure existing boundaries be preserved and no further paving take place.

We also need to recognize that future development on the Trinity Parking lots on the east and west side of Devonshire as well as University plans at the north end will make the preservation of Philosopher's Walk as a site of treed contemplation even more important.

Heritage:

Although the proposed Secondary Plan describes heritage preservation as a major goal, we saw a number of sites where heritage could be negatively impacted. We believe there is enough activity envisioned that full designation be considered.

- Falconer Hall is a wonderful heritage building and deserves full volume preservation. The concrete ramp on the south side of the building is hostile to the existing building and there should be some thinking go into how to provide a ramp without obstructing the heritage building. The building is in need of maintenance;
- The Munk School Observatory building should not be the site of a tower on the north end of the High Performance Centre. The windows and doors of the old observatory will never see sunlight again;

- St. George mansion style would be compromised if the University Women's Club on the west were demolished and replaced by a tower. Many of the buildings on the east side of St. George would be compromised by setback towers on existing buildings, including Woodsworth and the building to the north which has an astounding roof. Setbacks will not provide adequate protection, and 45 degree planes are not a reliable indicator as they depend entirely on where they are originated.

Setbacks:

The Queen's Park street wall on the west side established by the ROM should be honoured.

Hardscaping:

In general, we identified many areas where unnecessary hardscaping is present, and where future development should mandate % soft landscaping and trees. Locations include

- Between Falconer Hall and Flavelle House, the parking lot is unnecessary; could loading be put underground when the Faculty of Music is redeveloped? This is the greatest design challenge on campus. This area would benefit from a full understanding of the area, including Music and the Planetarium, before individual projects are approved.
- On the northeast and northwest corners of Varsity stadium, the existing seating places are positive, but there is not enough soft landscaping to make the area attractive; this experience should inform the new secondary plan;
- Outside the High Performance Centre on the west side of Devonshire, there is a concrete apron which is not a positive contribution to the street. Any proposal to put temporary stands on the west side of the Varsity field has to respect the line of trees along the fence.

Ugliness:

Nothing matches the ROM loading bays. We would hope that the University and the ROM might spend some energy figuring out how to improve that area, whether with doors or possible landscaping.

Site 1 (*Spadina and Bloor*) and UTS continue to create concerns. Any underground garage at site 1 must have minimal impact on Spadina and Huron, both on traffic patterns on the main street and inside the neighbourhoods, as well as parkspace. The site is on a transit hub. The UTS ramp should be removed so the impact on the playground is minimized.

We are a long way from dealing with the height issue.