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Toronto

Community Engagement Report

Results from the Active 18 Design Charrette



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Introduction

On November 18, 2009 Active 18 and York University Master of Environmental Studies (Planning) students held a design charrette at the Gladstone Hotel in Toronto from 5:30 to 8:30pm. The purpose of the design charrette was to obtain ideas from the community on the regeneration of the Northwest Queen Triangle. The concepts discussed in the design charrette will be incorporated into a Master Plan for the area, which will guide future regeneration and development efforts.



Roughly 60 to 70 people attended the charrette, including members from Active 18, Master of Environmental Studies students from York University, community members and representatives from the business community. The evening began with a presentation by the York University students on the existing conditions and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the study area. Following the presentation, attendees participated in roundtable discussion and worked together to design their envisioned community with the help of a facilitator. After the roundtable discussion one member from each group shared the concepts with the group at large. Lastly, the participants reviewed all of the group designs and provided comments using post-it stickers.

The comments below were recorded during the final presentations from the eight groups.

Design Charrette Group Ideas

Group 1

Started with bike path (through rail lands)
Bring bike path through area (don't marginalize the bike path)
Street connections (knitting in the streets)
Keep woodworking studio
Expand enterprises that go on there
Build new structure that has those some types of services

White buildings – look dead – but there’s a lot of activity going on there
Commercial centre around already existing studios
Florence – residential/employment
Some employment designations near railway tracks
keep residential away from railway tracks
6 stories maximum in Price Chopper area
Connection between Price Chopper area and other triangle – need connections
Greening at lower part of Gladstone
Continuation of greening into Price Chopper area
Alternative services (ie: organic market)
Community services lacking in area would go onto/around Price Chopper triangle
Building relationship between Gladstone and whatever happens behind it
Parking underground around Northcot area

Group 7

maintain bike trail
maintain light industrial space (someone works there in the group!)
mixed use/light industrial/maybe some commercial
green roofs
get rid of Price Chopper and create green space
keep what’s already on Gladstone (but add some intensification)
add alternative grocery store
trouble figuring out „access’ throughout the site
buffer between different uses

Group 6

Focused in larger triangle – zoning light industrial
Warehouses turn into commercial area
Angled parking
6 floors
Green roofs, outdoor live spaces
Alternative school

Capitalize on existing bike path
Enjoy back of retail spaces
Use laneways
Laneway housing
More access
Keep street grid going through
Berm/green wall and trees
Connect existing alleyways through neighbourhoods

Group 5

Continue rail trail down through area
Mirror development surrounding the area
Mixed use housing/retail commercial space
Price Chopper important – but move it somewhere else
Put some more height on top Price Chopper
Geothermal, district utility
Public art throughout
Add retail along Dufferin
Don't isolate rail trail
Housing/mixed use along rail line
Preserve some of the light industrial
Preserve agriculture/produce (warehouse)

Group 4

Start with basics – what do we want to keep – what is the framework
Keep some existing housing
Low density on outside of triangle
Keep existing studios
Green linkages – bike routes, maintain connections
Linear park system along railway corridor – link to other communities – connects to south side of Queen street and to Trinity
Could have a trail

Passive park system
Higher density residential in middle
Solar panels and energy centre
"Queen Greenland"
Central park
Water collection into wetland filtration system
Business node near Queen Street – food and retail service-oriented business
Artisan lane – promote craftsmanship (historic to neighbourhood)
Market court on Queen Street
Think about age group living in this development
Need more affordable housing and seniors housing, courtyard parks surrounding – near transit
Laneways
Community services – building on existing school site, and community market system
Small grid, more connections
keep Price Chopper
Balance density and new development
Parking is street side or underground
Community parking share
Green roofs/walls

Group 3

Started with rail corridor
Green land along corridor – bleed into rest of neighbourhood
Bike lanes
Emphasize blending and connections
Warehouses could be expanded
Maintain character of area
Bring something in behind it that integrates what's already there
Food, markets (more natural)
Mixed use residential on west side of Dufferin
Parkland on east side of Dufferin

Maintain character but build on it more
Green land throughout
Community needs – seniors, religious needs, community centre
Price Chopper – maintain it; important service – but compliment it with more natural/alternative food options

Group 2

Transit hub (railway, Dufferin, Queen)
Water issues – water comes downhill and pools
Add wetland just north of Gladstone
Half employment half residential zoning designation
Small blocks
Community centre near school (youth, seniors, Active 18 meeting space)
Slow down traffic on Dufferin – add street light

Summary of Key Themes

Land Use

The participants had a wide variety of ideas concerning land use and the built form in the North Queen West Triangle. Some groups opted to preserve and enhance the employment lands, or convert the employment land into smaller scale commercial uses. Other groups had a greater interest in more mixed use development, for example, half residential and half employment uses.



The groups proposed different strategies for residential development in the area. For example, some groups were interested in maintaining and improving the current housing stock; some were interested in expanding residential uses, but away from the railway, and; some were interested in higher density residential developments (6 stories) in the centre of the study area and lower density residential on the perimeter on the site. Many groups discussed the prospect of

increasing residential density through developing laneway housing.

The woodworking studio on Dufferin Avenue was cited as an important facility for the community's artists. While the building's function is important to the surrounding community, its outward appearance could be improved in order to serve as a landmark to the community's artistic heritage.

Street layout

Greater connectivity of spaces within the NorthWest Triangle was desired, with smaller blocks/grid system that offers better access and linkages with alleyways.

Community Services

Community services should be improved especially as they relate to the neighbourhood's aging population. Services should serve the different religious and linguistic groups in the Northwest Triangle area. A community centre was a common thread amongst participants. Two potential areas for a community centre that were discussed were close to the existing school, or close to Price Chopper. In addition, the expansion of community services offered from the existing public school on Dufferin Avenue was another theme in the discussions.



Neighbourhood Grocery

Participants felt strongly about introducing alternative food services into the Northwest Queen Triangle such as organic and farmer markets. They felt that it was important to keep the existing Price Chopper but to complement it with alternative food choices, for example products that would not be readily available in the Price Chopper.

Transportation

Integrate the railway into the community as trail system (pedestrian and/or bike) for park and/or natural heritage. Allow bike paths to permeate the neighbourhood by extending and capitalizing on existing bike lanes. Parking could be allocated underground or on side streets (and there was the suggestion of angled parking on Dufferin). Implement measures to reduce the pace of traffic on Dufferin street.

Water

To address the issues of water pooling and to allow the community to become more autonomous in managing their waste water, create a wetland or stormwater filtration system.

Green Energy

Participants felt that green energy technologies are a great way to reduce and reuse energy consumption. Participants want to capitalize on the use of green roofs, as well as green "living walls". Participants also felt it was important to introduce district geothermal technologies into the area as well as other types of district energy plans to reduce damage to the surrounding environment. As well, it was noted that placing solar panels on southwest facing buildings could reduce cost and minimize environmental impacts.



Business

There was an interest in expanding business in area by creating new structures for business. Participants suggested focusing a business node near Queen Street for retail and service oriented development. As well, it was important to integrate a food market, similar to a farmer's market facing Queen Street.

Art

Retain artist work spaces but increase the visibility of art in the neighbourhood by promoting craftsmanship in the form of public art and artisan lanes.

Park and Green Space

There is a dire need for park and open space in the neighbourhood - most groups suggested greening areas in various areas, either as conventional parks, park systems, or linear parks. Desirability for more canopy cover was expressed. Berms and green walls were also suggested by a number of teams.