

St. Clair Place Community Update Meeting (Landscape & Public Realm)

Tuesday, September 22, 2020

Zoom

5:00pm – 6:00pm

Summary

Project Team:

- Michelle Dagnino, LURA Consulting
- Amitai Zand, LURA Consulting
- Amanda Milborne Ireland, Capital Developments
- Claude Cormier, Claude Cormier + Associés
- Yi Zhou, Claude Cormier + Associés
- Michael Leckman, Diamond Schmitt Architects

Community Attendance: Approximately 27 attendees

Agenda:

1. Introduction/welcoming remarks by Michelle Dagnino and Amanda Milborne Ireland
2. Presentation by Claude Cormier on landscape and public realm changes in the revised application
3. Question & Answer session, facilitated by Michelle Dagnino with supporting expertise from Claude Cormier, Yi Zhou, and Michael Leckman
4. Adjournment/closing remarks by Michelle Dagnino and Amanda Milborne Ireland

Q&A:

What kinds of trees and flowers will be planted in and around St. Clair Place?

Claude Cormier, Claude Cormier + Associés:

At the moment we are proposing to plant Honey Locust and Shademaster Locust trees along Yonge. They are elegant trees and do not have a dense cover so they allow light to pass through. They are pleasant to be under with their dappled light and delicate foliage, so they will not be a solid green wall blocking views of the building.

In the plaza across the street on the northwest corner of Yonge and Heath, the tree plantings would likely be a mix of Elm species, similar to those historically found in the Yonge & St. Clair neighbourhood.

Heath Street would feature a combination of Redbud and/or Magnolia trees, which will blossom beautifully in the spring and create a wonderful neighbourhood feeling.

Next to Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, we are thinking of planting a ground cover of low-lying Hydrangea, forming a “green carpet”. In the garden on the west side of Yonge there would be Ginko trees planted along with a taller shrub bed with species that we have not decided on yet.

The shrubs will be flowering species and attract pollinators but will be low-lying so as not to create visual obstructions.

Can you explain some of recent proposed traffic improvements and what benefits they would bring?

Michael Leckman, Diamond Schmitt Architects:

The Yonge & Heath intersection would now be aligned like a typical perpendicular intersection, making it more intuitive and safer for pedestrians to know where to cross and drivers to know where to watch for pedestrians and cyclists. There will be new dedicated turn lanes provided at the intersection for turning onto Yonge Street, but otherwise Heath Street will remain a two-lane road with one lane for each direction.

Alvin Avenue will have two lanes (one for each direction) and will feature laybys for cars to have a permitted space to pull over and make a drop-off or delivery. Alvin Avenue will also be widened at its intersection with St. Clair Avenue East in order to make space for a dedicated a right-turn lane and help alleviate current congestion along Alvin. Additionally, parking and loading facilities would all be consolidated underground in St. Clair Place, further reducing backups on Alvin and freeing up the ground level for an enhanced streetscape and public realm.

I have doubts that the proposed Winter Garden concept will work at St. Clair Place.

Michael Leckman, Diamond Schmitt Architects:

We have a strong feeling about the success of the proposed Winter Garden as a curated and animated space. It complements other spaces at St. Clair Place well and facilitates movement to and from the St. Clair subway station. The Winter Garden would provide an all-season space for the community as a complement to the Urban Room (courtyard).

I have concerns about traffic congestion, especially with the traffic generated by the church and the junior school.

Michael Leckman, Diamond Schmitt Architects:

There will two parking entrances: One off Heath Street and another off Alvin Avenue. The traffic analyses and vehicle counts done by St. Clair Place's transportation consultant, Alun Lloyd of BA Group, indicate that there is a very good projected traffic flow, one that is even better than today along Alvin at mid-block. The improvement will be felt directly by the community.

Has there been any coordination in landscape design between St. Clair Place and the Yonge + St. Clair BIA (Business Improvement Area), which has their own streetscape plan?

Claude Cormier, Claude Cormier + Associés:

We have not yet looked at the BIA's plans, but it is a good next step for us to make sure there is compatibility between the BIA's design and our designs for St. Clair Place.

Can you explain the reasoning behind the proposed paver materials and patterns for St. Clair Place?

Claude Cormier, Claude Cormier + Associés:

There would be concrete sidewalks along the perimeter of the entire development since it is a City of Toronto requirement for this project. Inside St. Clair Place, however, we are proposing a light-toned granite paving with one colour but two different textures. We are proposing the same colour with one texture for the flooring of the indoor Winter Garden to provide a seamless visual connection. Further north in the outdoor space, towards Heath Street and the Deer Parkette, we are proposing the same pattern of granite pavers but with two contrasting colours. Comments we have received feeling that the contrast is too high are well-taken. We will keep studying this and potentially adjust. We are aiming to create a timeless design, yet one that also has a unique personality with a subtle modern signature.

The patterning of the granite features larger slabs and goes beyond the traditional square grid one might expect, for a greater visual effect. It is based on the work of Ellsworth Kelly, an American mid-century high-concept artist. We believe the granite pavers will age better over time than concrete pavers would. The pavers

will allow for the trees to grow deep root systems underneath in Silva Cells, which we have used successfully in our planting work at the Four Seasons in Yorkville, Berczy Park, and Love Park. The trees will be spaced 10 metres apart but over the years will grow into a full canopy with good coverage.

Will vehicles be able to drive along Heath Street East between Yonge and Alvin?

Yi Zhou, Claude Cormier + Associés:

The community was not as receptive to our original proposal for a woonerf whereby the plaza on the southeast corner of Yonge & Heath would be extended into Heath Street East and vehicle access along Heath between Yonge and Alvin would be restricted. In the most recent changes, there would be no woonerf on Heath and the street would have regular street paving and be open to vehicles. The difference in surfacing between Heath Street East's road paving and the Deer Parkette's granite paving will also enhance safety by serving as a visual cue to let drivers and pedestrians know where to be.

Where is the space for children to play at St. Clair Place?

Claude Cormier, Claude Cormier + Associés:

There is no traditional playground planned for St. Clair Place, per se, but we feel that the whimsy of the deer sculptures in the parkette will add to the sense of playfulness. We agree that opportunities for play should be further addressed and developed, however. If there are to be any additional elements added to the development to provide opportunities for play, they will be located in the parkette.