

Project Position Statement EARLY EXPOSURE DRAFT

Version 3: as at June 21, 2023

Address: 320, 328 and 332 Bloor Street West

Project Name: 320, 328 and 332 Bloor Street West	Date of Application: November 5, 2021
Application Number: 22 234506 STE 11 OZ	Date of ARA Board Approval of this Position Statement: T B D
P+D (2) Draft recommended to Board on:	P+D Review Group: DiStefano, Shaul, E. Sisam, D.Sisam Soskolne, Montgomery, Bartlett, Wiercinski

Project Status : Planning and Zoning					
	Pre-application		Application (1) Submitted X	Project Review Mtg proposed	Community Meeting X
	TEYCC(3)		Community Council:	Toronto Preservation Board:	OLT appeal: (4)
Project Status : Site Plan Control					
	application submitted X		Staff-led Working Group (WG)	'bumped-up' to Councillor	Working Group X
What the Developer Wants Now:					
	Official Plan Amendment		Zoning By-law Amendment X	Site Plan Approval	Heritage approval X

This version of ARA's Project Position Statement has been updated after the completion of Working Group discussion. At this writing, City Planning is in the midst of preparing their planning report. This Statement, and the views expressed in it, are presented by the ARA 'without prejudice' to any legal actions arising in the course of the City's review and/or possible appeals.

Brief Description of Project:

The application seeks to permit a 115 metre 36-storey mixed-use building containing 345 dwelling units, and an additional 250 square metres of non- residential gross floor area on the ground, first and second floors on the northeast corner of Spadina and Bloor Street West. 27 Vehicular parking spaces are provided and 351 bicycle spaces will be in the development.

These lands are subject to SASP 334 as amended by OPA 365 and OPA 368 which established the view planes from Knox College and which propose to establish a mid-block connection from Paul Martel Park. Immediately east of the development site is a 3-storey office building with a development application that has been approved to construct a 29-storey mixed use building with condominium units and commercial space at grade. This site is also subject to a limiting distance agreement with 316 Bloor Street West, the abutting property immediately to the east.

The 'four corners' of Spadina and Bloor Street West is an area of intensive development and significant transformation: 425 Bloor Street (SW), 350 Bloor West (NW), 371 Bloor Street West south

of University of Toronto Schools (also known as Site 1), mid block (SE). These are altogether expected to be 100,000 square metres. The breadth of these developments will exceed what was initially expected. Understanding the cumulative impact of development to infrastructure (capacity concerns), vehicular movement, public realm, access to transit, urban design, heritage, and the potential for sustainability and opportunity for district energy is very important.

Coordination of the development proposals in this intersection is an important piece that needs to be carefully considered through collaborative planning and with oversight from City Planning. The ARA, HVRA and HSRO have advocated for this necessary comprehensive review during the past two years.

This intersection also holds significance for Indigenous communities. The name Spadina itself originates from the Ojibway “Ishpadina”, or ‘a place on the hill’.



Figure 8

Four Corners Intersection Context



Images of the proposed development from the application.



View North



Bloor Street View



Spadina Road View South



Site Plan

ARA's Issues:

ARA has many significant concerns with the proposed project, all of which have been identified in the public consultation and working group sessions:

A. Building Design/ Site/

At first glance, from a distance the project appears promising: a bold identity when viewed from the south; a 'woonerf' pedestrian link to an existing park; another pedestrian link across the north side of the building; and a covered colonnade adjacent to the sidewalk along the Bloor Street façade. However, on closer inspection, none of these features fulfills the promise expected for this important corner.

This development should be carefully coordinated with developments on the other three corners with respect to the design of the public realm – sidewalks, landscape, lighting, and public amenities. It goes without saying that all infrastructure, vehicular movement, servicing, and sustainable initiatives in this corner must be considered together in a comprehensive way.

The bold expression of the façade is nothing more than an appliqué unrelated to the building structure or any overarching idea for the project. The colonnade along Bloor Street is at least 9.1 metres high, not affording any protection for pedestrians. Such monumental expression might be justified for a public building, but it seems inappropriate for an entrance lobby to a condominium or retail functions. The colonnade diminishes in width from the west to its eastern end where it appears to be not much wider than the doors that open into it, pinching uncomfortably close to the glass wall at the east end of the building. There is no colonnade or protection of any sort on the western flank along Spadina where there will be major pedestrian traffic to the subway entrance from Bloor Street. This critical aspect, an easily achievable improvement to the public realm, has not been considered.

The building also turns its back on potential future development sites to the north along Spadina Road. An Annex community objective is the creation of a Bloor Subway Parkway parallel and north of Bloor extending east-west throughout the Annex.

The proposed tower building lacks the intimacy of scale at the podium that characterizes the Annex.

B. Heritage/ Context

The existing three-storey building at 322-326 Bloor Street West relates to and reinforces the historic streetscape, parts of which are retained to the west. Retention of the building or its façade is important in creating a transition from newer, higher building stock to older, lower building stock. Retention of the building or façade would maintain a human scale currently visibly absent from the building design. Removal of the building would set a precedent for removal of other buildings in this style on the north side of Bloor to Bathurst.

The historic building is adjacent to an important heritage neighbourhood and fits into the commercial evolution of the neighbourhood. For example, in the 1936 City Directory, the names of shopkeepers and residents are a mixture of European and British origin and a reflection of their cultures. The building was home to the neighbourhood Dominion Store at 326 and adjacent to the popular Varsity Tea Rooms at 328. The Jewish community, once centred around Kensington Market, had been moving north of College Street during the period after the First World War. They purchased smaller infill houses that were built in the Annex in the 1930's and 1940's. Some of the storefronts that opened along Bloor Street reflect this move.

The building has historic value or associative value because it contributes to the understanding of the Annex community and its evolving culture. It has contextual value because of its importance in defining, maintaining, and supporting the character of the area and because it is physically, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings

The evolution of the design of the proposed development should not create an either/or situation necessitating a choice between either the retention of the heritage building or improvement of the public realm. Thoughtful design can embrace both priorities, necessary for the successful build-out of the Spadina/Bloor intersection.

C. Public Realm/ Woonerf

The widening of the sidewalks at this intersection is a welcome initiative; however, the colonnade by its position and configuration is an impediment to this public realm improvement. The V configuration of the columns may support the graphic ambition of the building's expression, but it represents a very unfriendly and awkward pedestrian experience at grade, poorly considered except as a graphic expression. This is particularly so along the west façade where this expression is applied to the extended lobby façade. The east and west elevations would be much improved with a change of program: the addition of at-grade retail entrances to the street which would bring activity and promote safety along the pedestrian route.

The woonerf, although poetically described, is actually a service yard for access to the parking ramp, loading dock, gas meters, exit doors, and intake and exhaust grilles. There are no active adjacencies, only an exit door from the retail space along Bloor and the blank wall of the proposed building at 316 Bloor to the east. An afterthought to provide pedestrian amenity, it will instead compromise the safety of pedestrians who dare to use this hostile space.

The somewhat aggressive paving pattern which seems to be de rigueur in many developments is problematic, working against the City's standards which are meant to provide continuity to the public realm.

The east-west link at the north end of the site is covered for its entire length. There is minimal natural light other than that which penetrates a slender gap between the continuous masonry wall of the subway building and the overhang above. There are no supporting adjacencies on either side, posing very serious safety and security concerns on this walkway designed for pedestrian use. Most of the pedestrian route is taken up by the solid walls of a parking garage ramp, parcel room, mail room, and property management office which has a small window.

To the east, there is a double driveway, the south side servicing 316 Bloor Street West and the north side servicing this project. Together the driveway surface spans 10 metres, the equivalent of a street right-of-way. This situation serves to illustrate the lack of coordination of these major tower projects where the ground plane and public realm will suffer in perpetuity. It is noted that there was a cooperative effort between these developments when consent was necessary to create an overhang/right-of-way in favour of 316 Bloor Street West (21 244661 STE 11 CO). A requirement of development should rectify this condition.

D. OPA 365

The woonerf is the result of a requirement by the Official Plan for a midblock connection between Paul Martel Park and Bloor Street and Spadina Road. A similar issue arose with 316 Bloor West, where the requirement for the north-south connection was eliminated. OPA 365 also identifies the requirement for 6 metre sidewalks.

These requirements should be reviewed in the context and integration of both developments, the heritage buildings and the public realm.

E. Paul Martel Ecology Park Interface

There is great concern that the pedestrian traffic through to Paul Martel Park will overwhelm the fragile plantings and interpretive centre for Indigenous history here. It should not be assumed that this park can be fully integrated as part of the walkway. Provision of fencing and a gate might facilitate closure of the park at night.

ARA's Position:			
	negotiate		request Project Review meeting
	request Working Group		support unconditionally
	oppose		no position yet

To comment on this interim Project Position Statement, please email Henry Wiercinski or Elizabeth Sisam, Co-chair, Planning and Development Committee at: info@theara.org

Chronology

Date Notes

March 28/22	Community Consultation Meeting
April 4/23	P+D
June 1/23	Workshop: Heritage and Public Realm

¹ Note: City Planners on this file are: City Planner and Urban Designer on this file are Corinna Prior and Kevin Lee

² ARA's Planning and Development Committee

³ Toronto and East York Community Council

⁴ New Ontario Land Tribunal, formerly Local Planning Appeals Tribunal and, before LPAT, Ontario Municipal Board