

Good Day All those involved or impacted by the Character Guidelines.

I wish to thank Councillor Grimes and the Planning Department for initiating this study.

An issue has come up with the splendid Guidelines prepared by SvN Consulting whose civic engagement was also excellent.

Here is an amendment to resolve issues.

Long Branch Urban Design Guidelines, Motion of Councillor Grimes, Seconded by ?

That the Neighbourhood Character Guidelines dated ? November 2017 be recommended to Council for adoption with the following amendments.

1) That the following be added after the 3 concentric scales mentioned on page ? “For **1. The property in relation to adjacent properties and 2. the street block**, all severances and all individual houses with the appearance of 3 storeys fronting the street, including any garage storey, will require evaluation within the context of nearby properties. The evaluation will include, as part of a complete planning application i) a “to scale” sketch of the front façade of the proposal in relation to the two abutting street properties and ii) that nearby properties as referenced in Official Plan policy 4.1.5c (sometimes referred to as the micro-neighbourhood.) be analysed from the point of view of consistency with lot frontage, density of housing, permitted zoning, garage facades, setbacks. slope of roofs, historic buildings and trees. At the discretion of the Planning Department the area of evaluation can be extended beyond the nearby buildings to anything up to the whole block and it will add properties to be included in such an analysis which merit the analysis. In Long Branch the aesthetic

character varies within every block and the further away a property is from the proposal the less influence on design of the proposal it should have. “The Long Branch Character Defining Guidelines” on page ?? represent the distinctive character of Long Branch to be reflected and reinforced in accordance with the Official Plan for the **3. The property in relation to the broader neighbourhood context.**

2) That Long Branch Character Defining Conditions in Section 2.2 include the addition “j. Rear yard garages and garages recessed well behind the front yard building setback.”

3) That the following definitions be added to the Glossary Aesthetics and Urban Design. These terms relate primarily to the third dimension and the visual senses but can also include hearing and other senses. They refer to beauty as referenced in the Official Plan Page 1.2 “beautiful architecture and urban design that astonish and inspire” to create an enjoyable and good quality of life. P 1.4 relates beauty to better economic prospects and says that good urban design is good for business. Application of such principles can create a fine grained texture to maximize the visual potential of the neighbourhood.

Infilling refers to blocks of land within a neighbourhood and not to individual lots as discussed on Page 4-4 and in Section 4.1.9 of the Official Plan.

Building envelope - change “occupied” to “permitted subject to density provisions”.

Intensification includes infilling, lot splitting and any increase in density

4) That the following clause be added at the end of the text

“Ongoing monitoring of how the guidelines are working may result in a need for changes. After 6 months City Planning Department will bring a report to Etobicoke York Community Council to assess how the Guidelines have been operating, and at appropriate junctures after this.

November 7 2017

The issue is that the Guidelines do not show how to apply them after defining the 3 concentric rings which I support.

Instead of relying on the old method of evaluating the broader character of the area of several hundred houses, I suggest that the Defining Character listed next to the large maps in the Guidelines be used.

The old method is illogical in Long Branch because it analyses a section of the neighbourhood unrelated visually to the block which is key to evaluation.

This has been used countless times by developers to justify approval of incompatible development by the OMB.

The great advantage of the SvN defining character list is

- 1) It excludes evaluation of the newer soldier houses (3 storey, double density on narrow lots) which are alien to the neighbourhood.
- 2) It offers a way to follow urban design principles (and avoid invalid evaluations) by capturing the essential defining elements of neighbourhood character.
- 3) It eliminates a huge workload for planning staff with the task of preparing information for several hundred properties for every hearing and which would also tie up TLAB
- 4) It is based on urban design principles rather than the irrational invention of the development sector to support approvals.

Unless the broad category evaluation is tied to the SvN report I suspect we will continue to further destroy the character of Long Branch.

I do not expect anybody to read the attached but it does it elaborates on the approach which I have used all my working life as well as working with City staff for many years.

By introducing evaluations at the micro level, there would be urban design information available for the Committee of Adjustment, Planning Department, TLAB and the Community submitted by the applicant.

Currently the planning system often works arbitrarily. Some would say always!

I am aware that certain members of Long Branch Neighbourhood Association wish to have the Guidelines approved with only an amendment for monitoring.

This seems to be a reactionary position based on limited information and with a conviction that the Guidelines are a magic bullet. We do not even know that TLAB would accept them because they are not a legal document.

I agree they should be approved as quickly as possible and the straightforward choice should not delay approval. If the Guidelines were approved with these amendments rather than deferred, I assume the LBNA would not object.

I have been heavily involved with the Committee of Adjustment process at all levels for over 5 years. My view is that without the amendments we will have the Character of Long Branch further destroyed.

I suspect anyone specialising in Urban Design would agree.

When the OP is evaluated for effectiveness, Long Branch so far will come in with a resounding "F". We need a valid and defensible base to aim for an A in a following review.

Some definitions that were asked for by community members have been added.

A submission by Jaan Pill is below.

I would be glad to discuss these points and am available at 416.255.0492

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Jaan Pill's letter

Hi David,

Your work on this is commendable.

I've outlined my views in feedback sent to Sabrina and posted at my website:

[Comments from Jaan Pill regarding August 2017 Long Branch Character Guidelines draft](#)

The following excerpt outlines my perspective:

My central comment is that a noteworthy feature of urban planning in Long Branch, in recent years, entails a consistent and wide-ranging distortion of everyday language.

Such a distortion - and debasement - of language has led to a situation in which, at Committee of Adjustment and Ontario Municipal Board meetings, in a large proportion of decisions, the word "Major" is interchangeable with the word "Minor."

The distortion of language, as it relates to urban planning, has given rise to an ongoing state of affairs in which a growing body of case law has been constructed, at the Ontario Municipal Board.

The case law reinforces, and guides, the incremental distortion of language, as it applies to urban planning, in neighbourhoods such as Long Branch and Alderwood.

It would, in response to such a state of affairs, be highly valuable if the Guidelines were to spell out, in detail, and in the visual language of urban design, what a "Minor" variance would really look like, in the context of of the Long Branch Neighbourhood Character Guidelines.

I would not recommend leaving the interpretation of the Guidelines, as they stand in the current draft, for members of the Committee of Adjustment, the Ontario Municipal Board, and the Toronto Local Appeal Body, to figure out on their own.

Without specific directions, from what I have observed over the years, CofA and OMB members will in a majority of cases - and with notable, but few, exceptions - leave their decisions to "professional judgement."

The latter term, from what I can gather, from observing many meetings, serves as code for subjective understanding, or personal preference - in many cases, in the absence of, or in disregard of, relevant evidence.

The concept of evidence-based practice does not, except in rare and inspiring cases, appear to be a standard feature of this form of professional judgement, from what I have observed, over a period of many years.

[End of excerpt]

The rest of my comments (please see link above) build upon this statement.

I support your efforts, as outlined in your recent email, to ensure that the leeway for "professional judgement," on the part of CoA members, is minimized.

I also support efforts to ensure that the Guidelines be re-visited regularly, to ensure they actually make a difference!

Best,

Jaan

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