

Development Proposals and High Park:

In Toronto's Official Plan, Bloor Street is designated an Avenue. Avenues are places intended for intensification. Developer interest picked up, so to ensure orderly development, Council approved an Avenue Study for the portion of Bloor from Keele to the Humber. Council also approved a Character Study for the Apartment Neighbourhood Area north of High Park.

Provincial documents require that municipalities protect natural heritage for the long term. In particular, development and site alteration shall not be permitted within specified natural heritage or, in some cases, adjacent to it. There is provision for some exceptions, but the proponent must show there will be no negative impact from single, multiple, or successive development or site alteration activities. Negative impacts may be direct, such as directly destroying all or part of the natural heritage feature, or they may be indirect. Indirect impacts include compromise of the ecological functions through development of adjacent lands, or human disturbance and consequent ills such as trampling and avenues for the introduction of invasive species. The province has issued a guideline, the Natural Heritage Reference Manual, to help municipalities understand how to meet this obligation.

There are three loci of protected natural heritage along the Bloor Avenue Study segment; provincially significant wetlands in the Humber, the provincially significant High Park Oak Woodlands Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI) in High Park, and habitat for chimney swifts (a threatened species) along Bloor. No development is proposed within High Park or the Humber wetlands, and chimney swift habitat is governed by species-specific regulation. On review of a number of factors, City Planning is proposing that the portion of Bloor near the Humber be removed from the Avenue designation and continue as Neighbourhood (ie no intensification). That leaves High Park.

Much is known of the natural heritage in High Park. Consultants performing a desktop study examined twenty reports. They found three significant gaps. Nothing is known of the ecological function of the lands north of High Park; there are a number of seeps; and the natural heritage itself suffers from trampling, particularly in the sensitive areas of provincially significant vegetation and slopes. An internal committee consisting of Parks, Planning, Toronto Water and TRCA will make recommendations. Current proposals include extending "green fingers" north into the Apartment Neighbourhood, protecting the quantity and quality of water entering High Park, both through storm sewers and groundwater, and the TRCA undertaking a survey of the Park's fauna this summer. Measures to prevent trampling will be considered.

More information at:

Bloor West Village Avenue Study

<https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/planning-studies-initiatives/bloor-west-village-avenue-study/>

High Park Apartment Neighbourhood Area Character Study

<https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/planning-studies-initiatives/high-park-apartment-neighbourhood-area-character-study/>

Summary presented by Leslie Gooding on behalf of the High Park Natural Environment Committee at the Jan. 24, 2018 High Park Resource Group meeting.