

John Bowker, Vice-Chair of the *Roncesvalles Business Improvement Area*, was in attendance to the City of Toronto's April 19th Roncesvalles West Land Use Study meeting, and responded to resident queries regarding commercial use. A statement was made that existing businesses would tend to prefer more businesses on the west side of the street, in that having more business would tend to attract more customers.

As background, in its 2003 [Roncesvalles] Streetscape Strategy, the RBVIA stated that:

Over time, Roncesvalles Ave – as one of the Main Streets identified in the Official Plan – will accommodate intensification and experience the transformation of many of its buildings. The west side is especially susceptible to experience change as commercial activities become more successful.

The BIA and the neighbourhood at large should adopt a long-term vision for how incremental growth should be accommodated along the west side. This vision should help build Roncesvalles as a cohesive, two-sided retail street. Fortunately, the east side of the street sets a clear precedent.

While conserving the architectural history of the street, new structures can begin to create a more defined edge by filling in the gaps between buildings. All new structures should face onto Roncesvalles Ave, with a commercial ground floor and a mix of uses above.

It is important that the setbacks of new structures in relation to the street be considered carefully as each block along Roncesvalles presents a very different condition. Generally, new structures should respond to the building edge defined by adjacent structures. This helps define a consistent street edge. It is possible, in some blocks, to build a tighter street by bringing new buildings closer to the street.

In a subsequent email to Councillor Perks, later forwarded to area residents' associations and Councillor Perks dated May 28th, John Bowker appeared to both backpedal from, and provide further input to the City with respect to developing the west side of Roncesvalles, stating:

This passage may leave the impression that the BIA is actively seeking intensification along Roncesvalles, or the conversion of Roncesvalles into a two-sided retail street.

To be clear, our street has thrived for over 100 years with its current configuration, and we do not consider the residential nature of the west side to be a barrier to the street's success. We certainly would not actively seek the imposition of intensification or commercialization of the west side onto a community that was steadfastly opposed. Our good relationship with our neighbours (who are also our customers) is very important to us, and we would expect any changes to the west side zoning to be considered in terms of what is best for the overall community, including but definitely not limited to its business interests.

Having said this, should the City proceed with a plan to allow more commercial uses and development on the west side, including new structures, we would encourage planners to consider the design points raised in our streetscape strategy document, e.g.: setbacks, built form, building edges, landscaping, etc. While we are not actively seeking new development, we would hope and expect any new businesses or structures on the west side to fit in organically with the rest of Roncesvalles -- the neighbourhood as well as the street -- with the east side serving as a precedent.