

Bike path now parkland

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The bike path along Lake Shore Boulevard between Leslie Street and Carlaw Avenue is officially parkland after Toronto Council approved the plan that will make it more difficult for the proposed SmartCentres retail development to construct new driveways onto the thoroughfare.

The vote closes a loophole that has existed since the city tore down the eastern spur of the Gardiner Expressway. The project included the construction of a linear park in its stead, but because the city never got around to designating it as such, the bike path there remained officially a roadway.

As a roadway, the city had little control over attempts by private landowners to extend a driveway across it. But as parkland, the city has control.

"This means that any crossing of it will have to be negotiated directly with the city - it doesn't fall under the purview of the Ontario Municipal Board," said Ward 30 (Toronto-Danforth) Councillor Paula Fletcher, who with members of the Leslieville community is opposing the proposed development immediately to the north at the Ontario Municipal Board this month.

Lawyers for SmartCentres have given the city notice that they regard the designation as an attempt to frustrate the redevelopment of the Toronto Film Studio lands. The traffic plan shows several new driveways emptying onto both Eastern Avenue to the north and Lake Shore Boulevard to the south.

Ward 29 (Toronto-Danforth) Councillor Case Ootes was one of the few on council who opposed the redesignation.

"The sole purpose of that decision was to thwart the Leslieville so-called big box development," Ootes said. "I think that's not a very smart move because it makes the city look obstructionist and I just don't think that's the right thing to do.