



On Tuesday July 20, 2021 over 30 people from numerous organizations participated in a second meeting hosted by Northcrest Developments and Canada Lands Company to discuss community services and facilities and social infrastructure. Participants represented a range of organizations and interests in the non-profit, public, and private sectors including community service providers, representatives of local and city-wide community organizations, as well as representatives from the City of Toronto, local school boards and five grassroots leaders partnering with the Centre for Connected Communities to share findings from the completed local context study.

The focus group was held online using Zoom video conferencing software, and included a presentation on the emerging Framework Plan from Northcrest Developments and Canada Lands Company, followed by a facilitated plenary and small group discussions between all participants. Consultants supporting Northcrest and Canada Lands also presented, including representatives of Urban Strategies Inc., and KPMB Architects.

The meeting was facilitated by Swerhun Inc., who also wrote this summary. As facilitators that are not advocating for any particular outcome of this project, the intent is to capture the perspectives shared during the discussion, not assess the merit or accuracy of any of these perspectives nor does it indicate an endorsement of any of these perspectives on the part of Northcrest Developments or Canada Lands Company.

This summary was subject to participant review prior to being finalized. If you have any questions about what's here, please contact the id8 Downsview team at info@id8downsview.ca.

id8 Downsview July 2021 Engagement 2 Downsview Community and Social Infrastructure

Tuesday, July 20, 2021, 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

Overall sentiment

- Participants were pleased to see the results of the Centre for Connected Communities (C3) Community Context Study. Participants urged both Northcrest and Canada Lands to continue to integrate more equitable approaches to the development process.
- Remarks were made and a question asked about who was consulted in the process of completing the Community Context Study and why. There was fear that a focus on consulting only in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs), and a particular focus on Black communities, diminishes the contribution of others participating in the id8 Downsview process and creates disadvantages for them. Illustrations of people used in the Community Context Study were referenced as contributing to this fear. *The consultant team provided clarification as to why the Community Context Study specifically focused on engaging underserved communities who continue to be marginalized from traditional planning processes.*
- These comments were a catalyst for further discussion regarding equity, inclusion, and the need for prioritizing underserved communities.

The id8 Downsview process does not tolerate, ignore, or condone discrimination and is committed to promoting respectful conduct, tolerance and inclusion. Northcrest, Canada Lands, and the third-party facilitators from Swerhun acknowledge the impact of discriminatory remarks made during this meeting and have followed up with the participants involved to prevent it from happening again. *Future meetings moving forward will open with clear reminders to all participants regarding the respectful, safe, and constructive environment the id8 Downsview process strives to **offer to all**.*

Detailed feedback

Feedback from participants is in regular text, and responses (where provided) from Northcrest, Canada Lands, and their consultants are noted in *italics*.

Purpose of this discussion about Community Services, Facilities, and Social Infrastructure

- **What is the purpose of the Community Services, Facilities, and Social Infrastructure conversations as part of this project? How will it manifest itself in the planning process?** *The outcomes of this conversation will help inform the Community Services and Facilities Report as part of the application that Northcrest and Canada Lands will submit to the City of Toronto with the proposed plan for the future of these lands. Beyond the typical Community Services and Facilities report that speaks to the brick-and-mortar aspect, the id8 Downsview process seeks to understand how to best contribute to the social cohesion and social infrastructure that already exists in and around Downsview. Through this process, we aim to better understand community priorities, how they align with public policy priorities and the landowners' priorities – including where the decisions have to be made and how to fund these decisions.*

Equity, Inclusion & Intersectionality

- **It is important to hold space in this process for grassroots organizations, which may not have the same level of institutional recognition and power as some other community organizations.** Many local grassroots organizations may not necessarily have all the technical administrative knowledge (e.g. applying for grants), but they fulfill a real need for local people that institutions or other community organizations do not. The lack of technical knowledge often results in lower levels of power for these organizations, where their legitimacy might be challenged by other community organizations. That is the reason why the Community Context Study is so important – it sheds light on the grassroots organizations that might be otherwise left out from the process. It's important that the process continues to incorporate the voices of these organizations and does not allow for their space for participation to be usurped by other community organizations.
- **There needs to be alignment between what happens on these lands and the surrounding communities.** It's important to understand that Black bodies are displaced more than any other culture, including in surrounding communities going through redevelopment. There are lessons to be learned from Little Jamaica, Lawrence Heights, Rexdale, etc. There are many people who don't come to these meetings that are harmed through redevelopment processes. There needs to be an effort to get people who have relationships with these residents to have conversations about the proposed redevelopment – people who are in places where developers are not going to go.
- **Indigenous communities and organizations should be consulted and integrated as part of the id8 Downsview engagement process.** *Northcrest and Canada Lands have ongoing streams of engagement for both Rights Holders and urban Indigenous organizations.*
- **Consider the impacts of urban intensification on existing community and social infrastructure.** Northcrest and Canada Lands should continue to examine the impacts of intensification on local communities, community infrastructure and transportation infrastructure (including traffic congestion).
- **Community and Social Infrastructure processes should look for different opportunities to strengthen social cohesion and reduced tension between diverse groups** (homeowners and renters, different income-levels, or ethnic backgrounds).

Complete Communities

- **Prioritize developing complete communities and not just wall-to-wall tower complexes.** Successfully developing complete communities will require a holistic approach to engaging various stakeholders in the process of planning and implementing community and social infrastructure.
- **Continue to focus on walkability of complete communities.** Co-location is a great mechanism for developing multi-purpose spaces in close proximity to each other (for example daycares, schools and other community assets). One suggestion included involving youth in supporting the engagement process.
- **A healthy and resilient environment is important not only for sustainability but also for the mental health of the community.** Ensure there is enough green landscape, trees and a decrease in carbon emissions to create a healthy community. The inclusion of local food systems is also important for the health and culture of the community.
- **Flexibility to plan for schools at the early stages is important.** It is important for the process to continue to be flexible to allow early planning for community assets, such as schools, in the first phase of development for the first three neighbourhoods. It is key to be able to site the location for new schools early in the process.
- **Downsview lands are an opportunity to help address the housing crisis in Toronto.** A broad range of affordable housing programs should be considered for the area, such as housing co-ops and senior housing.

Community Services, Facilities and Social Infrastructure Engagement Process & Workforce Development

- **The process for planning and implementing community services, facilities, and social infrastructure needs to start early to build the local community capacity to be ready for workforce development opportunities.** Learn from the lessons from Jane and Finch LRT (Light Rail Transit) and invest in organizations building skills and capacities of local residents and youth. Northcrest and Canada Lands should work with organizations to build these partnerships early in the process.
- **Be more intentional in who the landowners involve in the process of planning and developing the site.** Make sure community voices are involved, and especially people who are underrepresented in the workplace, including Black, Brown, and Indigenous people. Set targets, have apprenticeships, social procurement, work with minority-owned and led social enterprises. Would also love to be able to have space for a Black History Museum and Cultural Centre. Would like to see an inclusive development process. Consider how development can deliver benefits to new and existing communities. To further encourage community participation, the developers should provide extra funding to hold community functions or scholarships.
- **Working to change the system can be overwhelming because people are so used to things being the way they are now.** The challenges can lower the morale of the people involved. There needs to be a communication system so people know how to communicate with those leading the redevelopment and so they know how to be heard. Social media is an important tool to support this because it's free and it's a way for people to connect to the process.

Other Comments

- A participant shared additional resources to support further understanding of grassroots community organizing. *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah, highlights the power of grassroots organizing and community building as an approach for mobilizing communities. The participant

shared the following passage from the book:"... crime succeeds because crime does the one thing the government doesn't do: Crime cares. Crime is grassroots. Crime looks for the young kids who need support and lifting hand. Crime offers internship programs and summer jobs and opportunities for advancement. Crime gets involved in the community. Crime doesn't discriminate."

NEXT STEPS

Both Northcrest and Canada Lands thanked everyone who joined the meeting and appreciated the participants taking time to participate in these conversations. Northcrest and Canada Lands are excited to work collaboratively to invent a process that will deliver better outcomes. Both organizations have time and scale they can leverage to participate in innovative processes to deliver better outcomes and community benefits with the support of various actors. It is a journey that different actors are endeavouring together. Nicole Swerhun, the independent facilitator, reminded participants that the meeting summary will be shared in draft for participants to review. The facilitation team will also share links to the recording, presentation and id8 Downsview Community Resource Group ([available here](#)).