



## **id8 Downsview Community Resource Group (CRG) Site Tour with Northcrest and Canada Lands**

Saturday, November 20th, 2021 from 9:00 am – 1:00 p.m.

## **BRIEF SUMMARY NOTES**



## WHAT HAPPENED?

On Saturday, November 20, 2021, Northcrest and Canada Lands hosted a site tour in and around the 520 acres of the Downsview lands. The purpose of the tour was to introduce the id8 Downsview Community Resources Group (CRG) members to the site, get to know each other, discuss core proposals in the Framework Plan, and answer questions.

## HOW DID IT WORK?

Hosted by Jane Farrow from the Department of Words and Deeds (an engagement consultant to Northcrest and Canada Lands), the group included 21 CRG members and alternates who moved around the site by bus, making four stops where everyone left the bus and explored on foot:

- the Supply Depot at 40 Carl Hall Road (including a look inside at the film and TV studio spaces);
- Downsview Park (including climbing the mound to see the XOXO art installation of the Wind Rose);
- the Parks Commons (including The Hangar Sport Facility and Centennial College); and
- Bombardier (with a tour of the runway and a walk through the hangars).

Our Greenway Conservancy CRG members brought a cargo bike to the tour and used it to travel between some of the tour stops. Northcrest, Canada Lands, and some of the consultants who helped create the Framework Plan (from Urban Strategies Inc. and SLA) provided information along the way.

## WHY THESE NOTES?

These summary notes were written by the team from Swerhun Inc. (Ruth Belay, Nicole Swerhun) to capture – in very broad strokes – the experience of the tour. Given the many separate and different

conversations held, we know that we've only scratched the surface of the many rich exchanges from the day. These notes help CRG members who were not on the tour to gain some insight into the experience. It's one of the many mechanisms that the CRG will use to collectively capture our experiences and our work together. A draft version of these notes was distributed to participants for their review prior to finalizing.

## SO HOW DID IT GO?

This site tour was the first time that CRG members had an opportunity to meet in person and explore the 520 acres of Downsview that are the focus of the proposed Framework Plan that Northcrest and Canada Lands created to guide the future redevelopment of these lands. The vibe was friendly and enthusiastic, the participants were keen to see and learn from each other, and overall, the experience was well received and much appreciated by CRG members, Northcrest, and Canada Lands.

## WHAT DID PEOPLE TALK ABOUT?

Some of the comments, observations, and discussions focused on:

- **How important it is to be on the site.** Many CRG members said something along the lines of “wow, you don’t really get it until you get on the site” and encouraged Northcrest and Canada Lands to create more opportunities to get onsite. Many CRG members who couldn’t attend have already expressed interest in participating in a future tour, and Northcrest has agreed to set something up.
- **The importance of adaptive reuse.** There was a lot of appreciation for the way that existing buildings are being used. The Hangar was bustling with activities and the Supply Depot is also in active use (CRG occupied the courtroom used in the TV show “Suits”). The

restoration of the Centennial College buildings is a success, an outcome for which a CRG member organization (North York Community Preservation Council) had been advocating for years. People also comments that the Merchants Market is a unique space that is vibrant with multiculturalism and local businesses.

- **The importance of interim uses.** Many commented on the fact that the site has so much potential and presents a big opportunity – they don't want to see the space remain unused and empty. Some members commented on the importance of interim uses, and to trust that the community will be able to understand the interim/temporary nature of those uses.
- **The importance of providing local jobs and skills development.** The landowners confirmed that place-based workforce development is part of the id8 Downsview process, along with prioritizing employment for local residents.
- **Standing on the runway had a big impact on many.** It provoked some CRG members to suggest that the landowners consider hosting larger events and festivals on the runway. Standing on the runway also provoked a

reflection on whether it would be possible to plan a future for the site that didn't include roads and cars, but instead focused solely on bikes and pedestrians.

- **Let's find a way to bring more youth to the process.** Some CRG members shared the importance of integrating more youth into the process. Others talked about how they dream of using the site in the future (for example, one member who sings in a choir talk about the potential to sing here, another imagined interim uses that could be implemented by local communities).

## NEXT STEPS

Northcrest and Canada Lands thanked id8 Downsview CRG members for participating in the tour and everyone's enthusiasm and energy for helping plan the future. Northcrest let everyone know that they have started planning the Northcrest 1<sup>st</sup> District, and invited CRG members to participate in the public meeting on Wednesday November 24, 2021 and/or provide comments at [NorthcrestTogether.ca](http://NorthcrestTogether.ca). Nicole Swerhun also let participants know that a short summary of the tour will be sent out for review before being finalized.

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## PARTICIPANTS ON THE TOUR INCLUDED:

31 Division Community Police Liaison Committee (Mark Tenaglia, Lily Wong), Condo Corporation MTCC 1275 (Lisa Robles and Anita Cayetano), Downsview Lands Community Voice Association (Rosanna Laboni), FIT Community Services (Antonius Clarke, Paul Dunn), North York Community Preservation Panel (Geoff Kettel, Alex Grenzebach), Our Greenway Conservancy (Francine Harris, Kevin), St. Jerome Catholic School Parent Council (Adriana Aviles and Marie), TTCriders (Michael Arkin), Walk Toronto (Sonali Praharaj), Wilson Village BIA (Anthony Rossi), York University City Institute (Frederick Peters), and individual CRG members Dale Burnette-Splude, Mike Ruffolo, Rina Taddei, and Veronica Allen. **Tour leader:** Department of Words & Deeds (Jane Farrow). **Landowners:** Northcrest (Ian Hanecak, Chris Eby), Canada Lands (David Anselmi, Martin Ennis). **Land use planners:** Urban Strategies Inc. (Emily Reisman). **Landscape architects:** Stig Lennart Andersson (Anne-Sofie Sørensen, Rasmus Astrup). **CRG facilitators:** Swerhun Inc. (Nicole Swerhun, Ruth Belay).