

On Thursday, October 15, 2020 Northcrest and Canada Lands hosted a public workshop that shared and sought feedback on emerging ideas related to the future of People & Neighbourhoods on the 520 acres that are the focus of the id8 Downsview process. There were 21 community and stakeholder participants including: local residents as well as representatives of the DUKE Heights BIA (Business Improvement Area), Wilson Village BIA, the TRCA (Toronto and Region Conservation Authority), Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB), Toronto Lands Corporation, YAACE (Youth Association for Academics, Athletics and Character Education), Rivera Seniors Living, HousingNowTO, Toronto Kite Flyers, and the York Centre Seniors Steering Committee.

The public workshop was held online using Zoom video conferencing software and included a brief overview of the project from Chris Eby (Northcrest) and Deana Grinnell (Canada Lands). Accompanied by a more detailed presentation by Daniel Baumann (Henning Larsen) and Rasmus Astrup (SLA), consultants supporting the id8 Downsview process. This was followed by four breakout discussions and a wrap-up plenary. Other consultants supporting Northcrest and Canada Lands also participated, including representatives of Urban Strategies Inc., as did staff from the City of Toronto's Planning Division.

The meeting was facilitated by a team from 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 to assess the merit or accuracy of any of these perspectives. This summary does not 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.

People & Neighbourhoods

id8 Downsview Public Workshop
Thursday, October 15, 2020, 4 – 6 pm

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

This summary reflects an integration of the feedback shared in the four breakout rooms and the plenary discussion. Key themes and topics shared by participants are listed below, with more detail provided on the following pages. Please note that feedback from participants is in regular text, and responses (where provided) from Northcrest, Canada Lands, and their consultants are documented in *italics*.

Key themes and topics shared by participants

- 1. Support for identifying multiple neighbourhoods, including:**
 - many thoughts on what goes into a great neighbourhood, and thinking post-COVID; and
 - suggestions on how to think about where different uses are located on the site.
- 2. Strong support for better connections and walkability.**
- 3. Creating a strong, shared culture is key.**
- 4. Different ideas on specific uses to try to attract to the site.**
- 5. Support for ensuring affordability.**
- 6. Downsview needs to stay authentic.**
- 7. It's important to include arts and culture, and the uniqueness of the site.**
- 8. Other comments and questions focused on:** the need to respond to the changing nature of work; concern about potential contamination from previous uses; mixed perspectives on "best practice" examples; interest in phasing and in adjacent sites.

Several participants expressed support for the process, including the id8 Downsview team's approach to planning and engagement. Many encouraged Northcrest and Canada Lands to make the most of this opportunity.

1. Support for identifying multiple neighbourhoods

- **Toronto has great experience with creating neighbourhoods.** Support for the idea of examining this area as a series of neighbourhoods rather than one big place.
- **Support for the many hearts in the map – especially at Keele.** Rather than think about big projects (like one big bridge or tunnel), think about many – multiple smaller bridges or tunnels to help people connect to different modes of transportation. “Shuttles rather than subways.”

Thoughts on what goes into a great neighbourhood, including lessons from COVID:

- **We should be thinking about this area as a “town” – everything should be in reach.** There should be multiple hubs and centres and people should be able to live, work, and play there. Avoid previous planning approaches of making large, single use areas and make it a mixed-use area with retail strips.
- **Food choices, community centres, and parkland make great neighbourhoods.** Bars and restaurants – from cheap eats to medium price range – help create a social scene and strengthen social life. It will be important to avoid food deserts; have community centres because they provide places for all ages to hang out and socialize (they also make communities feel safer, as they are visible and provide more “eyes on the street”); and have green spaces and spaces for outdoor activities. Downsview Park is great, but there needs to be more smaller parks that create a more intimate community environment. This is especially important during the times of COVID, where the design of public spaces should discourage mass gatherings. There are good examples in the city where multiculturalism is integrated and reflected in the green spaces with outdoor community ovens/kitchens.
- **Start planning for schools as early as possible and consider integrated service delivery.** Schools in the area are at or over capacity. With the Tippet Road Regeneration Area adding over 3,000 people, and more families coming in as the site develops, planning for schools is critical to ensuring success of this project. It would also be great to see innovative models of financing, partnerships, and integrated service delivery. *A planner from the Toronto Lands Corporation said that TDSB has been engaged early and has been working closely with the id8 Project Team to discuss planning for schools. He has also mentioned that the TDSB and TLC are interested and open to discussing integrated service delivery and financing, referencing success stories such as the Canoe Landing.*
- **Need to think about and adapt for impacts of COVID.** Ensure everyone is thinking about and planning for how COVID will impact how people live and use space currently and in the future.

Suggestions on how to think about where different uses are located on the site

- **It’s great that the public discourse starts by acknowledging that Downsview will be a multi-use, multi-generation, multi-cultural place; and as such placement and adjacencies of different uses will play a big role in the cohesiveness of the neighbourhood.** There needs to be a lot of consideration given to where you put specific uses on the site and what

other uses will be near them. For example, basketball courts are needed in the neighbourhood for teenagers to spend time together, but a basketball court near seniors' housing will create a lot of conflict. Seniors housing should be close to a hospital with easy emergency vehicle access routes, and perhaps also close to a dog park and/or a kindergarten and a grocery store. Past seniors housing was designed to be inward looking, but we have learned that integrating them into the community has been shown to have positive mental health effects.

- **Transitions in height and density are important.** Some participants said that they like the idea of having 5-6 story buildings on the edge of the development and next to existing neighbourhoods. They don't see a problem with taller buildings being located around the transit stations. As one person said, "What scares me is the thought of having 40-50 story buildings right next to existing neighbourhoods."

2. Strong support for better connections and walkability

- **Support for connections, both within and external to the site.** Connections need to be safe, and they need to consider the needs of seniors (it can be un-safe if cyclists are flying by or people are walking and texting).
- **It's important to do the basics well.** The site is so well located because of the subway, the highways (401, 407), and people are asking that you do the roads properly. Also do the sewers properly, given the current issues we have. As one participant said: "If you have the intention to do a good project, it will be a good project. If you do good now with roads and sewers, the rest will come".
- **Strong support for green connectivity:** bicycle and walking. As one participant said: "Kudos to walkability. Having neighbourhoods with key places within a 5, 10, and 15 minute walk is amazing."
- **Walkability is important for Downsview.** One of the more challenging aspects about Downsview is the lack of walkability, particularly in getting across the site, crossing streets, and accessing TTC subway stations. Design routes that enhance the experience of the neighbourhood. There should be a function and a purpose to every connection. For example, think about the High Line park in New York, a fantastic green space that runs along the tracks. Pedestrian safety and comfort should also be considered in creating connections over the rail line. For example, Downsview Park Boulevard is already difficult to cross. If it serves as an extension going over the rails to accommodate the spill over traffic from and to major streets, it might make the environment more unfriendly for residents and users of the park to walk the street. It's also important to remember that walkability is important for all ages. For example, the elementary school students should be able to reach their schools within a 10-minute walk; and secondary school students within 20 minutes (at which point it is preferred that they use a transportation option). Parents might feel more comfortable for their teenaged kids to be within 10-15 minute walking distance from their homes to use community amenities. Walkable places are very important for the aging population, as well.
- **Consider providing public transit from neighbourhoods around the site to the subway stations.** Currently, the Stanley Greene community pays for a private shuttle that takes

residents to the subway station. While improved connectivity will help with easier access to the stations, consider bringing public transit to neighbouring communities like Stanley Greene that will specifically take people to subway stations.

3. Creating a strong, shared culture is key.

Participants shared different suggestions on how to establish a community culture where people look out for each other, communities are supported, and the area is safe.

- **Think about collective community benefits that can be provided here so people feel that there is support for them.** For example, consider creating digital infrastructure that's free in certain locations (e.g. major corners). Access to jobs are also important and including people from the community in the workforce here. This can be a win-win for communities and developers, and it's also a way to create belonging. After-hours amenities are another important community benefit. The challenge is to create a place where all users are welcome. There have been experiences in Scarborough where after-hours activities discouraged people from buying properties because of concerns about outsiders coming in.
- **The key is to deliberately invest in ways that foster a sense of community – through heritage, the arts, innovation, and experimentation.** Values like fostering a community that looks out for each other – and it takes some time to build that culture. There are many ways to work on this, for example using the hangars and other heritage buildings to engage youth, give them a sense of history and a sense of belonging. Innovation is key, as are the arts. Look at what can happen indoors, outdoors, and experiment – see if it works, do pop-ups, test ideas, and get feedback – and it also creates the opportunity to see how communities engage with the new things that are happening that celebrate the culture and history of the area. That way you can pick the best ideas.
- **Culture and a sense of community is key.** There needs to be something that children and youth can access from 10am-6pm on weekends and 3-10pm on weekdays. Something like an after-hours hub that supports academics, athletics, arts, mentoring, etc. This is critical to getting youth off the streets. Affordable housing is important, so people can live, work, and play in their community. This is what we need to do to ensure our children are thriving and they don't get caught up in gangs and the criminal justice system. It will be a beautiful thing if we can work together to create a community hub – it won't only help children and youth, it will also help parents and families.
- **Supporting diverse main streets is part of local culture – and it will take more than just creating the space and letting the market fill it.** If that happens, we'll have Rabba, Starbucks, a bank, and then see the same pattern repeat. *We know we need to find ways to support diverse, locally-owned businesses. This is a priority for us.* A local resident noted that there are some people in this community who wish a Starbucks would move in.
- **One idea could be to create criteria for social responsibility and accountability that any businesses locating here must meet.** That could apply to large businesses and focus on social equity and other priorities, essentially signaling that they have a responsibility to contribute and that there's a clear way to hold them accountable to meeting those criteria.

- **It's also important to think about safety.** In Manchester, an area was pedestrianized and safety issues were created. There weren't cars going by and so there were fewer eyes on the street. It's important to ensure safety in this new development. Things became safer in Manchester when the police set-up an office close to the area.

4. Different ideas on specific uses to try and attract to the site

- **Support having a mix of residential and employment uses.**
- **Important to provide housing and amenities for a mix of age groups both young and old.**
- **Think about how to attract people to the area.** Create a unique / specific amenity or attraction that would draw people to the area (e.g. the Cherry Blossoms in High Park).
- **Look at bringing a major education or research institution to the area.** Would be great to see a university or something like MARS come to the area. Aware that York University is close by, but universities are always full and could use more space. A university or research institution could be great employers for the area.
- **Create a construction innovation hub.** Given that this will be a multi-decade long process with lots of construction it would be great to see a construction innovation hub that could train local residents and provide them with employment as the area develops.

5. Support for ensuring affordability

- **Affordability is key.** Many local residents want to see a variety of locally owned businesses in the area. To enhance a sense of community, it would be great to see those who work here also be able to afford living here.
- **Create strong affordable housing targets.** It will be important the site / project has heights and densities that can support strong affordable housing targets; especially around the major transit stations. Would like to see the areas around the transit stations be developed earlier in the process; in part so that affordable housing can get started early. It will also be important to be clear with the public on the heights and densities that will be required to support affordable housing targets.

6. Downsview needs to stay authentic

- **There are a lot of things that work really well at Downsview** – Downsview Park, the ability to get fresh local produce from greenhouses, and the Merchants' Market. The Merchants' Market in particular is a fantastic place that in pre-COVID times was always packed because it speaks to the love of local shopping and reflects the cultural diversity of the area. As the site develops, Downsview should build on what works well and be authentic, and not try to be something else.

- **Use the existing airport identity.** The heritage and identity of this site is very connected to its use as an airport. Consider the opportunity to use this legacy to inform the future identity of the site.
- **There's only one Downsview,** and it could be an anchor for the broader surrounding area (including the DUKE Heights BIA).

7. It's important to include arts and culture, and the uniqueness of the site

- **Arts and culture were missing from the presentation, as was any mention of the uniqueness of the site** (Downsview is the highest point in Toronto). The uniqueness of the site can be framed through arts and culture and through experimentation – especially at this time, it's important to uplift today's communities and also to give people from downtown a reason to come here. *Northcrest – we agree about art and culture and are thinking about a whole strategy on that topic.*
- **Interim uses can help shape the future of the site.** For example, the Tempelhof Airport in Berlin is a bigger site than this one and it's a jewel for Berlin. It's a large space of historic significance (the airlifts happened there). We know this area will not be planned in one fell swoop, and interim uses will be important.

8. Other comments

The need to respond to the changing nature of work

- The pandemic has changed employment. The ability to work from home is key now, which means we could be facing a whole different future when it comes to employment on the site. It likely means thinking about internet infrastructure and the need for larger homes. Lots of businesses are restructuring and getting away from downtown. They're also leaving because the city is gridlocked, and the subway doesn't get enough people downtown efficiently (which is why people drive).

Concern about potential contamination from previous uses

- **Concern that previous industrial uses, particularly at the northern edge of the site around the Downsview Park Station, may have led to contamination and may delay the process.** *Our site assessments to date have shown little contamination in this area.*

Mixed perspectives on “best practice” examples

- **Kings Cross is a good example of a mixed-use community.** Kings Cross has a variety of building heights from 2 – 20 storeys and a mix of office and residential, but is a great place to live and hangout. No matter where you are there is light and air and the different spaces feel like outdoor living rooms. That said, it is not without its challenges; it is a wealthy area and not very affordable.
- **Mixed opinions on drawing inspiration from others:** some participants suggested drawing on examples from Europe and best practices across the world, while others said that it's important for the plan to be unique and tailored to this site, suggesting examples from the immediate surroundings to give a sense of scale (no shortage of area development to refer

to). Given the current moment, consider involving Indigenous communities in the design process to make this a more “of this place” plan.

Interest in phasing, the next part of the process, and some support for starting soon

- **Support for the concept of starting development on the id8 lands.** Speaking on behalf of seniors, “it would be great to see this work speed up so we can enjoy it”. It’s very important for York Seniors Centre Steering Committee to be well-connected with the id8 Downsview plans. Pathways and roads should also be well-connected across the site.
- **Some participants were interested in understanding phasing, asking the id8 Downsview team if they have an idea about how they will propose to organize the space?** *The id8 Downsview team members said that it’s too early in the process to have specific phasing plans. At a high-level, Northcrest thinks it makes sense to start with Bombardier Hangars and beginning in and around Wilson station. CLC’s next phase will be supporting the DAIR Hub on its lands.*

Interest in adjacent sites

- **What’s the large open space on the east side of Allen being developed?** *Northcrest explained that it’s owned by the City, CreateTO has a separate planning process for that area. CreateTO is well ahead of CLC and Northcrest, so our plan will likely have to respond to whatever they get approved to do.*

NEXT STEPS

Chris (Northcrest) and Deana (Canada Lands) thanked people for making the time to participate, and especially local residents, who contributed to a valuable discussion. They said that they’re looking forward to continuing to work together, and that the input shared will help shape the future of these lands.

The id8 Downsview team confirmed that the presentation slides would be shared along with the recording of the presentation and closing plenary discussion. They encouraged participants to share the information with their networks and also flagged that there is an online feedback form. With another big thank you, the meeting wrapped up with a commitment from the id8 Downsview team to staying in touch.