

On Tuesday, October 13, 2020 Northcrest and Canada Lands hosted a public workshop that shared and sought feedback on emerging ideas related to the future of Jobs & Employment on the 520 acres that are the focus of the id8 Downsview process. There were 9 community and stakeholder participants including: 5 local residents (including a York University student), and representatives of the Toronto Community Benefits Network, Employment Ontario, Trinity Theatre, and the DUKE Heights BIA (Business Improvement Area).

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), and a more detailed presentation by Emily Reisman from Urban Strategies Inc., consultants supporting the id8 Downsview process. This was followed by two breakout discussions and a wrap-up plenary. Other consultants supporting Northcrest and Canada Lands also participated, including representatives of Henning Larsen and staff from the City of Toronto's Economic Development & Culture Division and the 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 or Canada Lands.

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.

Jobs & Employment

id8 Downsview Public Workshop

Tuesday, October 13, 2020, 12 – 2 pm

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

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

Key themes and topics shared by participants

- 1. Compatibility with adjacent residential areas is critical.**
- 2. Appreciation for the unique opportunity this site creates, as well as the proposal to create main streets.**
- 3. Think about what will attract people to the site – with a focus on arts, culture, entertainment, food, and young people.**
- 4. Investments made on these lands need to be equitable and affordable.**
- 5. Honour the employment history of the site and re-use existing buildings.**
- 6. Other comments and questions:** Interest in sustainability commitments; role of the City of Toronto; interest in more details; and interest in seeing the process work more closely with the community.

1. Compatibility with adjacent residential areas is critical

- **It's important to ensure compatibility and proper transition between industrial and residential uses, as even light industries could have an impact on neighbouring residential areas.** Downsview residents, particularly those living close to the runway and the Bombardier operations, have endured noise and light pollution among other things for many years. Many of the employees drive to the site and do not use public transit, adding to congestion and the need for extensive parking. To create a truly complete community, where people want to live, compatibility of uses is an important consideration.
- **The runway is not a compatible use right now.** The compatibility with residential uses is especially important for the employment uses you are trying to bring in now. *Bombardier will cease its operation in 2023 and the runway will not be operational anymore. We agree the compatibility of uses is an important consideration, as is creating proper transitions between residential and employment areas. As we are just in early stages of planning the framework for the site, we have a great opportunity in terms of the types of employment uses we can consider, their placement on the site, and the design of the place that minimizes conflicts and impacts. Our big goal is also improving connections through the site to increase access and use the multiple subway stations and GO station.*
- **How is the City planning to address impacts from the industries on the residential areas?** *Once Northcrest and Canada Lands submit their application for the Secondary Plan amendment as a result of this work, the City will do a comprehensive review of this submission and undertake studies and a public consultation process. These studies will look at the impacts and mitigation solutions for the proposal, including what is proposed in terms of the employment lands. It is important that the results of these studies be shared with the community.*

2. Appreciation for the unique opportunity this site creates, as well as the proposal to create main streets

- **There is a unique opportunity here to create a post-pandemic planned community with a range of uses.** Given the big geography, the plan for it needs to be evolving. If you get going on it now, it can lead the way.
- **Interest in seeing diverse, independent retail and more walkable streets** – like Wilson – with little shops to walk to with residential in between. It is important to remember that many local businesses are dependent on the major institutional employees in the area.
- **The area needs safe spaces for small local businesses to thrive.** *A staff member with the City of Toronto's Economic Development & Culture noted that smaller businesses often can't afford new commercial rents so it's important to make individual commercial space more affordable at the same time as protecting for large scale employment.*

3. Think about what will attract people to the site – with a focus on arts, culture, entertainment, food, and young people

- **Emphasize the role of creativity and the arts to attract people to the new neighbourhoods and support locals.**
- **It's important to figure out how this place can support innovation, arts, film, music, tourists, and locals.** A lot of York University students (and others) take the subway past Downsview regularly and live on campus. Downtown is far away. Young people want a place for entertainment, arts, culture. With COVID, 70% of artists thought about leaving the city during the pandemic and music venues are closing. It will need to be a lot more than an innovation centre to attract people. It will need studio spaces and to celebrate diversity and inclusion. That's what will attract investors, tourists, employers, and others. *We know this can't just be a collection of street grids. We want this to be a place where people want to come. We're thinking along the same lines as you are.*
- **Think about how this work can help develop intergenerational leadership, especially from youth.** Youth face challenges, especially those under 20 years old, and work is needed to destigmatize them. These types of negative stereotypes can work against the development of the community. Find ways to support youth leadership and volunteering.
- **Food is a business that will always be relevant.** Think about how the site can support cheap food/street food for businesses and consumers. *We're paying attention to the evolving nature of business, and we know the thinking around employment is shifting. We're thinking about opportunities to nurture new start-ups and what's achievable in terms of delivering a robust community. We know there's a food market there now, and we know how popular that is, and the vibrancy that comes with buying food, eating food, and sharing food. It's too early to know what will be on the site, but we do know that we want to create places where people want to be.*

4. Investments made on these lands need to be equitable and affordable

- **It's important to work with stakeholders and residents to connect communities to create new jobs, as well as new housing affordable to workers.** It's important for the id8 Downsview team to think about how to connect future employment opportunities to communities, and particularly to stakeholders and residents. These net new jobs will be important, as will be the affordability of new spaces created. Housing also needs to be available to those earning lower to middle incomes because then the people that will work here will also be able to afford to live here – which is necessary when creating complete communities. *At Northcrest, we believe in public benefits. With a site this size there will be a lot of public benefit opportunities, whether that be workforce development, affordable housing, etc. We are thinking about workforce development and how to leverage opportunities. This is top of mind - we understand it is a tough time for small business, affordable commercial spaces.*
- **Beyond jobs, employment, and affordability in housing, think about also addressing food insecurity.** This area needs spaces that support a culture where people can grow their own food.

- **When it comes to skills development, it will be harder and harder for people with lower skills to find work.** We need to help employers connect with job seekers. *We know that this doesn't happen organically – there needs to be a team working together to create the types of opportunities being discussed. If we are to make a true “place”, then we need all things for all people. I'm very interested in how the TDSB is working with students to expose them to the fact that there are so many jobs many young people don't know exist. The interests of high school students are changing, so we have to be constantly learning to best respond.*

5. Honour the employment history of the site and re-use existing buildings

- **Partner with colleges, universities, and governments to advance education and innovation in industry.** The aerospace industry has a big history on the site. Consider bringing in more research and development, education, and other non-intrusive industry-related uses to the site. *We are looking at bringing various innovative and office uses. For example, Canada Lands is supporting the Downsview Aerospace Innovation and Research (DAIR) Hub, a consortium of aerospace innovation companies and post-secondary institutions from the Greater Toronto Area.*
- **Invest in retrofitting existing buildings to ensure they can be repurposed for different, more sustainable industries.** What is going to happen to the existing uses at the Hangar, like the arena? *Canada Lands owns that portion of the land. While we are looking at how we can improve connectivity to these buildings – for example through rethinking and redesigning Carl Hall Road and connections to the new neighbourhood – we are anticipating the sports uses at the arena to continue. Of course, as the site develops, we will need to look at the compatibility of the sport uses and how to address change over time. .*

6. Other comments and questions

Interest in sustainability commitments

- Ensure that the future land users and/or owners (if parcels of the site will at some point be sold) have commitment to sustainability and keeping the local area green as part of their mandates. It's important that those who come to use or own parts of the site as the site develops, be it major employers and/or developers, are required to have certain sustainability commitments towards these lands.

Role of the City of Toronto

- Can the City explain the need to retain employment lands within the city? How is it being decided what portion of the land will be residential and what portion of the land will be for employment uses? Torontonians pay a lot of taxes; and the land transfer tax is so high too. Many move out to suburbs for a quiet, peaceful residential experience. Why does the City think it is a good idea to mix employment and residential in the city in one place? *Employment lands are protected in Toronto and play an important economic role. Currently, 13% of all lands in Toronto are employment lands and these 13% provide 29% of all the jobs in the Toronto. It is important that the jobs do not only exist in Downtown and are spread across the city. That is why having employment uses at Downsview, where significant investments in public transit have been made and where historically the City has had a significant employment area, is so important. The City has recently undertaken a study that*

shows that the benefits from the taxes generated by the employment lands outweigh the public investment into employment lands and they help keep the residential taxes lower. Currently, there are no specific allocations in terms of land use for the site. The City will continue working with Northcrest and Canada Lands to understand the suitable land use proportions. Link added after the meeting by the City of Toronto: Economic Value of the City's Employment Lands, Staff Report

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/cc/bgrd/backgroundfile-64931.pdf>

Interest in more detail

- There is interest to learn more about concrete ideas and plans in terms of types of employment, including interim employment under consideration, at the next public meeting.

Interest in seeing the process work more closely with the community

- Is there an opportunity to work more closely with us and engage more community members? I volunteer to engage my community more about this project. *Creating a stakeholder / community advisory group is one of the process steps we've been planning, which is a best practice in many engagement processes. One of our challenges is how to make sure we have representation from all of the communities given that the size covers such a big area and in a safe manner. We're trying to figure out how to do it in the best possible way and we'll be sharing more ideas on this.*

NEXT STEPS

Chris (Northcrest) and Deana (Canada Lands) thanked people for making the time to participate. 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.