

On Tuesday, June 2, 2020 representatives of educational interests in the Downsview area participated in a focus group that represented the first of what will be many conversations regarding the future of 520 acres at Downsview. Participants represented the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), the Toronto Lands Corporation, the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB), the Conseil Scolaire Viamonde, a local Montessori school, and Centennial College.

The focus group was held online using WebEx video conferencing software and included a brief introduction of the project from Northcrest and Canada Lands, followed by facilitated discussion between all participants. Consultants supporting Northcrest and Canada Lands also participated, including representatives of Urban Strategies Inc., Henning Larsen, and SLA Architects.

The meeting was facilitated by Nicole Swerhun and Khly Lamparero 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.

The 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

June 2020 Focus Group Education

Tuesday, June 2, 2020, 1 – 2 pm

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

Overall sentiment:

- All participants are interested in staying connected to/working with Northcrest and Canada Lands and sharing information on best practices, guidelines, and lessons learned.

Existing local school capacity

- TDSB elementary and secondary schools are at or above capacity. TDSB is actively seeking a new site to build a new school.
- The TCDSB is also at capacity and looking for sites for at least 2 new elementary schools.
- The Conseil Scolaire Viamonde has a more regional catchment model. This site is at the border of two catchment areas for schools that still have sufficient capacity for the long term. However, this may change based on future growth.
- The Montessori program is interested in growing, however space options in the neighbourhood are very limited (especially locations that are walkable).

Determining additional capacity required

- Future demand in *existing* communities is forecasted by using information within the school boards (e.g. how many students current attending schools) and data from the City of Toronto, Stats Canada, Revenue Ontario, and other sources (e.g. birth rates, geographic-specific changes, migration).
- Future demand in *new* communities is informed by the projected development yield, including considerations such as the size of the land, the built form, the tenure and type of development, the number of units, as well as the number of students from similar type of new development in similar contexts as close to the site as possible.

What is the future of schools?

- Schools are an important part of complete communities.

- Both the TDSB and TCDSB have examples of new/emerging school models that are multiuse/multipurpose, where services are co-located (e.g. City of Toronto facilities are embedded in the schools), and where lessons have been learned on what works and where there are opportunities to improve.
- Both boards are already planning schools in podiums of larger buildings and proposing schools on smaller sites with secure access to green space on the roofs.
- Canoe Landing is a best practices model – it has two elementary schools (one TDSB, one TCDSB), a community centre and childcare centre.

Big demand for Aerospace and Tech Education

- Demand exceeds capacity at Centennial College’s Aerospace Campus at Downsview, and efforts are ongoing to partner and expand on the success of the program. There is leading-edge work being done on how to make the aerospace industry more lightweight, more green, more electric – it’s an industry estimated to grow to \$3.4 trillion in 2032, and even if it achieves to grow to only half that, it’s still substantial. Many people don’t know that over 60% of plane landing gear in the world is produced in Ontario, and most of it in the GTA. Centennial is partnering with the University of Toronto Institute of Aerospace Studies and it would be great to connect to the school boards as well. Students from Marc Garneau, for example, could dramatically expand their exposure to leading edge research. The closer the education industry works together, the stronger it gets.

Walkability

- It’s critical that schools be within walking distance of where students live. The TDSB walking distance guideline is 1.6 km for elementary schools, 3.2 km for grades 6-8, and 5 km for secondary schools.
- School Boards aim to not have students cross train tracks – in Downsview it is the Barrie GO line that divides the school catchment areas.

Built form

- Both boards monitor population growth projections, demographic changes, proposed housing types (single family, townhouses, condos, etc.) to estimate the number of students that will need a school.

NEXT STEPS

Northcrest and Canada Lands thanked everyone who joined the meeting and encouraged people to reach out to their networks to pass on information about the project. The id8 Downsview team committed to staying in touch and encouraged people to not hesitate to get in touch with any follow-up questions or thoughts at this early stage in the process.