

Meeting Overview

On Thursday March 9, 2022, Northcrest Developments (Northcrest) held the second virtual public townhall as part of the engagement process for Northcrest 1st District. Twenty-nine members of the public attended, including local residents, representatives of local community organizations and businesses, as well as staff from the City of Toronto, and staff from Councillor James Pasternak Office.

The purpose of the townhall was to share and seek feedback from the public on the emerging district plan. Chris Eby and Kristy Shortall delivered the Northcrest presentation. Questions for participants focused on the five key themes of the plan:

1. Jobs & Opportunities:

What is the best way to work with the community on workforce development?

How can we leverage existing programs and groups that are already active in this space?

2. Homes & Amenities:

What are the community amenities that you would like to see in this new neighbourhood?

3. Walkable & Connected:

What are the most important features of a safe, accessible and connected neighbourhood?

4. Vibrant Public Spaces & Culture:

What types of arts and culture programming would you like to see?

5. Sustainable & Healthy:

What are the best ways to deliver sustainable, low-carbon neighbourhoods?

This summary captures feedback shared by participants during the townhall. Presentation slides shared at the meeting and the recording of the Town Hall are available on the project website at northcresttogether.ca.

The meeting was facilitated and documented by Third Party Public (formerly Swerhun Inc.). 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. Feedback documented in this summary does not indicate an endorsement of any of these perspectives by Northcrest Developments. The summary was subject to participant review before being finalized.

Overall Sentiment

Listed below are key takeaways from the meeting:

- There was appreciation and excitement about the progress and the work.
- Notable support for the new pedestrian and cycling bridge to Downsview Park and improved connections with a desire to see safety prioritized.
- Considerable insight and advice shared, particularly around planning and designing communities to be inclusive and accessible, and creating interesting open spaces to foster art and culture.
- Desire to see more sustainable development and constructions practices and materials, as well as green spaces to act as buffers but also amenities for the community
- Concerns raised around traffic and congestion with more people anticipated in the area.
- Questions and comments around economic development, the planning process, and desire to get back to in-person meetings as soon as possible.

Summary of Feedback from Participants

The following points summarize the feedback shared by participants in response to the questions posed to them by Northcrest.

1. Importance of sustainable development & green spaces.

- **Prioritize sustainable development and reduce carbon footprint.** Look for ways to promote more sustainable development and minimize the carbon footprint. Consider the current context of residents not using public transit and look for ways to reduce reliance on driving for the new development. A participant shared the desire to see green, energy efficiency buildings that feature solar panels and sustainable construction materials.
- **Consider having more green spaces in between the new development and the existing Ancaster neighbourhood.** Ensure that there is adequate separation between proposed buildings and existing communities.
- **There were two clarification questions regarding potential changes to Park Commons and Downsview Park.** A participant asked if Parks Commons has changed and if there were any plans to build in that area. There was also another question about if development revenue would contribute to the development of the park.

Park Commons is owned by our partners, Canada Lands Company (and is outside of the District). The space reflects the historic Hangars in that area and features a range of institutional and recreational uses (no residential). The Park Commons designation was approved as part of the existing [2011 Downsview Area Secondary Plan](#) and is not proposed to change as part of this exercise. As for Downsview Park, in comparison to other established parks in the City, Downsview Park is a relatively young park that will continue to evolve and get better. We will do everything we can to work with our partners to continue to make it better.

2. Excitement for the proposed pedestrian and cycling bridge and advice for new paths and trails.

- **Build infrastructure to support connectivity before residential development.**
One of the most important things you can build first is the new park bridge to Downsview Park. It would provide the necessary connections to the existing communities and support the new development.
- **It is important that cyclists and pedestrians are physically separated on paths and trails.** Participants said they were delighted to see a plan for the new bridge over the GO Line. There was a suggestion that cyclists and pedestrians need to be physically separated, beyond the painted lines, on all new paths and trails.
- **The new paths and trails should connect to the infrastructure outside the district.** In addition to increasing connectivity within the district, it is also important to ensure new paths and trails connect to the infrastructure outside of the district.

3. There were some concerns regarding traffic and congestion.

- **Consider the impacts of the new residential, retail, and employment hub on traffic.**
Traffic is an issue in the area and there is interest in understanding how the new residential, retail and the new employment hub will impact local traffic, surrounding communities and the availability of parking spaces.
- **Will Garratt Boulevard be expanded to include a bike lane?**

Our plan does not currently contemplate a bike lane along Garratt Boulevard. Additional off-site improvements will be identified through the planning process in collaboration with City of Toronto staff.

4. Interest in understanding how local economic development and community benefits framework relate to the boarder id8 Framework Plan Process.

- **There was a question of clarification to understand how the Northcrest team was approaching the local community development and community benefits framework at the district and how it connected to the broader id8 process, including the 370 acres.** The participant highlighted that workforce development would require a more focused conversation regarding the local economic plan.

This district is an employment hub with a focus on employment opportunities. There are opportunities to advance these discussions through the id8 process. We are working with the City on understanding how community priorities connect with the City's regulatory

process. Workforce development will require more specific discussions, so we will be happy to connect with organizations like Toronto Community Benefits Network for such discussions.

- There was a question of how Business Improvement Area (BIA) organizations were formed and if new businesses in the Hangars would be included in existing BIAs.*

**Noted added following meeting: Business Improvement Area organizations are established by the City of Toronto Act. The businesses within the Hangars would need to apply to be part of a new or existing BIA if deemed appropriate.*

5. Desire to see planning and design considerations that would support a more inclusive community, including for seniors.

- **Ensure the planning and design of the district meaningfully considers the needs of seniors.** In every district, including this one, seniors should feel included. Community design should consider wayfinding, lighting, sidewalk design, etc. that cater towards seniors.
- **Prioritize accessibility in the design of the district.** There was an appreciation expressed for the plan and a suggestion to get certified to ensure that the spaces are actually accessible. For example, community gardens should be accessible to those with mobility issues. “Accessible” doesn’t just mean being able to get through the door. Consider looking for opportunities for seniors and youth to be involved in the planning process.

6. Desire to see interesting arts and culture spaces to attract people year-round.

- **With the district having a film focus, consider having interesting spaces that would attract people year-round.** Consider outdoor places for live music and jazz bands, performance spaces, places where people can dance, choirs in the park, showcasing local and world-renowned artists and performers. Downsview is a multicultural place that has up-and-coming performers and it would be great to showcase their talents.

7. Interest in focused discussions with local residents and in-person meetings.

- **Consider establishing a committee for the Northcrest 1st District with local residents.**

We currently have an id8 Downsview Community Resource Group comprised of local organizations, residents and other organizations. The purpose of the group is to discuss everything related to the development of these lands, including this district. We are open to having discussions with residents and will connect in terms of the timing of construction. If there are other things that we can be doing, please let us know.

- **There was interest in having in-person meetings or presentations.** There are a lot of residents who are not familiar with Zoom and know something is happening but do not have the details. Opportunities for in-person meetings would give everyone greater peace of mind.

Next Steps

The Northcrest team thanked everyone for their contributions and appreciated the chance to speak with participants. Northcrest shared that there will be continued efforts to refine the plan before submitting it to the City of Toronto in May. Nicole Swerhun also noted that the Third Public Party facilitation team would be sharing the summary of the townhall with participants in draft for their review before finalizing it.