

Downsview West District
Community Meeting 1 Integrated Summary
December 13, 2022
Via Zoom from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Meeting Overview

On Tuesday, December 13, 2022, Canada Lands hosted the first virtual community meeting to introduce the Downsview West District planning process and team, present and seek feedback on the proposed vision for the Downsview West District informed by the id8 Downsview Framework Plan, and seek feedback on potential opportunities and challenges related to developing the district. Over 50 people attended the meeting.

The meeting was held virtually over Zoom video conferencing software. The meeting was two hours and included introductions from the project team, a presentation, a question and answer period, breakout room discussions, and a closing plenary discussion.

The meeting materials, including the presentation and a recording of the meeting are available on the project webpage (www.westdownsviewouest.ca) and through direct links below:

1. Meeting presentation – [linked here](#)
2. Meeting recording – [linked here](#)

Third Party Public facilitated and documented the meeting. As facilitators that are not advocating for any particular outcome of this project, the intent with this summary is to capture the perspectives shared during the discussions, 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 Canada Lands Company.

This Integrated Summary was shared with participants for review before it was finalized and captures feedback shared during the breakout room discussions and full room discussion. The detailed summary of each breakout room can be found in Attachment 2, starting on page 5.

Integrated Summary of Feedback

Participants asked questions and shared feedback at three points during the meeting, including a plenary conversation immediately following the presentation, during small group breakout room discussions, and again in a final plenary discussion after the breakout room discussions. This section of the report provides a high-level summary feedback shared at all points during the meeting. The questions of clarification are included in Attachment 1 and more detailed summaries of the feedback shared in each breakout room are included Attachment 2. These attachments should be read along with this section of the report.

Feedback related to affordability and inclusion

Several participants discussed the importance of affordability and shared support for including both affordable housing and affordable commercial options within the District. Participants also encouraged Canada Lands to exceed minimum affordable housing targets set by the City of Toronto to ensure the future district is inclusive of all, rather than exclusive. The types of comments and suggestions shared included:

- Clarify the affordable City housing targets that Canada Lands is planning to exceed. The target of 20% is too low and should be exceeded.
- Consider a variety of affordable housing options, including but not limited to cooperative housing and affordable housing for students, seniors, families.
- Affordable retail is important to provide people with affordable options to shop, especially for food.
- Consider implementing a Canada Lands Company Canada-wide strategy for affordable housing.

Feedback related to connections (getting to/from the district and moving around within the district)

Participants share support for creating safe and accessible connections within the district and to/from the district for a variety of uses, including pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles. The types of comments and suggestions shared included:

- Create connections that improve access to/from both the TTC and GO Stations at the north-east corner of the site. Participants said that these stations and the area immediately around the stations are quite sterile and were encouraged to hear there was development opportunity around these stations that could help bring life to the area and improve access.
- A safe rail crossing at Carl Hall road is very important. Given plans by Metrolinx to electrify the track to allow for 15-minute all-day service a grade separated crossing is strongly preferred.
- Safe pedestrian and cycling routes are essential to help people move to and through the district. There was a suggestion to create separated cycle tracks that would allow cyclists to move quickly through the site without conflicts with vehicles and pedestrians.
- Ensure roads within the district do not become shortcuts for people trying to avoid traffic on Sheppard Ave W and Keele St.
- North-south connections, both within the district, and to/from surrounding areas are important and should be given just as much consideration as east-west connections.
- Improving connections to Downsview Park is important because it is an amazing community asset that provides an important retreat from the city and provides a space to host a variety of community and city-wide events.
- Include infrastructure to support electric vehicles (i.e., charging stations) within the district.

Feedback related to the supply depot building

Participants discussed the significant size and importance of the supply depot. Participants shared a variety of ideas about how the building could be re-purposed to best serve existing and future residents. There were mixed opinions about the importance of preserving historical elements of the building -- with some sharing support and others raising concerns that it would result in a missed opportunity to supply much needed housing in the area on such a large footprint of land. Participants also discussed the importance of maintaining existing community resources within the building, particular the Merchants' Market, which they said provides important affordable retail options for people in the area. One participant said that the supply depot presents a great location to focus on environmental sustainability. There is a good example in Glasgow, Scotland where an old factory was transformed into an environmentally sustainable institute.

Feedback related to community services and facilities

Participants discussed the importance of providing opportunities for a variety of community services and facilities in the district, accessible to both existing and future residents. The types of comments and suggestions shared included:

- Ensure whatever is built and provided is accessible to all residents.
- Community services and facilities should be available and accessible year-round (both inside and outside).
- Many community services and facilities and community agencies are concentrated in the downtown core. There is a need for more community services in North Toronto and the development of this district and surrounding districts creates a great opportunity to address this need.

Process feedback

Participants shared appreciation for early engagement for this district planning process and the ongoing id8 engagement and expressed keen interest in staying connected and involved as the process continues.

Next Steps

The project team thanked participants for their participation and encouraged them to stay involved as the process continues, explaining that this is first of three rounds that Canada Lands and the team is planning as part of the district planning process. The facilitation team explained additional ways for people to share feedback and stay up to date, including visiting the project webpage (www.westdownsviewouest.ca), completing the online feedback form, and/or getting in touch by phone or email. The facilitation team also explained that a draft summary of the feedback shared at the meeting will be shared with participants for review in the new year.

ATTACHMENT 1 – Questions of Clarification

Following the presentation participants asked a few questions of clarification. The questions asked and responses provided by the project team are included below.

Question: Can you clarify how much land is owned by TTC around the subway station?

Answer: The area that TTC owns/controls is essentially the footprint of their building/station with a very small apron (approximately 1 metre) around the building, and Vitti Street, which is adjacent to the subway station. Canada Lands owns the lands north and south of the station, and west of Vitti Street. TTC also has some sub-surface rights where the trains move. That said, there is a significant development opportunity around the stations on lands within Canada Lands control.

Question: I recall from previous meetings for the id8 process that there has been talk of taking out the middle of the supply depot building to create an open boulevard, is this still being considered?

Answer: Within the id8 Framework Plan we, Canada Lands, have included a proposal to run a major east-west road with public realm features through the northerly 1/3 of the building. This proposed route would create the opportunity to open up the building and make it much more publicly accessible with a smaller re-purposed building to the north of the road and a larger re-purposed building to the south of the road. That said, this idea is part of a larger formal process with the City of Toronto that includes the Environmental Assessment (EA) process. The EA process is evaluating a number of different options for the major east-west road, including the one described above, and will ultimately inform the final decision on the routing of the road.

A note added after the meeting by Canada Lands: To learn more about the EA process, visit Master Environmental Servicing Plan at the City of Toronto [Update Downsview web page](https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/planning-studies-initiatives/update-downsview/): <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/planning-studies-initiatives/update-downsview/>

Question: Has there been any discussion or consideration for district heating and other types of sustainable development?

Answer: Yes, sustainable development and resiliency are top of mind for this district. That said, we are very early in the process and we have not made decisions about how this will unfold.

ATTACHMENT 2 – Breakout Room Discussions

Please find your breakout room discussion by using the facilitator from your room and project team members names.

Breakout Room #1: Ruth

Overall Sentiment

The discussion focused on interest and support for affordable housing; plans for the supply depot building, including heritage preservation; and the engagement process, including appreciation for the process to date and strong interest in staying involved throughout the process. Participants also shared an interest in getting clarity on building heights.

- **Clarify the housing affordability targets that Canada Lands is planning to exceed.** What exactly are the targets that the project team is planning to exceed? The targets should be 20 to 30% affordable housing.
- **Consider implementing a Canada Lands Company Canada-wide strategy for affordable housing.** It is unclear how the federal government's housing strategy is being applied across all of Canada Lands Company's properties. There are interesting examples such as Heather Lands in Vancouver.
- **There is some concern about maintaining the heritage of the supply depot building and the military history of the site.** It is encouraging that the approach includes adaptive reuse and creating something unique for this area.
- **Provide clarity on the heights are being proposed at the district.**
- **Appreciation for affordable housing, community benefits and green spaces.** Support for exceeding the city targets and sharing more updates around community benefits.
- **Appreciation for the id8 Downsview engagement process to date.** Engagement to date has been refreshing and there is interest in continuing to participate, collaborate and connect with the project team through this process.

Breakout Room #2: Stephanie

Overall Sentiment

The discussion focused on ways to create and improve connections to/from and through the district, especially the transit stations; creating community services and facilities that are accessible to all residents; mitigating traffic congestion; and maintaining important community uses present in the supply depot (e.g., the Merchants Market).

- **There is an opportunity to improve how people get to/from and use the TTC and GO stations.** Improvements could include accessible entrances on both sides of the GO station; longer platforms; electric vehicle charging stations in or around parking lots near the transit stations; and creating a shuttle service that

connects Downsview West District and the transit stations and other nearby facilities.

- **Connectivity throughout the entire area is fundamental.** Sheppard Avenue West is currently a barrier for pedestrians and cyclists trying to move through the area. Use the district planning process to make it easier and safer for pedestrians and cyclists to move around the area.
- **Community services and facilities are the heart of the community and should be prioritized.** Ensure that whatever is built for the community is accessible to all residents. For example, building a community centre closer to the Keele and Sheppard intersection ignores the residents further away. Community facilities should be year-round (both inside and outside), accessible, and should include meeting rooms and facilities for seniors.
- **Consider the implications of more development increasing traffic along the major arteries in the Downsview area.** There is already a ton of congestion which makes it hard to turn onto streets during rush hour. Ensure traffic patterns are well understood and inform the design of the district. Also consider using Tangiers Road (which is parallel to Keele Street) to help relieve the Keele Street traffic.
- **Be cautious with any potential redevelopment of supply depot that may create barriers for the community to access.** The Flea Market is a community resource, and it is important that it doesn't become gentrified for those who need affordable groceries. There is also an opportunity to build on top of the building and utilize the roof space for recreational purposes.

Breakout Room #3: Matthew

Overall Sentiment

The discussion focused on improving ways for people to get around the area; creating space and opportunities for community services and facilities for both existing and future residents; ensuring the Downsview West District is well integrated with the surrounding area, both current and being planned; creating a diversity of places for people to live, including family sized and affordable units; ensuring the railway crossing at Carl Hall Road is safe; opportunities for repurposing the supply depot building; the importance of creating connections to Downsview Park; and opportunities for retail / commercial uses.

- **Ensure connections provide people with a range of ways to get to/from and around the district.** It is important that people are able to safely and comfortably walk, cycle and drive to and through the district, with more connections over the rail line. Consider including dedicated cycling tracks that allow cyclists to move quickly (e.g., 25-30 km/hour) without conflicts with pedestrians or cars. Downsview Park is an amazing community asset that provides an important retreat from the city. It is important that this district provides connections to/from Downsview Park.

- **Developing this district and the surrounding area presents a great opportunity to increase the number and type of community services and facilities in the area.** There are many community services that have locations downtown and could and should have satellite locations in this area. This would reduce the need for people to go to and from the downtown to access needed services (e.g., Ontario Works).
- **There is a significant need for a range of housing types and sizes.** The presentation included discussion of “comfortable density”, density should be high enough to provide housing that is affordable. It is also important to provide family sized units and housing for seniors and students.
- **It is crucial that there is a safe railway crossing at Carl Hall Road.** We understand Metrolinx is planning to electrify the track to allow for 15-minute all-day service, which will result in a significant increase in the number of trains moving through the area. There are strong concerns with the safety of a level-crossing as opposed to a grade separated-crossing. We would like to have representatives from Metrolinx present at future discussions so they can provide information and answer questions.
- **The supply depot building takes up an enormous amount of space and presents several opportunities for the existing and future community.** There were different ideas about preserving and repurposing the building. One participant liked the idea of preserving the historical elements and suggested focusing on sustainability by using natural elements / building materials. Another participant discussed the importance of addressing the City’s housing crisis and shared concerns that preserving or even repurposing a single-story building with such a large footprint would be a missed opportunity to build much needed housing, especially affordable housing. They suggested building residential units on top of the supply depot. Participants also discussed opportunities for food production within the supply depot.
- **Retail / commercial development should include small businesses.** Commercial and retail unit sizes and design should allow for and encourage smaller businesses as opposed to big-box developments.