

William Baker Neighbourhood – Phase Three Consultations
Downsview Lands Community Voice Association
Virtual Meeting via WebEx Meetings
Thursday, November 5th, 2020 - 7:30 – 9:00 pm

Participants

Downsview Lands Community Voice Association (Linda Gargaro, Rita Delcasale-Cimini, Josie Casciato, Marlene DiPasquale, Rosanna Iaboni, Patrick O'Neill, Vincent Galperin)
Councillor James Pasternak and Staff (Councillor Pasternak, Adam Steiner)
City of Toronto, City Planning (Ben Di Raimo)
Canada Lands Company (James Cox, Kristal Tanunagara)
The Planning Partnership, Land Use Planning Consultant to Canada Lands (Donna Hinde), consultant to Canada Lands
Dougan & Associates, Ecological Consultant to Canada Lands (Jim Dougan), consultant to Canada Lands
Swerhun Inc. (Nicole Swerhun, Matthew Wheatley), consultant to Canada Lands

This summary was written by Swerhun Inc. and was shared with participants for review prior to being finalized. The summary provides a review of the key topics discussed in the conversation; it is not intended to be a verbatim transcript.

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

On Thursday, November 5th, Canada Lands and members of its consultant team met with representatives of the Downsview Lands Community Voice Association (the Voice) as part of Phase Three of the William Baker Neighbourhood consultation process. The Canada Lands team presented the Emerging District Plan Land Use Concept for the future neighbourhood and sought feedback on the material presented. The feedback shared by the participating representatives of the Voice is summarized below; responses and comments provided by Canada Lands and its consultant team are included in *italics*.

The vast majority of discussion focused on representatives of the Voice asking questions related to the presentation made by Canada Lands and their consultant team. The questions have been organized by theme here, along with any additional comments or concerns shared.

Councillor Pasternak's Opening Remarks

Councillor Pasternak opened the meeting with a few remarks, noting that he biked through William Baker earlier in the week and remarked at the beauty of the woodlot. He identified the following items as important for William Baker including:

- protecting the woodlot (noting that he had a very high-level meeting with the General Manager of Forestry about this over the last week);

- Building a complete community (noting the importance of having community amenities in and around William Baker including the community centre and daycare);
- Prioritizing housing and amenities for seniors (noting that last week he moved a motion at Toronto City Council for Planning Staff to create guidelines on what a seniors' village is); and
- Having respect for historical stable communities that surround the Downsview Lands and are part of Downsview.

He concluded by saying that these are important discussions and people's opinions are valued. He also noted that he looks forward to hearing people's comments and following through with the process to ensure what is built in William Baker is the best development possible and provides the resources and assets that have long been missing from the Downsview area.

1. Discussion related to the woodlot and trees

- Does the multi-use trail going through the woodlot (in the emerging District Plan) follow the existing asphalt road or is it a new connection? *The trail generally follows the existing asphalt, which is where the old military street used to be. The surface will change, but it's roughly the same location.*
- How far north will the new east-west road south of the woodlot be? How close is it to the forested area? *It's in the same location that the City of Toronto identifies in the Downsview Area Secondary Plan, approximately 140 metres north of Sheppard. The road bypasses the woodlot, with a buffer of about 10 metres between the road and the woodlot. The buffer will be left to naturalize and will include some new plantings to enhance the ecology of the woodlot.*
- There are some very mature trees on the site. What do you know about the trees at the south end of the site, in the northeast corner of Keele and Sheppard? Some of them are 100 years old. *We have tagged and evaluated all of the trees. The intent is to try and protect as many trees as possible and integrate them into the new streetscape and the new development. We know that this area was part of people's backyards when the old military housing was here.*
- What would enhancing the woodlot entail? *It would entail creating buffers around the woodlot so that the edge conditions are more natural which makes the treed areas more contiguous, improves the canopy, helps to manage wind and sunlight, and enhancing the open areas between woodlot blocks, creating more continuous canopy that is better for birds that prefer deeper forest conditions. It also entails removing invasive species such as the Dog-strangling Vine.*
- Why have low-rise buildings been squeezed in between the woodlot and Sheppard Ave W? This wasn't part of any of the concepts shared during Phase 2 of the consultation. *Our team looked carefully at where the edge of the woodlot is in this area and the tree species. When Sheppard was moved and this area was cleared it regenerated with Sumac and is totally infested with Dog-strangling Vine. We looked at how much depth was needed there for development, and it's*

about 40 metres. This doesn't impact the woodlot and we'll remove the invasive species and create a new edge.

2. Discussion related to seniors

- *How many units will there be in the seniors hub? Canada Lands is using the word "hub" to refer to a "centre of activity" and not a physical building or place. The first phase of all development at William Baker will be in the southern part of the site. Approximately 1,500 units are anticipated for this first phase. Canada Lands envisions it as an intergenerational hub with two sites for seniors housing.*
- *How many seniors units are included? It's early for us to say, but for example, the seniors building closest to the woodlot is about a 1-1.5 acre site that could be perfect for assisted living or long term care. We anticipate that could include about 100-150 units.*
- *I thought the seniors would be closer to the community centre and close to the new bridge crossing Sheppard. We estimate that it's about a 50 metre walk from the seniors building beside the bridge and the future community centre site.*

3. Discussion related to density and uses

- *Can you explain what a Community Hub / Neighbourhood Focus is? It's a mix of housing, support services, retail, commercial, and medical uses, community space, supported by great pedestrian connections.*
- *What's the difference between neighbourhood-serving retail and mixed use? We consider neighbourhood-serving retail very small scale, while mixed use areas include a much broader mix of things like restaurants, grocery stores, doctors' offices, and other uses that have a much larger draw in terms of the people they attract.*
- *The emerging District Plan looks too crowded at the south with 1,500 units. That means there must be 2,000 units that will come to the north end of the site. I would prefer if you put more units to the north. We have completed a lot of market research and we understand that there is a certain population required to be able to successfully deliver the mix of uses that people, including feedback from the Voice during previous meetings, have told us that they would like to see in the neighbourhood. This mix of uses is important so that we don't create a bedroom community. There are two key locations where the density is highest and where a mix of uses is most likely to be supported – closest to transit and existing infrastructure on the northeast part of the site by Downsview Park Station and closest to Keele and Sheppard. We could spread the density more across the site, but then it's more likely that we'll end up with a more uniform built form that people have told us they would prefer not to see – they want to see different built form and a mix of architecture.*

4. Discussion related to affordability

- *Is a certain part of the development required to be rental? Will affordable units be spread out across the whole neighbourhood? Yes, Canada Lands will deliver a minimum of 10% of the units as affordable (as required by the City of Toronto),*

and within that, half of the units will be affordable rental. For example, if we take the City's demonstration plan for William Baker at 3,500 units, then 350 would be affordable, and 175 of those would be affordable rental. And yes, they will be spread across the site.

- If there ends up being a seniors' condo complex where the seniors buy the units, for example in a more adult-living building. Would those units be considered affordable housing? Especially since they're likely to be only 600 square feet. *That most likely would not qualify for affordable housing. It could maybe qualify if there was some type of affordable home ownership program within that building that was part of the affordable housing requirement. But you could also have a stand-alone seniors market condo that would not qualify.*

5. Related to the community centre and Section 37

- Given the financial challenges facing government, it's unlikely that even if the land is available that the community centre could be delivered soon. Would Canada Lands consider front-ending the community centre? *Front-ending infrastructure costs is something that Canada Lands has done before, and it is something we are open to considering here.*
- What are the limits to how much the City can ask for in terms of Section 37 contributions from Canada Lands? *Ben Di Raimo and Councillor Pasternak explained that the idea at the City is that growth pays for itself and the City won't approve development unless it helps create a complete community.*
- Can't we reach out to the private sector to support the community centre through a public-private partnership? There are a number of big name businesses in the area that could be approached. This is a model we see in other areas around Toronto. Also, the new Jewish community centre was a public-private partnership and it's beautiful. *Councillor Pasternak noted that the community centre is likely to be built through a public-private partnership with contributions from multiple developers. Also, the community centre may not be as extensive and expensive as \$60 million. There are good examples of \$40 million community centres (like the one at Black Creek and Eglinton) that are beautiful and serve the community well.*

6. Other questions raised and comments shared:

- Is there any other place for a playground in William Baker, other than in the green space next to the new pedestrian bridge? *Yes, there is also space for a playground in the park in the northern part of the site and in the park space around the woodlot.*
- When do you think you'll break ground with Phase 1 and when do you think you'll move forward with the second phase? *We know that the development of the William Baker neighbourhood will go through a number of market cycles. We will start planning Phase 2 while Phase 1 is still unfolding. We need to work with market forces.*
- When the Canadian Forces Base closed the Federal government promised that the proceeds from the sale of any lands around the park would be put towards

Downsview Park. That was the promise the Liberals made. Downsview Park has never been completed. Will Canada Lands be putting the William Baker proceeds to Downsview Park? *Canada Lands will be investing in community benefits at William Baker, including the new pedestrian bridge, enhancing and preserving the woodlot, etc. Over the last few years, there have been significant investments made in Downsview Park and the surrounding area, including the Play Zone, the dog park, the Sesquicentennial Trail, Keele Steet improvements and other park features.*

- We used to receive long term plans and annual reports from Downsview Park, but we haven't seen those reports in years.

NEXT STEPS

James Cox thanked the representatives of the Voice for their thoughts and making the time to participate. He encouraged them to also attend the upcoming public meetings and/or to share their thoughts with him directly anytime.

FOLLOWING THE MEETING

Immediately following the meeting there was an email from a participating member of the Voice who had thoughts to share in response to the presentation. Those thoughts were not part of the discussion, but given how quickly they were shared and that the participant hadn't been vocal during the meeting, it was agreed that the feedback would be included in this meeting summary along with the responses provided by Canada Lands.

- I was a little bit surprised about the comments from the ecology expert about wanting to reduce the size of the Sumac because of the infestation of the Dog-strangling Vine. I don't think this is a reason to reduce its size and add townhomes. I think there are other ways to preserve the Sumac and remove the Dog-strangling Vine. I was also concerned about the trees that were once part of the backyard of some homes. I think those should be preserved as much as the main woodlot. I am more concerned than anything else about the possibility of the shrinkage of the existing woodlot. I understand that some trees are dead/dying or invasive, but this should be an opportunity to start immediately planting trees that are native trees. The new plantings should be trees that are well established or are strong enough to be planted that can take of themselves instead of small seedlings that need attention for the first few months of their life. *In responding to your comments and concerns, I want to advise that overall Canada Lands will be growing and enhancing the woodlot through the ecological management plan we discussed last night. We will be re-naturalizing some of the areas that previously had military housing and expanding the canopy connection between the three existing areas of forest. This will benefit woodlot functions in terms of bird and plant diversity, and enhance other ecological services for runoff management, air quality, microclimate, and noise abatement. It will also contribute to the City of Toronto's forest cover target, a key objective of Councillor Pasternak. As Jim Dougan (Senior Ecologist) noted yesterday, the existing sumac shrub edge is proposed to be replaced with a new naturalized edge that will establish and replace the severe Dog Strangling Vine infestation that currently exists in the sumac. The proposed townhouses do not reduce the size of the woodlot and are proposed in the field adjacent to Sheppard.*
- I am also concerned about any roads that would be put through the woodlot. The woodlot and any existing trees should be maintained and properly cared for. If there is a committee formed for the woodlot I would like to be a part of it. *The new internal road from Sheppard Ave to Keele St is derived from the road framework that comes from the City's Downsview Area Secondary Plan. It swings southward to avoid the southern part of the woodlot. It will provide the woodlot with a buffer of approximately 10 metres (30 feet) and also allow some open grown trees to the south of the woodlot to be retained. The buffer, plus additional naturalization, will eventually expand the forest cover around this area. There are existing residential roads attributed to the former housing that will either be removed and naturalized or re-*

purposed as multi-purpose trails. In this respect, the overall extent of roads will be reduced, which is a positive.

- There was not any mention about the Homes for Heroes Veterans organization. Will this be incorporated in the design of residential housing? A lot was mentioned about seniors and their amenities. I am just wondering where the veterans housing would be. *Canada Lands has been engaged with Homes for Heroes, and have been monitoring their Calgary project which created 15 new residential units for homeless veterans. I agree consideration at William Baker should be undertaken in time. As mentioned last night, part of our work on William Baker around affordable housing will be working through the Federal Lands Initiative for affordable housing (the program under the Federal Housing Strategy that Canada Lands is active with CMHC). Through this program, we have also been involved with the Wateridge Veterans House, a pilot in our Ottawa project that will provide support to 40 homeless or near homeless veterans.*