



140 Merton
Community Meeting #1
MEETING SUMMARY

Thursday, June 20, 2019
6:00 – 9:00 pm, North Toronto Memorial Community Centre
200 Eglinton Ave W.



MEETING OVERVIEW

On Thursday, June 20, 2019, the City of Toronto and CreateTO hosted the first community meeting for **140 Merton Street** as part of the Housing Now Initiative. Approximately 60 people attended, in addition to staff from the City of Toronto, CreateTO and the project consultant team. About 50% of participants raised their hand to indicate that live close to 140 Merton, just under half were representing non-profit housing or community service providers, and 10 indicated that they were interested in more information about opportunities to live in the development.

The purpose of the meeting was to introduce Housing Now and share and seek feedback on the conceptual design and preliminary directions for 140 Merton Street. The meeting included an open house, presentation, and full room discussion.

This meeting summary was prepared by Swerhun Inc., an independent third-party facilitation firm supporting CreateTO and the City in their community engagement for Housing Now. This summary captures feedback shared at the meeting and is not intended to serve as a verbatim transcript. This summary was shared in draft with participants for review before being finalized.

Feedback received after the meeting by email and through the project website up until July 31, 2019 will be shared with the project team for consideration as they advance the Housing Now Initiative and refine the conceptual design for the proposed development at 140 Merton Street in preparation for sharing at **Community Meeting #2 (planned for September 2019)**.

Note: The intent of this summary is to capture the range of perspectives that were shared at the meeting. It does not assess the merit or accuracy of any of these perspectives, nor does it indicate an endorsement of any of these perspectives on the part of the City of Toronto or CreateTO.

FEEDBACK RECEIVED

Participants shared feedback through one-on-one conversations with staff, by posting notes with feedback on the display panels, and through the full room discussion following the presentation. The points below summarize the feedback received. They have been grouped under the following headings: Housing, Planning, Development and Community Services & Facilities. Responses from the City and/or CreateTO are noted *in italics*.

Overall

- **There was considerable support for the Housing Now program.** Several participants said that they're excited by what they see, and that they like the mid-range of incomes targeted, the focus on seniors, the protection of SPRINT on the site, the additional space for community services, and that the neighbourhood plans are being honored. Those who expressed concern are very worried about the negative impact that the huge growth in the area will have (and is already having) on quality of life and the supporting infrastructure, especially parks.

Housing

- **Non-profit housing providers urged the City and CreateTO to ensure the project is feasible for them.** Representatives from a few different organizations flagged early issues that they see with the feasibility of the development, including costs associated with the landscaping/public realm, the protection of heritage features, the creation of the community services space and the rent supports required by community organizations using the space. The City and CreateTO were encouraged to dig into the costing, look at opportunities to simplify the structure and rationalize elements. *The City confirmed that the community space and heritage components of the development are City expenses and separate from the expenses associated with the housing.*
- **There were different opinions on the lack of bachelor units on the site and across the entire Housing Now program.** Some participants said that bachelor units are critical to ensuring affordability. They also are the format needed by single women on low incomes and they demonstrate a recognition that household sizes keep shrinking. Others worried that bachelor units may be less accessible or less flexible over time as they don't accommodate a second person (e.g. caregiver).
- **There were concerns that the affordable units would not be affordable enough to seniors on fixed incomes.** There were participants that urged the City to ensure that seniors on ODSP (Ontario Disability Support Program) would be able to afford units in the development. Including those on Ontario Works was also suggested.
- **There were participants who encouraged the City and CreateTO to make the units accessible to disabled people.** Some said they would like the City/CreateTO to consider making all units fully accessible. This includes accessible washrooms in all units, which supports aging in place. This could be an opportunity to pilot full accessibility.

- **There were concerns about the mix of people that would be living in the development.** Some anxiety was expressed by neighbours concerned about people with addictions and/or the homeless moving into the area. Other participants had experience living in seniors rental buildings where vacant units had been filled with residents suffering from addictions and with mental health issues, which resulted in damages to the building and a negative experience for other residents. *The City confirmed that there have been instances where empty units have been used to house low income and homeless people, and noted that the necessary supports may not have been provided. For Housing Now, there will be non-profit rental housing providers that will be responsible for identifying who will live in the building (through an eligibility process). Without this program, it is likely that another luxury condo would be going up on the site, and this program demonstrates that the City thinks it's important to provide other housing options.*
- **Support for affordable housing and interest in living in the units.** Through the one-on-one conversations with the Project Team during the Open House, several participants expressed interest in living in the future affordable rental units and wanted to know how to apply for the units.

Planning

- **There were mixed opinions about the development should respect the directions in the Midtown in Focus plan.**
 - Councillor Josh Matlow and several local residents said that were very happy to see that the proposed development is in line with the new Yonge-Eglinton Secondary Plan adopted by City Council through the Midtown in Focus study. The Plan was developed through years of consultation with the community and it reflects a strong vision on how to manage growth. One local resident leader from the South Eglinton Residents and Ratepayers Association (SERRA) made the point that several more development applications are coming in, and they anticipate the area will be growing from 9,000 to 15,000 people – at some point the growth in this area needs to stop and instead see the city encourage growth at many, many other subway stations. One resident was worried about emergency evacuation procedures if the building was higher than 15 storeys.
 - Other participants felt strongly that the City and CreateTO need to be more ambitious with the site, and suggested that more affordable units be accommodated by adding more height and/or reconfiguring the site. They also said that more density is required to keep it affordable – if this doesn't happen, it's a missed opportunity. *The City expressed two concerns with going outside the Midtown in Focus Plan: that would be inconsistent with years of planning with the local community; and a concern that re-opening any Midtown in Focus decisions would slow down the process (and the message from City Council has been clear that they would like to see this housing built as quickly as possible).*
- **The area needs to be looked at holistically.** With the new development we need public infrastructure that is accessible, including wider sidewalks to accommodate strollers and wheelchairs. *The City has a Parks and Public Realm Plan that is very detailed for the area, and it includes specific improvements for Merton.*

- **The area needs more mid-block connections.** Having two mid-block connections to the site is a good idea. *The City noted that the Midtown in Focus also has intentions for more midblock connections throughout the Davisville Village area.*

Development

- **Consider reconfiguring the driveway so that it doesn't take up as much space on the site.** Ideas included: making the driveway shorter so cars enter the garage closer to the front of the site (freeing up more space for community).
- **Make sure that the elevators are safe.** *CreateTO noted that elevators are highly regulated and that the number of severe incidents is very rare. Maintenance is key.*

Community Services

- **Participants identified a need for many community services,** including: affordable daycare, library, and more community services for seniors. A café would also be great as a place for seniors to be able to get out of their homes and meet during the day (right now there's just the Tim Hortons at the Esso). It was also suggested that the driveway shown could be covered and built over to create additional floor space for additional community services and retail.

Other

- **Will pets be allowed?** *That would be a decision for the organization that manages the leases in the building.*

NEXT STEPS

The Project Team thanked participants for attending the meeting and committed to writing a summary of the meeting and sharing it in draft with participants for review prior to it being finalized. The Team also committed to posting the presentation to the project website at www.createto.ca/housingnow. Finally, the Team explained that a second Community Meeting will be held in September 2019 to share a revised development concept for the site and to provide further information on the next stages of the Housing Now Initiative.