



50 Wilson Heights Boulevard
Community Meeting #1

MEETING SUMMARY

Wednesday, June 12, 2019

6:00 – 9:00 pm

Beth David B'nai Israel Beth Am, 55 Yeomans Road



MEETING OVERVIEW

On Wednesday, June 12, 2019 the City of Toronto and CreateTO hosted the first community meeting for **50 Wilson Heights Boulevard** as part of the Housing Now Initiative. Approximately 65 people attended, in addition to staff from the City of Toronto, CreateTO and the project consultant team.

The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the Housing Now Initiative and share and seek feedback on the conceptual design and preliminary directions for 50 Wilson Heights Boulevard. The meeting included an open house, presentation and full room question and answer period.

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. The summary was shared 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 50 Wilson Heights Boulevard 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*.

Housing

- **Need for deeply affordable and accessible housing.** Some participants said that the affordable housing proposed is not considered affordable for everyone. There was some interest in seeing more attention given to deeply affordable housing, particularly to serve individuals who have intellectual and physical disabilities, seniors, and those on fixed incomes. One suggestion was to consider a B3 standard to support caregivers. A few participants would like to see more than 3% of the project allocated for deeply affordable units, suggesting the Canadian federal standard may be 5%.
- **Clearer communication about housing tenure.** There were participants that asked questions about the types of housing and unit quantity that will be provided, as well as whether the proposed towers on the site would be fully-mixed housing occupation (i.e. affordable rental and condominiums). A participant noted that there can be challenges when affordable rental and market rental units are in the same building but managed by two different entities. There were also questions about whether TCHC will be involved, and whether this project is similar to what was happening at Lawrence Heights or Regent Park. Some participants were interested in providing affordable ownership in addition to affordable rental. *The City and CreateTO confirmed that this is not TCHC housing. The project will include housing opportunities for a range of income levels.*
- **Interest in living in the affordable housing units.** Through the one-on-one conversations with the Project Team during the Open House, a number of participants said they have interest in living in the future affordable rental units and were very keen to understand how to apply for the units.

Planning

- **Need to more deeply consider the local and larger area context.** There were participants who would like to see greater focus given to the context of the Bathurst/Wilson/Dufferin area. In particular, looking at traffic flows (especially from north to south) and how increasing density impacts street use, access to the on-site TTC transit loop, space allocation for pedestrians, and ensuring access to first-responders. *The CreateTO/City team noted that there will be a traffic impact study to help address these concerns.*
- **Mixed opinions on building height and massing.** Responses were mixed about the scale of the Wilson Heights Boulevard development, and a few respondents thought that the current proposal was suitable. Some said that there is already a lot

of development on Tippet Road, and that adding more would increase traffic and safety concerns. A few people would like to see more building height and density, to allow for more deeply affordable residential units.

Development

- **Prioritize the commuter parking issue.** Many participants wanted to see a concrete plan to save or replace the existing 885 spot commuter parking lot. Parking related points raised by participants included:
 - People rely on the parking lot to get to work by TTC, or drive to drop off their children at school on their way to the lot.
 - More info is needed on how the lot is being used (including where people are commuting from to use it).
 - The new parking lot at the 407 costs \$12 and this lot costs \$5, which creates an incentive to park here.
 - If parking is replaced, there also needs to be a plan to supplement the lost spots during construction.
 - Create more parking on the empty lot at Sheppard West Station or Downsview Park GO Station, or consider multi-level parking at the development site.

Some participants noted that most residents do not need to drive if they live near Wilson Station, and said that housing is a more suitable use than parking close to a subway. There were participants who were receptive to the idea of a shared resident-commuter parking model, providing that model works for everyone.

Given the high interest in the parking issue and the concerns expressed, Councillor Pasternak offered to organize a special meeting dedicated to discussing parking concerns further and exploring options to address them. Respondents interested in participating in a smaller working group to explore parking were asked to sign up at the meeting and/or get in touch with the Councillor's office.

- **Create an accessible park and open space.** Several participants said that they'd like to see community space that is safe, all-season, and accommodates all types of people. Of the elements suggested at the meeting, people were in favor of including a splash pad, climbing wall, and a grassy area with seating, shade and an area to barbeque. Other suggestions raised included adding a senior-friendly walking path, a children's play area, a bike rental station, and a dog off-leash area. One participant would like to see the Community Services & Facilities building in the podium of the main complex, and suggested it would be more usable if it isn't in a separate building.
- **Minimize construction impacts.** A few participants noted that there is a lot of construction currently in the area, particularly along Tippet Road. Those that live in nearby apartments noted that it is noisy, and that their balconies are covered in excess dirt and dust. There is a concern that the development at 50 Wilson Heights Boulevard would contribute to this, and suggested better enforcement is necessary to mitigate construction impacts as the neighborhood increases in density.

- **Improve road conditions.** Many participants said that Wilson Avenue and Wilson Heights Boulevard are car-oriented with fast-moving traffic, and more consideration is needed for cyclists and pedestrians in the area. There are concerns about only 1 exit from the Tippett area, and the potential for people to be trapped in the area if the intersection of Tippett Road and Wilson is closed for any reason. Specific solutions shared by participants included widening the roads for safer lane width and provide access for WheelTrans vehicles and other accessibility parking. Respondents would also like to see more lights, pedestrian crossings, especially to Wilson Station, and enforcement of legal driving speeds.
- **Address the neighborhood ‘food desert’ gap.** One participant noted that the surrounding area is a food desert with the nearest grocery store some distance away. There were participants who said that they’d like to see the proposed commercial space used to provide the community with fresh, healthy food options.
- **Capitalize on potential retail and commercial uses.** In addition to the support for having greater access to fresh and healthy groceries, there were participants who said that they’d like to see other small-scale retail such as a convenience store, doctor’s clinic, or restaurant. Parking spaces and sidewalk lighting were two ancillary considerations flagged.

Community Services & Facilities

- **Concerns about school capacity.** A participant stressed that the local schools in the area are nearing or operating over capacity. A suggestion was made to have new residents and families sign a waiver to acknowledge that their children will be bussed to schools further away, as well as recognize that there may not be a guarantee that the school board will have money to bus students.
- **Prioritize programming for youth.** One participant suggested that a designated space and programming for youth be considered for this development.

Other Comments

- **There were questions about how the Housing Now sites were selected.** A few people were concerned that the community hadn’t been consulted on the location of the sites. For example, Sheppard West was raised as a potential location to consider. *The City and CreateTO team explained that a number of factors were considered in selection of the sites, and that the Mayor and City Council had supported the program and the first 4 sites very quickly following the last municipal election.*
- **Request for other options for providing feedback.** A participant raised the fact that many people in the community are interested in and impacted by this project but couldn’t make it to the public meeting. It was suggested that an online survey could allow for more people to participate.

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.