



705 Warden Avenue
Community Meeting #1

MEETING SUMMARY

Thursday, June 13, 2019

6:00 – 9:00 pm

Warden Hilltop Community Centre, 25 Mendelssohn Street



MEETING OVERVIEW

On Thursday, June 13, 2019, the City of Toronto and CreateTO hosted the first community meeting for **705 Warden Avenue** as part of the Housing Now Initiative. Approximately 160 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 705 Warden Avenue. 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. The 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 705 Warden Avenue 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, and Other.

Housing

- **Opposition to having a Housing Now site in this area.** Several participants said they were unhappy this development is happening in the area and were upset that the community was not consulted about whether it wanted the project in the neighbourhood in the first place. Participants also said that the opinions and concerns of residents who live in the neighbourhood should be given significant consideration. Some participants shared the opinion that local residents would not support the proposed development.
- **Concerns related to possible impacts of affordable housing.** Several participants shared concerns about crime in the neighbourhood, decreased property values as a result of new affordable rental units, and maintenance of rental properties.
- **Support and interest in affordable housing.** Some participants expressed support for the City's work to build affordable housing. During the Open House, several participants asked members of the Project Team how to qualify for an affordable unit and said they were interested in potentially living in one. There were also questions and interest in larger affordable units, including 4 bedroom units. There were suggestions to develop mechanisms to graduate people out of affordable units who no longer require affordable housing.
- **Include ownership units in the development.** Several suggested the City consider including ownership units in the development, proposing a potential mix of a third affordable rental units, a third market rental units, and a third private ownership. Others suggested the City explore "graduation mechanisms" to transition residents out of affordable units to market rental/ownership units once they have reached a certain income. There were also suggestions to set up a rent-to-own program for the units. *The City said that Housing Now has identified a target of 225 affordable rental units and 225 market rental units. The challenge is to deploy these units across the buildings. CreateTO added that there is currently no graduation mechanism to require people to move out of affordable units.*
- **Explore alternative locations for the Housing Now development.** Some suggested the City consider other parts of the City for affordable housing, such as vacant sites and/or commercial and industrial lands at Comstock and Warden. *City Planning responded that one of the reasons 705 Warden was chosen as a site is that the land is already in City ownership, so it can move more quickly to develop affordable housing than if it had to purchase privately-held land. The City added that it has policies to protect employment lands for jobs, such as the lands at Comstock and Warden.*
- **Describe affordable housing as "workforce housing".** There was a suggestion that the City describe this initiative as providing "workforce housing" since its target audience is

working people and it doesn't address homelessness or rent geared to income (RGI) housing.

Planning

- **Coordinate this development with other City studies in the area.** The project team should coordinate this development with other City studies — such as the Golden Mile Secondary Plan Study — to ensure there are appropriate community services and facilities to accommodate existing and new residents both in this area and beyond. In the Golden Mile Secondary Plan Study, the City is recommending new residents use nearby Community Centres, including Warden Hilltop. If the City is going to be adding more users to the Warden Hilltop Community Centre, it should be improving transit connections, too.

Development

- **Concern that the proposed building heights are too tall.** Several participants expressed that the proposed 7, 8, and 18 storey buildings are too high for this neighbourhood. *City staff noted that the City's Official Plan and the Warden Woods Secondary Plan identify the area around 705 Warden for higher density and mixed-use developments, and that these policy documents were developed in consultation with the local community.*
- **Study parking across the broader area.** Many participants shared comments or concerns about parking in the area, saying both on-street parking and parking at the community centre are already limited. They said there needs to be enough parking for current and future residents, users of the community centre, retail staff and customers, and commuters. They suggested the City look at expanding parking at the community centre, offering on-street parking permits, adding underground parking, and providing free parking in the commuter lot on weekends and for users of the community centre. *City Planning said it could review existing parking and permitting restrictions and explore options as a result of this feedback. Community Centre staff have shared their interest in more parking for those using the Centre.*
- **Preferred commercial and retail uses.** Several participants said that the area needs a grocery store. Other suggestions included: a pharmacy (e.g. Shopper's Drug Mart), coffee shops, a restaurant/pub, bank, a dry cleaner, dentist office, and health clinic.
- **Suggested community uses and facilities.** Participants suggested the City look at including a library and affordable daycare in the proposed community space.
- **Suggested activities and uses in the expanded park.** Participants suggested the City consider including a number of activities and uses in an expanded park / open space beside Warden Hilltop Community Centre, including: a pool, new landscaping elements (such as native plants, naturalized spaces, and flowers), statues, public art, and picnic tables. Other suggested elements were: a skating rink/trail, baseball diamond, basketball court, and lots of trees. There was also a suggestion to preserve views of the community centre.
- **Improve pedestrian and cycling safety.** Some raised concerns about the lack of pedestrian safety and cycling infrastructure. Participants said it is important to make the area more pedestrian- and bike-friendly. There was a suggestion to include an east-west

pedestrian crossing at Warden and Roper and to ensure a safe access to the TTC pedestrian bridge and future passenger pick-up and drop-off area.

- **Make the TTC Station accessible/barrier free.** Participants said that Warden TTC Station and the pedestrian access bridge are currently not accessible/barrier-free. Some said the pedestrian bridge should have better lighting, be better maintained, and be made accessible. Other comments included suggestions to provide a north TTC station entrance suggestions for the proposed TTC admin building to be part of the station.

Community Services & Facilities

- **Improving infrastructure in the area.** Some participants said the City should improve infrastructure (such as water flow and TTC subway capacity) to serve the current population before considering any future residents to the area.
- **Improve the use of Warden Hilltop Community Centre.** Participants suggested the City look at expanding the size, programming and parking at the community centre. There were some concerns raised that an expanded community centre may result in increased property taxes for local residents. *Community Centre staff have shared their interest in more parking for those using the Centre.*

Other

- **Frustration about lack of notice about the project and the meeting.** Several participants said they did not receive meeting notices in the mail, instead learning of the meeting through social networks and social media. Participants suggested a range of outreach opportunities for the City consider for future consultation events about this project, including: send notices beyond 500 meters from the site, set up sandwich boards on the road promoting the meeting, and have staff knock on individual doors in the neighbourhood.

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. 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.

Councillor Crawford thanked participants for attending the meeting. He said these conversations are important and that he is planning to meet with community members throughout the summer to discuss this project further. Councillor Crawford said the City has an affordability crisis that affects many people, including members of his family and likely the families of many participants, and the Housing Now Initiative is about creating opportunities for them.