



140 Merton Street  
**Community Meeting #2**  
**MEETING SUMMARY**

Tuesday, September 10, 2019  
6:00 – 9:00 pm, Glebe Road United Church  
20 Glebe Road East



## OVERVIEW

Toronto City Council initiated Housing Now in December of 2018 to accelerate the development of affordable rental housing within mixed income, mixed-use, transit-oriented communities across the City of Toronto. The first phase of Housing Now has the potential to create more than 10,000 new residential units across 11 properties, which will include over 3,700 affordable rental units, with rents averaging 80 percent of Toronto's average market rent. In 2019, City of Toronto and CreateTO staff are advancing background studies, engaging with residents and stakeholders, and developing concept plans and business cases for the first set of properties. Four of the 11 properties – including 140 Merton Street – will be offered to market in 2019 with the remaining properties anticipated for market offering in 2020. Additional information about the Housing Now Initiative can be found on the project website [www.createto.ca/housingnow](http://www.createto.ca/housingnow).

As part of the community engagement process for Housing Now, the City of Toronto and CreateTO hosted the **second community meeting for 140 Merton Street on Tuesday, September 10, 2019**. Approximately 80 people attended, in addition to staff from the City of Toronto, CreateTO and the project consultant team. Councillor Josh Matlow and staff also attended and participated in the meeting. The first meeting was held on June 20, 2019 to introduce Housing Now and to share and seek feedback on the conceptual design and preliminary directions for the site.

The first community meeting was held on June 20, 2019 to introduce Housing Now and share and seek feedback on the conceptual design and preliminary directions for the site. **The purpose of this second meeting was to share the updated development concept for 140 Merton Street (including how it was refined based on feedback received at the June 20, 2019 public consultation meeting, as well as additional technical work), provide further information on the next stages of the Housing**

**Now Initiative, and respond to questions and comments.** Staff will present a Zoning By-Law Amendment and other recommendations to City Council at the end of 2019 to facilitate the development of the Housing Now project. Staff plan to provide further updates and consultation as the project proceeds through the final stage of approvals (Site Plan Control) and construction.

This meeting summary was prepared by Swerhun Inc., an independent third-party firm retained by CreateTO and the City of Toronto to facilitate the community meetings. This summary captures feedback shared at the meeting and is not intended to serve as a verbatim transcript. The summary was shared with participants in draft for review prior to being finalized.

*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.*

## OVERALL OBSERVATIONS

The majority of participants at the community meeting expressed support for the Housing Now program and appreciation for the City's and CreateTO's efforts to respond to the questions and comments raised at the first community meeting. Several participants encouraged the City and CreateTO to examine whether the number of affordable units could be increased. There were participants who raised issues related to height, shadows, and construction impacts; however, the bulk of the discussion focused on how to design the building to meet the needs of seniors and the fairness of the eligibility process.

## COMMENTS & QUESTIONS RECEIVED

Following the open house and an update briefing from the City and CreateTO on the revised development concept, participants asked questions and shared comments through a full room discussion. The points below summarize the questions and comments shared. Responses from CreateTO and/or the City of Toronto, where provided, are included *in italics*. The feedback has been grouped under the following themes: Access to Housing; Development Concept Design; and Process & Other Feedback.

### Access to Housing

**Some participants pushed the City to offer more affordable units on this site.** *The City explained that there are no capital dollars available to support the development of publicly-subsidized affordable housing on this site. The Housing Now program is financially feasible because of a combination of factors including: rents from the market units that will be used to cover capital and operating costs; and the City is leveraging the value of the land and providing other incentives to the future housing provider (i.e. for affordable units, waiving property taxes, no development charges, no planning application fees, no building permit fees, etc.).*

**Some participants were interested to know how future residents will be selected.** There was strong advice that the selection process be fair and transparent and prohibit any nepotism.

*The City explained that the chosen housing provider will be required to submit a proposed selection process to the City for review and approval. The City will ensure the process is open and transparent and will review the process annually.*

**Some participants asked questions about affordability, including who will be able to afford to live here and how many affordable units will be provided.**

*The City explained that the target for Housing Now is to make the affordable rental units affordable for households earning between \$21,000 and \$52,000 annually with rents not being more than 80% of the city-wide average market rate in Toronto as set by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). They also explained that at least 50% of the units on this site will be affordable. Councillor Matlow, however, has asked City staff to look at increasing the number of affordable units for this site, up to 100%, noting the critical need for affordable housing for seniors in the City and this area in particular.*

**Some participants said that more needs to be done to increase affordable housing in the City.** They suggested that the City continue to look for additional sites for Housing Now and find additional ways to increase the amount of affordable housing across the City. *The City explained that there will be additional Housing Now sites identified, and agreed that Housing Now alone will not be enough to address the City's affordable housing crisis. They explained that the City is investigating and implementing other initiatives related to affordable housing through the City's HousingTO Action Plan and noted the importance of working with the other two levels of government. In 2021, the federal and provincial governments are expected to introduce the Canada Housing Benefit that could help the non-profit housing provider offer even more affordable rents at this site.*

## **Development Concept Design**

**Several participants asked questions and shared comments about the unit design, including specific amenities and accessibility for seniors that will be designed into the building (e.g. width of doors, height of cabinetry, width of elevator doors, grab bars, emergency buttons, access to nursing space, etc.).** Questions and comments included:

- It's important to consider these types of design requirements prior to construction because the costs are much higher if the building is retrofitted later.
- Given that this will be a building intended for seniors-focused housing it will be important that a large number of units that are accessible so that residents don't have to move out if/when they begin to have physical mobility issues and/or other disabilities. The units should allow residents to age in place. Not every resident will need a fully accessible unit when they move in so not all units need to be accessible right away. It should be easy to add accessible features to the units as needed.
- Will each unit have its own thermostat?
- Advice that all units have a balcony; residents without balconies may feel left out if they don't have one and others do.
- Request to investigate requiring the entire building be smoke free as both cigarette and marijuana smoke is harmful to residents, including those that don't smoke.

*The City's response to these questions and advice included:*

- *A percentage of the units will be accessible; Council direction is to have at least 20% accessible units but there may be an opportunity to provide more on this site because it is a seniors' building. The City and CreateTO will set the minimum criteria and look for an experienced development partner that may be able to go beyond this and provide additional accessible units. The City and CreateTO appreciate the advice to ensure accessible features can be easily added. This is something the City is also thinking about and more details will be available when the Site Plan is developed.*
- *The City is in support of thermostats for each unit and balconies. These are details that will be determined later in the process during the Site Plan Application process.*
- *With regard to smoking, this will be a modern building with good ventilation to prevent smoke from passing through units. There may be a possibility to make specific floors non-smoking; the housing operator will set the policies and rules around smoking once they're onboard in 2020.*
- *The City is going to recommend that there be updates and consultation at the Site Plan Application stage to allow members of the public to ask questions and share feedback about details related to the Site Plan.*

**Some participants expressed interest in the development incorporate environmentally sustainable design to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.**

Specific suggestions included: a green roof and a living wall / vertical planting on the building.

- *The City said they agree with this advice and will be holding themselves to a higher design standard than that required of private developers. The City will require that this building meets Tier 2 of the Toronto Green Standard. A green roof is proposed on top of the podium.*

**A few participants expressed concern about the shadow impacts from the tall building height, specifically:**

- Concern that the building is too tall and will cast shadows and block views. Other buildings in the immediate area are not as tall as the proposed height for this building.
- Concern that the shadow impact assessments were conducted in March and September, which means that information about the extent of shadows during the summer months is missing.

*The City and CreateTO's response to these concerns included:*

- *The proposed tall building has been located and designed to provide appropriate transitions to surrounding properties. The tall building will have a slender floorplate (much slendrer than the slab apartment towners in the area), meaning shadows pass relatively quickly.*
- *It is normal practice to do shadow studies for March and September because these are the months when shadows are at the average between their shortest and longest. We can examine shadow impacts for the summer as well and include it in the package.*

**A few participants suggested that the City and CreateTO explore a building design that extends over the driveway to enable more shared space.**

- A participant suggested covering the driveway to provide common space for residents (e.g. a dog run).

*The City noted that this suggestion had also been made at the first public meeting, and that opportunities to cover the driveway had been explored. Ultimately the City and CreateTO concluded that covering the driveway would not be advantageous due to vertical clearance requirements; there needs to be adequate space/height for trucks to enter the loading spaces in that section of the building.*

**A participant expressed concerns about the financial viability of the number of units proposed and the balance of affordable units versus market units.** Based on their organization’s calculations, it would require a 26-storey building on the Merton site to ensure a financially sustainable project offering with 50% affordable units and 50% market rate units. If the building has fewer storeys, it would require a significant financial subsidy of the affordable units.

**Some participants said the area needs a local grocery / food store.** Participants said the existing Sobeys in the area may be lost and expressed interest in having a local food / grocery store in the base of this development or the surrounding area. *Councillor Josh Matlow also expressed interest / need for a food / grocery store in the area to support the day-to-day needs of the local community.*

**A participant expressed interest in having visitor parking available in the new development.** *The City confirmed that one floor of the underground parking garage will be dedicated to serving a number of different groups, including visitors.*

## Process & Other Feedback

**Several participants said that they appreciated that the City and CreateTO came back to the community to share the revised development concept and respond to questions and comments.** They thanked the City and CreateTO for coming back to the community to provide updates on process and responding to questions and comments shared at the first Community Meeting as well as this meeting. Some also said they recognize that this is both an important and difficult initiative and thanked the City and CreateTO for all of their work.

**A participant asked for information about what’s happening with the site that neighbours 30 Merton Street (the site that currently has a 4-storey garage), and asked whether it will be developed at the same time, and how construction impacts would be managed?** *Staff explained that the site is 30 Merton Street and that the City has received a development application for the site, which is currently under appeal. They also explained that there is not a specific timeline for the development of the site. Councillor Matlow added that developers are required to submit Construction Management Plans, and that as a Councillor, he can create a Construction Liaison Committee involving local residents to address issues like noise, dust, traffic, etc.*

## NEXT STEPS

The project team thanked participants for their continued participation in the process and committed to sharing a draft meeting summary with participants prior to finalizing it and posting it on the project website. The team also informed participants they can stay up to date on the process and continue to connect with the project team by visiting the project website ([www.createto.ca/housingnow](http://www.createto.ca/housingnow)) and sending emails to

[housingnow@toronto.ca](mailto:housingnow@toronto.ca). The team will also continue to send out updates to individuals that have signed in at the community meetings and/or signed up for updates on the project website, including in advance of City Council meetings and decisions at the end of 2019.