



50 Wilson Heights Boulevard
Community Meeting #2
MEETING SUMMARY

Monday, September 16, 2019
6:00 – 9:00 pm, Church of the Resurrection
1 Tippett Road



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 50 Wilson Heights Boulevard – 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.

As part of the community engagement process for Housing Now the City of Toronto and CreateTO hosted the **second community meeting for 50 Wilson Heights Boulevard on Monday, September 16, 2019**. Approximately 200 people attended, in addition to staff from the City of Toronto, CreateTO and the project consultant team. Councillor James Pasternak also attended and participated in the meeting. The first meeting was held on June 12, 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 12, 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 50 Wilson Heights Boulevard (including how it was refined based on**

feedback received at the June 12, 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, Draft Plan of Subdivision 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 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

There were a number of perspectives shared by participants at the meeting, with two general themes expressed:

There was a strong voice from many participants who expressed concern about the selection of 50 Wilson Heights as a Housing Now site because of the potential negative impact the development could have on the local community in particular in terms of reduced commuter parking capacity and increased pressure on community services (e.g. school capacity) as well as increased traffic, and concerns about pedestrian safety.

There was also a strong voice from many participants supportive of the Housing Now program at this site, with many urging the City to do more to ensure there are a larger number of affordable units, more accessible units, and more deeply affordable units. There were also participants interested in knowing more about when and how they would be able to apply to live in this housing. More detail on these perspectives, as well as others, is provided below.

COMMENTS & QUESTIONS RECEIVED

Following the open house and an update briefing from the City and CreateTO on the updated development concept, was presented after which participants asked questions and shared comments through a full room discussion. The points below summarize the questions and comments shared. The feedback has been grouped under the following themes: Access to Housing, Development Concept, and Parking & Transportation. Responses from the City, CreateTO and the TTC are noted in *italics*.

Access to Housing

Several participants discussed and shared comments about the need for affordable housing in the City and this area specifically. The types of comments shared included:

- There is an affordable housing crisis in Toronto, and we need to hold all of our elected officials to account to take bold and swift action to deal with this crisis.
- The Housing Now target of serving those with incomes of \$21,000 to \$52,000 a year is not affordable enough. More affordable options need to be part of this project.
- The City needs to prioritize retaining public ownership over the Housing Now lands. If that doesn't happen, we will continue losing the capacity of the City to meet our future housing needs. *The City explained that Housing Now is not providing any public funds to support construction and is not providing any ongoing operating subsidy. As a result, the construction costs have to be paid for through the sale of condos on the site and through charging market rents on some of the units. From the 1940s through to the 1990s there were 100,000 units of social housing built, and very little has been built since then. The Housing Now model is an effort to change that. Without Housing Now, there could have been a scenario on this site where the City sold the land to the highest bidder for private condos. With Housing Now, non-profit operators will be involved, and the City will hold 99-year leases on the sites.*
- The Housing Now developments, including this one, should have a higher percentage of affordable units. The Housing Now developments are on public land and we should be pushing for more than the 33% proposed.
- We need truly affordable housing, not something that requires people to work two or three jobs just to afford housing. We also need deeply affordable housing in the City for people living on fixed incomes and support programs (e.g. the Ontario Disability Support Program).
- Accessible housing is also needed. Investigate having the lower floors in the residential buildings designed for deeper accessibility (i.e. designed to Building Code B3 standards that can accommodate caregivers and support workers for people with disabilities). *The City noted that 20% of Housing Now units will be fully accessible and that some of the units will be deeply affordable for individuals making less than \$21,000 annually, e.g. individuals who receive financial assistance through the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).*
- What is the value of the land? *CreateTO noted that there are about 1.2 million square feet of development proposed, and each square foot is \$50 to \$75, which translates into roughly \$75 million.*

Some participants had questions about the process for applying for the affordable units, including when the application process would begin and how people will be informed. *The City explained that the application process will be made publicly available approximately six months to a year before construction finishes and the units are ready. They explained that updates will be made available on the Housing Now website (www.createto.ca/housingnow) and e-mailed to individuals that have signed in at the community meetings and/or signed up for updates on the project website.*

How is the City paying for this? *The City explained that the development relies on the City contributing the land value and providing financial incentives and waivers (e.g. the developer will not have to pay certain City fees for the affordable units). The project is*

also being designed to receive federal financing and funding through the National Housing Strategy.

Development Concept

Some participants raised concerns about additional growth in this area and identified needed community services and amenities. Concerns and comments included:

- There are already a number of condos being built in the immediate area; the proposed development for this site will bring more people that will put even greater strain on the existing infrastructure.
- Schools in the area are at or near capacity and the proposed residential development will bring more families and children to the area which will add stress to the school system.
- This area is in need of more medical facilities and services. The Province has deemed this area to be an underserved medical area. Medical facilities will also require designated on-site parking for people accessing the facilities and services.
- There is a lack of grocery stores and access to quality options for food in the area.

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

- *The City directs growth to certain areas of the City, including avenues, mixed-use areas, and areas near/adjacent to transit. This site meets these conditions.*
- *The redevelopment of the site was initially planned through the Tippett Road Regeneration Study. City Council adopted a new planning framework for the lands north and south of Wilson Avenue in 2015, following extensive consultation. The proposed density of development at 50 Wilson Heights fits within this approved plan.*
- *The development concept shown tonight will provide guidance to the developer who will partner with the City to build and operate this development. The details of the development plan for 50 Wilson Heights will be important in ensuring the buildings and overall site are appropriately designed and there is adequate infrastructure to support existing and future residents. The developer partner will be required to outline these details as part of the Site Plan approval stage.*
- *The City agrees there is a need for medical services and commercial amenities, including a grocery store in the area. The lower floors of the buildings on Blocks 1 and 2 will include both office and retail space, which can accommodate these uses. The grocery store is planned for the corner of Wilson Heights and Wilson Avenue. These features can be secured through the Zoning By-law Amendment staff will present to City Council at the end of this year.*

Some participants said there is need for spaces that can accommodate programs and amenities for both youth and seniors. Comments included:

- At the first Community Meeting in June attendees said the area needs more programs and services for youth. There isn't any mention of this in the presentation. Youth need programs and services to keep them safe and out of crime. The layout of the development should be designed to encourage public safety prevent isolated areas that may create opportunities for negative activities (e.g. drug dealing). *The*

City did hear the advice and comments about youth at the June meeting. The development concept includes community agency space on the site that the City will lease out. This space presents a great opportunity to provide space and programs for youth in the area. In preparation for building and leasing the space, the City will connect with service providers and other stakeholders to understand specific needs for the area.

- Universal design practices should be employed. There are many seniors in the area that require housing and additional program space. These objectives could be better achieved with universal design practices. I don't mind intensification, but it would be nice to see the buildings terraced on the east side and to see human-centred design. Also, seniors don't require parking. Another option could be to consider building on top of the subway station.

A concern about loss of views from the proposed development. A participant said they live in the area and are concerned that the 12-14 storeys proposed for the buildings will block their western view – their current view of the city will be blocked by another development (not associated with Housing Now). *The City noted that the development proposed at 50 Wilson Heights complies with the Tippet Road Regeneration Study and City's Mid-Rise Design Guidelines. The Tippet study confirmed that this site is appropriate for directing density, in part because of its proximity to the Wilson Station.*

What is the planned mix of housing for the site? *The City explained the mix of housing is proposed to include 1/3 market ownership, 1/3 market rental, and 1/3 affordable rental. The parcel that accommodates market ownership will be sold and the remaining lands (market and affordable rental) will continue to be owned by the City and leased for a period of 99 years.*

Parking & Transportation

Several participants shared concerns about the loss of the commuter parking lot and the proposed approach to accommodating parking, including shared parking. Specific concerns and questions included:

- Concern that the proposed shared parking scenario won't provide enough spaces for the people who use the lot to access the subway to get to work downtown.
- The existing bus network is not a viable alternative to get to/from Wilson Station for many people in the area. There are a variety of reasons why people in the local community need to drive to access Wilson Station (e.g. have to drop off/pick up their kids from school, don't feel safe waiting on an empty bus platform late at night, etc.).
- Use of Sheppard West station as an alternative location for commuters presents safety issues, e.g. have to cross the lot to reach the station.
- There are other pieces of vacant land in the area that have been suggested as opportunities to provide additional parking (e.g. the Allen District Lands around Sheppard West Station and the land currently used for EMS training along Allen Road). These options suggested by the community throughout the process should continue to be investigated in order to accommodate the need for commuter parking. A participant suggested encouraging CLC (the Canada Lands Company) to provide parking by the Downsview station, saying CLC needs to cooperate. *These locations were identified through staff's work and discussed at previous consultation meetings.*

CreateTO and City staff are reviewing options along the subway line. Construction of public parking is anticipated at Sheppard West Station as part of the broader mixed-use redevelopment of the Allen District; however, development there is several years away. The Councillor and staff have been engaging CLC about the Downsview Station opportunity.

- *The vacant parcels in the area were also suggested as alternative locations for the proposed mixed-use, affordable housing development. The Mayor and City Council have identified Housing Now and the creation of affordable housing on City-owned land as a priority. In January 2019, City Council voted unanimously to launch the program and dedicate the property at 50 Wilson Heights Blvd. to this initiative. The other suggested sites are not as close to transit (an important feature of 50 Wilson Heights Blvd.) and/or are not yet serviced with adequate municipal infrastructure to support development. Municipal infrastructure has been expanded in the 50 Wilson Heights Blvd. area as part of the 2015 plan, anticipating mixed-use development on the site.*
- *This is one more place where the City is taking away parking. Other parking lots in the area have been removed without the addition of affordable housing.*
- *I'm disappointed with the City. This is not fair. It's not fair because not enough parking is being replaced, because of the impact on the public school system, because of the limited transit service, and overall this shows a poor job of planning.*
- *There is very little parkland here and not enough greenspace. A central park is proposed as part of the development for 50 Wilson Heights Blvd.*
- *I encourage the City to think about the area more comprehensively, like it would with the development of a Secondary Plan. This would also mean looking at what's happening around the site, including what will happen given the sale of the Bombardier lands and other pending developments.*
- *The plan for parking should ensure there is adequate parking secured for future residents, regardless of unit size.*
- *There is a perception that this development is going ahead regardless of whether an appropriate plan to replace/provide commuter parking is established. Several participants indicated that there needs to be a mechanism to hold the City accountable for the parking solution(s) developed. One participant, with support expressed by others, was specific in identifying the need for hard numbers in the parking agreement, a monitoring program, and a requirement to report back to the City with the results – including City Council. A participant urged the City and CreateTO to save as many spots as possible for commuter use during construction. CreateTO and the City explained that the proposed shared public parking has been informed by an analysis of users of the current parking. It aligns with the observed local demand, rather than the majority of users who travel from outside the Ward. Shared parking is only part of the solution. It is one of a series of measures that will need to be part of the solution. Other measures can open up other parking opportunities at nearby stations, improve local bus service, regulate local parking impacts and direct commuters from York Region to other sites with available parking capacity.*

A few participants shared concerns about pedestrian safety in the area. Sidewalks and intersections around Wilson station are already busy and can be very dangerous. Improvements are needed to make the area safer. For example, a resident from 525

Wilson Avenue expressed concern about the lack of safety crossing to the subway station.

The City affirmed that they're aware the area is extremely busy and said that they are currently studying opportunities for improvements. A signalized intersection is proposed at Wilson Heights Boulevard and Goodwill Avenue, allowing safe pedestrian crossings on what is currently a fast-moving street. The development concept also provides room for wider sidewalks and multiple routes through the site and to the subway station. More detailed design of sidewalks and intersections will happen through the Site Plan Application. The City wants this area to work well for all users and modes of transportation.

There were some questions and comments about bus routes to/from Wilson Station, including relocation of the bus loop. Participants were interested in the TTC's current and future bus service commitments at Wilson Station, including how many bus routes use Wilson Station and how late the buses run. There was also a concern about noise generated as a result of the proposal to relocate the bus loop into the middle of the development.

At the meeting, the City explained they are aware that Wilson is a busy station and they aware the TTC wants to maintain service and in some instances increase frequency for some routes. They also explained they are still having discussions with the TTC about if/where the bus loop could be relocated to on the site. The TTC confirmed that this is one of the busiest stations for bus service, and that the TTC is looking to maintain or increase service.

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) and sending emails to 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.