



705 Warden Avenue  
**Community Meeting #2**  
**MEETING SUMMARY**

Thursday, September 12, 2019  
6:00 – 9:00 pm, Warden Hilltop Community Centre  
25 Mendelssohn Street



## 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 705 Warden Avenue – 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 705 Warden Avenue on Thursday, September 12, 2019**. Approximately 250 people attended, in addition to staff from the City of Toronto, CreateTO, and the project consultant team. Councillor Gary Crawford also attended and participated in the meeting.

The first community meeting was held on June 13, 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 705 Warden Avenue (including how it was refined based on feedback received at the June 13, 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 facilitation 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

In broad strokes, the questions and comments revealed a number of perspectives related to the updated development concept for 705 Warden Ave. Compared to the first public meeting about 705 Warden Ave., more participants were receptive to the Housing Now program and the proposed concept, though many still had strong concerns about the height of the proposed buildings, building maintenance, transportation, servicing infrastructure, congestion, constrained community resources in the area, and safety/security. A few participants said they appreciated that the City and CreateTO had returned with responses to the specific concerns and questions raised at the first public meeting, though some disagreed with some of those responses.

## COMMENTS & QUESTIONS RECEIVED

Following the open house and an update briefing from the City and CreateTO on the updated development concept, participants asked questions and shared comments through a full room discussion. The points below summarize the questions and comments shared. They have been grouped under the following themes: Access to Housing; Development Concept Design; Safety & Security; Infrastructure; and Process & Other Feedback. Responses from the City and/or CreateTO are noted in *italics*.

### Access to Housing

Participants shared a range of opinions about access to housing. Some expressed support for Housing Now and this initiative to create mixed-income communities, and a few were interested in understanding how they could apply to live in this development. Others suggested alternative and/or additional ways the City could address the housing affordability crisis in Toronto. Specific comments, questions, and concerns about Access to Housing included:

**Some strong support for mixed-income communities.** Some participants expressed interest and appreciation for the potential benefit of a mixed-income community, with one participant saying he grew up in a mixed-income community and they are some of

the most vibrant communities in Toronto. The City should consider doing some education around what mixed-income communities are to dispel the concern that this development will be social housing.

**Questions and suggestions about who could live in the development, including:**

- Do the incomes the City is targeting for the affordable units reflect individual or household income?
- What kinds of criteria will the City be looking at to determine eligibility to live here?
- How will people be selected to live in the affordable units?
- Would a person making an annual income of \$30,000 be eligible to live here?
- The City should target people who make minimum wage and/or are labourers in factories — this plan doesn't do enough to meet those people's needs.

*The City and CreateTO's responses to these questions included:*

- *The target incomes reflect household income, not individual income.*
- *The process for selecting people to live here will be a transparent process approved and monitored by and run through the City. People will qualify to live here based on a number of criteria including their income, and there will also be a number of accessible units for people with disabilities and seniors.*
- *Yes, a person making \$30,000 would be eligible to live here. In fact, a person making as low as \$22,000 would be eligible. The selection process will likely include a credit rating check, a landlord reference check, assessing the applicant's ability to pay rent, among other things.*
- *The City agrees that we need housing that's affordable for many income levels, including labourers who make minimum wage. As part of the evaluation process, the City will prioritize proposals that include homes affordable to lower-income households including those earning minimum wages.*
- *Our evaluation of potential operators will look at who they think they can house, and we would look favourably on a proposal that could house labourers.*

**Questions and advice about other ways the City could provide affordable housing, including:**

- Have you looked into regulating Airbnb's as part of the solution to addressing housing affordability?
- Why did the City not put more affordable housing on other sites, such as 251 Esther Shiner Blvd? Why did you not include 50% affordable housing units there, too?

*The City's responses to these questions included:*

- *The City has policies to regulate at short-term rentals like Airbnb that are starting to come into effect.*
- *Only the smaller sites (such as 705 Warden Ave) have a 50/50 split of affordable units and market rental units; including a condo component on the smaller sites is complicated in terms of the design of buildings, severing of parcels and operation of shared facilities. The number of affordable units was not determined on neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood basis. The City is developing a business case for*

*each site, and, if we can make the economics work, we would look at adding more units to any of them (including at Esther Shiner Blvd). The City is also looking beyond the 11 sites identified as the first part of Housing Now to help achieve as many affordable units as possible. We are also expecting potential operators to identify if/how they can do better on any given site — what we're presenting tonight is a conceptual plan based on the targets City Council set.*

## **Development Concept Design**

**Some concern about the height and design of the development**, specifically:

- Concerns that people in the higher storeys might not be able to enter or leave their unit if there are blackouts (which are more frequent due to climate change).
- Concern that the building looks like a “fort or a prison” and will not fit in with the rest of the neighbourhood.
- Advice that the City consider climate change and resiliency in the design of the building.

*The City's responses to these concerns included:*

- *There are many developments being built across the City in excess of the 18 storeys proposed, and City has mechanisms in place to make these buildings as resilient as possible in the face of blackouts and other climate change-related challenges.*
- *The City shares the concern about climate change and resiliency and is holding itself to a higher design standard than required of private developers. For 705 Warden Ave., the City is pursuing Tier 2 of the Toronto Green Standard, which is a set of targets the City uses to guide green development. The City sees the redevelopment of the existing big parking lot, including expanded parkland and a renaturalized edge to the Massey Creek ravine, as an improvement from a climate resiliency perspective.*
- *The City has architects on its team and will relay feedback about the building's design to them. Part of City Planning's job is to work to make sure new development contributes positively to existing neighbourhoods, such as by studying wind and shadow impacts and trying to locate taller buildings in appropriate locations.*

**Questions about how this development will be paid for (e.g. through taxes on existing residents, property taxes from future residents of the buildings)?** *The City explained that:*

- *The City will contribute the value of the land to help spur development, but it will continue to own and lease the land. City Council have also approved financial incentives and waivers (e.g. the developer will not have to pay certain fees for the affordable units). The City will not contribute any capital or operating subsidies once the development is up and running and the development will be built and financed privately (i.e. not through taxpayer dollars). Selected proponents will be expected to apply for additional funding or financing from the federal government (e.g. the CMHC's Rental Construction Financing program as an example).*
- *Tenants will not pay property taxes separately from their rent. These will be paid by the operator (though tenants will indirectly pay property taxes through their rent).*

**Questions about the breakdown and rationale for the number of units, including:**

- How many of the 466 proposed units will be affordable?
- Will the number of units change from what is presented tonight?
- Which of the buildings will have affordable units and which will have market rental units?

*In response to these questions, the City said:*

- *Half of the 466 units will be affordable, the other half will be market rental units. The reduced value of the land, financial incentives provided through the City's Open Door Program, and in some cases rent collected from the market units will help support the creation and operation of the affordable rental units.*
- *The City has heard calls both to increase and to decrease the amount of affordable housing in the development. The final number of units may shift as detailed designs are finalized; that said, the general range of the units shown tonight is appropriate to achieving the project's objectives and integrating successfully with the surrounding neighbourhoods.*
- *All buildings will have a mix of market rental and affordable units — no building has been designated to have only one type of unit.*

**Interest in understanding more detail about the proposed daycare, including:** how many spaces will be in the daycare, the anticipated age range for the daycare, whether the daycare will be for area residents (or just residents of the new buildings), and why the daycare is located where it is. *The City responded that the planned daycare is standard size and would have 62 spaces for pre-school ages (1 to 4-year-olds). The location of the daycare is influenced by a number of factors, including proximity to outdoor space (like the expanded park). The City expects the daycare would be open to anyone in the area, not just residents of the new buildings.*

**How will the City ensure this development occurs in the anticipated timeline?** *The City wants this development to proceed on an expedited timeline, given the urgent need for affordable housing in the city — part of the selection process for choosing an operator will include looking at their track record, including their ability to complete projects like this on time.*

**Questions about planning policy, including:**

- Why does this development not have to conform to the zoning by-law, which would require a shorter building?
- How is a 15-year-old Secondary Plan relevant to today?

*The City's responses to these questions included:*

- *The Secondary Plan and Official Plan have long identified this site as a place for intensification. The City is working to achieve the affordable housing targets as set by Council while ensuring the tallest building has minimal impacts on the existing community, on Taylor-Massey Creek, and takes factors like shadowing and wind into consideration.*

- *While the Secondary Plan was developed 15 years ago, the City is required to review its plans every 5 years. It was reviewed to make sure the current planning framework is consistent with Toronto's needs.*

#### **Other advice and questions about the Development Concept Design, including:**

- A range of opinions about including retail space in the buildings. A few said they would prefer for the buildings to have common space and/or function rooms instead of retail, while others said the retail could be positive if it provides the area with a grocery store. Several identified the area as a food desert without a grocery store options in walking distance.
- Advice to consider increasing the size of the Community Centre.
- Desire to see sports fields added on the expanded parkland.
- Is it possible to move the proposed TTC administrative building to the top of the development and free up more land for housing?

#### *The City's responses included:*

- *We will consider the feedback about retail space. Regardless of whether there is retail, the City will require common and amenity space in the development for residents to use.*
- *This Community Centre is under-used relative to other community centres in the City. Community Centre staff have requested expanded public parking associated with the centre, which is included in the development concept.*
- *The City is looking for feedback about potential uses of one acre of the expanded parkland and will consider the suggested sports fields as part of its process.*
- *The location of the TTC building is the product of many years of TTC planning and the City concludes that it will fit within the broader development. Neither the City nor the TTC are considering moving the building.*

### **Safety & Security**

Many participants raised safety and security as concerns in the community — both in the existing community and potentially as a result of this new development.

#### **Many said there needs to be a holistic look at safety and security as part of this process.** Specific concerns and questions about safety and security included:

- There used to be a corner store nearby, but the owner was held up at gunpoint multiple times and had to close shop. How will the City ensure the neighbourhood remains safe and secure after this development is built?
- How will this building be different from TCH (Toronto Community Housing) buildings (which many consider unsafe)?

#### *The City responded that:*

- *The City will be responsible for selecting the operator of this development, and as part of that process, can look to see how well their proposal includes operational measures and design features to mitigate safety risks.*

- *The City can do a “safety audit” when reviewing the proposal to identify anything in the proposed design that might impact security (e.g. dark or secluded spaces) and address them by applying the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design.*
- *Developments like this can lead to increased safety and security since they can result in more eyes on the street, which can discourage illegal or unsafe activity.*
- *Toronto Community Housing has had challenges in part because they have not been provided with the funding they need and because some of their developments have concentrated residents in one isolated location. This Housing Now Initiative is different in that it proposes to house people with a range of incomes. The City will also ensure the selected operator follows the requirements for tenant selection, income verification, reporting, and overall administration of affordable rental homes created through Housing Now.*

## Infrastructure

Several participants raised questions and concerns about servicing, transportation, and other hard and soft infrastructure. Specific points raised included:

**Many concerns about the capacity of infrastructure**, including:

- The lack of a grocery store – one has been promised as previous planning processes and has yet to become a reality.
- Lack of space for childcare – local children are waitlisted for childcare within 8km of the area).
- Lack of space in schools.
- Poor water pressures.
- Lack of parking.

*The City’s responses to concerns about the capacity of infrastructure included:*

- *The City is looking at the capacity of hard infrastructure as part of this process — including storm water and sanitary infrastructure. CreateTO’s consultants have prepared reports on what impact, if any, this development has on them and what strategies may be required to address those impacts. City staff have reviewed these reports and requested additional analysis as part of the second submission this fall.*
- *The City’s engineers are reviewing water pressure and are aware of concerns about this issue here. They are looking at water pressure to ensure no water pressure issues emerge for residents as a result of this development.*
- *In terms of community infrastructure, like schools, the City is working closely with school boards to understand its existing capacity and the potential impacts of this new development. The Toronto District School Board is factoring in new demand from 705 Warden Ave. as part of its planning for broader changes in the school system in southern Scarborough.*

**Concerns and questions about the commuter parking lot and parking generally**, including:

- Do you have statistics on the current use of the commuter parking lot? As residents, we see the parking lot is often full, as are side streets, and getting rid of the parking lot will make things worse.
- Can you explain the composition of the proposed 332 parking spaces? Will some still be available for commuters?
- It's demeaning to suggest that just because people rent, they cannot afford a car.

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

- *We have looked at current demand on the existing parking lot – it is well-used but not entirely full on an average weekday. Paid public parking will be included in the new development, including to serve commuters using Warden Station. This parking is proposed to operate in a shared facility; commuters can park during the day when residents take their car out. CreateTO's transportation consultants have identified an appropriate number that balances these user groups.*
- *The City has heard concerns about on-street parking within the neighbourhood to the north. Additional on-street parking will be provided along the new road. The proposed development also includes additional parking related to the community centre, so that people can continue to drive to and access the community centre.*
- *We are not basing our parking plans on assumptions about people because of their income level; we are basing them on the City's experience and data from other communities. The data shows that some people that move into developments like this (rental apartments adjacent to transit) choose not to own a car.*

**Some questions and concerns about congestion and road safety, including:**

- How are you planning to address congestion?
- Are you considering adding speed bumps to any of the roads?

*The City responses to these questions and concerns included:*

- *CreateTO has prepared a Traffic Impact Study and parking study as part of this process. The City will continue to look at issues like traffic and safety as part of its review. City staff will be preparing a report on this work in December, which will be publicly available.*
- *The City has not yet looked at adding speed bumps; it will as part of reviewing traffic and safety at the detailed design stage. Speed bumps may make sense around the park to ensure safety. Residents can also petition to have speed bumps added.*

## **Process & Other Feedback**

**Some appreciation for the process.** A few participants said they appreciated that the City had returned and responded to the concerns the community raised earlier in the process, though some said they were frustrated that they did not have any influence over whether this development should be here at all.

**Some interest in understanding how construction will impact people living east of the park.** *The City will require the developer to follow City protocols regarding issuing*

*notices to the community on timing of construction and what impacts, if any, there are on local residents so everyone is aware of any impacts and can adjust their travel, if necessary.*

## **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.