



777 Victoria Park Avenue
Community Meeting #2
MEETING SUMMARY

Monday, September 9, 2019
6:00 – 9:00 pm

Seicho-No-Ie Toronto Centre, 662 Victoria Park Avenue



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 777 Victoria Park 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.

As part of the community engagement process for Housing Now, the City of Toronto and CreateTO hosted the **second community meeting for 777 Victoria Park Avenue on Monday, September 9, 2019**. Approximately 225 people attended, in addition to staff from the City of Toronto, CreateTO, and the project consultant team. Councillor Gary Crawford and Councillor Brad Bradford also attended and participated in the meeting.

The first community meeting was held on June 10, 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 777 Victoria Park Avenue (including how it was refined based on feedback received at the June 10, 2019 public consultation meeting, as well as additional technical work), provide further information on the next stages of**

Housing Now, and respond to questions and comments. Staff will present a Zoning By-law Amendment and other recommendations to City Council in November 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 777 Victoria Park Avenue:

- **Many participants were concerned about traffic and safety on Denton Avenue,** particularly connected to the proposed driveway for the new development. Several said the proposed driveway, combined with the TTC bus entryway, would likely make a bad situation worse. Several attendees said there is already a lot of congestion and it is often a dangerous place for pedestrians and cyclists.
- **Some participants were concerned about parking,** specifically shared commuter parking, and spillover commuter parking. Participants had questions and concerns about the proposed shared parking plan and whether it would provide sufficient parking given the current demand on the commuter parking lot.
- **Some support for the idea of providing affordable housing, generally, and interest in this initiative, specifically.** Some expressed support for Housing Now, saying this type of housing is needed in Toronto. Some suggested the City should focus on providing deeply affordable units and/or ensuring that all units in the initiative become affordable. A few participants asked about rent control and community services at the site and how the City can control and maintain these community benefits.
- **Some concern about sinkholes.** Some residents shared that the area has recently experienced sinkholes and they were concerned that more development in the area could result in more.

COMMENTS & QUESTIONS RECEIVED

Following the open house and a briefing presentation from City staff 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 Design, Servicing & Transportation; and Process & Other Feedback. Responses from the City, CreateTO, and/or the consultant team are noted in *italics*.

Access to Housing

Some support for and questions about the Housing Now initiative. A few participants said they applaud the City for undertaking this initiative and acknowledged that developing affordable housing is hard to do. Questions asked by participants included:

- How does the City ensure the affordable rental rates will remain affordable? A few participants asked if or how rent control might apply to this development (since rent control regulations do not apply to new developments).
- What will happen if a tenant in an affordable rental unit loses their job?
- What percentage of units will be accessible for people with disabilities?
- Has the City considered including long-term care in any of the sites?

The City's and CreateTO's responses to these questions include:

- *The affordable rental rates will be protected through the operator's contract with the City. The rents will remain affordable for 99 years. These affordable rental rates will be protected even through vacancy.*
- *This is not a rent-geared-to-income (RGI) project, which is typically what Toronto Community Housing provides. If a person's income goes down, the affordable rent in Housing Now will not go down with it. When a person or family applies for an affordable rental unit, they are income tested in order to qualify for a unit. In 2021 the federal and provincial governments are expected to introduce the Canada Housing Benefit that could help the housing operator offer even more affordable rents at this site.*
- *Council has set a target of at least 20% of all units to be accessible across the Housing Now initiative.*
- *We are considering long-term care at our larger properties.*

Other comments about the Housing Now Initiative, included:

- **Consider the opportunity to provide deeply affordable and/or co-op units using public land to address the housing crisis.** A few participants shared concern that the Housing Now program is not doing enough to address the city's housing crisis and said the affordable units may not be affordable enough to support the people who need it (for example, early childhood educators who make between \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year). There was also a suggestion for the City to make all of the units in Housing Now affordable. *Housing Now is just one program in the City's affordable housing plan. Some of the deeply affordable units will be offered well-*

below the market rates with rents at 40% of the average market rate. To make the project work economically, the City is essentially leasing the land for free and waiving relevant charges and fees, while the rent collected from market rate rentals will support the affordable rental rates. There will not be any capital or operating subsidies provided by the City in the future.

Development Design

There was an interest in learning more about the development concept and some participants asked questions of clarification. Questions asked by participants included:

- I understand that half of the residential units here are affordable rental units. What kind of units are in the other half of the development?
- Which building will the affordable rental units be in?
- Is there a mandate for small-scale businesses on site?
- What is the catchment area for local schools?
- Will this development include sustainable materials?
- Will there be Wi-Fi or cell towers on top of this building? A participant shared a preference to not have these on the building.

The City's and CreateTO's responses to these questions include:

- *777 Victoria Park is proposed to have a total of 508 rental units. This site will have a 50:50 split between affordable rental units and market rental units.*
- *The intent is to have the market and affordable rental units mixed within the buildings and on the floors, where there will be a mix of people in a space. We will look to the operators to inform us on the best way to construct and operate these buildings.*
- *There will be a small retail space by the proposed transit plaza. We are not targeting any specific business.*
- *This address may send students to Samuel Hearne Middle School or Oakridge Junior Public School. These schools do not currently have capacity issues.*
- *The City shares the concern about climate change and is holding itself to a higher design standard than required of private developers. For 777 Victoria Park 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.*
- *Regarding Wi-Fi and cell towers, we do not have a concrete answer for this at the moment. This would be determined in the Site Plan stage later in the process.*
- *If this property is intended to remain in public ownership, it is surprising to see a privately-owned public space (POPS) identified on the property shown in the presentation. The City will continue to own this site, and therefore these outdoor spaces will remain as public lands. We can revise the POPS label in the diagram to reflect public ownership.*

Servicing & Transportation

Some participants shared concerns about existing and previous issues with local servicing and transportation. Questions and comments included:

- **How will the City address this?** A participant said this area has experienced a few sinkholes in the past and shared concerns about recurring sinkholes in the area. *A hydrogeological study is required as part of the development process. The study will look at the dewatering requirements for the development. The City's engineering and water groups have reviewed the initial reports from our consultants. We agree that the issue needs more attention and requires further work to be done for these studies.*
- **Strong concerns about traffic along Denton Ave. and commuter parking.** Some participants shared that there are existing conflicts with bus traffic along Denton Ave., and the addition of a driveway here may increase traffic, congestion, and conflicts. Some participants also shared concern about the loss of commuter parking and said that there are currently issues with spillover commuter parking in the area. A few participants said the area is currently not pedestrian or cyclist friendly.

Some participants were particularly interested in learning about the City's plans for commuter parking and asked questions about the proposed parking solutions. Questions asked by participants include:

- Where is the entrance to the new commuter parking lot and how many spaces will be available to commuters? Some participants shared concerns about losing commuter parking and the spillover of commuter parking on neighbouring streets and in the general area.
- Consider a driveway entrance from Victoria Park Ave. instead of Denton Ave concerns. Many participants shared strong concerns about existing traffic along Denton Ave. and were concerned about the proposal to add a driveway directly across from 757 Victoria Park Ave.
- What will happen to the accessible drop-off and parking spaces currently in the commuter parking lot?

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

- *The entrance to the underground commuter parking lot is proposed to be off of Denton Ave., toward the southeast of the property. There will be 230 parking spaces in the development, and approximately half of these spaces are proposed to be part of a shared parking strategy. The City and CreateTO has consulted with the Toronto Parking Authority (TPA), who operate a number of shared parking facilities across the City. If there are fewer people who do not own a car than expected, then there will be more parking spaces available to the public.*
- *We appreciate the advice. Staff have been looking at all of the options for the driveway. CreateTO's traffic consultants suggest this option from Denton Ave. performs better than an entrance from Victoria Park Ave. We are continuing to*

review the alternatives and the impacts of each. The final detailed design of these access points will be confirmed during the Site Plan Application process.

- *The City is proposing to move the current passenger drop off and accessible parking spaces to a reconstructed parking lot at the Dentonia Park Golf Course.*

Other questions and comments raised by participants include:

- **In a previous discussion with Councillor Crawford, he suggested that 30 Denton Ave. might have room for public parking.** *The Councillor responded that he has spoken to staff at 30 Denton Ave. about this idea but there are many technical challenges so it may not work out.*
- Consider adding a second entrance to the TTC station on Denton Ave. by the bus driveway. A few participants suggested there should be a second TTC entrance by the bus driveway since many people currently cut across the parking lot or walk through the driveway to access the station. *The City would have to raise this suggestion to the TTC for their consideration.*

Process & Other Feedback

The following points capture process and other feedback shared by participants at the meeting:

- **Could you clarify the consultation process after this meeting?** One participant said that she attended the first meeting as well as a meeting with the Councillor and felt that the consultation process has been helpful. *The staff report and recommended zoning will be submitted in November 2019, and then it will go to Planning and Housing Committee (November 13th) and City Council. After that, the Site Plan application process will determine how tall, how many units, and other details (such as building materials). We will consult with the public with updated drawings and final details.*
- **What kind of notice was distributed for this meeting?** A participant shared that he and his neighbours did not receive any notice even though they live very close to the site. *Notice for this meeting was sent twice to addresses over 500-metres of 777 Victoria Park Ave. as well as 705 Warden Ave. People who have opted out of receiving unaddressed mail may not have received this notice. There is also a development sign on the site with meeting details on it, and it will be revised once the statutory meeting details have been determined.*
- **Does the City have other publicly-owned land that could be used for Housing Now?** A participant shared concerns that the City is taking away two well-used commuter parking lots. *The City owns a limited amount of well-located, developable land. The Council direction for Housing Now is to provide housing close to transit on 11 sites identified in this first phase. The TTC declared this site as surplus ten years ago, and we are able to do something to address the housing crisis here while also delivering other public benefits such as childcare and improved public spaces.*
- **Consider providing employment space here instead of housing.** *City staff and CreateTO were directed to provide housing, which is a priority identified by Council*

and was passed unanimously. This opportunity places residential housing on a subway line and fulfills provincial planning and Toronto's Official Plan policies.

- **Will the changes in Bill 108 affect this proposal?** How can the City can guarantee the benefits from the development proposal given the Province's plan to change the City's planning framework? *Bill 108 changed some of the planning legislation and how the City can collect Development Charges. Because this is a City-led development process, the City has the opportunity to go to Council to determine what is appropriate for this site. The City will retain ownership of the land and control the affordable rental units as well as provide community benefits such as childcare or other community uses.*
- **Other feedback.** A participant shared concerns about the existing concentration of affordable rental housing in the area, crime rates, and noisy construction and suggested that the City should consider approaching private condominiums and developers to provide affordable rental units.

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.