



405 Sherbourne Street

Phase One Community Feedback Report

February 2021

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Appendix 1. Overview of Phase One Consultation Activities

Background and process overview

Toronto City Council initiated Housing Now in December 2018 to accelerate the development of affordable rental housing within mixed income, mixed-use, transit-oriented communities across Toronto. 405 Sherbourne Street is one of the 17 current City Council approved Housing Now sites located across the city. Housing Now is part of the HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan and will help the city in achieving its target of approving 40,000 affordable rental and supportive homes by 2030.

The 405 Sherbourne site is located on the edge of Cabbagetown, between Sherbourne Street and Carlton Street. It is currently used as a Green P surface parking lot and is surrounded predominantly by residential and some commercial space. Detailed information about the preliminary development concept for 405 Sherbourne Street is available on the project website at www.createto.ca/405sherbourne.

The process for the 405 Sherbourne Street site launched in the fall of 2020, with the first phase of community consultation held in the winter of 2020 to share and seek feedback on the preliminary development concept. A second community meeting will take place in the spring of 2021, which will focus on a revised development concept. CreateTO anticipates submitting the revised development concept to the City for review and approval in the summer of 2021 prior to procuring a development partner for the site. Final City approvals and construction are expected to start in late 2022. The graphic below provides more detail on the expected timeline.



Phase One consultation overview

The first phase of consultation began in the winter of 2020. CreateTO, City Planning, the Housing Secretariat and subject matter experts hosted meetings with local community groups and a virtual Community Meeting on Monday, November 23rd, 2020. The consultation materials were also made available on the project website and by mail with opportunities to provide feedback online and/or by mail.

The City and CreateTO advertised the Community Meeting through: a mailed notice to residents and businesses surrounding the site (approximately 6,500 notices mailed); emails sent to individuals that signed up for updates on the [Housing Now website](#); posters installed in the community; the [site-specific web page](#); Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam's newsletter; and CreateTO's social media channels. Respondents to the online feedback form indicated hearing about the process through a variety of channels

including: The Councillor's newsletter; the meeting notice, social media, word of mouth, and the community posters.

Additional details on the first phase of consultation, including the materials shared at the Community Consultation Meeting are available on the project website at createto.ca/405sherbourne

Emerging key themes from feedback received

These emerging key themes highlight topics raised consistently throughout the winter 2020 consultation; they should be read in concert with the more detailed summary of feedback that follows.

General support for affordable housing. Many participants supported affordable housing at 405 Sherbourne and the Housing Now Initiative overall. Some suggested the City and CreateTO consider adjusting parts of the preliminary development such as height, density, amount of underground parking, and composition of units (such as including studios or adding affordable homeownership units), to maximize the affordable housing opportunity and financial viability of the project.

Mixed opinions about the proposed height and density of the development. Several participants said the proposed concept is too tall, expressing concern about shadow and wind impacts and concern that a tall building does not match the area's heritage character. Others suggested the City and CreateTO increase the building's height and density to maximize affordable housing and offset development costs.

Concern about existing and potentially increased traffic. Participants were concerned about potential traffic impacts — including pedestrian safety and traffic congestion — and advocated for strategies to mitigate these issues. Suggestions included installing traffic lights at Wellesley and Bleecker streets and making the mid-block vehicle access on the site one-way.

Strong support for public open green space. Generally, participants supported efforts to create a green space that is safe, comfortable, and open for anyone to meet and spend time. There were mixed opinions about the location of the open space: some said it should be on the south side of the development (away from the vehicle access area), while others said it should be on the north side to provide more opportunity for green space.

Detailed summary of feedback received

This first phase of community consultation focussed on sharing and seeking feedback on the preliminary development concept for 405 Sherbourne St. Following the November 23rd Community Meeting, CreateTO added the presentation and a recording of the meeting to the project website. CreateTO also shared an online feedback form following the public session, which was available until late 2020. Finally, participants shared hard copy feedback forms via pre-paid postage. This report integrates feedback shared at the public sessions, meetings with local organizations, online feedback forms, mailed-in feedback forms, and emails sent to the project team.

The intent of the consultation was to capture the range of perspectives shared. As a result, this report references “few”, “some”, and “many” participants sharing a particular point of view. Participants were not asked to confirm whether they did or did not agree with any particular point raised. As a result, this summary is qualitative and based on what people said or wrote.

Detailed feedback on the Preliminary Development Concept

Participants provided feedback about: the development overall, public realm features, affordable housing, heritage and character, community agency space, parking and traffic, and other comments.

Feedback on the development overall

Mixed opinions about the proposed height. Some said the proposed height of 22-stories is too tall, sharing concerns about shadow and wind impacts on the surrounding neighbourhood (especially the nearby homes on Bleecker Street). One participant said the high-rise buildings on Sherbourne Street create wind tunnels that affect Wellesley Street to the north. Some were concerned that the proposed height would not align with the character and heritage of the area and would set a precedent for future development. Others advocated for increased heights and density, suggesting 25 or 27 storeys would better offset the costs of providing affordable units.

Concern about additional density in the neighbourhood. Some were concerned about adding more people to the area, saying the neighbourhood is already crowded and, with COVID-19 requiring physical distancing, a potential health risk. Others were concerned with potential traffic impacts, including pedestrian safety and traffic congestion. One person suggested redeveloping the site as a park instead of the proposed building. Some suggested exploring strategies to improve the intersection at Wellesley and Bleecker streets and others suggested making the mid-block vehicle access one-way within the site.

Provide service access from Sherbourne Street. It was voiced that Bleecker Street often ends up being the “back of the building” where noisy servicing like garbage pick-up happens, and that waste removal could be less disruptive off of Sherbourne Street.

Feedback on public realm features

Strong support for green space around the development. Many participants supported creating green space around the development with suggestions to include

trees, flowers, and bushes. Specific advice on how to strengthen the green spaces included suggestions to use diverse greenery to support a strong ecosystem and to add a green roof.

Support for open public space. Participants said the public open space(s) should be safe and welcoming, including to children and diverse families and cultures. One participant was concerned that adding benches could encourage unwanted behaviours like loitering and drug use. Specific suggestions for the public space around the site, included:

- space for dogs;
- space/equipment for outdoor calisthenics;
- space for an open local market;
- space for street furniture (benches, tables etc.) that are protected from the elements and safely used;
- appropriate soil volumes to support chosen vegetation; and
- encourage regular and consistent use to promote safety.

A variety of opinions about the location(s) of the public open space. Participants appreciated the design team's effort to create safe, comfortable, public places for people to meet and spend time. Generally, they preferred a single large open space over two smaller spaces. Some suggested locating this open space on the south side of the building to keep pedestrians and vehicles apart. Others suggested the open space go on the north side to provide more room for existing trees and to limit shadow impacts to the north.

The building design should help promote safety. Participants suggested designing the building to encourage activity and "eyes on the street." The fact that the building will be residential is excellent as long as it relates to the neighbourhood and does not create barriers between neighbours. Having outdoor space that everyone can enjoy creates safer environments by making it comfortable to walk around the site.

Feedback on affordable housing

Strong support for affordable housing. In general, participants supported the focus on providing affordable housing at 405 Sherbourne. A few participants said units need to be deeply affordable.

Interest in seeing options for affordable home ownership (in addition to affordable rental). Consider including affordable ownership units to help residents to build equity. Renting may not provide residents the same protection as owning.

Off-setting costs of building/operating affordable housing. A few participants said this is an especially difficult and expensive area of the City to build and operate in. They shared different ideas on how to further off-set the cost of providing affordable housing, including:

- incorporate some market condo units and/or smaller unit sizes;
- Increase the building height and total number of units (up to 27-storeys); and
- Exclude the site from the Cabbagetown Heritage Conservation District policies.

Support for family-sized units. Some suggested building units with families in mind. Many affordable units are single dwelling units, and there is a real need for affordable family-sized units in the city.

Consider reducing the parking ratio requirement to help offset the cost of the affordable units.

Feedback about heritage and character

Ensure the development respects the area's look and feel. In general, participants said the building should fit in and align with the architectural heritage of the area by:

- using a brick façade to align with the neighbourhood context;
- reducing the height of the development to low/mid-rise for a better fit with the characteristics in the neighbourhood;
- using a mix of old and modern work.

Feedback on community agency space

Support for creating community agency space. Participants said many local agencies need additional space. Some suggested the City and CreateTO consult with community service providers in the area and city (such as Fife House, Casey House, Fred Victor, and Dixon Hall) about agency space needs. A few said there are already several community service agencies in the neighbourhood, so no more are needed. Suggested types of community agency space included:

- healthcare and medical services;
- senior services (including an activity/party room);
- a library;
- social services and employment;
- a daycare centre;
- a gymnasium;
- a multi-use community service space;
- art or studio space;
- a bike hub;
- space to focus on the homeless population (mental health services, food banks).

Interest in small commercial space on the ground floor. Some participants wanted the building to include a small coffee shop that could also be a gathering space. Another suggested considering short lease alternatives to encourage retail start-ups.

Feedback about parking, traffic, and impacts to the local street network

Concern about limited parking in the area. Some were concerned about the lack of on-street parking in the area and that this development could remove public parking. Consider keeping some public parking on-site.

Add a traffic light at Wellesley and Bleecker Streets to improve traffic flow and pedestrian safety. A few participants said this intersection is congested and can be dangerous for pedestrians and difficult for drivers to turn. They said adding more residents and cars to the area will make it even busier.

Consider making the building's vehicular access one-way to make it safer and create more space for pedestrians.

Other suggestions, comments, and concerns

Important for tenants to know they are living across the street from an established entertainment facility. Since residents will be moving in across the street from The Phoenix, CreateTO should consider design strategies that mitigate noise impacts. The City and CreateTO should create mechanisms to ensure residents understand they are choosing to live next to an entertainment venue before moving in.

Recommendation for layout of units. One participant suggested a number of ideas for the future layout of the units:

- include en-suite laundry machines in the bathroom of units;
- create a kitchen with a view and plenty countertop/pantry space;
- provide storage areas for the units;
- ensure there are windows in the bathroom for ventilation;
- keep coat closets away from the kitchen;

Questions on how to apply for affordable housing. A few asked for information on how to apply for the affordable units on site and to be informed when units are available.

Next steps

The first phase of consultation for the 405 Sherbourne Street site wrapped up in late 2020. A second phase of consultation will take place in the spring of 2021, with a second Community Meeting and continued opportunities to review information and share feedback online, by phone, and mail. The second phase of consultation will focus on sharing and seeking feedback on a revised development concept prior to finalizing the development concept. CreateTO and the City will provide updates on the website and by email and mail to those that signed up to receive updates.

Appendix 1. Overview of Phase One Consultation Activities

Cabbagetown Heritage Conservation District Committee Meeting

Wednesday, October 21, 2020

Virtual Meeting

On Wednesday, October 21, 2020, the City of Toronto and CreateTO hosted a meeting with the Cabbagetown Heritage Conservation District Committee. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the Housing Now Initiative and the 405 Sherbourne site and answer questions related to heritage.

Local Organizations' Meeting

Thursday, November 12, 2020

7:30-9:30 pm, Virtual Meeting

Participants: 20 Invited, 3 in attendance

On Thursday, November 12, 2020, the City of Toronto and CreateTO hosted a meeting with representatives from local organizations to introduce the Housing Now Initiative and share and seek feedback on the team's early ideas for the 405 Sherbourne preliminary development concept. Representatives from local organizations attended the meeting, including a representative of a residential association, a community service provider, and a local business. Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, staff from the City of Toronto and CreateTO, and members of the project consultant team also attended and participated in the meeting. The project team provided a presentation introducing Housing Now along with a site analysis, context, and project schedule for 405 Sherbourne Street. Participants shared feedback through a facilitated discussion guided by a series of discussion questions.

Community Consultation Meeting

Monday, November 23, 2020

7:00-9:00 pm, Virtual Meeting

Participants: Approximately 70 People

On Monday, November 23rd, 2020, the City of Toronto and CreateTO hosted a virtual Community Consultation Meeting for the proposed redevelopment of 405 Sherbourne Street as part of the Housing Now Initiative. Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, staff from the City of Toronto and CreateTO, and members of the project consultant team also attended and participated in the meeting. The project team provided a presentation introducing Housing Now, a site analysis and an overview of the planning framework, heritage considerations, preliminary development concept and the project schedule. Following the presentation, participants asked questions and shared feedback through a facilitated discussion. A recording of the meeting is available on [CreateTO's YouTube channel](#) and a meeting summary (shared first in draft with participants) is on [the project website](#).

Online Feedback Form

November 9, 2020-December 21, 2020

Reponses Received: 14

The online feedback form was available online and by mail upon request for approximately 6 weeks from November to early January. The questions included were:

1. What types of public realm features (such as trees and plantings, walkways, street furniture) would you like to see around the building?
2. What suggestions do you have, if any, on how best to reflect the characteristics of the neighbourhood and surrounding buildings in the preliminary development concept?
3. What types of community agency space do you think would benefit the local community? (e.g., library, community health services, employment centre, senior services, etc.)
4. Other comments?
5. How did you hear about this process?

Mailed Engagement Materials

Mailed out upon request

Total requests for materials received: 46

Total feedback forms received by mail: 6

The Community Meeting Notice included a tear-off card with pre-paid postage, which allowed anyone to request hard copies of a Discussion Guide, 405 Sherbourne Information Sheet, and a feedback form. They could also request these documents by leaving a voicemail. All hard copy packages included a pre-paid postage return envelope so participants could mail their feedback.