

Don Mills Crossing: Community Building at Don Mills and Eglinton - Phase 2 Report

Date: October 27, 2017

To: Planning and Growth Management Committee

From: Acting Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division

Wards: 26 - Don Valley West

SUMMARY

This report recommends approval in principle of the Public Realm Plan for the Don Mills Crossing study area. The Public Realm Plan is one of the Study outcomes that will be used to guide future development. The Plan will serve as the organizing structure for the preparation of a Secondary Plan. The Public Realm Plan is accompanied by four guiding principles which will ensure the creation of a complete and connected community: Create a Vibrant Mixed Use Community; Connect with Nature and Build Resiliency; Enhance Mobility Choice, Comfort and Connectivity; and Support Inclusive City Building. These principles align with Provincial and municipal policies related to appropriate intensification around transit facilities.

Launched in June 2016, the Don Mills Crossing study is the outcome of City Council's May 2014 adoption of Eglinton Connects and its June 2016 settlement of an Ontario Municipal Board appeal for the Celestica lands, a 60 acre parcel located at the northwest corner of Don Mills Road and Eglinton Avenue East. Both Council decisions require the development of a comprehensive planning framework prior to new development occurring in the area.

Don Mills Crossing is a three-phase study. In January 2017, Planning and Growth Management Committee adopted the Profile Report completed at the conclusion of Phase 1. During Phase 2, a Public Realm Plan and guiding principles were developed and refined through a series of community and stakeholder consultation events. This report marks the conclusion of this phase and sets the stage for preparation of a Secondary Plan for the Don Mills Crossing Core Study Area through additional analysis and policy development.

The Public Realm Plan proposes to enhance the relationship between the natural setting of the area and future development which will serve as both a placemaking and a resiliency strategy. A key component of the Plan is improved connectivity to help ensure that future intensification does not occur in isolation, but connects to the surrounding communities. These new connections should be at a pedestrian scale, concentrating community services and employment opportunities within walking distance of transit, important neighbourhood destinations and cultural resources. This

will assist in ensuring the cumulative benefit of public investment in transit, pedestrian and community infrastructure and new development extends beyond the Don Mills and Eglinton study area and into the surrounding communities. The Public Realm Plan will serve to structure the pattern of future development parcels and support the day-to-day activities of residents and workers in a pedestrian friendly, transit oriented environment.

Phase 2 of the Don Mills Crossing study also explored how key components of the Public Realm Plan and supporting principles could be advanced through City-wide initiatives including the Ravine Strategy, the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan and TransformTO. The objective was to ensure that growth and investment in the Don Mills Crossing area works to advance city-wide initiatives at the local level.

This report recommends that City Council adopt the attached Public Realm Plan Report as the basis to undertake stakeholder and public consultation that will inform the preparation of a new Secondary Plan. The proposed Secondary Plan is targeted to be brought forward for Planning and Growth Management Committee's consideration in the second quarter of 2018.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Acting Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division recommends that City Council:

1. Direct the Acting Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division, to use the Public Realm Plan Report contained in Attachment 2 as a basis for undertaking stakeholder and public consultations to inform the preparation of a proposed Secondary Plan for the Don Mills Crossing Core Study Area.
2. Request the Acting Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division to bring forward a proposed Secondary Plan and supporting implementation strategies for the Don Mills Crossing Core Study Area based on the Public Realm Plan report contained in Attachment 2 and informed by the consultations in Recommendation 1 by the second quarter of 2018.
3. Direct staff to review applications for official plan amendments and/or rezoning applications in the area subject to the Don Mills Crossing study in the context of advancing the Public Realm Plan report contained in Attachment 2.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

This report's recommendations have no financial impact.

The Don Mills Crossing study will advance various corporate initiatives to help ensure that new development triggered by the Eglinton Crosstown LRT public investment is leveraged for the benefit of existing and future residents and employees. This includes the following:

Don Mills Civitan Arena Relocation:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.GM19.6>

Toronto's Licensed Child Care Growth Strategy:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.CD19.2>

Toronto Ravine Strategy:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.EX27.8>

Parks & Recreation Facilities Management Plan:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.EX28.2>

Toronto Public Library Facilities Master Plan:

<http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2017/mar20/B20170320-full-agenda-revised.pdf#page=7>

In support of the above and findings from the Don Mills Crossing study, a financial strategy will be undertaken in conjunction with preparation of the proposed Secondary Plan to identify and secure specific infrastructure measures that address existing infrastructure needs and keep pace with the scale of growth expected in the Don Mills and Eglinton area. Development approvals for individual sites will secure hard and soft infrastructure to support related demand and contribute to a complete community.

DECISION HISTORY

City Council Direction

Direction to undertake the Don Mills Crossing study was provided through the following decisions of Council:

- In August 2014, City Council identified Don Mills and Eglinton as a Focus Area through its adoption of Eglinton Connects, and provided direction to staff to develop a Secondary Plan for the Focus Area to advance these matters:
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.PG35.3>
- In June 2016, City Council reached a settlement of an Ontario Municipal Board appeal of Official Plan Amendment 231 (Employment Policies) as it applied to the Celestica lands. The settlement included a Site and Area Specific Policy requiring a comprehensive planning framework prior to new development:
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.CC19.8>

Don Mills Crossing Profile Report

At its meeting of January 11, 2017, Planning and Growth Management Committee adopted the Don Mills Crossing Phase 1 Report which presented a profile of the study area and its immediate surroundings. The Don Mills Crossing Profile Report outlined how the study area is a collection of single use precincts, developed at a large scale between the expansive natural valleys of the Don River. The Profile Report focused on

the history and a review of the demographics of the study area which updated and confirmed the findings of Eglinton Connects on community infrastructure needs: <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.PG17.7>

COMMENTS

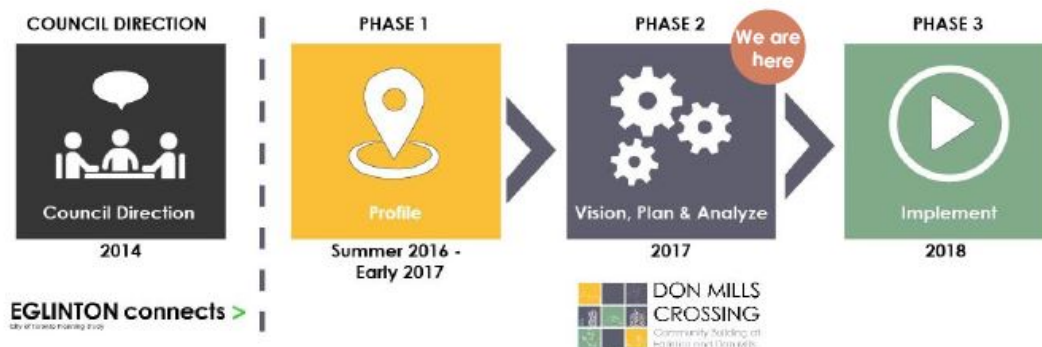
Background

The Don Mills Crossing study builds on the work of Eglinton Connects coupled with the potential city building opportunities around the future redevelopment of the Celestica lands to advance a comprehensive planning framework for the area surrounding Don Mills and Eglinton. The new Eglinton Crosstown LRT stop at Don Mills and Eglinton will spur opportunities for redevelopment on vacant and underutilized lands surrounding the station, some of which are in public ownership. The opportunity to inform future development in the area by establishing a secondary plan provides the ability to deliver a new public realm, a connected open space system, community facilities, additional employment uses, a range of housing and connections to the adjacent ravine system.

Process

Don Mills Crossing is advancing through three phases as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Don Mills Crossing Process and Phasing



Phase 2 focused on the development of a Public Realm Plan to provide a structure for a new community in the study area. Four guiding principles are proposed to guide future planning in the area and to activate the public realm to ensure a complete community emerges. These principles will inform additional analysis and policy development in Phase 3 leading to the preparation of a proposed Secondary Plan and implementation strategies for consideration by City Council.

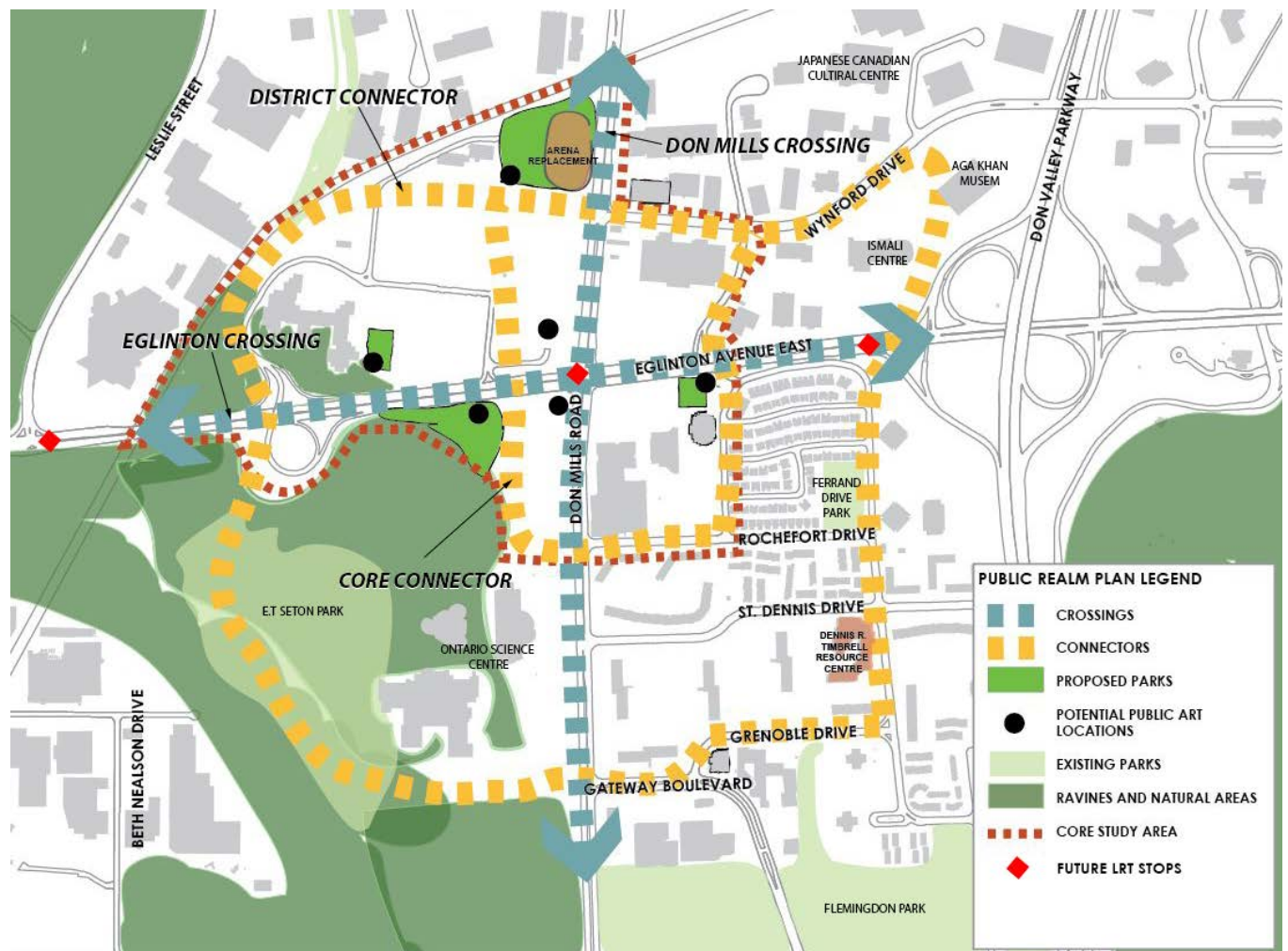
As part of Don Mills Crossing's transportation analysis, the City has initiated a Mobility Plan Study to examine new transportation infrastructure and a grade-separated crossing of the CP Rail Corridor for pedestrians and cyclists. The Mobility Plan Study will satisfy Phases 1 and 2 of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment Process.

A Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment has also been initiated to ensure that structures with heritage potential in the area are properly identified, understood and potentially conserved. In addition, a Community Services and Facilities (CS&F) Profile was conducted during Phase 1 of Don Mills Crossing, which updated and confirmed the findings of Eglinton Connects previously adopted by City Council.

Public Realm Plan

Through the work of the Phase 2 component of the Don Mills Crossing study, a Public Realm Plan has been developed, which will serve to guide the structure for a new community at Don Mills and Eglinton as illustrated in Figure 2. As intensification around transit infrastructure in the area occurs, it will be important for the area to transform from a series of large disconnected precincts into a more integrated and vibrant employment and mixed-use community. The Public Realm Plan identifies important places and spaces in the community, while emphasizing pedestrian and cycling mobility through the Core Study Area and better connections from the surrounding communities to the new transit area.

Figure 2: Don Mills Crossing Public Realm Plan



The Public Realm Plan is organized into Crossings and Connectors: streets, trails and open spaces that tie new places as they emerge with redevelopment with the surrounding community. Anticipating intensification in the area, the Crossings and Connectors will be designed to be experienced as places themselves in addition to being links between important places. Descriptions of these pillars of the public realm plan follow, and a full discussion of the public realm character and other features can be found in Chapter 2 of the Public Realm Plan Report found in Attachment 2.

The Crossings follow the path of the arterial roads which fully connect through the various natural and manmade barriers present in the area:

- **The Eglinton Crossing** would feature a landscape treatment that would range from a more natural condition to reflect its relationship with the ravine at its western extent to a more urban and manicured treatment to the east adjacent to the Agha Khan Park and Museum grounds.
- **The Don Mills Crossing** would include enhanced setbacks and urban streetscapes offering pedestrian amenity as part of the employment area north of Eglinton Avenue East and the residential community to the south. Its intersection with the Eglinton Crossing will mark the central intersection of the study area where high volumes of pedestrian activity are anticipated surrounding the new transit station.

The Connectors are circulation routes which bring together more local destinations:

- **The District Connector** is a series of streets and trails linking the Core Study Area with active transportation infrastructure in existing and emerging neighbourhoods. It will connect Flemingdon Park with the ravine along the West Branch of the Don River Valley and extend via a new trail connection from the ravine into the redevelopment on the Celestica lands. It will include pedestrian and cycling infrastructure as part of the new Wynford Drive extension west from Don Mills Road that will connect to an active transportation connection across the CP Rail Corridor to the terminus of the Leaside Spur Trail and Leslie Street and surrounding areas.
- **The Core Connector** is a tighter loop of public streets intended to improve day-to-day mobility to and from the future transit infrastructure. New public streets (to the west of Don Mills Road) or the realignment of existing streets (to the east) will provide new safe north-south crossings of Eglinton Avenue East allowing for easier movement for pedestrians to the LRT station and activities that will emerge nearby.

Together, the Crossings and Connectors provide improved connectivity and circulation to the three existing parks in the area (E.T. Seton/Sunnybrook, Ferrand Drive Park and Flemingdon Park). Within the Core Study Area, new open space will be created through parkland conveyances from development. This has the potential to result in at least four new public parks: one large signature park and three smaller local parks.

The signature park will be large enough to accommodate the relocated Don Mills Arena in a campus setting as part of a variety of recreational uses to serve the local area as well as the broader community. Two of the local parks will have a relationship with the ravine along the western portion of the Eglinton Crossing. The neighbourhood park to

the north of Eglinton Avenue East will be designed as a portal into the ravine with connections to the new trail system into E.T. Seton Park. South of Eglinton Avenue East, the local park will have a more passive relationship with the ravine given the adjacent steep grades and environmentally sensitive areas at the base of the slope. The final local scale park will be located within the Core Connector southeast of Don Mills Road and Eglinton Avenue East, and would provide urban amenity adjacent to lands anticipated to develop with the greatest intensity of uses.

Principles

The Public Realm Plan will structure and organize the public places and development sites. Four guiding principles outlined below will guide future planning in the area to activate these places and ensure the development of a complete community.

- **Create a Vibrant Mixed-Use Community:** Appropriate levels of intensification will occur with a range and mix of uses to foster activity and animate the public realm. This includes a range of employment uses, housing types and tenure, and community uses. High quality buildings with appropriate building type, setbacks and massing will support and frame the public realm ensuring a comfortable and enjoyable pedestrian experience. The character of the area will be enhanced through the retention of identified heritage structures through development.
- **Connect with Nature and Build Resiliency:** New street and trail connections to adjacent natural areas will be guided by the goal of both protecting and celebrating these important resources. Natural systems enhance the public realm with more than landscape; they can build resiliency in handling storm water, increase biodiversity or be a source for low-carbon energy.
- **Enhance Mobility Choice, Comfort and Connectivity:** New streets and existing streets will be designed as a network that promotes multimodal travel, functioning as efficient links that are also experienced as safe and beautiful places. Walking and cycling in the community will be balanced with other modes of transit to provide many options for local and district-level mobility.
- **Support Inclusive City Building:** The facilities and services necessary to meet the needs of seniors and youth in a growing community will form part of a public realm network designed for all ages and abilities. A range of housing type, tenure and affordability will include units sized for families.

The Public Realm Plan together with the guiding principles set the framework for the urban structure for the study area which will direct the highest intensity of development with the greatest mix of uses on lands bound by the Core Connector given their proximity to transit. Development heights and densities will decrease outside the Core Connector while maintaining a compact form on a fine grain and walkable street network. Built form will be shaped to frame and support the public realm and ensure appropriate levels of sunlight are preserved on the key links and public parks identified in the Public Realm Plan. These objectives, discussed in detail in the attached Public Realm Plan report, will implement the Growth Plan and Official Plan policies that

provide for building complete, transit supportive communities that focus intensification in close proximity to transit.

Public Engagement

Through Phase 2 of the Don Mills Crossing study, hundreds of local community members and stakeholders were engaged to help develop, refine and advance the Public Realm Plan and guiding principles outlined in this report.

Consultation events were complemented by a series of Planners in Public Spaces (PiPS) consultations at local businesses and community gatherings. In addition, an online tool on the project web page provided individuals with the opportunity to review the Public Realm Plan and express a preference on the potential alignment and treatment of the various components. The Don Mills Crossing study was also presented to the City's Design Review Panel and the Toronto Planning Review Panel, a city-wide resident advisory group providing input into the planning process. Full summaries of all public consultation events are posted on the Don Mills Crossing website: www.toronto.ca/donmillscrossing.

Participants in consultation events confirmed earlier Phase 1 findings, including the need for better ravine connections and the provision of a safe crossing of the rail corridor to connect with the adjacent Leaside Spur trail. Participants were generally supportive of the direction of the Public Realm Plan, highlighting its ability to deliver ravine connections and the rail corridor crossing through site development. There was support for the concept that nature should be an important part of the character of the public realm and many expressed a preference for the use of naturalized landscape treatments to enhance the relationships to the ravine.

Issues raised by participants included how new development would add pressure to the capacity of existing community facilities and outlined the potential need for additional facilities to accommodate anticipated area growth. Participants also indicated a desire to see existing facilities in Flemingdon Park be improved and expanded to accommodate additional programs and services with particular attention paid to the design and location to serve the higher proportion of seniors and youth found in the surrounding community. Other comments expressed concern related to the potential loss of vehicular travel lanes when implementing potential cycling lanes on existing streets identified in the Public Realm Plan.

Participants also commented on built form, specifically that the heights of buildings and the location of tall buildings needed to be carefully considered in terms of location and separation to not impact enjoyment of the public realm. Similarly, participants and the Design Review Panel indicated that new buildings should be well designed and appropriately scaled to not set negative precedent in a rapidly developing area. Comments also included the need for a legible and direct connection from the Science Centre LRT station to the Ontario Science Centre. This route should have weather protection and potential wayfinding features to mark this important route from the transit stop to its namesake institution.

Development Applications in the Don Mills Crossing Study Area

Development applications have been filed for the Celestica lands and pre-application discussions are ongoing for other lands within the study area. A goal of the Don Mills Crossing study is to ensure that development is considered through an integrated approach that advances the Public Realm Plan and the four guiding principles to support the development of a vibrant and complete community. Development should not be considered in isolation from the broader context.

Conclusion

This report sets the stage for the development of a proposed new Secondary Plan in Phase 3 of the Don Mills Crossing study. The foundation of the proposed Secondary Plan will be the Public Realm Plan and the four guiding principles that bring the Plan to life. In addition to setting the stage for physical growth and improvement, the future Secondary Plan would also inform or help implement other City initiatives such as the Toronto Ravine Strategy, the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan and TransformTO.

Phase 3 of the Don Mills Crossing study will be informed by ongoing analysis on heritage properties, mobility planning, built form and community services and facilities. The preparation of a Secondary Plan for this area presents an important city building opportunity. The Don Mills Crossing study will advance this opportunity to transition the area from a "place between places" to a transit-centric community that is an attractive, resilient and inclusive place to live, work and play.

CONTACT

Christian Ventresca, Senior Planner, Strategic Initiatives, City Planning Division
416-392-3439, Christian.Ventresca@toronto.ca

Corwin Cambray, Project Manager, Strategic Initiatives, Policy & Analysis, City Planning Division, 416-338-1910, Corwin.Cambray@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Gregg Lintern, MCIP, RPP
Acting Chief Planner and Executive Director
City Planning Division

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Don Mills Crossing Public Realm Plan and Principles
Attachment 2 - Don Mills Crossing Public Realm Plan Report