



Toronto Community  
Benefits Network



## TCBN Submission on PH12.1 - Downsview Secondary Plan

Thursday May 9, 2024

Members of the Economic and Development Committee and City Council  
Toronto City Hall  
100 Queen St W  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Chair and Members of the Planning and Housing Committee,

The Toronto Community Benefits Network (TCBN) is submitting this letter today in support of the Downsview Secondary Plan with a few recommendations for improvement.

The TCBN, a 120-member city wide community-labour coalition located within the Downsview surrounding area in North York, has led an extensive engagement process through consultations with over 1,500 local community members, stakeholders and member organizations over the past two years. Engagement activities included community outreach, petitions, participating in and hosting events in the community, and a neighbourhood tour in collaboration with Northcrest Developments.

We would like to recognize the ongoing support and active leadership from local Councillor James Pasternak who has attended numerous TCBN events and community engagement activities expressing strong support for our **vision in Downsview as a thriving, inclusive, diverse, affordable and environmentally sustainable neighbourhood for decades to come.**



As a Black-led local organization, we would also like to recognize the deep community engagement with local residents and stakeholders, Indigenous and Black communities led by the interdivisional City of Toronto staff teams from Community Development, Social Development, Finance and Administration, Economic Development and City Planning during the Secondary Plan process and by Canada Lands Company and Northcrest through the Id8 Downsview engagement process.

Specifically, we would like to highlight the commitment and leadership of Northcrest Developments to be the first private sector developer to participate in the City of Toronto's voluntary approach to establishing Community Benefits Plans under the Community Benefits Framework, a commitment which was announced by Northcrest at the GTHA Summit held at Toronto City Hall on October 28th, 2023. The summit, hosted by the Toronto CBN, Peel CBN and Hamilton CBN, brought together over 200 residents, community and labour organizations, government and political representatives, employers and contractors from across the GTHA to discuss the importance of Community Benefits Agreements and equitable development approaches in city building

#### Community Benefits Agreements & Community Benefits Plans

TCBN and local community benefits coalitions have long advocated for planning tools that can enable community informed, equitable development approaches as part of large scale developments and the densification of Toronto neighbourhoods. Such tools can ensure that local communities, most impacted by a development project, can have a say and share in the prosperity, opportunities and benefits that support inclusive economies, sustainable development and affordable neighbourhoods.

The TCBN recognizes the limited planning tools, set by the Provincial government, which limits the City of Toronto's ability to require Community Benefits Agreements in the planning approvals process and as such proudly advocated for and supported the motion to start this interdivisional work on exploring voluntary approaches to community benefits plan in private sector developments. ([MM47.1](#) by City Councillor Joe Mihevc in 2022).

With the City of Toronto and Canada Lands Company, as owners of public land at Downsview, there is a great opportunity to ensure that these developments go beyond Community Benefits Plans, and include Community Benefits Agreements that include targets for local and equitable workforce development, apprenticeships and training, social procurement and other neighbourhood and environmental improvements that can maximize benefits and opportunities for Black and Indigenous communities.

#### Rent Geared to Income & Deeply Affordable Housing

Through our extensive community engagement process, affordable housing and most importantly, deeply affordable housing and rent-to-own opportunities has been identified as the most important priority for local residents, community groups and member organizations. The secondary plan should emphasize the development of more deeply affordable and rent-geared to income housing as part of each district plan and phase of development at Downsview. While the City of Toronto is setting a goal of 30% for affordable housing, the Secondary Plan should also ensure that public federally owned districts also meet a similar 30% target, with deeply affordable and rent geared to income housing in perpetuity.



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In February, TCBN submitted a letter to the North York Community Council expressing disappointment with the Canada Lands Company's Arbo District plan proposal that does not include a commitment for a Community Benefits Agreement and only commits to 20% affordable housing at 80% average market rent for only 25 years.

With Downsview being the largest planned development project in Toronto, and amidst a housing affordability crisis, governments should think more strategically (including collaboration and partnership with the public and non-profit sectors) on how it can increase the amount of affordable housing units. This includes more deeply affordable and rent geared to income options as well as increased tenure that keeps this housing affordable in perpetuity.

#### Climate Action & Environmental Sustainability

Climate action and sustainability has been a critical pillar of TCBNs engagement with local residents, community groups, organizations and labour union members. A few weeks ago, the TCBN hosted a climate action workshop with the Toronto Environmental Alliance at the Downsview Library to discuss important community and member priorities for climate action as part of the redevelopment of the Downsview area. Key themes that were discussed included green buildings and built environment, energy efficiency, multimodal mobility options within the neighbourhood and connecting the surrounding neighbourhoods, enhanced parks and green spaces for activities and recreation for all ages, and pathways to good green jobs. We would like to see all developments at Downsview align with the City of Toronto TransformTO goals and meet the highest tier of the Toronto Green Standard.

As a Black-led organization and local community stakeholder, we look forward to the continued engagement, participation and collaboration in the next phase of the Downsview Secondary Plan specifically as it relates to public sector Community Benefits Agreements and private sector Community Benefits Plans which includes meaningful community engagement, measures for monitoring, tracking and reporting of outcomes and community oversight.

While the TCBN is in support of the Downsview Secondary Plan, we would like to ensure important community priorities are reflected in the Plan and subsequent District Plans to come. We would like to recognize the support from local Councillor James Pasternak and City staff in helping to develop this innovative and interdivisional approach to equitable city building with the inclusion of a Community Development Plan that was passed at the Economic and Community Development Committee on April 30.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R Powell".

Rosemarie Powell  
Executive Director  
Toronto Community Benefits Network



### Community Priorities for Inclusive Economies and Community Benefits at Downsview

Through our [CBAforDownsview](#) campaign, steered by the Downsview Community Benefits Committee which included local residents and member organizations from community and labour, the TCBN has identified a number of key themes and priorities for inclusive local economies, equitable and sustainable development actions that are reflected in each phase of the land use planning process and as part of formalized agreements to deliver on community benefits targets:

Priority Areas	Targets and Expectations
<p><b>Good jobs and inclusive economies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meet the TCBN minimum standard of 10% apprenticeships trades and/or craft working hours on a trade-by-trade basis to be performed by apprentices from equity deserving groups with a focus on Black and Indigenous communities</li> <li>● Ensure minimum 50% target for equity hiring and minimum 25% for local hiring in new professional, administrative, technical, operations and maintenance roles with a focus on Black and Indigenous communities</li> <li>● Ensure employment opportunities that pay a living wage across all phases of construction and development</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social procurement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Minimum 20% social procurement target through purchasing goods and/or services from local businesses, social enterprises and businesses that are owned by persons who identify as Indigenous, Black or Persons of Colour.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Neighbourhood Improvements</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Minimum 30% affordable housing on public land and 20% affordable housing on private land including affordable and community ownership in each phase of with at least 50% being deeply affordable or Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) for a minimum of 99 years</li> <li>● A plan for affordable below market rate commercial and micro retail space opportunities are available to nonprofits, social enterprises, Black-owned and Indigenous-owned organizations and businesses</li> </ul>
<p><b>Environmental sustainability</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensure equitable and sustainable development that commits to the highest level of Toronto's Green Standard, a program that supports a 'just transition' for green jobs and careers, the adoption of innovative green building design and materials, sustainable micro mobility initiatives and preservation parks and open spaces for culturally specific community-led initiatives</li> </ul>
<p><b>Accountability and Transparency through community oversight</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A public commitment by each landowner through a Community Benefits Framework that leads to an agreement for community benefits for each phase of development at Downsview. Such agreements would include measurable targets in development contracts and a commitment to ongoing community oversight, monitoring, tracking,</li> </ul>



	public reporting in each phase of development. Community oversight should also include representation from Indigenous-led and Black-led organizations and residents
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**About the Toronto Community Benefits Network**

Since 2014, TCBNs advocacy and engagement in local communities across Toronto has led to formalized frameworks and agreements to ensure responsible development with commitments to community benefits, social procurement, neighbourhood improvements and targets for inclusive local economic pathways for Black, Indigenous and equity deserving groups into good jobs and opportunities including apprenticeships, professional, administrative and technical and long-term stable careers.

TCBNs programs with member organizations from community and labour, working with employers and contractors to facilitate pathways into construction, for Indigenous, Black and equity deserving groups especially amongst Black youth, women, newcomers and contractors who historically have been underrepresented and have faced significant barriers to opportunities in the sector. Our work has also focused on hosting events like the Green Build Career Fair, working with employers, unions and contractors to promote green careers, skills development and training opportunities in neighbourhoods across Toronto.

The TCBN also hosts the [Canadian Building Diversity Awards](#), the premier event celebrating diversity, equity, and inclusion across Canada. The upcoming 4th annual celebration, on June 14th, 2024 "Building A Sustainable Future" will honor the visionaries and trailblazers fostering a more inclusive future in the construction industry.