

May 8, 2024

Re: Item PH12.1 - Update Downsview: Secondary Plan, Zoning By-law, Urban Design Guidelines and Master Environmental Servicing Plan - Final Report

Dear Councillor Gord Perks and Members of the Planning and Housing Committee,

I am writing on behalf of Social Planning Toronto (SPT), a non-profit, charitable community organization that challenges inequity in our city through knowledge generation, debate, civic engagement, advocacy, and collaboration to spark social and policy change rooted in social and economic justice and a vision for an equitable, inclusive, and accessible Toronto.

Social Planning Toronto is excited to be a part of the Downsview development that is embarking on the Secondary Plan approval process. As a member of the Community Resource Group, our organization has been participating in the consultation process for the last two years and we are optimistic about the opportunities this development offers to Downsview communities.

We are encouraged by the recent City Council direction to request to the Social Development, Finance and Administration Division, to continue to work with all property owners and stakeholders in the Secondary Plan Area to include Community Development Plans as part of the District Plan submissions.

To support the existing growing population (over 40,000) and the 115,000 new residents anticipated in Downsview over 30 years we request the committee to consider following recommendations for inclusion in the community benefits plan:

Neighbourhood improvements:

Commit to neighbourhood improvements such as affordable and free recreation spaces, accessible community centres and arts and cultural spaces, affordable, non-profit childcare centres, connected public parks. This should be supported through investments in social infrastructure that address local needs such as food insecurity and community access to space. The use of Urban Design Guidelines for further direction on the public realm, and built form, is a step in the right direction to ensure equitable and accessible design of space and amenities. The newly proposed pilot of the Community Planning Permit System should eliminate access and administrative barriers for all equity deserving groups to access community space seamlessly as part of the continued neighbourhood improvement process.

Affordable housing:

Commit to building a minimum of 30% affordable housing and/or affordable ownership throughout the developments. Since housing affordability is the most pressing issue affecting Toronto residents, we strongly recommend that the city develops criteria for deeply affordable units to address the housing crisis in Downsview. We also recommend that at least 50% of all affordable housing is deeply affordable or Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) for a minimum of 99 years.

Minimum disruption to communities:

Commit to a zero percent of disruption to communities while connecting all land use areas such as employment, institutional, neighbourhoods, transit corridor, parks, green space, and mobility network during the development phases in 30 years. Commit to an information sharing system that informs and prepares communities in advance to avoid disruptions.

Good jobs and local hiring:

Commit to 50% equity hiring (defined as the hiring of historically disadvantaged communities i.e. Black, Indigenous, racialized, newcomers, etc.), with 30% being locally hired for the construction development, operations and maintenance. Commit to having all jobs to pay a living wage with benefits. We also recommend establishing an inclusive training program in conjunction with local educational institutions to help local communities prepare and apply for various jobs during different phases of the development.

Environmental sustainability:

Commit to 100 percent zero emission buildings. Ensure that environmental sustainability is maintained with the highest LEED certification, green building design, construction and operations, sustainable initiatives, and the preservation of the current Downsview Park area 6.

Accountability and Transparency:

A commitment from all landowners including Create TO, Northcrest Developments and Canada Lands Company to sign a Community Benefits Framework with Toronto Community Benefits Network, who have been working with local communities to establish priorities for the Downsview Development and have been advocating for the establishment of a Community Benefits Agreements for each phase of development at Downsview. Such frameworks would commit to including measurable targets in development contracts and a commitment to ongoing monitoring, tracking, public reporting, and community oversight in each phase of development.

SPT congratulates the Create TO, Canada Lands Company and Northcrest Developments for creating opportunities to transform Downsview communities through this development. We hope that through ongoing engagement and collaboration, this plan will establish the framework that will guide the creation of a transformational model community, over the next thirty years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "mwong".

Melissa Wong
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