

July 03, 2025

RE: NY25.4 - 123 Garratt Boulevard (Taxiway West District) - Zoning By-law Amendment

To Mayor of Toronto Olivia Chow, Members of City Council and North York Community Council,

The Toronto Community Benefits Network is a city-wide network with 120 member organizations from community, labour and social enterprise. We are located in the Downsview area and have been an active participant throughout the Downsview planning process.

In 2021, the TCBN launched our [CBAforDownsview](#) campaign to ensure the Downsview redevelopment plan reflects the priorities of local communities and that each project phase includes commitments to community benefits that can help to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of people living in the Downsview area, especially in local City-identified neighbourhood improvement areas and emerging neighbourhoods.

We are pleased to see Northcrest take a first step in embracing the possibilities for community benefits as part of its Taxiway district plan, the first of many as part of the 30+ year Downsview redevelopment plan.

We applaud the City of Toronto for working with Northcrest to develop targets that the Northcrest leadership and their stakeholders were willing to support. This is a commitment that our diverse city richly deserves. In 2022, it was through TCBNs advocacy that the City Council approved a [motion](#) (MM47.1, Mihevc) encouraging the City to explore options for voluntary private sector community benefits plan as part of the planning approval process.

Toronto is among the most diverse cities in the world, over **55 % of the population** identify as a visible minority; Black residents alone make up approximately **9.6 %**, and Indigenous peoples nearly **0.8 %** of the city. In the broader GTA, Black individuals are about **7.8 %**, and Indigenous peoples represent a significant but underrepresented portion. Yet, persistent disparities exist: median wages for Black Torontonians are approximately **\$13,000 lower for men** and **\$3,400 lower for women** compared to others, and **nearly 35 % of Black children** live in low-income households, nearly double the city average of 18%. Addressing these systemic inequities demands proactive interventions. It is within this context that TCBN does its work to ensure equitable approaches to inclusive development in Toronto.

We support Northcrest's proposed Community Benefits Plan, and urge Northcrest and the City to go even further during its various stages of implementation, to ensure the plan becomes truly transformational:

1. Private Sector Community Benefits Plan

Northcrest's leadership as the first private developer in Toronto embracing a Community Benefits Plan is commendable. As part of its implementation strategy for Phase 1, we encourage and look forward to participating in meaningful community and stakeholder engagement through the Community Benefits Working Group.

Our goal is to value-add to the various phases of development, bringing forward best practices and learnings from our work on over nine community benefits projects (both public and private projects) in Toronto.

Community benefits requirements should be anchored in **legally binding agreements** with developer partners, leaseholders, contractors and suppliers and the implementation phase should include an **apprenticeship plan, employment and labour market plan, community oversight through a working group, annual public reporting, and regular evaluation.**

Tracking and reporting should include **disaggregated data and key performance indicators** to ensure equitable representation of Black and Indigenous communities across project works and activities. We encourage commonly used percentage-based targets for construction hiring and breaking down the proposed dollar value hiring and social procurement targets into more focused ones such as:

- **10 % or more apprenticeship trade or craft hours** by equity-deserving tradespeople (priority for Black and Indigenous communities)
- **50 % equity hiring** in professional, administrative, and technical roles, with at least **25 % local hiring**
- **20 % social procurement** from local, Indigenous, Black, or equity-focused businesses and social enterprises

2. Anchor affordability and community ownership

We are encouraged by Northcrest's commitment to long-term affordable housing tenure on the site including options for **deeply affordable and/or rent-geared-to-income units**. As the plan develops, we would like for it to include specific commitments for **community ownership and/or affordable, below market rent options** for commercial, retail and community spaces for nonprofits, Black-owned and Indigenous-owned enterprises.

3. Prioritize living wages, sustainability, and capacity-building

We will continue to encourage **good jobs across all project phases** with job quality indicators for monitoring. Further, we will support **green jobs, skills training and elevate career pathways and advancement for Black and Indigenous communities** in planning, operations, and construction of new districts. Strengthening these will help reduce income disparities, ensure sustainable development and build intergenerational community wealth.

4. Build robust implementation partnerships

We firmly believe *"the proof of concept will be in the implementation"*. We encourage ongoing coordination between **community, labour, developer partners and contractors**, with regular working group meetings, oversight mechanisms to track targets, transparent dashboards with annual public reporting, and continuous representation from Black and Indigenous-led organizations and groups.

5. Adopt a culture-sensitive approach to placemaking

Toronto's cultural richness is reflected in its distinct communities, from Chinatown to Little Jamaica.

Embedding community-led, culturally relevant public spaces, art, and programming, especially in early project phases like the runway and hangars will strengthen community identity and connection.

We welcome this vision and the concrete steps taken by Northcrest and the City. If fully realized, the Downsview transformation has the potential to deliver not only a city within a city, but a model for truly inclusive development, one that becomes a blueprint for future private development projects across Toronto and beyond.

The TCBN is a committed partner with a wealth of expertise and knowledge on community benefits in Toronto, both on public sector and private sector projects. As local stakeholders and national convenor in the development of best practices and standards for community benefits, we look forward to continuing to work with City Council, City staff and Northcrest in the development of a robust, best practices-informed and industry-aligned model for the delivery of a private sector Community Benefits Plan as part of the Northcrest's first district plan at Downsview.

Sincerely,



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