

July 6, 2026

Re: Item NY34.9 – 1377 Sheppard Avenue West (Downsview West District) – Zoning By-law Amendment – Decision Report – Approval

Dear Chair and Members of North York Community Council,

On behalf of the Toronto Community Benefits Network (TCBN), we are writing to express significant concerns in regards to the proposed Downsview West District Plan. As this significant project moves forward, we urge Council to ensure that the development delivers meaningful and lasting benefits for the Downsview community, particularly for residents and businesses who have historically experienced barriers to opportunity and are most vulnerable to displacement.

The redevelopment of this site presents an important opportunity to advance the City's goals of equitable development and inclusive growth by embedding community benefits into the planning and implementation of the project. We respectfully ask that City Council prioritize the following measures:

1. Deliver a minimum of 30% affordable housing

Housing affordability remains one of the most pressing challenges facing Toronto. Public lands should be prioritized for public good. As such, we urge Council to secure a minimum of 30% affordable housing across the development, with affordability defined in a manner that reflects the needs of low- and moderate-income households rather than market rates. A substantial affordable housing commitment will help ensure that long-time residents, newcomers, seniors, families, and workers can continue to live in the community as the area grows.

As one of the largest redevelopment areas in Toronto, the development plan for Downsview West District should create mixed-income communities that remain accessible to existing residents in the long term. We are also disappointed to see a 25-year tenure for affordable housing on this site. We encourage the City of Toronto and Canada Lands Company (CLC) to prioritize partnerships with non profit housing providers and community land trusts to secure deeply affordable housing options on public lands in perpetuity.

2. Secure a Community Benefits Plan with local and equitable hiring commitments

This development represents a major public opportunity to create pathways to good jobs and careers. In 2023, Council passed a motion requesting all district plan proposals at Downsview to include a Community Benefits Plan. This was also reinforced as a key pillar of the Downsview Community Development Plan, which was informed through years of engagement with local communities and stakeholders from the Indigenous and Black community.

While CLC has expressed interest, no formal commitment has been made to date. We encourage the City Council to secure a commitment from CLC prior to the approval of this district plan. Such a plan must include:

- Local hiring targets for residents of surrounding neighbourhoods;
- Equitable access to apprenticeships, skilled trades, and long term career pathways for equity-deserving communities, including Black, Indigenous, racialized, newcomer, youth, women, and persons with disabilities;
- Local and social procurement targets for business and contract opportunities
- Partnerships with community agencies, employment service providers, and training organizations to connect local residents to opportunities generated by the project; and
- Transparent monitoring and public reporting on community benefits outcomes throughout construction and beyond

Community benefits are a proven approach to ensuring that major developments generate inclusive economic opportunities while addressing systemic barriers to employment.

3. Protect the small businesses operating within the Downsview Merchants Market

The Downsview Merchants Market is home to many small, local, newcomer, and family-owned businesses that contribute significantly to the local economy, provide culturally diverse goods and services, and serve as an important community hub.

Redevelopment should not come at the expense of these businesses. We urge Council to require a comprehensive plan that includes meaningful consultation with affected merchants and measures including:

- Early and ongoing engagement with all tenants on redevelopment plan and construction timelines
- Relocation assistance and business continuity supports during construction;
- A commitment for all existing merchants to return to the redeveloped site on fair and affordable commercial lease terms
- Strategies to minimize economic disruption and preserve the market's role during construction and beyond, and
- A commitment to not increase rents after redevelopment

Protecting these businesses will help maintain the economic and cultural vitality that has made the Downsview community unique.

Building an inclusive Downsview

Redevelopment of the Downsview West District should not only deliver new homes but also create equitable economic opportunities, preserve community assets, and strengthen social inclusion. By securing significant affordable housing, implementing a robust Community Benefits Plan, and protecting the businesses that make the Downsview Merchants Market a valued community destination, Council can ensure this project becomes a model for inclusive and equitable city-building.

TCBN looks forward to continuing to work with the City of Toronto, CLC, community organizations, labour partners, and local residents to ensure this project delivers lasting benefits for current and future generations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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