

## Woodside Square Planning Review Public Open House #1 Consultation Summary

### Event Overview

The first public meeting for the Woodside Square Planning Review took place on Wednesday, December 4, 2019, at the Albert Campbell Collegiate Institute cafeteria (150 Sandhurst Circle).

The purpose of the open house was to:

- Provide information about the Woodside Square Planning Review
- Gather feedback on the proposed planning goals and preliminary concepts
- Identify interest in a Local Advisory Group

This event was part of the Woodside Square Planning Review, initiated by City Council in Fall 2019. Staff from various City divisions, including City Planning, Transportation Services, Engineering & Construction Services, and Parks, Forestry & Recreation were present at the event to answer question and engage with attendees.

The event consisted of an open house format with information boards on display, followed by a staff presentation and a question and answer period. Staff were available at all boards to provide information and clarification to attendees and gather feedback.



A presentation was given by Sophie Knowles, Project Lead. She introduced the agenda and provided background information on the Woodside Square Planning Review process, policy framework, the proposed planning goals, and next steps. The presentation slides and panels can be found on the [project website](#).



## Public Notice

Notification for this Open House was provided in English and Traditional Chinese. Notices were mailed to 18,475 addresses within the Agincourt North and Milliken communities and to people who signed up as interested parties during previous Planner in Public Space (PiPs) events at Woodside Square mall held in July 2019. The event was posted on the City of Toronto's public consultation events calendar and the Woodside Square Planning Review webpage. Notice of the event was also distributed by the landowner to mall tenants and promoted on digital kiosks at Woodside Square.

## Event Engagement Activities

Approximately 250 people attended the open house, including individuals of different ages, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Attendees provided feedback by speaking directly with staff, providing comments during the open question and answer period, and responding to a survey that was administered both on paper and digitally during the event. A total of 50 digital and paper survey responses were received. Participants were also invited to submit applications to participate in a Local Advisory Group.

## Summary of Feedback

### Land Use

Participants expressed the social and functional importance of the mall and strongly advocated for the mall to remain long-term, including all existing retail, community services and commercial uses. Many residents in the area rely on the retail amenities in the mall. Some feared that the mall may eventually be demolished despite assurance from the ownership group that the mall is proposed to remain.

Some residents were supportive of seeing additional retail and service commercial or entertainment space, including some offices to service the community. There was mixed feedback regarding the proposal to add residential uses. Many participants opposed adding residential uses to the site and preferred the existing surface parking to remain. Some participants were supportive of intensification because it would add a wider range of housing options to the community.

### Built Form and Housing

Participants indicated concerns about the density of the proposed concept, mostly related to the potential increased traffic congestion. There were also concerns about building heights and participants wanted more information on how mid-rise and/or tall building forms could impact the community. Some of the concerns were related to shadow impacts of new buildings. It was suggested that the proposal should provide transition to the low-rise residential neighbourhood to the north. Participants also recommended that housing options should be inclusive to individuals with different needs, such as fully accessible units, affordable units and rental units. Some



participants expressed the need for an increase in supply for housing for seniors. Various types of open spaces and generous setbacks for soft landscaping along the streets should be considered.

### Impacts on Mall Businesses

Participants raised concerns that the removal of the convenient surface parking areas could detract from the viability of the mall itself and lead to the eventual decay and closure of the mall. Construction activities could also deter people from visiting the mall, thereby harming businesses. Impacts of construction on existing businesses would need to be carefully evaluated and mitigated.

### Parks, Community Services and Facilities

The mall is an important community gathering space that can be enhanced with additional community services and facilities, particularly ones catered to youth and seniors. Participants noted that the mall site is used for community gathering activities such as Tai Chi and cultural events, and that any changes to the site should support these activities. Some participants expressed the need to identify larger opportunities on the site for new parks and public open spaces for the neighbourhood to service the additional density. One participant expressed safety concerns about locating a park adjacent to a busy roadway, Finch Avenue East. The library located in Woodside Square mall is popular with the local community, and some participants hoped it could be expanded in the future.

### Transportation and Parking

Pedestrian safety, traffic congestion, and parking were important issues voiced by the participants and were raised frequently throughout the event. Participants raised concerns that intensification of the site would exacerbate existing conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles. Many pedestrians in the area do not feel safe crossing intersections around the site, including: Finch Avenue East and McCowan Road; Brimwood Boulevard and Sandhurst Circle; and Finch Avenue East and Sandhurst Circle. The all-way stop at the intersection of Brimwood Boulevard and Sandhurst Circle, in particular, was noted to be extremely dangerous for students of Brimwood Public School and Albert Campbell Collegiate, with some vehicles rushing pedestrians or not stopping at all. Furthermore, vehicles sometimes use the wide vehicle travel lanes at this intersection as unsafe informal double lanes. Participants raised concerns about fast vehicle turning speeds at Sandhurst and Finch and suggested that the crossing times for pedestrians should be reviewed to ensure sufficient time for safe crossing, particularly for seniors. Participants also raised safety concerns about the limited safe crossing opportunities on McCowan Road.

Some participants recommended measures to improve pedestrian safety through adding safer pedestrian crossings and incorporating wider sidewalks and landscaped



boulevards. Participants also suggested incorporating additional cycling infrastructure such as separated bike lanes.

Participants raised concerns that intensification of the site would exacerbate traffic in the area, noting that the intersections of McCowan/Finch and Finch/Sandhurst intersections are already quite congested. Participants raised the need to carefully study the transportation impacts beyond site limits.

Many participants felt strongly that the number of parking spaces should not be reduced. Participants shared that the parking spaces at the mall are heavily used, particularly on weekends and during the Christmas season. Many felt that surface parking spaces were safer and more convenient than underground parking. Some participants were not confident that mall patrons would use underground parking. Additionally, there were some confusion about how retail parking can be incorporated within a residential development without conflict.

### Phasing

Participants expressed uncertainty towards the proposed development, given that no application has been submitted. Preparatory work for an addition to the mall (a separate Site Plan Application) had recently begun, including tree removals and closing off a portion of the parking lot, which led to confusion between the addition project, the Planning Review, and the anticipated rezoning application. Staff provided clarifications that the mall addition work that are currently underway is not related to the Planning Review and the anticipated rezoning application.

Participants requested assurances that the mall is not proposed to be redeveloped. A representative for the landowner indicated clearly at the meeting that the owners currently intend to keep the mall for foreseeable future, as demonstrated by their recent renovations and planned expansion of the mall.

### Next Steps

This public open house was part of the study initiation and visioning phase. All feedback will form part of the public record and is an important part of this review. The next steps would be to design, test and analyze the rezoning application once it's been submitted. Other key considerations will include provincial and municipal planning policies, additional inputs from the community and local stakeholders, technical review by City Division and external agency comments, as well as research and required technical evaluations. The Woodside Square Planning Review is expected to take 1-2 years from the receipt of the anticipated development application. Staff recommended policies will be considered by Scarborough Community Council at the end of the Planning Review.

Interested attendees were provided with an opportunity to sign-up for future public engagement events, including participation in a Local Advisory Group (LAG) to be organized as part of the review process. Additional opportunities to participate and provide feedback will be provided as the Planning Framework Review advances and will be posted on the [project webpage](#).