

# Woodside Square Planning Review Local Advisory Group Meeting #1 Summary

## Meeting Details

August 12, 2020  
6:30 – 8:30pm  
WebEx Videoconference

### Agenda

<u>Time</u>		<u>Topic</u>
6:30-6:45	15 mins	Welcome and introductions
6:45-6:50	5 mins	Remarks from Ward 23 Councillor Lai
6:50-6:55	5 mins	Local Advisory Group purpose, roles and responsibilities
6:55-7:05	10 mins	Woodside Square Planning Review overview + proposed goals
7:05-7:35	30 mins	Discussion
7:35-7:45	10 mins	Development application overview
7:45-8:20	35 mins	Discussion
8:20-8:30	10 mins	Summary and next steps

### Attendees

#### Local Advisory Group

Alura Moores  
Carrie Chung  
Etienne Mercieca  
Joseph Sheon  
Pritesh Tejani  
Saifoo Lau  
Shivonne Modeste  
Stephen Siu  
Tin Chung  
Whitney Zhan  
Wing Tai Lam

Regrets:  
Alex Cho

#### Ward 23 Scarborough North

Councillor Cynthia Lai  
Nicholas Dominelli  
Denise Yan

#### City staff

Sophie Knowles, Project Lead  
Christian Ventresca, Manager Community Planning, Scarborough North Section  
Shan Li, Urban Design  
Ben Morell, Transportation Planning  
Lukasz Pawlowski, Transportation Services  
John Stuckless, Parks Planning

#### Applicant

Louis Tinker, Bousfields  
Galen Lam, WSIM Group  
Eric Wong, WSIM Group

## Overview

The Local Advisory Group (LAG) was formed to provide city staff with feedback, guidance and advice and to ensure that the opinions and ideas of local community members are included in the planning review process. The group membership is composed of 12 volunteer residents, local business owners and employees, and representatives of non-profit community organizations, including a local residents association and a non-profit seniors housing provider. This was the first of three meetings scheduled to take place at key junctures in the Woodside Square Planning Review.

This first meeting focused on the Woodside Square Planning Review process and proposed goals as well as discussions on how well the current development proposal is responding to these goals. Local Advisory Group members generally supported the proposed Planning Review goals. Transportation and community services and facilities emerged as areas of particular focus for the group. LAG members were amenable to introducing residential uses and additional density to the site, with the primary caveats that the community be provided the opportunity to identify what community services and facilities are needed on site to serve the existing communities and future residents and that transportation concerns be addressed. Other discussion topics included sustainable design, public realm and adequate outdoor recreation and amenity areas, proposed density, affordable housing, phasing and construction impacts, partnership opportunities, and the relationship between the Planning Review and the Development Application.

## Feedback Themes

### *Transportation: Safety, Congestion and Parking*

The group expressed that transportation infrastructure should be addressed simultaneously with development. If we are planning for a much denser neighborhood, we must provide adequate, safe avenues of travel to accommodate the additional people.

Members highlighted the existing safety issues facing pedestrians and cyclists in and around the site and asked about how the Planning Review will address these issues. Particular concern was raised for pedestrians, especially children, high school students, and seniors who frequent the mall.

The group offered transportation solutions, including improving express or dedicated bus service along McCowan Road and Finch Avenue East and introducing bike lanes so that people can include cycling as a safe choice. Brimwood Junior Public School has been advocating for a crossing guard at the intersection of Brimwood Boulevard and Sandhurst Circle. It was also suggested that traffic modification around schools (e.g. no right turns on red lights during school starting and ending hours) should be considered. It was noted that streetscape design and landscaping should consider pedestrian safety (e.g. greenery should not block sight lines).

Members also raised concerns about increased car use that would accompany potential redevelopment and the impacts that additional vehicle trips would have on the road network. Turning into the mall from McCowan Road is already difficult due to the existing traffic volume. Members also expressed concerns about the increased demand on already congested bus routes.

Members questioned whether the proposed parking available for commercial uses would be sufficient, particularly given the entertainment uses (banquet facility and cinema) on the site which can draw large crowds. As an example, Casa Deluz Banquet Hall has a seating capacity of over 500. It will be important to account for the parking needs of both the existing users of the site as well as the proposed new residents, visitors, and commercial uses.

It is important to consider the people who comprise this neighbourhood before making assumptions about transportation choices and parking demand. The community includes many people with lower incomes who drive for services and amenities and rely on the mall parking. People with lower incomes are unlikely to take taxis or rideshare (e.g. Uber). To be more accessible to people of all financial means, the

proposed development should allow people to conveniently and safely walk and cycle to services and amenities.

Staff response: It is important to hear community feedback on these issues, as it is very early and staff are studying these issues. A Transportation Impact Study was submitted as part of the application which staff are reviewing. Recommendations for transportation improvements are expected to come out of the planning review, and could include changes to the proposed development and improvements to the street network (such as traffic signals, new public streets, dedicated cycling infrastructure, pedestrian improvements, etc.). City policy direction encourages future developments to be more multi-modal in order to serve the needs of all transportation network users. There are planned improvements to provide dedicated bus lanes along Finch Avenue East and McCowan Road, which are planned irrespective of development at Woodside Square. Improvements to cycling infrastructure within and around the site will be important to making cycling a safe option.

### *Planning for People: Community Services and Facilities*

The group expressed that provision of additional community services and facilities as part of redevelopment was essential to their support for the development. Members expressed desire for a livable space and a complete community where people can access as much as possible from close at hand. It is imperative that community services and facilities be provided in order to create a thriving, holistic neighbourhood. Time should be taken to understand what services and amenities people in the community want.

There is already a lack of some services and community facilities in the area, such as recreation facilities, affordable meeting spaces for groups, and physical and mental health supports, so incorporating such services and facilities as part of any potential redevelopment on the mall lands is of critical importance. Many of the events for seniors at the Milliken Park Community Centre as well as local swim programs are already at capacity.

A member who works with young people noted that the community lacks mental health supports or crisis support for children and youth. Markham Stouffville Hospital is the closest location for youth mental health crisis care. There are multiple schools around the community with many students, and having resources and supports in place would be quite beneficial.

Members were interested in understanding what demographics might be expected to live in the proposed development and noted their interest in the new development providing amenities for children, families and seniors in particular. Providing recreation amenities with a focus on youth and younger demographics will help entice families to stay in the community rather than move elsewhere, like Markham. The mall is also used by many seniors, and it is important to consider seniors' service and recreation needs as part of any new development.

Some ideas offered for programming that could be provided in conjunction with new community services and facilities included safe biking programs for all ages, development programs for children and youth such as cooking and gardening classes, community engagement and social improvement programs, such as community cleanups and tree planting, cultural events for inclusive celebration of all cultures and heritages in the Agincourt North community, seniors' engagement programs or Big Brothers Big Sisters-type programs, and active social programs to promote safer communities and inclusivity (e.g. active against gun violence, active against racism, etc.).

Members noted that there are existing community services inside the mall, including the public library and the Centre for Immigrant and Community Services and asked how we can ensure that these services remain in the community long-term. Members were also interested in allowing Tai Chi activities to continue at the mall.

A question was asked about whether local schools have capacity to accommodate the estimated number of new students. Staff advised that this question is being investigated as part of the application review process. The application has been circulated to all school boards. Toronto Catholic School Board has indicated that there is sufficient capacity at local elementary schools, but that the local Catholic secondary

schools are at capacity. The Toronto District School Board has not responded yet. One member who is the principal of Brimwood Boulevard Junior Public School advised that his school has capacity to welcome some additional students.

### *Quality and Adequate Provision of Public Realm and Outdoor Amenity Areas*

Members were also interested in the provision of outdoor amenity spaces and the quality of the environments in the proposed Privately-Owned Publicly Accessible Spaces (POPS). One member questioned whether the amount of outdoor amenity space would be sufficient, especially given the current reality of COVID-19. Sufficient space for active outdoor recreation and fitness activities should be provided, such as tennis courts, mini soccer, outdoor yoga and Tai Chi programs. It was noted that local students would benefit from additional greenspaces where they could branch out. One member raised concerns that the proposed outdoor amenity area and POPS near McCowan Road and Finch Avenue East could be noisy due to the busy roadways, and that the acoustics of this space should be studied.

Staff response: Usually two metres of outdoor amenity space per residential unit is required for new developments, so we would like to see more. Staff will be seeking out the greatest amount of public parkland conveyance that is permitted by City policy in order to provide a healthy and safe environment. The current plans do not show parkland, but staff will be providing comments seeking out the greatest amount of park space possible.

### *Density*

Some members questioned whether the proposed heights and densities could be appropriately accommodated on the site. Some members raised concerns about the impact of the proposed building heights on adjacent low-rise dwellings. The new development should not take away from the quality of life of those living in the surrounding areas.

### *Sustainable Design*

Members were also interested in the environmental impacts of the development and advocated for the inclusion of environmentally-friendly design measures such as using permeable surfaces rather than hard surfaces in order to assist with stormwater management. One member raised a concern about how the proposed development could negatively impact air quality due to the introduction of additional vehicles and asked whether an air quality study would be completed.

Staff response: Large sites present an opportunity to implement sustainable design measures, and staff will strongly encourage the applicant to implement sustainable design strategies. Encouraging fewer vehicle trips can help to decrease emissions. There is no air quality study done for this type of development; however, the Toronto Green Standards encourage the use of low emitting fuel efficient vehicles and reduction in vehicle trips through strategies like providing better active transportation options and encouraging carpooling in order to reduce emissions. New developments are required to provide electric vehicle supply equipment for 20 percent of new parking spaces, with the remainder of the spaces designed to permit the installation of future electric vehicle supply equipment.

### *Affordable Housing*

One member was interested in affordable housing as part of a complete community, and asked about whether the affordable housing component would be "deeply affordable".

Staff response: The Official Plan doesn't define whether "deeply affordable" housing is required, but just that affordable housing is required as part of the development of large sites, and it can be anywhere on the spectrum.

### *Partnership Opportunities*

The group offered suggestions for potential partnerships, particularly with the local youth and surrounding schools. One member suggested that construction from future development could present an opportunity to introduce trades to local high school students as potential career paths and provide trade apprenticeships for local youth. It was also suggested that opportunities could be explored to share access to the Albert Campbell Collegiate pool with the public. The library at Woodside Square offers another great opportunity for partnerships with schools.

Staff response: Toronto has various youth jobs programs, and this is an interesting opportunity worth exploring. City Planning has been involved with local high school students at Albert Campbell Collegiate and will look for further opportunities to engage with students.

### *Restaurants*

One member suggested that they would like to see more variety in the selection of restaurants on the site. Another member asked about what the plans were for the McDonald's restaurant at McCowan/Finch.

Staff response: The current plans propose that the McDonald's restaurant and drive thru be incorporated within Block 2 (northwest corner of McCowan/Finch). Staff have concerns about the compatibility of the drive thru component with pedestrian safety and the proposed residential uses. Applicant response: The drive thru would handle queues within the building. They are faced with contending with some tenant obligations (e.g. parking/drive-through etc.).

### *Phasing and Construction Impacts*

The group was interested in understanding the timeframe for completion of the development proposal and expressed concern for the safety of seniors and students during construction activities.

Staff are studying the potential of the site. It will take at least a year to get the study done, and there are still processes to go through even if the study and application are approved. It will likely be long-term. Applicant response: This is a very difficult question. The fastest time that construction could start with all necessary approvals passed is likely three years from now.

### *Planning Review versus Development Application*

A member asked how the development proposal differs from the Woodside Square Planning Review.

Staff response: The development proposal reflects what the current owners are seeking to do with their property right now. The Planning Review is led by City staff. The Planning Review will establish policies related to the goals that are being discussed today to guide any long-term redevelopment of the site. The Planning Review will also consider how the site could evolve, should the mall be redeveloped at some point in the future. Staff will endeavor to bring these two pieces together to achieve a policy framework and development that is implementable and acceptable to all parties.

## Next Steps

Group members are welcome to submit additional comments via email. This meeting summary was provided for the Local Advisory Group's review. A Preliminary Report on the development application will be considered by Scarborough Community Council on September 15, 2020. A public meeting focused on the development application is anticipated to be held in Fall 2020, and LAG members are invited to participate. The next LAG meeting will likely take place following receipt of the revised submission.