



Woodside Square Planning Review

Community Consultation Meeting

Wednesday, May 12, 2021

6:30 – 8:30 PM

This summary provides a high level summary of participant feedback. It is not intended to provide a verbatim transcript of the meeting.

If you have any questions after reviewing this summary, please contact Yishan Liu, Planner at woodsidesquarereview@toronto.ca / 416-395-6708.

Meeting Overview

The City hosted a virtual community consultation meeting on Wednesday, May 12, 2021.

The purpose of the community consultation meeting was to introduce and discuss details of the Official Plan Amendment initiated by the City to set out the long-term vision for the Woodside Square lands, the Zoning By-law Amendment application submitted by the applicant for the redevelopment of the lands, to provide information about the review process and seek feedback from the public.

The community consultation meeting consisted of presentations by both City Planning staff and the applicant team. The presentations were followed by a Question & Answer (Q&A) session. City staff from various Divisions, including City Planning and Transportation Services, were present at the event to answer questions. Simultaneous translation of the presentations and Q&A session were available in both Mandarin and Cantonese on separate phone lines.

Approximately 200 people attended the community consultation meeting. Attendees provided feedback through the chat box and live during the Q&A session.

Meeting Background

The meeting began with introductions from Yishan Liu, Planner, followed by opening remarks from Councillor Cynthia Lai of Ward 23.

Yishan then provided a review of the agenda and background information related to:

- The site;
- Why a Planning Review is required;
- The applicant's development proposal;
- The Planning Review and development review processes;
- Policy framework, strategies and other considerations which will inform the Planning Review and the review of the development application;
- Feedback received to date;
- Matters to be resolved

Following the Staff's presentation, the applicant then presented their proposal to redevelop the Woodside Square site to the public, which was followed by a Q&A session.

Q&A Session - General Questions & Feedback

Pedestrian Safety & Transportation

1. **I am concerned for the safety of local residents – especially students at nearby schools and seniors living in the area. Many people walk in this area and pedestrian safety is already a major concern. Finch & McCowan is one of the most dangerous intersections in the city. How can we make this area safe for pedestrians?**

A: Improving the safety of this area, particularly at major intersections, will be a priority for the City. This could include things like introducing a finer-grained network of streets on the site, and transportation improvements such as signalized intersections and advanced greens. The Planning Review currently being led by City Planning will look closely at these issues, and staff will be evaluating the development proposal with these questions in mind.

Transportation demand management strategies will also be considered – this includes improving transit, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure to encourage more people to choose transportation options other than private vehicles for more of their trips.

The City of Toronto launched the Vision Zero Road Safety Plan in 2016. This is a comprehensive action plan focused on reducing traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries on Toronto's streets through a range of initiatives, including engineering improvements and traffic control.

2. Our transit system needs to be improved. The busses are already at or near capacity. Will this proposed development put additional strain on our transit system? What kinds of transit improvements are planned?

A: The planning review will identify issues, including needed improvements to the transit system.

The City can ensure that projects in the area are phased in such a way that transit improvements will be necessary before any higher densities would be allowed to be built. This can ensure that any development proceeds with the necessary improvements being in place. Future plans for this corridor could include LRT (light rail transit) or BRT (bus rapid transit) along Finch Avenue – where the transit vehicles operate within a dedicated lane allocated in the right-of-way – to provide more efficient and higher-capacity transit service.

An extension of the subway in Scarborough is planned from Kennedy Station to Sheppard Avenue & McCowan Road, which will improve transit access and service in the area. A Sheppard East subway extension may be considered further into the future. These subway extension projects are Provincial projects, so any further extensions of these subway lines would be decided on by the Province of Ontario.

Traffic

3. More people living here will increase the number of people driving on the roads. How will we manage this increase in traffic and reduce congestion?

A: A transportation impact study is under review to understand current traffic levels and identify potential impacts to traffic. City staff will be looking closely at a traffic study for the area, which will explore ways to have more people living and working within the same area without needing to own a car. This will include improving services in the area for people to be able to meet their needs within walking distance.

The staff review will also identify additional transportation improvements that can be made. These could include: better road connectivity, signalling improvements,

transit improvements (such as a dedicated bus lane), and cycling improvements (such as bike lanes).

4. Where will all these new people park? Where will I be able to park when I visit Woodside Square?

A: The transportation demand management strategies described above will aim to not only identify ways to accommodate traffic and parking demand on site, but to also reduce the demand for parking through encouraging alternative modes of transport. When it is easier for people to choose to walk, roll, take the bus, or bike, there will be less demand for parking.

The current proposal includes some surface parking for mall visitors with the majority of parking proposed to be located below grade. The proposed developments will also include underground residential parking spaces. This parking strategy is under review as including mall parking within the future development blocks could present issues related to access and ownership.

5. Will there be any road widening to accommodate an increase in traffic?

There will likely not be any widening of the existing roads. Instead, measures such as improving road connectivity, introducing new streets into the network, and traffic demand management measures such as improved pedestrian, transit, and cycling infrastructure will be considered.

Environment

6. I am concerned about potential negative impacts on the environment. How will potential environmental impacts be identified and how can any development enhance environmental protection?

A: The planning review and development review will look at potential impacts to the environment and ensure they are addressed. The Toronto Green Standard (TGS) applies to all development applications in Toronto and include requirements for reducing energy use in new buildings, improving stormwater management, improving air and water quality, reducing waste, and improving biodiversity and natural features on site. Urban Forestry has minimum requirements for tree planting, including replacement of any trees that would need to be removed. The applicant will be required to meet these requirements.

7. I am concerned about negative impacts during the construction of this proposed development. How will these impacts be mitigated?

A: If rezoning of this site is approved, the applicant would need to provide a detailed construction management plan when the time comes to construct the approved building(s) – potentially years away. This report would be comprehensive and outline the phasing of construction work to ensure minimal impacts (such as noise, vibration, and dust) to the surrounding community and need to adhere to in-force noise and property standards by-laws as enforced by the City.

Community Services & Amenities

8. There are services needed in our community. For example, we lack a daycare facility, and the nearest rec centre is far away – these are priorities for our community. Would this development include more of these types of services and facilities within walking distance?

A: One of the priorities of the planning review is to identify the community services and facilities that can be improved upon. The proposed redevelopment of this site can be a great opportunity to introduce new services and facilities into the community and expand existing ones. City staff are listening to the community to understand what your priorities are to improve existing services, and identify new services and facilities needed in the area.

The City can also use Section 37 of the *Planning Act* as a tool to secure community benefits. These benefits could also be secured off-site nearby – such as a park or a community rec centre.

9. I feel that this proposed development does not include enough parkland and open space. Having access to nature and open space is important for our community. Will this development meet the City's requirements for parkland?

A: As identified above, the City can leverage Section 37 to secure community benefits for the larger neighbourhood, including the potential to redevelop or add to existing parks and spaces in the surrounding area.

The City has a parkland dedication requirement that would be secured if this rezoning were approved. This would involve a public process to ask the community for input on how the park should be designed. The parkland dedication requirement is based on the proposed number of residential units. Parks staff will likely be requiring approximately 8000m² of parkland.

10. With the inclusion of Privately Owned Publicly-Accessible Open Spaces (POPS) in the proposed development, I am concerned that a private entity

could restrict access to these open spaces to the general public. How can we make sure the public has access to open spaces?

A: While POPS are privately owned, a legal agreement would be in place to ensure the public have full access to these spaces.

POPS are intended to complement the City's public parks, open spaces and natural areas. The City also expands and enhances public park spaces through parkland acquisition strategies, whereby land or cash in lieu of land is provided to the City as part of the development process.

Infrastructure & Utilities

11. I am concerned about the capacity of our local community services, including schools and hospitals. Is there enough capacity for the new people who would be living in our community?

A: All development applications get circulated to local agencies, for example the TDSB and TDCSB, for review. The school boards have indicated that there is sufficient capacity at elementary schools in the area. There may be capacity constraints at the high school level. Should the rezoning be approved, the applicant would be required to provide this information to potential residents.

The capacity of other services in the area, such as health care, is also considered in the application review.

12. This area experiences infrastructure capacity issues such as power outages. Will this development put an additional strain on our infrastructure and utility services?

A: Much like school boards and local health authorities, development applications are also circulated to utility and service providers (such as Toronto Hydro). These organizations provide comments on the existing capacity and potential impacts of a proposed development that help inform staff's review.

Development applications also provide an opportunity for these service providers to evaluate and plan for capacity needs and improvements. Because of this, new developments often lead to infrastructure improvements in the surrounding community.

Built Form

13. The mall is important to our community. Is there a plan for it to be demolished?

A: The owner plans to keep the mall – the application does not consider redevelopment of the existing mall.

While the development application is looking at the shorter- to medium-term development of the site, the planning review being undertaken by City staff is looking at the very long-term planning horizon. While no redevelopment of the mall is planned in the foreseeable future, the vision for the site should ensure the vibrancy and significance of the mall isn't lost if it is one day redeveloped.

Any development that happens on the site should be appropriate and respect the existing context, while addressing the City's planning priorities.

14. Is it possible to focus development on top of the existing mall?

A: The proposal to develop the site around the mall is intended to make sure the site could be intensified while avoiding impacts to the mall itself. Any development on the site of the mall itself would have a larger impact to the mall, which has been identified as important to the community by providing retail, commercial and services to existing residents.

15. What types of retail and non-residential uses will be included at the site?

A: At this stage, the exact types of new retail spaces in the proposal have not been defined. The general idea would be to include retail at the ground level to activate the street – creating activity on the sidewalks and animating open spaces. Retail would be designed to complement the existing mall. Office spaces would also be located in the lower levels of the podiums of the proposed buildings. The types of offices spaces have not yet been identified.

The proposed development would also include parks and open spaces. Additional community services and facilities are to be identified based on community input.

16. I am concerned about the heights of the proposed development. Will there be impacts to the community, such as shadows and wind?

A: The current proposal is currently under review, and the proposed heights are not set in stone. The proposal will go through additional submissions. This is something City Planning staff are looking at closely.

The applicant has submitted a shadow study and will be required to also submit a wind study. These studies will show any potential impacts of the proposed development. The City will need to be satisfied that impacts to pedestrians and residents will meet the City's requirements.

17. I am concerned about the density of the proposed development. How can we determine the number of new people this site can accommodate, and how can we address the impacts?

A: This is something City Planning staff are looking at closely in conjunction with the site context (e.g. transit, open space, other considerations). The planning review will look at any potential density compared to the size and scale of the site – what is possible and appropriate given the context, and how many new community members this site could accommodate.

Planning Process

18. How was this project initiated?

A: The planning review was initiated when the landowner approached the city with an interest in exploring additional development opportunities for the site, including new housing and parkland. The site is subject to a site-specific policy under the City's Official Plan which requires a planning review to be completed to Council's satisfaction before any new uses are permitted. When a rezoning application was received, the City initiated the planning review. This planning review will evaluate the appropriateness of permitting additional land uses on the site, and will also establish the policy framework to guide any future redevelopment on the site.

The rezoning process is initiated by the applicant, while the planning review is a separate process and is initiated by the City.

19. What is the timeline for this process? This feels like it is being rushed through. How long will the City review of the proposed development take?

A: This is a standard rezoning application process. Timelines for these processes vary, but on average they take at least two years. The Woodside Square Planning Review was initiated in Fall 2019.

The City has received the first submission from the applicant and staff are currently in the process of reviewing it. The applicant will make additional resubmissions that take into account comments from the City as well as comments and concerns from the community. The submissions the City receives will be weighed in conversations with the community and the local Councillor, taking into account the local context as well as the Official Plan and City policies. Any development that proceeds will need to fit this context appropriately.

20. Will this site be developed all at once, or will development be phased?

A: The City has policy mechanisms in place that can ensure development is phased. This will make sure necessary infrastructure, for example road improvements, can be in place if and when any development occurs. The applicant has identified a phasing plan for the proposed development.

21. What does the City consider when reviewing development applications?

A: The City considers many things when evaluating a development application. These include: community input, planning policies, the technical aspects of the site, adjacent sites and the surrounding neighbourhood, the current zoning by-law and what it permits, as well as how the site could be integrated into the area.

22. What will be the community's opportunity for input on this Planning Review and development application? How will the community's concerns be considered?

A: Community comments and concerns are considered by planning staff in reviewing the development application.

A public open house was held in December 2019, and a Local Advisory Group (LAG) was formed. The LAG is a group composed of 12 volunteer residents, local business owners and employees, and representatives of non-profit community organizations. It is intended 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. A virtual community consultation meeting was also held on May 12, 2021.

The [Woodside Square Planning Review Community Engagement Survey](#) is open until July 1, 2021. Please fill it out to tell us what you envision for Woodside Square Mall.

Additionally, you can provide your comments and feedback to Yishan Liu, Planner, at woodsidesquarereview@toronto.ca or by phone: 416-395-6708.

23. How can I get more information and updates during this process? Who should I reach out to with questions, feedback or concerns?

A: You can find more information and updates on this process on the City's website, at www.toronto.ca/woodsidesquarereview.

If you have questions, feedback, or concerns, you can provide reach out to Yishan Liu, Planner, at woodsidesquarereview@toronto.ca or by phone: 416-395-6708.

Additional Questions:

The following questions were received via e-mail and through the chatbox during the meeting, but were not answered due to time constraints. Answers are provided below:

Pedestrian Safety & Transportation

1. It is difficult for emergency services now to access the site, how can this be addressed?

A: The applicant is required to ensure there are emergency access routes; the new streets are also being reviewed.

2. When COVID is over, many people will return to their regular routes. I used to take the McCowan bus everyday, and it was always packed. Are there any plans on improving transit service? If buildings are being built, I can only imagine that there will be more people, and busses will become more packed.

A: The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) is responsible for transit service improvements. They have been circulated and will advise whether transit infrastructure upgrades are required. They also take proposed density into consideration when they plan out future service.

Traffic

3. When will the traffic review be done? The current traffic is not typical because of the pandemic and this should be factored in.

A: The applicant's transportation impact study is required to review both current and historical pre-pandemic traffic levels.

4. How many parking lots are reserved for the new buildings? And, how many parking lots reserved for the visitors to the Mall and these new buildings respectively?

A: Approximately 4000 parking spaces are currently proposed. 430 are proposed for the existing mall. The parking arrangement may change as the application is revised.

5. Regarding parking, a lot of mall parking is 30 minutes or less for quick trips (bank ATM, library, Shoppers, LCBO etc) and the proponent doesn't provide this.

A: Short-term parking is a consideration.

Environment

6. What about tree preservation?

A: Approximately half the trees on or near the site are currently proposed to be preserved or are unaffected by the development. Urban Forestry has minimum requirements for tree planting, including replacement of any trees that would need to be removed. The applicant will be required to meet these requirements.

Community Services & Amenities

7. I applaud proposing a privately owned publicly accessible space (POPS) but they're surrounded by tall buildings, consider a stepped building to allow for more sunlight from dawn to dusk for park users. Centralize the towers to the centre or relocate the large POPS to the corner of the site.

A: Staff are carefully reviewing the location of the POPS and park, and will be reviewing the shadow studies to ensure sufficient hours of sunlight over the amenity spaces.

8. Would suggest that the retirement building be located next to the larger POPS.

A: Noted.

Infrastructure & Utilities

- 9. Inclusion of the future mall component will require a Right-of-Way larger than the currently proposed 20m, therefore if there is a possibility of 4 additional blocks, the ultimate road width, capacity and Transportation Impact Study should be adjusted to follow suit. Stormwater Management and servicing reports assume the mall will stay and since there's sanitary sewer deficiencies downstream, it is best to upgrade those sewers now.**

Built Form

- 10. Are there any building height restrictions? It looks like Towers C to F will be significantly higher than everything else around it.**

A: Height restrictions are set in the Zoning By-law.

- 11. If there are a huge number of objections to this large scale redevelopment project, can the City request the developer to scale down the project?**

There are too many tall buildings in this proposal. More is not always better. Can there be less tall residential buildings. 9 buildings are too aggressive and close to each other.

A: The applicant would be responding to City and community concerns in their next resubmission.

- 12. How will the City decide how tall the buildings can be?**

A: We will be looking at the direction from our policies, best practices from design guidelines, whether the buildings sufficiently transition to their surroundings, whether there is sufficient separation distance between towers, the shadowing impacts, whether the proposed density can be accommodated, whether there is sufficient infrastructure available, among other factors.

- 13. What measures will the proposed project take to mitigate negative impact on adjacent home prices?**

A: Typically large scale redevelopment brings the opportunity for renewal and positive reinvestment, which are generally perceived to be an area benefit.

Planning Process

14. By what quantitative yard sticks is the proposed project evaluated for compliance to, Provincial Policies, Land Use, Official Plan Conformity, Transportation, Infrastructure capacities and Community services and facilities?

A: See the preliminary report for a more detailed explanation on how the proposal will be reviewed:

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/sc/bgrd/backgroundfile-156044.pdf>.

We will be reviewing what is reasonable for the site, surrounding context, and heed the guidance of policies and guidelines.

15. Regarding this virtual meeting, I think it is not fair to the seniors who have difficulty accessing the web. The telephone line also limits the participants' communication with each other. This meeting format is not democratic. The City should hold another meeting after the Covid-19.

A: As noted in the answer to Question 22 on page 10, there are multiple ways to engage. Due to the pandemic, there are restrictions for in-person meetings, we are currently abiding by federal and provincial guidance.

16. Is it possible for the city to send a ballot to the entire community to vote on this Zoning By-law amendment?

A: As noted above, there are multiple formats to engage and provide your input. Once a recommendation is provided by Community Planning, a statutory council meeting is held where Council members vote and decide whether to approve or refuse the application. This meeting is also open to the public.

17. There are petitions opposing the development.

A: Staff have received both petitions in opposition and in support of the development.

18. Please provide a preliminary grading plan to confirm assumptions of the SWM and servicing reports and also confirm if the phasing works.

A: Servicing and drainage area plans have been provided by the applicant, they are called, they are called "Civil and Utilities Plans" and can be downloaded from www.toronto.ca/aic.

Phasing will be carefully reviewed.

19. Thank you for the community consultation meeting. Please keep us all informed.

20. Can there be a condition for SPA that the mall building not be removed?

A: The current zoning by-law amendment application proposes to retain the mall.

21. Has there been any studies done on having a Cinema facing Albert Campbell Collegiate Institute? What are the impacts on the students?

A: The cinema was approved through a previous Committee of Adjustment and Site Plan control application. The Cinema use was permitted as of right by the current by-law.

22. I don't understand the choice of location for an expansion of housing units. There are other malls that have greater unused parking areas for development of condos, eg. Bridlewood mall at Bridletown Circle.

A: The redevelopment of Bridletown Mall was part of the Finch-Warden Revitalization Study which was completed in 2010. It is anticipated that Bridletown Mall will be redeveloped.

The City of Toronto also recently completed its Mall Redevelopment Guide (<https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/official-plan-guidelines/design-guidelines/mall-redevelopment-guide/>) which recognizes that mall sites are large sites that can accommodate many city building initiatives.

23. Other than the aforementioned, what other exceptions/waivers does the proposed project seek?

A: A Zoning By-law amendment application is required in order to permit the proposed new land uses. Performance standards also are required to establish appropriate building locations, heights and densities, massing, stepbacks and setbacks, and parking requirements to facilitate the proposed development.