

# **UPDATE >>>>** **DOWNSVIEW**

## **William Baker/Arbo District (Phase 1) Community Consultation Meeting** Application to amend Zoning By-law (By-law 1082-2022)

Meeting Summary

March 31, 2025, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Virtual via Webex

*Report prepared by City Planning*

*City of Toronto*

## Attendees

### Public Participants

Approximately 64 members of the public attended.

<b>City of Toronto</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
<b>Community Planning</b> Andrew Kim Caia Yeung Perry Korouyenis	<b>Canada Lands Company</b> Eric Mark Farouk Janmohamed James Cox
<b>Ward 6 York Centre</b> Councillor Pasternak Akheim Cooke	<b>Consultants</b> Amy Jiang, BA Group Arthur Grabowski, The Planning Partnership David Godin, The Planning Partnership Heather Schibli, Dougan Ecology

## Background

In July 2022, City Council approved a Zoning By-law Amendment (By-law 1082-2022) and endorsed a District Plan for Phase 1 of the William Baker/Arbo District that was submitted by the Canada Lands Company ('CLC') as the property owners. Phase 1 of the William Baker/Arbo District is approximately 8.2 hectares (20.2 acres). This district is in the northwest portion of the Downsview Secondary Plan Area and is 1 of 15 districts identified for more detailed planning. The endorsed District Plan for the William Baker/Arbo District consists of residential buildings with a range of heights, mixed use blocks, commercial uses, parks, and an enhanced woodlot.

CLC submitted a subsequent Zoning By-law Amendment application in March 2025 to modify Zoning By-law 1082-2022. In this application, CLC has proposed to modify some zoning provisions in the following ways:

- increase the maximum permitted dwelling units from 1,400 units up to 1,700 units;
- reduce the minimum size of 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom units; and
- adjust the timing for the delivery of services.

The proposed modifications will not alter any other site-specific performance standards that were previously approved under Zoning By-law 1082-2022, including the maximum total gross floor areas, minimum non-residential gross floor areas, minimum setbacks, or maximum building heights.

The City of Toronto hosted a virtual community consultation meeting on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025, to share information and hear community feedback about the March 2025 Zoning By-law Amendment application.

## Notification Area

Approximately 1458 notices were delivered within a 120-metre radius of the subject lands. The event was also promoted online via the [City Planning and Development Review Public Consultation website](#), an e-update to Update Downsview listserv subscribers, and by Canada Lands Company's e-newsletter.

## Meeting Agenda

6:35-6:40pm	Introductions
6:40-7:10pm	<div>Presentations<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• City of Toronto's presentation by Perry Korouyenis</li><li>• Canada Lands Company's presentation by Eric Mark, Arthur Grabowski, and David Godin</li></ul></div>
7:10-8:00pm	Question-and-Answer (Q&A) Discussion

## Q&A Discussion Summary

This summary of the Q&A discussion is not a verbatim transcript but is intended to provide a high-level record of questions, comments, and answers from the meeting. Questions have been grouped thematically.

### *Housing*

- 1. Question:** Who asked for more housing units? The community was happy with the previously approved number of units. What happened to the seniors' village?

**Answer:** The previously approved Zoning By-law Amendment application permitted a maximum of 1,400 housing units. This application from Canada Lands Company proposes to increase the permitted maximum to 1,700 units. The proposed increase to 1,700 units is in response to feedback from builders, market changes, and rising construction costs. The 300 additional units provide flexibility for unit sizes and changing market demands.

Regarding the seniors' village, CLC is working with builders to understand the market for seniors' housing. CLC is focused on getting the City's approval to move forward with the construction of infrastructure before delivering any seniors' housing.

- 2. Question:** Does the increase in housing units apply to the whole district or just to Block 1?

**Answer:** The permitted maximum number of housing units applies to the three development blocks in Phase 1 (Blocks 1, 3A, and 3B). The gross floor area will not change which means that the building sizes will stay the same, but more housing units will be allowed.

3. **Question:** What are the guidelines for affordable housing? What is considered affordable?

**Answer:** As part of the first zoning application for Phase 1 of the William Baker/Arbo District, affordable housing was secured in the approved Zoning By-law Amendment (By-law 1082-2022). The affordable housing requirements will be secured in a Section 37 agreement. For this district, affordable housing is considered to be 80% of the average market rate over a 5-year period. The average market rent is set annually by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Please visit the [Current City of Toronto Average Market Rents webpage](#) for more information.

4. **Question:** Will proposals for affordable housing, accessible housing, or housing for vulnerable demographics (in addition to seniors housing) be prioritized?

**Answer:** CLC is prioritizing and exploring a range housing types. Currently, CLC is undertaking a land lease process for an affordable housing project on Block 3B, in partnership with CMHC. Block 3B will have a minimum of 30% of units allocated for affordable housing. Housing for specific demographics will be explored with the City in future stages.

5. **Question:** Will the new housing be for rent or sale? Is the new housing intended for families with children, single people, or seniors? There seem to be a lot of 2- and 3-bedroom units.

**Answer:** The zoning does not prescribe if the units are rental or ownership or a combination. The housing tenure will depend on the building partners, but a portion will be affordable rental units and CLC is exploring a range of building partners and tenure types.

6. **Question:** Will the number of affordable housing units increase if the total number of housing units increases? The application should include 4-bedroom units for multi-generational families. The community would like to have a say in the type of programming for the seniors' village. Please remove the term "seniors' component", this is unpleasant. The community would like a follow-up meeting at the beginning of May for deeper engagement.

**Answer:** CLC has committed to provide 20% of the total housing units in the district as affordable housing and 50% of those affordable units to be affordable rental. This application proposes that the maximum number of housing units be 1,700. The number of affordable housing units will be a percentage of the total number of units to be built.

The William Baker/Arbo Phase 1 Zoning By-law (By-law 1082-2022) prescribes a minimum number of 2- and 3-bedroom units which is based on the City's [Growing Up Guidelines](#). These minimums do not prevent 4-bedroom units from being built. The final unit mix depends on community needs, the market, and the builders. The comment about removing the term "seniors' component" has been noted.

7. **Comment:** The community and community organizations would like to have a forum where they can work with CLC on the seniors' village to ensure community needs are met collaboratively instead of duplicating work that is already being completed by CLC.
8. **Question:** Can CLC speak about the Public Land Bank and its impact on the William Baker/Arbo District? Are all three development blocks part of this program?

**Answer:** Yes, the three development blocks in Phase 1 of the William Baker/Arbo District are part of the Public Land Bank program. The program has identified surplus federal land that is suitable for housing development. Being a part of the program does not change the municipal development approval process, but it may help attract building partners and create excitement around the opportunity for new housing.

### ***Community Services***

9. **Question:** What new community services will be provided in Downsview? There is currently a lack of community services. What will happen when more people move in? What is the benefit of these additional housing units and will more resources be put towards the Community Recreation Centre (CRC) as a result of this change?

**Answer:** The William Baker/Arbo District will have many community benefits including:

- the public woodlot and new parks;
- \$7 million for the new Downsview CRC at Keele and Sheppard; and
- Rehabilitation of the pedestrian bridge over Sheppard Avenue West that will connect the new park and Downsview Park.

In addition, other development projects within the Downsview Secondary Plan Area will provide new community services and benefits like new schools, childcare centres, and community agency space.

### ***Natural Spaces & Food Production***

10. **Question:** There have been no conversations about food production or maintaining natural spaces for urban farmers. There is a problem with rabbits eating crops in Downsview Park. Having natural spaces for animals to feed on will draw them away from the farms. How does the plan address wildlife, food production, and people dropping off pets in Downsview Park?

**Answer:** CLC is working with City staff on the restoration of the woodlot in the William Baker/Arbo District. The restoration will involve removing invasive species to ensure native species can thrive. The ecological restoration is intended to follow forest succession from meadow to mature trees which will create a better habitat for wildlife. CLC will look into how to better prevent people from dropping off pets in Downsview Park.

## ***Pedestrian Realm***

**11. Question:** What are the plans for activating the portion of Sheppard Avenue West near Keele Street? Is this work being coordinated with the Downsview West District to make sure the road works are aligned?

**Answer:** CLC is focused on improving the pedestrian realm, promoting active frontages along Keele Street and Sheppard Avenue West, and increasing commercial spaces. The steep slopes along Sheppard Avenue West are challenging but efforts are being made to create comfortable walking environments, improve cycling infrastructure, and activate the street.

The Downsview West District and access to the planned Community Recreation Centre at the southeast corner of Keele Street and Sheppard Avenue West are being coordinated with the William Baker/Arbo District to ensure a coordinated road and active transportation network.

## ***Building Performance Standards***

**12. Question:** Why does this application not change other aspects of the Zoning By-law, like setbacks, parking, mid-rise and tower regulations? Why do these regulations not match other City guidelines and why do they seem more restrictive and inefficient?

**Answer:** Phase 1 of the district was approved under the 2011 Downsview Area Secondary Plan because the application was submitted and approved before the new 2024 Downsview Secondary Plan was created. The older plan had lower density targets and different built form standards. There have been recent policy updates, including urban design guidelines that prioritize tower building forms and design principles. CLC is leveraging past approvals to start construction as soon as possible and is focused on the timing and availability of housing.

## ***Transportation Impacts***

**13. Question:** There are existing cycling and walking paths in the Woodlot. Will these paths stay open during the construction of the district?

**Answer:** It is to be determined how much access to the Woodlot can be retained during construction. The whole area will eventually be under construction, but CLC is exploring construction phasing options to try and keep some Woodlot paths open. A Construction Management Plan will be prepared at a later stage to describe the management and maintenance of the construction areas, including the trails and surrounding areas. Street A will have a new bike path that will provide an off-street route from Keele Street to Sheppard Avenue West.

**14. Question:** How does increasing the number of housing units impact traffic and parking? Keele Street and Sheppard Avenue West are already congested and not everyone will take public transit. How will traffic impacts be addressed?

**Answer:** This application proposes an increase of 300 housing units from the last approved application (1,400 to 1,700 units). The traffic analyses from 2021 and 2022 were approved and the traffic analysis from this year is being reviewed by the City. The recent traffic analysis looked at possible future traffic scenarios based on the William Baker/Arbo District and other developments that have been approved in the surrounding area.

There is expected to be an increase of 60 vehicle trips during the morning and evening rush hours which is about a 1% increase in traffic at Keele and Sheppard. Additionally, there is expected to be about 350-450 new cars disbursed across the entire street network which is about 1 new car per minute and can be accommodated within the future street network. Lastly, there is planned to be 0.4 parking spaces per residential unit which is less than the current market rate. Less parking will help to reduce traffic impacts.

### ***Community Engagement***

**15. Question:** Why was this meeting held online? Lots of older residents and local community members would prefer in-person meetings.

**Answer:** It is common to hold community consultation meetings online and this format was chosen because the meeting would be accessible to a broader audience, and because this application has a limited scope to modify a previously approved Zoning By-law Amendment. However, City staff have noted that the community prefers to meet in person.

### ***Construction Timeline***

**16. Question:** When will infrastructure be constructed?

**Answer:** CLC is working with the City on the detailed design for sewers, sidewalks, and other servicing infrastructure. CLC is aiming to have the Draft Plan of Subdivision registered by the end of Summer 2025 and construction of the servicing infrastructure will start shortly after.