

Downsview West District  
**Community Meeting Two Summary**  
January 23, 2024  
Via Zoom from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

## Meeting Overview

On Tuesday, January 23, 2024, Canada Lands hosted the second virtual community meeting to share and get the community's feedback on emerging ideas for the Downsview West District Plan. Approximately 50 people attended the meeting.

The meeting was held virtually over Zoom video conferencing software. The meeting was two hours and included introductions from the project team, a presentation, a question and answer period, breakout room discussions, and a closing plenary discussion.

The meeting materials, including the presentation and a recording of the meeting are available on the project webpage ([www.westdownsviewouest.ca](http://www.westdownsviewouest.ca)) and through direct links below:

1. Meeting presentation – [linked here](#)
2. Meeting recording – [linked here](#)

Third Party Public facilitated and documented the meeting. As facilitators that are not advocating for any particular outcome of this project, the intent with this summary is to capture the perspectives shared during the discussions, not to assess the merit or accuracy of any of these perspectives. This summary does not indicate an endorsement of any of these perspectives on the part of Canada Lands Company. The summary was shared in draft with participants for review before being finalized.

## Integrated Summary of Feedback

Participants asked questions and shared feedback at three points during the meeting, including a plenary conversation immediately following the presentation, during small group breakout room discussions, and again in a final plenary discussion. This section of the report provides a high-level summary of feedback shared at all points during the meeting. The questions of clarification are included in Attachment 1 and more detailed summaries of the feedback shared in each breakout room are included Attachment 2. The attachments should be read along with this section of the report. Responses provided by Canada Lands and members of the project team are noted in *italics*, where provided.

Feedback related to connections (getting to/from the district and moving around within the district)

**Support for the proposed connections, walkways, and cycling infrastructure.**

Participants said they support more pedestrian space, as the area transitions into a more walkable community.

**Consider how adding more people will affect the driving and transit systems in the area.** It is important to think beyond this district to the future area as a whole.

Feedback related to density

**Support for the proposed densities in the area.** Some said the density makes sense around the transit stations. Others shared suggestions for the team to increase density and go beyond the proposed FSI. Some said that there should be more density, and higher buildings along the transit areas, especially if it allows for more affordable housing.

**Provide examples of successful higher density and mixed-use developments.**

It is important for people to understand what higher density and mixed-use developments look like and how they can function successfully. In the future public materials could use visuals including videos to provide real-world examples.

Feedback related to the overall design

**Participant liked the idea of making the buildings “architecturally beautiful”, and pedestrian areas that people can enjoy.** Some said there should be a cohesive architectural identity for the District.

Feedback related to community services and amenities

**This District can impact the surrounding areas positively,** if it provides things that are missing in the area, such as commercial spaces and community facilities.

**Participants were supportive of the proposed school.** Participants said that many schools in the area are at capacity already. Some said it is also important to think about adding other institutional amenities to the area to help create an identity for Downsview West. Suggestions included schools for art and music and a museum.

**Support for affordable housing.** Some participants discussed the City’s housing crisis and the urgent need for affordable housing. They shared strong support for Canada Lands using this district go beyond the minimum requirements for affordable housing. Participants encouraged Canada Lands to connect with local organizations and partners that can help provide affordable housing in the district.

Feedback related to the Supply Depot

**There was a range of opinions shared about the east-west road connection identified as the preferred option in the City of Toronto’s Master Environmental Servicing Plan.** Some participants shared support for the new east-

west road that will go through the Supply Depot. Participants said it brings opportunities for better connections to the surrounding area and will bring the Supply Depot to a human scale. There was also concern that having a road cut through the Supply Depot does not respect the history and heritage of the building.

**Interest in the future use of the Supply Depot.** Participants discussed the significant size of the Supply Depot and the opportunities it presents to bring additional community uses and facilities to the area. There was interest in providing space for existing uses in the future version of the Supply Depot (e.g., the Merchants Market). Participants also said Canada Lands should examine how the roof of the building can be used to support different community uses.

## **Next Steps**

The project team thanked participants for their participation and encouraged them to stay involved as the process continues. The facilitation team explained additional ways for people to share feedback and stay up to date, including visiting the project webpage ([www.westdownsviewouest.ca](http://www.westdownsviewouest.ca)), completing the online feedback form, and/or getting in touch by phone or email. The facilitation team also explained that a draft summary of the feedback shared at the meeting will be shared with participants for review in the upcoming week.

## **ATTACHMENT 1 – Questions of Clarification**

Following the presentation participants asked a few questions of clarification. Included are questions emailed to the team after the meeting. The questions asked during and shortly after the meeting, and responses provided by the project team are included below.

**Question:** Can you clarify what the Depot is?

**Answer:** It is a warehouse building built by the Department of Defense in the Cold War era along Carl Hall Road. Originally it was a Supply Depot, and currently, it holds the Merchant's Market, among other interim uses.

**Question:** What is the expected timeline, both the start date and completion?

**Answer:** The formal application to the City is targeted for June this year. We are aiming for the first shovel on the ground to be in 2028 and completion can take up to 10 years.

**Question:** When will we get more information about affordable housing, and will we have more information describing what those units will look like?

**Answer:** There will be more information in 2024, but not describing what the units will look like. We are working closely with colleagues and reaching out into the community to see which partners and programs can help build and operate the affordable housing.

**Question:** How will it be determined which streets are for pedestrians and which are for vehicles?

**Answer:** All the streets will include space for pedestrians and cyclists and will be safe for them.

**Question:** How many residential units will there be?

**Answer:** The density is set by the draft Secondary Plan – and it estimates that there will be 13,000 people at full build-out.

**Question:** Will there be other public service improvements, like schools, in the area?

**Answer:** There will be at least one public school and one daycare, and the City of Toronto will work with partners to see what is needed.

**Question:** Will there be improvements to the transit system in the area, as many busses are now full?

**Answer:** The TTC is aware and will be informed of the changes to density so that they can plan accordingly.

**Question:** Is the podium shown on the park sketches finalized?

**Answer:** None of the sketches are representative of the final design.

**Question:** Is there a detailed study on the impact that this project will have on the present infrastructure? If so, can it be made public, and include information on who is responsible and who is signing off on the design?

**Answer:** There is a Master Environmental Servicing Plan ("MESP") underway at the City of Toronto, which will examine and recommend infrastructure projects, initiatives,

and policies to support the anticipated growth and development. Information about the MESP can be found on the City of Toronto's [Update Downsview](#) webpage.

**Question:** Will the residences affected by this plan be compensated for any disruptions, such as noise, traffic, pollution, or road damage? What prevention measures will be in place to prevent the community from heavy construction vehicle traffic?

**Answer:** Future builders will likely be required to prepare traffic management plans as part of their Construction Management Plans when submitting their development applications.

**Question:** Is there a timeline/schedule available for the 10 districts that will be developed?

**Answer:** The 10 districts are anticipated to be developed over a period of 30 or more years.

## ATTACHMENT 2 – Breakout Room Discussions

Please find your breakout room discussion by using the facilitator from your room and project team members names.

### Breakout Room #1: Matthew

#### Overall Sentiment

The discussion focused on connections to and through the district; the opportunity the Supply Depot presents for the community; the importance of providing affordable housing; and advice on how to show ways that higher density and mixed-use developments can work well.

**It is important for existing tenants of the Supply Depot to have space in the future.** The Merchants Market is an important space, we would love to see it or something similar in the future version of the Supply Depot.

**Interest in opportunities for different uses on the roof of the Supply Depot.** The Supply Depot is a massive building. Consider different uses that the building could structurally support. One idea is multiple cricket pitches; there is likely enough space and lots of people in the area play cricket.

**Unclear how this district will interact / connect to Sheppard Avenue.** It would be great if the development of this District can help make Sheppard Avenue more pedestrian friendly.

**Strong support for affordable housing.** Fully support the proposed heights of 35 to 60 storeys, especially if they can support increased affordable housing in the area. Also eager to share information about local groups and partners that could help develop the affordable housing.

**Share examples of high density mixed-use developments to help people understand how they can be successful.** Include examples in your public materials of successful high density developments. 1 York Street is one good example. Show examples of successful mixed-use developments (e.g., combinations of schools, residential buildings, transit stations, etc.).

**Cycling infrastructure is important.** The district should include cycling infrastructure that connects to the surrounding area and existing cycling infrastructure. Consider ways to allow cyclists to safely move through the area without too many places they are required to stop.

### Breakout Room #2: Stephanie

#### Overall Sentiment

Participants had positive feedback about the Downsview West District as a whole. They agree with the proposed density, the preferred Depot option, and the distribution of parks. They said that nothing jumps out to them as an issue.

**The preferred option, of cutting through the Supply Depot makes sense.**

Dividing the Depot into two helps bring such a big building down to a more human scale, making it easier for people to get around and connect to other districts. Use the frontage space for public community space and create a design that invites people to walk through the depot.

**Consider increasing the density, Downsview West has an opportunity to go past the proposed FSI in the Secondary Plan.** One participant wanted to understand what the limiting factor for FSI is. Others said the different types of density proposed makes sense, especially in relation to the transit system. One participant suggested adding a light-rail system that can justify adding more density and height.

**Participants wanted to understand how the infrastructure would support cycling, and whether there were separate bicycle paths.**

*Canada Lands response: all the streets and boulevards will have bicycle facilities incorporated.*

**Ensure that there will be pedestrian safe street design** especially for the children that will be walking from north to south as they attend school or other services.

**The distribution and location of parks makes sense.** Participants were supportive of the linear park and the reuse of existing structures.

### **Breakout Room #3: Pragya**

#### **Overall Sentiment**

The discussion focused on a number of topics, including community services – specially schools, the need for affordable housing, need to support local artists through the development, and creating a cohesive architectural identity for the project. Participants also expressed their appreciation and desire for higher density in the upcoming neighbourhood to tackle the housing crisis.

**There is a need to develop community services in the area, especially schools.** Given that most schools in the area are either at or over capacity, there is a need to make sure there is capacity in the upcoming schools to intake the new residents in the neighbourhood.

**There is a critical need for affordable housing in the area,** and the upcoming development should address this.

**Range of opinions about the timing of community services being built.** While a participant said it is important to include community services like schools in early phases, before new residents come into the neighbourhood, another said the lack of community service provision should not delay building direly needed affordable housing in the area.

*Canada Lands response: the decision of when to include schools will be made in conjunction with the school boards.*

**Participants support a higher density if it facilitates more housing.** Some participants said they appreciated the development and wanted higher density – especially to facilitate more housing. One said they would encourage Canada Lands to be bolder with the density. A participant also asked why Park Commons was not being developed – since it could be a good space for development and increased density.

**Appreciation that emerging ideas prioritize arts and culture, but also need to explore innovative ways of supporting artists in the development.** This is an increasingly difficult time for artists in the city, and it is great to see that the emerging ideas as prioritizing arts and culture. Some suggestions to further develop these plans included:

- a) Micro-retail options;
- b) Affordable commercial spaces and retail spaces;
- c) Accommodating alternative business models and alternative retail spaces: like retail alleys at Honest Ed's, and the STACKT market, the shipping container market; and
- d) Involving students in the activation, including collaborating with post-secondary institutions in the area and in the city. Internships or other opportunities for students from TMU/OCAD and other post-secondary institutions. Examples from Central St. Martins, London, which has a course on Creative Cities and also provides students options for artistic collaborations in the city.

**Activate streetscapes early, including animating pedestrian and cycling pathways.** Examples from Montreal and Europe where roads are closed to be pedestrianized / to prioritize cyclists. Some other suggestions included having patios.

**Concern about flooding to the South and West of the lands,** including basement flooding in the area. A participant asked if a study will be done, and will it be made public?

*Canada Lands response: We realize that this development will have an impact on the neighbourhoods around it. As part of the Update Downsview Secondary Plan process study area boundaries were set in consultation with the City to study potential impacts on the surrounding area. The area being studied for stormwater, sanitary, and water supply is quite large and similar to the study area set for the Transportation Master Plan, which are north to Finch Avenue; east to Bathurst Street; south to Lawrence Avenue; and west to Jane Street.*

**Need to create a cohesive architectural identity for the District** and in between the different districts on the Downsview lands. A participant also suggested staying away from the glass-tower like aesthetics which are prevalent in the city.

## **Breakout Room #4: Yulia**

### **Overall Sentiment**

The discussion focused on a number of topics, including the Supply Depot, traffic safety and congestion, the need for additional community services and schools in the area, and Downsview Park.



**It is not clear how dissecting the supply depot into two is respectful to its heritage.** The supply depot was built in 1953. It was built to be bomb proof and a lot of work went into making it distinct. It was paid for in full by Canadian citizens in the time of the Cold War. It seems that the project team uses the Indigenous argument to downplay the major surgery of dissecting the building into two. Doing so does not come across as respectful to history and heritage. This building has been kind of a “white elephant”, but it has been very much a part of Downsview, and it is a distinctive building that should be preserved.

*Canada Lands response: Heritage has been an important since the development of the id8 Framework for the broader 520 acres of land. The approach has always been to look forward to the future while honouring the past. The area has gone through different iterations – there is a pre-contact history, then there is a settler farming history, then comes the military use, and a post-military use with more public uses of the Depot and the spaces around it. Based on all of this, we are looking at what that next iteration of this space could be – with everything that it has been before – while looking into the future.*

*The direction to split the building was arrived at through an Environmental Assessment study undertaken with the City of Toronto. The building will continue to have a significant presence and serve as a landmark once it is bisected by a road. In fact, there are many opportunities to come with that direction to increase public access and public use of the building.*

**Consider disclosing the extent of asbestos-containing materials within the Depot.** There have been multiple asks to Canada Lands to disclose the studies that look at asbestos-containing materials in the Depot. And the answer received has been we are not going to disclose it, but we are using best practices, following the law. If the building is going to be separated, there is a real concern that it may impact the health of people living around it, and the communities need to be able to know what that risk is.

**How is the Depot going to be rehabilitated? What could be a potential programming?**

*Canada Lands response: There is a history of film over the last 25 years in this building, which we would like to continue – it’s great employment use and brings a lot of value to the neighbourhood. As we started exploring adaptive re-use of the building, one critical question for us was how do we open this building up? It was designed intentionally to be inward-facing and not friendly to public use. One thing we heard from local communities that Downsview needs places like the Merchant’s market, more local shops, cafes, and coffee shops. And the scale of this building is immense, which means it has the great potential to evolve as the district evolves. You could open up a vast space with partition walls into smaller spaces to meet the needs of entrepreneurs, businesses, and employers. The District Plan is not going to dictate what goes into the building but will look at how the building can be integrated into the new mixed used community.*

**If the road goes through and a lot of shops are brought in, how will the parking be accommodated?**

*Canada Lands response:* Most of the parking right now is on the surface. With the phased implementation over time, there will be an ability to phase behaviour around the parking as the uses of the Depot evolve. There is no plan to maintain the swaths of parking land around the building – it's not the highest and best use for these lands. Some of the blocks will have below grade parking, but overall, there is an anticipated behaviour shift towards more transit use and active transportation, particularly with the TTC subway station nearby.

**Consider designing roads and traffic flow in a way that does not require so many traffic lights.** There are about 10 traffic lights on the presented diagram of the transportation network. Usually, the need for a traffic light is a sign of a bad safety road design. Traffic safety is very important and situations that eliminate the need for a signalized intersection (maybe where a stop sign would suffice) tend to be much safer for pedestrians and cyclists. Look at Sweden where cities with over 100,000 people rely on road networks without traffic lights.

**Concerns for growing traffic.** Be clear about how traffic and congestion are going to be managed with the anticipated daily population growth.

**Consider providing more public washrooms, sheltered areas, and seating on the way to Downsview Park.** This is a lovely place to visit in the summer. As new residents and businesses arrive, there should be more amenities provided around Downsview Park to make the visits to the park more comfortable. Currently, there is only one public washroom available by the orchard.

**There is a need for more schools and community amenities and facilities in the area.**