

Ancaster Community Townhall – DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Ancaster Community Centre
December 12, 2023

I. OVERVIEW

On Tuesday, December 12, 2023, Northcrest Developments (Northcrest) hosted a community townhall at the Ancaster Community Centre (41 Ancaster Road). The purpose of the meeting was to present and seek feedback on the proposed updates to the Hangar District Plan informed by the feedback from the previous Ancaster community meeting (August 31, 2023),

The presentation covered what Northcrest has heard from the community to-date and focused on the proposed high-level road network and built form.

About 30 Ancaster community members participated in the townhall. The community was invited to attend the event through a variety of means including, postcards sent to every home in the Ancaster neighbourhood (roughly from Dufferin Street to the Barrie GO bridge and from the 401 up to the Bombardier facility), geographically targeted social media ads, Northcrest's newsletter and an invitation from the local Councillor James Pasternak.

The townhall was held from 5:30 – 8:00 pm, and included a dinner, an open house with information boards, opening remarks from Councillor James Pasternak, a presentation from Northcrest, as well as a facilitated Q&A. Urban design and planning consultants from Urban Strategies were also present to answer questions.

This summary was written by Third Party Public Inc., the independent facilitation team. This summary is intended to reflect key questions and points of feedback shared by participants; it is not intended to be a verbatim transcript.



Summary Structure

This summary is organized to reflect key themes of discussion, and is organized into the following sections:

- I. Overview
- II. General Sentiment and Key Themes of Discussion
- III. Detailed Feedback, including comments and questions about:
 - A. Dufferin Street Extension
 - B. Dufferin Street Widening Option
 - C. Increased Access from Ancaster to Hangar District
 - D. Green Space, Sustainability, Wildlife
 - E. Community Engagement
 - F. Other Comments
- IV. Next Steps.

Note that answers and comments provided by Northcrest and Councillor Pasternak are noted in italics and marked as such. Also note that the numbering system is used for ease of reference only and does not indicate priority or endorsement on part of Northcrest.

II. GENERAL SENTIMENT AND KEY THEMES OF DISCUSSION

This section provides a high-level overview of key themes of discussion and the general sentiment captured at the meeting. It is intended to be read together with the detailed feedback captured in the rest of the report.

1. Many participants identified as long-time Ancaster residents and many noted that although the community is grateful for the community activities that are taking place already, such as mini-golf and skate nights, the feel responsibility to advocate for all Ancaster residents and for future generations.
2. Many expressed concerns around the proposed Dufferin extension and widening, the proposed increased access to the new District due to potential for increased traffic and fear of losing small community feel experienced by many Ancaster families throughout several generations. Some participants shared that they were happy to the development in the area and were looking forward to seeing more community amenities and green spaces, some said they were undecided and wanted to learn more about impacts on the Ancaster community.
3. There was lack of clarity around what decisions have been made, when, and how the communities have been involved. Some participants expressed concerns that no meaningful decisions are open for community influence at this point and that not clear answers could be provided for specific questions at this point. *The Northcrest team and Councillor Pasternak provided clarifications about the draft updated Secondary Plan, the MESP process, and the upcoming detailed design study.*
4. Several participants thanked Northcrest for organizing the meeting and many said they would like to see more meetings and touch points, noting that much of the community was not represented at the meeting. Participants shared suggestions on how to best reach the community, as well as which formats and times would work the best for the Ancaster residents.

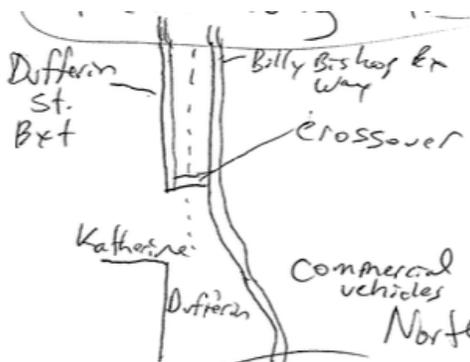
III. DETAILED FEEDBACK

A. The Proposed Dufferin Street Extension

1. **Why is it necessary to extend Dufferin Street? Have you considered other options for north-south connections? Desire to see the decision around the Dufferin Street Extension revisited.** Many participants questioned the need for the Dufferin Street extension, given that Billy Bishop Way, not too far away, is also proposed to be extended. One participant challenged the notion for the need of the regional north-south connection and several participants expressed the need to revisit this decision.

Several different alternatives were offered at the meeting by participants, including:

- extending and widening Billy Bishop Way (only) and not extending Dufferin Street;
- extending Dufferin east of Beffort Road in the middle of the runway (at least the part that cuts close to Ancaster neighbourhood)/ Northcrest-owned land and keeping Beffort Road as is; and
- not to extend Dufferin Street north of Katherine Road, and rather start the extension at the cross-over road that goes across the runway to the Billy Bishop Way extension. See the graphic below:



Alternative proposed by a participant

Answer provided by Northcrest: The Dufferin Street extension (along with the Billy Bishop Way extension) emerged as a preferred solution for a north-south connection in the Master Environmental Services Plan study (MESP). The study has been undertaken by Northcrest, Canada Lands and the City of Toronto as part of updating Downsview Secondary Plan (“Update Downsview”). A lot of work went into determining this preferred solution. Over the past three years, MESP looked at environmental conditions, servicing conditions, and traffic conditions. A long list of options for the major street network connections was carefully considered and tested against a variety of selection criteria, including the impact on the local communities. The list of options included scenarios with no roads north-south, one road north-south, some roads east-west, with Dufferin being a smaller road, with Billy Bishop being a bigger road -- all with different configurations. The goal was to find a solution that anticipates population growth over the next 50 years and provides convenient mobility choices – that respects the current car-centric reality and proactively encourages the use of the currently underutilized transit stations; a solution that improves local access but keeps the through traffic away from local residential streets. Currently, the Ancaster community has not had many mobility choices; and we want to ensure they exist in the future, as we know the change that does not rely on cars happens when those choices exist. How Dufferin and Billy

Bishop Way extensions emerged as a preferred solution is documented in the 2,000 page MESP report.

- 2. Strong concerns around the decision for Dufferin Street to be extended and desire to understand how the impact on the Ancaster community has been considered.** Several participants noted that they do not want Dufferin Street to be extended. One participant noted that with the proposed Billy Bishop Way extension and the Dufferin Street Extension going to Council for approval in early 2024, it seems that the key decisions with direct impacts on the local communities, have already been made; what's left for community input are small design details. The participant added that it is unclear how impact on Ancaster community was considered in making this decision. It is important that the community discusses and fully understands the implications of the proposed Dufferin Street extension.

Some of the key concerns around extending Dufferin Street shared by participants included:

- Worsening of congestion due to population increase for Dufferin Street that is already very congested, with bumper-to-bumper traffic during the rush hours and spill-over of congestion to local residential streets.
- Re-direction of traffic through driving apps (Google Maps, Waze, etc.) to local residential streets from the Dufferin Street extension, including a heavy truck traffic going to the Chesswood industrial area. The Dufferin Street extension will be used as a shortcut versus using Billy Bishop Way or Allen Road.
- Loss of easy access for local Ancaster residents to/from Highway 401, due to inability to make left turns on Katherine Road and Regent Road, which currently serves as an access point for many locals to go on 401. The City of Toronto representative shared at the Update Downsview Open House in October of 2023 at the Downsview Library that there it is unclear how, and it may not be possible, for local residents to be able to make a left turn at Beffort Road (going north) onto Katherine Road with the currently proposed alignment of the Dufferin Street extension. It could also mean that other small streets might need to be opened up to create this access point, or that locals will need to make a left at Regent and go up Maniza Road with already heavy traffic from the school and the church or go more north past Katherine Road to make a left turn.
- The Dufferin Street extension will come after new residents and employees move in, so before it is implemented it will not help much with traffic.

Answer provided by Northcrest: *What is going to the Council approval in 2024 is the updated Downsview Secondary Plan. The Secondary Plan protects for an ability for future growth to happen here. It gives us a broad sense of where key infrastructure, including roads, is needed, but it does not dictate specific design or precise alignment of the streets. Such details will be part of the next three years of work, where we will be closely engaging the Ancaster community, and where there will be opportunities for community input. The Katherine/Beffort intersection will also be part of the detailed design, at this point we do not know what that intersection will look like, but it is important to clarify that no existing access points have been studied for closure. The existing access point from Katherine Road to Beffort Road is not proposed for closure or for any change at this point. The only changes that will be studied in the next three years is how Beffort ties into the Katherine Road.*

3. **Provide more transitional surface parking lots.** One participant asked if Northcrest is proposing any changes to the local Ancaster streets to accommodate the District parking needs and shared a concern that visitors to the District would park on Ancaster streets. With the current approach to planning not a lot of parking is being built to promote a shift to active transportation, which may take a long time or may not work as planned.

Answer provided by Northcrest: No, we are not proposing any changes to local roads to accommodate parking. Our plan is to make the District pedestrian-friendly first. There will be some underground parking in the District, as per the City's standards and requirements. And we have been talking to the City how to best accommodate this transition to being less car-reliant over time. We are very cautious about parking, we recognize that we need provide options for people and we have the land to do it – so, we are looking at transitional temporary surface parking to accommodate this transition.

B. The Dufferin Street Widening Option

4. **What will happen south of Fire Station on Beffort Road all the way down to Wilson Avenue?**

Answer provided by Northcrest: This stretch is part of the proposed Dufferin Street extension. At this point, we do not know exactly how this stretch is going to look like, including the intersection of Dufferin and Beffort. Currently, there are two of options identified in the Master Environment Services Plan (as part of the Secondary Plan Update) how the existing Dufferin Street can connect into Beffort Road. One option is to leave Dufferin Street as is, with improvements of how it looks and feels. Another option is to widen Dufferin Street. This decision is going to be made at the detailed design stage and will be based on the results of the next 3 years of the detailed design study.

Some residents have gotten the letters from the City of Toronto notifying them that their properties might get affected if the Dufferin Street will need to be widened to 33 meters, which is the maximum range. What is currently proposed in the plan in the widening option is 25 meters, which is essentially the widths of Dufferin Street right now. Also important to note that no widening is proposed to Beffort Road. We are proposing to introduce a green buffer zone along Beffort Road in the future but we are not proposing any other changes.

5. **What does a maximum of 33 m widening mean for Dufferin Street? Are you planning for additional lanes? Are you going to be taking property from each side of the street?** During the Update Downsview Open House at the Downsview Library, some participants understood that the decision to have four lanes had already been made.

Answer provided by Northcrest: The decision about four lanes has not been made. The MESP looked at Dufferin Street continuing to have two lanes for cars in both options – with or without widening. The option with the widening will be studied further in the next three years to better understand whether to introduce two additional bus lanes. The detailed design will look at how to make everything fit and whether or not there is a need to take small part of private properties. Again, it is important to remember that the private property might get affected if a maximum of 33-meter widening is determined necessary. Currently, the MESP recommends the option for widening Dufferin Street to be at a 25-meter range.

6. **The Ancaster community needs to be part of the detailed design process and needs to be notified about the decisions in the next three years as this work unfolds.**

Answer provided by Northcrest: Yes, we absolutely agree with this comment. This study is part of the Environmental Assessment process that is regulated by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks. This process requires public notification to happen as part of the next three years of the detailed design study. So, there will be a lot of touch points and communication with Ancaster community and immediate property owners.

7. **There should be clarity around how community would be notified and engaged if the modelling did not predict traffic outcomes accurately and/or traffic plans do not match what happens on the ground in real life.** Several participants also noted that it would be too late / too challenging and virtually impossible to change anything at the point of implementation with real-time results.

Answer provided by Northcrest: Nothing has been set in stone and if there is something that needs to be modified because we see traffic behaving in a way we didn't anticipate or there is not enough parking on the street, the plans will change and we will engage you in an ongoing conversation, following advice from you on how to do it better. Again, the Secondary Plan that is going to Council is conceptual in nature – do we need two roads or one? Do we want six acres of park in one place or more smaller parks spread out? The specifics and details for these conceptual decisions will be worked out in the next three years, and will come back to you and engage you in an ongoing discussions about these details.

C. Proposed Increased Access from Ancaster to Hangar District

8. **It is important to preserve the quiet residential pocket, that was there for several generations. Do not open the small Ancaster streets to the new Hangar District; rely on the existing connections instead.**

Highlights of shared comments included:

- Community feels grateful for both the activities that are happening now at Downsview – like mini-golf, skate nights, as well as the services and green spaces and other improvements that are coming as part of this development. However, this is a big responsibility to advocate fairly for all neighbours and for the future generations, whose families have been in Ancaster for many years. The concern is that residents of Ancaster may lose the quiet residential community feel due to increased traffic and extension of the smaller local street – Home Road, Powell Road -- to the new Hangar district. Another participant noted that the access from Ancaster to the new district already exist through Garratt Boulevard and through Murray Road.
- There is no need to open up small streets for improving mobility options, as there is a bus that takes local residents to transit stations that comes every 15 minutes and it takes 5 minutes to be at a subway station, and 25 minutes to get to downtown Toronto.
- Several participants urged Councillor Pasternak to help Ancaster community advocate for their community priorities and to ensure that other Councillors do not vote to approve something that local communities do not want.

Answer provided by Northcrest: Thank you for this comment. We are looking at redesign and will definitely take these comments back. The reason why we have proposed opening up more roads to the neighbourhood is because we know how great this community is, and we want to make sure that this community has access to more grocery store, coffee shops, restaurants, parks, daycares – everything that is not there right now, as you have been with a big industrial site.

It is important to note the opening of these streets is not indented to accommodate through- traffic for people travelling north-south or east-west, as the existing dead-ends on local streets will continue to exist. For us as long-term owners of the neighbouring lands, it is as important to ensure that Ancaster is safe and has a proper flow in terms of road traffic. We believe in creating the connections the right way, responsibly, with the communities' input. That's why we are here talking to you today, and will continue working with you moving forward, as we develop the detailed design.

Answer provided by Councillor Pasternak: That's exactly right, this is my responsibility to listen, solicit community input, and represent interests of this community and other Downsview communities at City Council. I have been to many meetings about this over the past couple of years – I continue to listen and learn. What is important to remember is that it is the Secondary Plan that is going for Council approval in spring of 2024. The Secondary Plan will propose the main road network. But when it comes to traffic safety – stop signs, speed limits, crosswalks, community safety zones, automated enforcement, etc. – it is implemented once the high-level infrastructure plan is already in place. And that is what we will look at in the future at the planning and zoning applications level. At the application stage, we work with property owners on compromise, finding solutions that best work for all. Property owners can always appeal to the Province, and in that sense much of the planning power has been taken away from the City. So, it is important for all of us to work together.

D. Green Space, Sustainability and Wildlife

9. What do 6 acres of green space look like?

Answer provided by Northcrest: We are proposing extending Robert Leek Park and provide a new comprehensive connection of systems of green spaces that would allow you to go from Downsview Park to Ancaster Park to Robert Leek Park.

10. Ensure wildlife is well protected and the new greenspaces accommodate the temporary wetland areas. Wildlife including water fowl, coyotes, foxes, racoons, rabbits, and groundhogs live at the Downsview site with “temporary” wetlands in spring and fall. Ensure greenspace has small ponds or wetland-like areas and a nature centre to accommodate the wildlife, similar to Downsview Park. It will also prevent this wildlife from moving into the Ancaster neighbourhood.

11. Be very careful during construction so that no harm (flooding) or threats to health (air/water pollution) occur.

E. Community Engagement

12. Desire to see more community engagement with clear communication. Ancaster community is a key stakeholder for this development, and only a small portion of the community is represented at the meeting (mostly residents from the south-east and north-east corner of Ancaster) . And from those who are presented, nobody was consulted on the Dufferin extension or opening up the small streets – your primary stakeholders have not had any input on key decisions.

Shared process advice included:

- Have more meetings and touch points with the community. Hold meetings on Saturdays, as it is difficult to get to the meetings on time during the work week. Consider different days and formats for in-person and virtual engagement.
- Consider a local Ancaster community committee to keep the community up-to-date through community representatives. Several participants noted that they would be interested in being part of such a group.
- Ensure engagement materials are available in different languages spoken in Donwsvie. Not all community members speak English and many of them are multicultural.
- Keep in mind that not everybody can participate virtually, not everybody has access to Internet or knows how use technology.
- Ensure the community actually knows about these meetings. The postcard in the mailbox looks like an ad and not many would have read it. Be clear what the meeting purpose is and what kind of information it will include.
- Consider more Italian language event at community centres or libraries, not at restaurants. There might be confusion that people may need to pay for dinner or people might not want to come to restaurant for serious conversations, as they usually come to such places to enjoy good time with the family and friends.
- Desire to know when the next Ancaster community meeting is going to be.

Answer provided by Northcrest: *We are planning to come back to the community in March. We'll show you the changes to the plan for the resubmission to the City of Toronto. We would love to have community representatives and ambassadors that we can run the proposed changes by – have we missed anything, what else is critical to consider from the community perspective?*

13. Transparency is key. Be proactive, not reactive. Be transparent about your engagement and communication plan, and who you have engaged to date. The point is that it doesn't feel that Northcrest is being transparent with this community. It is not very clear what kind of engagements happened when and who participated in these meetings. You keep referring to engagements on the high-level decisions about roads, yet many in this room did not participate in these engagements. There are engagement reports on the website, but they do not say who participated and some numbers are shocking – e.g. only eight seniors participated in the seniors' meeting, only eight people to speak about culture, and only five local businesses. And only 148 people reached the end of the survey. There is a Community Resource Group, some applied and were not selected, and we do not know who represents Ancaster at that group.

Answer provided by Northcrest: *Thank you so much for these comments. We take this very seriously, and we know how important this community is. We are open to meeting with the community more often and come to where the community already meets – church, coffee shops, your houses – to have more conversations where needed. We*

have been trying to do our best to engage with this community, and we are always learning and willing to do better with your advice and help. And we rely on people living in this neighbourhood to help us and guide us on how to best engage with you. So thank you for this advice, and we hope we can continue relying on you moving forward.

- 14. Demonstrate how you have heard community voices.** Clearly share what you have heard from the community, how you have considered it and what alternate plans you have made. Sure the community would benefit from additional community amenities, community centres, libraries, coffee shops in the “Downsvoid” but the community needs to be part of the culture where the development is informed by community voices.
- Answer provided by Northcrest: Thank you for this. What we hear today is that it's not that you do not want the north-south connection, it's about how that north-south connection interacts with your neighbourhood – to ensure there is no blockage of access points and no congestion and more traffic coming into your neighbourhood. So will take all these suggestions and focus our attention on it.*

F. Other

This section includes additional comments shared in writing at the meeting.

- Consider a bus-only road between the new and the old communities.
- No high-rise buildings near Ancaster homes.

IV. NEXT STEPS

Chris Eby, Executive Vice-President of Corporate and Public Affairs at Northcrest, thanked members of the community for taking the time to participate and share their thoughts. He wished everyone one Happy Holidays and noted that Northcrest will continue to work with the Ancaster residents and will come back in March of 2024 to provide updates on the Hangar District Plan.

For more information please visit the Northcrest website at (www.northcrestdev.ca/hangardistrict) or contact Ian Hanecak, Senior Manager of Community Relations at IHanecak@northcrestdev.ca.