

Hangar District – Ancaster Community Update Summary

Thursday, August 30, 2023, from 5:30 – 8 pm at Ancaster Community Centre



Overview

On Thursday, August 30, 2023, Northcrest Developments hosted a community update event at the Ancaster Community Centre (41 Ancaster Road). Local communities were invited to come and learn more about key changes to the Hangar District Plan resubmitted to the City of Toronto in August 2023.

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

The event featured an indoor section with information boards, along with printed take-home materials and jumbo Lego for kids. Northcrest staff were present to answer any questions, with the support of Third Party Public recording key feedback and questions shared by participants. Additionally, an outdoor section in the park behind the community centre had free pizza and ice cream, lawn games, and other activities for families to enjoy.

This summary was written by Third Party Public Inc., the independent facilitation team that helped with taking notes at the event. This summary is intended to reflect key questions and points of feedback shared by participants during the event; it is not intended to be a verbatim transcript. The summary was informed and reviewed by the Northcrest staff attending the meeting. The summary is available at www.northcrestdev.ca/together



Key Themes of Feedback and Questions

The following points summarize key themes of feedback. They are meant to be read together with the rest of the report.

- **General support for the plan with some questions and concerns.** Many participants said they were excited to see what was proposed in the plan, particularly improved connectivity and the pedestrian bridge, pedestrianized runway, employment and innovation, and considerations for sustainability.
- **Interest in the height of new buildings and location of these buildings and desire to see low-height buildings around the edges facing the existing neighbourhood.** There was general interest in understanding the height of proposed buildings and the location of these buildings, with some emphasizing the importance of new buildings immediately facing existing single-family homes low height and not creating negative shadow impacts on the adjacent properties.
- **Questions and concerns around increased traffic in residential areas.** Many participants stressed that Ancaster is a residential neighbourhood that is already experiencing unreasonable traffic. There were many questions about how Northcrest is planning to keep the traffic away from residential streets.
- **Interest in community services and facilities and other amenities.** Many participants said it was important to ensure that existing and new residents of all ages can access community services and facilities, including community centres, child care, youth spaces, and programs for seniors. Many also expressed excitement for having a variety of easily accessible retail and restaurants.
- **Interest in construction timelines, phasing and construction management.** There was interest in understanding when shovels would be in the ground and which areas of the district would be built out first. There was a desire to see an effective construction management plan that addresses traffic, congestion, and noise on local residential streets.
- **Questions about the process and resubmission of the district plan.** Several participants said it was not clear what had changed from the previous submission, some said that it was not clear how the changes came about and whether/how the Ancaster community informed these changes.

Overall Sentiment & Process Advice

Overall Sentiment

On Thursday, August 30, 2023, the project team interacted with over 200 people at Ancaster Community Centre. Many participants were interested in learning more about Northcrest Hangar (1st) District Plan resubmission and said they appreciated the opportunity to connect with Northcrest to ask questions and have in-person conversations about what is planned. A range of questions and thoughts was shared during the event. While many expressed their excitement for more activities, places to go to, anticipated increase in existing property values, and better ways to get in and around the area, some raised concerns about the change in the residential feel of the existing neighbourhood next to the new district, increased traffic, shadow impact, and need to live through the years of construction.

QUESTIONS AND FEEDBACK

The feedback and questions shared by participants during Northcrest's Ancaster Community Event are grouped by common themes and summarized below:

Height, Built Form, and Density

- **Support for the maximum height of 14 storeys away from the existing neighbourhood.** There were a number of participants who assumed that there would be very tall buildings in this District. These groups were pleased to hear the maximum is 14 storeys and limited to certain areas. Generally, participants said they were supportive of mid-scale heights for the Hangar District, particularly on the northern side of the district.
- **Consider the shadow impact of new buildings on existing communities.** There were several participants concerned about the shadows from the new proposed buildings on the existing single-family homes. They emphasized that it was important that the sun exposure for existing residents is not reduced. One suggestion was to consider how to best position mechanical penthouses to limit the shadow impacts.
- **Consider reducing the height of the stacked townhouses around the edge of the district facing Ancaster.** Some participants noted the first row of the new buildings need to align with the existing single-family homes and that even four-storey stacked townhouses will create a significant visual difference, will cast a shadow on the existing buildings, and might not integrate well with Ancaster homes.
- **Increase the percentage of two- and three-bedroom units.** There needs to be more two and three-unit bedrooms to accommodate families. This area is perfect for families given the schools, parks, places of worship, and other community amenities in the area. There should be a target of 40 - 60% of two- to three-bedroom units, the exact number can be subject to market demand.
- **Concern around the historical footprint of expansion of airport lands and future implications on the existing neighbourhood.** Some participants shared that De Havilland / Bombardier has purchased several properties in the area to expand its footprint over time. There was a suggestion that those lands revert to single detached homes, rather than towns/midrise buildings. There was also a general concern that with the rezoning, there would be increased development activity in the whole neighbourhood i.e. single detached homes would be acquired by developers to build tall buildings.

Traffic and connectivity

- **Strong support for the Downsview Park Bridge and improved connectivity.** Many participants said they were excited to see the Downsview Park Bridge and the generally improved connectivity through the area, particularly improved cycling and pedestrian connections to and from the park and to nearby transit stations. Some urged Northcrest to share concrete dates for the construction of the bridge.
- **General concerns around growing traffic and congestion in the area.** Many participants talked about already heavily congested streets surrounding the new district – Allen Rod, Wilson Street, Keele Street, and Sheppard West, raising concern about what might happen when more new residents and employees would come to Hangar District. One suggestion was for the project team to visit the site during school pick-up and drop-off to understand the amount of traffic on Ancaster Road and Maniza Road.
- **Ensure that proposed road extensions and new roads do not bring the traffic to the residential streets.** There were many questions around proposed road extensions, particularly for Dufferin Street – its alignment, intersections with local roads, and whether it connects to Sheppard West. A range of opinions and suggestions was shared – with some saying they really liked the proposed extensions and suggested that the Dufferin Street extension be 4 lanes and not 2; some saying they preferred the Dufferin Street extension be parallel to Billy Bishop Way; and some who were more cautious and concerned about the impact on local residential streets. There was a general shared sentiment that a plan for new connections needs to prevent traffic spilling over onto residential streets, many of which already suffer from speeding cars passing through trying to avoid congested main roads.
- **Concern that the transportation planning does not reflect car-centric reality.** Some participants expressed concerns that much of the proposed transportation plan is hinged on the assumption that there will be much less driving and much more active transportation. The participants noted that while it is a good aspiration, it is unlikely to become a reality and people will still rely primarily on cars to get around – e.g. people are not likely to use the shuttle to go to the grocery store; they will still drive to amenities which will need parking. Some said it is important to recognize that existing street design and infrastructure were specifically built to be car-friendly, unlike much of Europe, which is where the team seems to take inspiration from.
- **Concerns about the proposed changes to Home Road.** Some residents were concerned about Home Road being converted from a cul-de-sac to a connecting road.
- **Concerns for safety regarding Powell Road.** A safety concern was raised for the Powell Road intersection near the Flight Safety School. It is currently unsafe for pedestrians and the bus route has damaged the road. Consider lowering the speed limit to improve safety.
- **Questions about expropriation.** Some participants asked whether the extension of the roads or the creating of new roads would require private property expropriation? *The City is at the very beginning of a long study process and no decisions have been made. The next stage in this process is the City's evaluation of designs that seek to minimize or eliminate impacts on existing properties and public spaces. The goal is to ensure these necessary roads and pathways get built with no disruption to existing property owners and we anticipate those designs will be shared starting either in late 2024 or 2025 when detailed design gets underway.*

Employment, community facilities, and other amenities

- **Strong support for proposed employment focus.** Many participants said they supported the idea of creating an employment hub based on innovation and creative industries and that it would benefit both local businesses and homeowners.
- **Strong support for opportunities for youth** including local jobs for youth and access to youth services and community spaces.
- **Ensure school and child care capacity.** With the anticipation of many young families moving into the area, it is important to ensure there is adequate school and child care capacity and that existing schools and child care centres are renovated to meet growing demands.
- **Need for spaces and services for seniors.** Many participants noted that there is an aging population in the area that needs access to spaces and programs designed specifically for seniors. Likewise, the design of the streets and the public realm needs to consider the needs of the seniors.
- **Excited for new retail, services and amenities.** There is an interest in seeing new restaurants, local stores and grocers.
- **Include more recreational amenities in the parks such as tennis, basketball courts, etc.**

Greenspaces, natural diversity, and sustainability

- **Support for sustainable development and practices.** Some participants were interested in learning more about how Northcrest is thinking about sustainability and were excited to learn about plans for low-carbon building design, renewable energy, and green infrastructure.
- **Preserve wildlife in the area.** Some participants noted that there are several families of foxes, squirrels, raccoons, etc. in the Ancaster neighbourhood and inquired about the plans to preserve and maintain the wildlife in the area.
- **Ensure that soils and water are not contaminated by previous manufacturing and military activities.**
- **Questions about flooding and stormwater management.** A few participants talked about the importance of ensuring that the new development does not contribute and where possible alleviates the existing flooding problem in the area. Some noted that places like Agudath Cemetery in Ancaster have been completely flooded before.

Construction and phasing

- **Overall, participants were interested in understanding construction timelines, specifically:**
 - **What is the construction timeline? When will shovels be in the ground?** *Timelines are based on a variety of factors that can greatly affect when construction begins, occurs, and ends, such as approval timelines. Assuming all current resubmission and approval timelines remain constant, local residents might expect construction of the streets and infrastructure to begin sometime in 2026-2027.*
 - **When will the Dufferin Street extension be constructed?** *Assuming all engineering work is completed on current timelines, the Dufferin Street extension would begin construction around 2033.*

- **Which parts of the district would be built first?** Northcrest sees great value in maintaining and modernizing the existing hangar facilities for a mix of new employment uses. This adaptive reuse of hangars in addition to a new park, local amenities and residential units will make up the first phase of the district's development. Construction of new buildings in this initial phase will begin sometime in 2028 and be completed sometime around 2030-2031.
- **When would the cycling and pedestrian bridge be constructed?** Northcrest understands the value of delivering this important connection as early in the process as possible. As such, construction of the Downsview Park Bridge is anticipated to follow a similar timeline as the first phase of new construction. Subject to a constant project timeline, construction will occur roughly between 2027 – 2030.
- **When will units be available for sale?** Residential units will be available for preconstruction sale sometime around 2027-2028.
- **Concern about construction management.** Generally, local Ancaster residents were concerned about managing the construction impact on local residents, particularly around access to local streets, congestion and traffic, noise and air pollution. One suggestion was to ensure that construction routing does not rely on immediate residential roads (e.g. Ancaster Road, Maniza Road, etc.). Consider using Beffort Road, Hanover Road or Murray Road, or other routes to get to the site.

Process Advice

Participants were unclear about the process for the district plan. There was a desire to better understand how feedback is being integrated into the new submission. There was interest to learn about the following:

- **Stages and the current stage of the approval process.** Northcrest is currently working through the approvals process with City staff, in consultation with the public. Following the most recent resubmission in June 2023, Northcrest is looking at 2 additional draft resubmissions in 2024, with a final draft going before City Council for approval in early 2025.
- **Community engagement between the submission and resubmission and how community feedback has informed the resubmission.** Northcrest kicked off engagement with the local community in November 2021 and following 6 months of consultation, submitted their District Plan to the City of Toronto. Since that time, Northcrest has continued to engage regularly with the local community, incorporating feedback where appropriate through 2022 and into 2023 as they prepared their June 2023 resubmission. All engagement and community feedback reports can be found [here](#).
- **Upcoming engagement opportunities that local residents to be involved in an advisory capacity and share their experience with the Bombardier facilities, community engagement and equity.** Community engagement will continue to be an integral part of the planning process from 2023 through 2024 as subsequent resubmissions are made. Northcrest has committed to providing regular opportunities for the community to provide their feedback and is looking to plan a follow-up meeting in December 2023. Please sign up for the [newsletter](#) to keep informed of the next engagement opportunity.

Participants have also shared advice for upcoming community events:

- Bring relevant supporting information, such as maps and plans, to orient viewers and visually demonstrate material changes to the district plan – particularly for conversations around road extensions. Include maps in the take-away materials.

- Ensure all the maps are labelled with street names and cardinal North.
- The staff were really knowledgeable and helpful but would be great to have more staff to answer questions during the busy times.

Next Steps

Northcrest will continue to work with local communities and the City of Toronto 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.