

Hangar / Taxiway West District Open House Feedback Summary

October 28/ October 30, 2024: 9 am – noon; 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm; 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm
November 2, 2024: noon – 3:00 pm
YZD Experience Center, 34 Hanover Rd, Downsview

OPEN HOUSE OVERVIEW

On October 28th, 30th, and November 1st Northcrest Developments (Northcrest) held a three-day Open House Event at the YZD Experience Centre. The purpose of the Open House was to share the highlights of the latest proposed Taxiway West District submitted to the City of Toronto for their review in August of 2024.

Residents of the Ancaster neighbourhood received a hand-delivered invitation to the Open House and were notified via Councillor Pasternak's e-newsletter. Northcrest also invited over 180 community organizations via e-mail.

About 150 people attended the Open House over three days, including local Ancaster residents, members of the local business community, as well as representatives of 17 local organizations (see Appendix A for the list of organizations). Councillor James Pasternak also visited during one of the Open House days.

During the Open House, attendees could look at the information boards, ask Northcrest staff questions, and share their feedback on the latest version of the proposed District Plan. The City of Toronto staff was also present to answer community questions and provide more information related to the City's review of the proposed Taxiway West (Hangar) District Plan, including the City's upcoming Townhall on December 3rd at Ancaster Community Centre.

Third Party Public, an independent facilitation firm retained to support engagement for Taxiway West District, wrote this feedback summary. The intent of this report is to capture the perspectives shared during the discussion, not to assess the merit or accuracy of any of the perspectives. Feedback documented in this summary does not indicate an endorsement of any of these perspectives by Northcrest.



If you have questions about this report, please e-mail them to Matthew at matthew@thirdpartypublic.ca

GENERAL SENTIMENT & KEY MESSAGES

Generally, participants, including local residents and representatives of local community and business organizations, expressed support for the overall proposed plan and the vision for the new district. Many also shared specific concerns and advice for the Northcrest team. This section captures a high-level summary of commonly shared comments. Detailed feedback is captured in the rest of the report.

What Participants Said They Liked:

1. Many local residents noted that they looked forward to the pedestrian connection to Downsview Park, improved cycling and pedestrian connections, proposed new open spaces and parks, and more places for the community to shop and play. Some noted that they liked the proposed parking by the pedestrian bridge and the employment uses of the buildings next to Yard Works.
2. Many, particularly representatives of youth and business organizations, expressed their support and interest in employment, affordable housing, spaces and services for youth and families, and increased public transit service into the neighbourhood. All those attending on behalf of organizations noted that they were encouraged and interested in continuing to stay in touch with Northcrest to explore opportunities of working together.

What Participants Said They Were Concerned About:

3. Many local residents shared concerns related to construction traffic and management, the impacts of the projected population growth on Ancaster and how it would affect local traffic flow, and the proposed heights of the buildings immediately next to the Ancaster homes.
4. There was a difference of opinion about the proposed vehicular access to the new district at Garrett Boulevard. Many participants said they strongly opposed Garrett Boulevard being one of the main access points through Ancaster to the new district. Many noted that it is not equitable and puts an undue amount of safety risks and negative impacts on residents living west of Ancaster Road. They said, if there are connections through Ancaster, all streets need to be opened and connected to the new district. Others said that while they were concerned about worsening traffic congestion in Ancaster, they supported the updated street network plan that removes some of the previously proposed additional vehicular access points to the new district. Some noted that they would like to see no vehicular access points through Ancaster and would like Northcrest to consider creating vehicular connections north of Ancaster on currently undeveloped lands.
5. Some participants also noted the need for the right water infrastructure to avoid flooding, more family-sized units, and more community services and facilities to support the growing population. A few noted the need for purpose-built housing, facilities, and an economy that can support the film industry and the new generation of workers and families.

What Participants Asked About:

6. Many participants were interested in learning more about housing, including affordable housing, when the construction would begin, when people would be able to buy a unit, and when people would start moving in. Many also asked about the recently announced Rogers Music Stadium.

DETAILED FEEDBACK

This section captures a range of feedback shared during the Open House. Feedback is organized under key categories for ease of reference.

Employment & Job Opportunities

- **Support for employment.** Many participants expressed support and excitement for envisioned employment uses. Particularly, participants expressed excitement about film studio(s), industries that build on the aerospace legacy of Downsview, and opportunities for creative and artisanal workspaces.
- **Provide more employment opportunities for youth and people of all abilities.** Many participants, including representatives of youth, employment, and business organizations emphasized the importance of entry-level jobs and training support to create more employment opportunities for youth and people with disabilities.
- **Consider encouraging a mix of locally-owned stores and bigger brands.**
- **Anchor employment opportunities in as much cultural empowerment as possible.** Cultural erasure is real.

Local Street Network, Traffic & Congestion

- **Concern about the increase in construction truck traffic on Garratt Boulevard.** Currently, all the trucks are coming through Garrett, and the air quality has gone down, it is much noisier, and it's more difficult to sleep. There are a lot of elderly people living on the street, and the noise and pollution is affecting them negatively. Some noted that many drivers have to back down on Garratt Blvd. because trucks cannot make a left turn from Wilson Avenue to Garratt Blvd.
- **Overall concern about increased "trickle-down" traffic to local Ancaster streets.** In general, many of the local residents said they were concerned that vehicular traffic would increase with the development of the new district and would create an unsafe environment for local Ancaster residents and street users. Some participants identified as long-time Ancaster residents and recounted times when Bombardier traffic resulted in many accidents on north-south streets in Ancaster in the 80s, particularly at intersections along Ancaster Road. Due to serious safety risks, Bombardier created the Hanover-Beffort Road and regulated employee traffic through the Ancaster neighbourhood, which improved the safety environment. There is a real concern that Garratt Blvd. will end up being a "short-cut" route not just for people in the Hangar District but also for the "trickle-down" transient traffic on Sheppard Street and Keele Street, and all the other future districts. Alternative solutions were proposed to address this concern:
 - Consider a ring road around the new district, north and east of Hanover Road, so the traffic does not go through the Ancaster community.

- Consider not having any vehicular access points from Ancaster to the new district, and building new roads east of the new district and north of Ancaster, since those lands are owned by Northcrest, not developed, and present a great opportunity for direct access to Allen Road.
- Consider using the runway as the main access road to the new district and the future districts.
- **Concern for having Garratt Boulevard as a main north-south vehicular access point to the new district.** Many participants from the west side of Ancaster said they were very concerned with the proposed plan to have Garratt Boulevard be the main north-south vehicular access point. Many said that they agree that the City needs to grow but noted it needs to grow fairly. It is important to keep through-traffic in Ancaster even. They noted that the plan currently is unfair and inequitable to people living in West Ancaster – it concentrates traffic, dust, noise, and increased safety risks in one part of the neighbourhood. For context, some shared many challenges residents on Murray Street have faced over the years, including flooded basements, the Sunrise explosion, the cement dust from TESKEY Concrete Co. Corp., and many broken promises. Some participants noted that many seniors on Murray Rd are not able to come to meetings to voice their opinions. Some participants also wanted to clarify that they wanted to withdraw their signature from a petition to close the Ancaster Road access point. They clarified that many on the west side of Ancaster signed the petition without a full understanding that the petition meant that the only south access to the new district would go through west Ancaster (via Garratt Blvd and Murray Rd). Participants offered a range of alternative solutions:
 - Don't create a dump on Murray Rd, create a river that flows beautifully all across Ancaster, in terms of traffic. Do not block the arteries to the heart – if you block an artery, the heart stops, so the traffic must flow evenly. It's either all the roads that open to the new district or no roads. Consider extending all east-west Ancaster streets and connecting them to Allen Road.
 - During rush hour, it is easier to make a left turn to Maniza Rd (because of the dedicated left turn lane). Consider making Maniza a one-way street going north, as it will help extend the bus service to continue on Hanover Road into the new neighbourhood and back to Garratt Rd; and making Ancaster Rd one-way going south (to utilize the existing traffic light).
 - Consider extending Home Road into the site and creating a park on the northern part of the new access point.
- **Support for the updated local street network.** Some participants said they were supportive of the proposed fine-grain street network and the closure of Home Rd and Ancaster Rd access points, as it would decrease the through-traffic in the neighbourhood. They also noted that Ancaster Rd has never been opened to the Bombardier site, so opening it would be a drastic change.
- **A range of opinions about parking.** Some participants supported the proposed parking in the new district, specifically its location by the new pedestrian bridge. Some noted the importance of providing visitor parking near residences, especially for personal support workers coming to the area to care for clients (e.g., seniors and/or people with disabilities). Others were worried visitors to the new district would park on local Ancaster streets.

Housing, Height, and Density

- **Support for larger family-sized housing.** Many said they appreciated that Northcrest was planning for bigger units to support growing families. Some said that more three- and four-bedroom housing is needed – if not for families, then just to be able to stay social and have people over (which is challenging in smaller units).
- **Interest in affordable and purpose-built housing.** Many participants were interested in learning more about how “affordable” is defined, whether it would be rental or ownership, who would be qualified, and how to get an affordable unit. Many noted that affordable housing is key for local youth to be able to stay in Downsview and start families. Some suggested working with the film industry to build housing for movie industry workers. Others were interested in seeing purpose-built housing for seniors. Some noted a need for Indigenous affordable housing. Representatives of various organizations expressed interest in continuing discussions with Northcrest to explore opportunities for culturally informed purpose-built housing options.
- **Difference of opinion about height integration.** Some participants said they liked that the four-storey stacked townhouses acted as a buffer between the Ancaster homes and the mid-rise residential buildings. Others said they would prefer to see two-storey detached or semi-detached houses instead of the stacked townhouses. Some noted that there is not enough space proposed between the townhouses and the existing Ancaster houses.
- **Consider redistributing the height of the buildings by making the buildings closer to the Ancaster neighbourhood shorter and the further buildings taller.** Some noted that it felt like a big jump to go from single-family homes in Ancaster to four-storey townhomes to eight-storey buildings immediately after. Consider reducing the height of the currently proposed 8-storey buildings to 6 storeys and making the buildings furthest from Ancaster taller.
- **Consider treating Block K similar to Block J concerning building heights** -- with no more than four storeys next to existing Ancaster residences.
- **Ensure high standards for building design and architecture.** Some participants urged Northcrest to ensure that the plan looks good not just on paper but also in reality. Many said that designs looked great and it’s important that buildings look beautiful once constructed.

Parks, Open Spaces, Active Transportation, and Recreation

- **Support for Downsview Park pedestrian bridge.** Many participants said they could not wait to see the Downsview Park pedestrian bridge and have direct access from Ancaster to Downsview Park.
- **Support for parks and open spaces.** Many participants said they appreciated the new parks, open plazas for community gatherings, and a string of smaller connecting green spaces. Some said they would love to see more food trucks and food options along the green and open spaces, as well as community-oriented events and festivals.
- **Support for pedestrian focus and improved cycling connections.** Many participants said they liked improved cycling and pedestrian connections in the area. Many noted that it would help spend more time outside, which is beneficial for community health. Some urged

Northcrest to create protected/separated bicycle lanes throughout the district with a connection to Downsview Park.

- **Improve public transit.** Explore ways to bring more TTC bus routes into the area and increase the frequency of the existing bus service. Explore opportunities to collaborate with TTC to promote local events, such as a farmers' market, that may attract visitors from beyond the district and local Ancaster community.
- **Other suggestions included:**
 - Explore a way to bring a new park into the Ancaster neighbourhood; and
 - Include existing green spaces and parks surrounding the site as part of the green spaces and parks plan.
 - Extend the proposed Greenway in the District along Hanover and Beffort Roads. Many participants were supportive of the greenway and said they liked the landscaping and pedestrian walkways, the integration with separated bike lanes, and the idea of extending it down the length of Beffort/Hanover Roads.

Community Services & Facilities

- **Ensure that residents and workers in the new district have access to community services and facilities.** Many participants said they wanted to see the new district be a place for families. Particularly, participants emphasized the need for:
 - Schools and daycares, noting that it would be great to have child support facilities for shift workers;
 - Youth spaces for youth to gather and hang out, learn more about art and sciences, and create;
 - Community gardens are especially important in urban settings with many kids growing up not knowing how vegetables and herbs are grown. There are a lot more benefits to community gardens than just access to fresh food;
 - Medical services, especially if more families are expected to move in;
 - A farmers' market that is open year-round and accessible via active transportation; and
 - A community centre.
- **Appreciation for YZD Experience Centre.** Some participants said they really appreciated that the YZD Experience Centre had community-based events and offered space for community use. Representatives of many organizations expressed their interest in using space for community events.

Sustainability and Water Management

- **Ensure that new developments do not contribute to the existing flooding problem in Ancaster.** Many participants discussed the need for appropriate stormwater and wastewater infrastructure to support the anticipated population growth. Residents of Ancaster have been dealing with flooding for a long time and are concerned that the new buildings would make the flooding worse. Some said that they have experienced more water-related issues in their homes due to construction in the area. A few participants noted that houses on Murray Road were never properly accounted for in the current water management system, and as such the residents struggle with constant basement flooding.

- **Interest in learning more about how stormwater will be managed.** Some participants asked about stormwater management and how Northcrest is going to ensure that the district does not flood during big storm events, which happens to the neighbourhoods south of the runway.
- **Interest in understanding Northcrest’s approach to vegetation management.** Some participants asked whether all the existing vegetation would be uprooted to accommodate construction.
- **Ensure you are building for the future and a different climate.** Some participants emphasized the importance of taking into consideration climate change and the hotter, wetter, wilder weather. Some recommended planning and building in a way that would accommodate new technology and infrastructure, such as electric vehicles and smart weather shelters.
- **It’s important to protect existing wildlife in Downsview.** Some participants noted that there are coyotes, foxes, and geese that live here. It’s important they are not disturbed during construction.

Phasing

- **Interest in understanding when and how the development of the district will be phased.** Some participants said that detailed schedules and detailed proposals for developments in the new district and on broader Downsview lands should be publicly available – communities would greatly benefit from this information. Many participants asked:
 - When the construction is going to start first and where;
 - When residential units are going to be available for sale;
 - When will people start moving in?
 - When will the runway be built out fully?

Process

- **Appreciation and need for continued community involvement.** Many participants said they appreciated Northcrest’s continued engagement with the community. A few noted that “Real estate ethics are tricky, and what you do here is beautiful!”. Many emphasized that more work together needs to be done collaboratively, including resolving the local street network issues with the Ancaster community and ensuring that the change occurs according to the District Plan that the communities have agreed to.
- **Concern about the divide happening within the Ancaster community.** Some participants said they were concerned about the divide within the community and asked Northcrest to avoid small “cliquey” meetings with different groups, and rather host meetings where everyone can have a say.
- **Clarity around roles, decision-making, and implementation.** Many participants indicated that there should be more clarity about the role of the City of Toronto, Northcrest, and elected officials -- who informs and makes final decisions on the District Plan and who is in

charge of ensuring that the agreed-upon decisions are implemented? What is the public accountability process to trace the decision-making and involvement of different actors?

- **Interest in understanding how Northcrest and the City approach balancing many different inputs.** Some participants were curious to understand how Northcrest is balancing many different inputs given there are many different priorities in the neighbourhood. A few noted that they appreciated the District Plan process created space for many different voices and priorities to come in.
- **Consider sharing feedback from the Open House at the December 3rd City-led Community Meeting.** It would be useful to understand a range of opinions about the district plan proposals.

Other

- **Interest in learning more about Rogers Music Stadium.** Many participants asked about the location of the Rogers Music Stadium, whether it was permanent, when it would open and how long it would stay for.
- **Interest in understanding what will happen to the Hangars.** A few participants asked whether existing Hangars will be preserved or demolished completely and how would the space be used.
- **Consider connecting with and visiting “The Art Collective”** -- it is a local Downsview Hub for architects, designers, artists. They know a lot of businesses around and they are always looking for space. Could be a great tenant for Northcrest.
- **Bring more food trucks to Play on the Runway.** This is an amazing event, and having more food trucks, maybe even a food truck festival, would be great. Also ensure that different genres of music are not too close to each other, It's fun to experience different music but when the music overlaps, it just becomes noise. It is also great that it is free! Everything is so expensive these days.
- **Consider organizing vintage car meet-ups.** There are a lot of people around here and south of Wilson who own or have inherited vintage cars, and they would love a picture of their car on a runway.
- **Questions and concerns** about Update Downsview MESP decisions around Dufferin Street extension and widening, local street signs, Bombardier operations, Yard Works, and the Dufferin Street extension.

Next Steps

Northcrest committed to posting a summary of the feedback received on the Hangar District website: www.northcrestdev.ca/the-hangar-district.

The City of Toronto staff encouraged participants to attend a City-led community townhall on December 3, 2024.

APPENDIX A. LIST OF PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATION

Members of the following organizations attended during one of the three days of Open House:

1. 29 Roots Youth Employment Services
2. Afro-Canadian Affordable Housing
3. Afro Caribbean Farm
4. Downsview Lands Voice Community Association
5. Eritrean Community Centre
6. Ghanaian Canadian Association of Ontario
7. Hispanic Development Centre
8. Mary's House
9. New Nakfa
10. Philippine Legacy and Cultural Alliance
11. Stanley Greene Residents Association
12. Toronto Catholics District School Board
13. Urban Squash Toronto
14. Wilson Village BIA
15. York University Community Satellite Office
16. York Centre Senior Steering Committee
17. Youth Now On Track