

William Baker Neighbourhood – Planning Submission Meeting  
**York Centre Seniors Steering Committee Meeting**  
Online Meeting Via WebEx  
Friday, March 5, 2021, 10:00 – 11:30 am

### **Participants**

York Centre Seniors Steering Committee (Elizabeth Jassem, Josie Casciato, Rina Camarra)

Councillor Pasternak's Office (Councillor Pasternak, Aytakin Mohammadi, Hector Alonso)

Canada Lands (James Cox, Victor Simone)

City of Toronto Planning (Ben DiRaimo)

The Planning Partnership, Master Planning consultant to Canada Lands (Donna Hinde)

Swerhun Inc. Facilitation consultant to Canada Lands (Nicole Swerhun, Matthew Wheatley)

*This summary was written by Swerhun Inc. and shared with participants for their review before being finalized. The summary provides a review of the key topics discussed in the conversation; it is not intended to be a verbatim transcript.*

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## **SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK**

On Friday, March 5, 2021 Canada Lands and a member of its consultant team virtually met with the York Centre Seniors Steering Committee (YC SSC), Councillor Pasternak and his office, and City of Toronto Planning staff to provide an update and answer questions about their recently submitted District Plan and development applications.

Canada Lands, Councillor Pasternak, and Ben DiRaimo all provided opening remarks in which they each reinforced how much they value the participation of the YC SSC and how important it is to work together to ensure a successful neighbourhood in William Baker:

- James reinforced how much Canada lands appreciates the passion and commitment of the YC SSC, and that the feedback they have shared to date has helped create a better plan for William Baker.
- Councillor Pasternak emphasized the need for new community amenities in the area, and particularly a community centre – noting that development at William Baker will be making an important financial contribution to the community centre. He also identified other community priorities such as protecting the woodlot (he has already had discussions with City Forestry staff about this), creating a road system that's safe, and ultimately trying to deliver a community that meets everyone's expectations.
- Ben confirmed that Canada Lands had formally submitted their William Baker District Plan Application. All City Divisions will be reviewing and commenting on the Application, suggesting refinements as/if necessary, and ultimately be responsible

for making a recommendation to City Council. He encouraged the YC SSC to now send any of their comments regarding the District Plan to him at the City and shared his confidence that there will be a strong process that supports any necessary evolutions to the District Plan to get everyone to a good place about the future, together.

- Elizabeth also added a few remarks, stressing that a mix-up with the summary from the previous meeting was unintentional, resulting from work overload, and very limited resources, while assisting two large and complex organizations, Canada Lands and Northcrest Developments.

Elizabeth also said that:

- In its humble beginnings in early 2019, YC SSC requested Canada lands to establish a more inclusive and collaborative working model that would better serve the community; in line with its well-established involvement as co-creators and co-producers of the envisioned project and to avoid misunderstandings leading to frustration and aggravation within the community. Unfortunately, nothing has changed.
  - After all, Canada Lands, as a Crown Corporation, is guided by regulations requiring their responsiveness to stakeholders and citizens. Canada Lands processes should clearly present their support to all citizens' needs and aspirations and should result with solutions that effectively serve the community.
  - YC SSC and Canada Lands' working process should have been finalized with a compromised and mutually-accepted option suitable for the community, before Canada Lands submitted the Draft District Plan to the City for review.
  - YC SSC has always very much wanted Canada Lands to succeed and for that reason YC SSC has, for over 2-years, worked to help and support Canada Lands. Despite YC SSC's deep professional commitment and constant-proactive dedication to this process, they are losing hope. We have not reached a mutually compromised solution. YC SSC still cannot support Canada Lands' Draft District Plan in its entirety.
  - YC SSC has presented their own "YC SSC EVERYONE'S Seniors Health Village (SHV™) community alternative to Canada Lands as a more suitable design option for William Baker, Downsview. Unfortunately, again, this work is still being totally ignored by Canada Lands. Hopefully, we can repair all this through our consultation process with the City, which we are entering now. We need to rebuild our community's trust in the City.
  - A name change for the York Centre Seniors Steering Committee will be coming in the future.
- Josie added her thanks to the various participants for taking the time to meet with the YC SSC, noting that Canada Lands has really worked hard, and that she and the community really want to do something good here.

## **Facilitated Discussion**

Following a presentation that reviewed the District Plan and development applications submission delivered by James Cox and Donna Hinde (The Planning Partnership), facilitated discussion followed. The feedback and questions shared by members of the

YC SSC are summarized below; responses and comments provided by Canada Lands and its consultant team are included in *italics*.

**1. The vast majority of discussion focused on concerns expressed by YC SSC representatives about the curved road connecting Sheppard to Keele in the southern portion of the site.** The YC SSC understands that this road is a requirement in the City's last Downsview Area Secondary Plan from 2011, however they have significant safety concerns and would like to see the City consider options for the road when reviewing the William Baker District Plan. Representatives of the YC SSC said that they would like the City to analyze all of the best design options for the road. Some of the ideas suggested by the YC SSC in the meeting included:

- Investigate the possibility of burying the road completely, so there are no conflicts with pedestrians or any other users in the community. This supports the potential to use William Baker as a place to experiment and showcase new and better standards for communities of the future. There is relatively little here, so it provides a blank slate for new ideas. Remember that in the future there will be (for example) drones providing delivery, more use of bikes and walking, and traditional transportation networks will change. Goods delivery should also happen underground via basements. Europe and Asia already has options like this, which don't favour the car. It's important to think about the major use of AI technology. *Ben emphasized that the William Baker area is not a blank slate because very clear direction is provided in the City's Downsview Area Secondary Plan, which involved a lot of studies and work by City staff and the community. He reminded the YC SSC representatives that no Official Plan Amendment (OPA) has been applied for by Canada Lands – what they are submitting is consistent with the City's existing Downsview Area Secondary Plan.*
- The City's 2011 Downsview Area Secondary Plan is outdated and needs to be modified accordingly for people and new technology requirements, demands, and expectations.
- Add a slip lane to facilitate turning of vehicles travelling west on Sheppard and wanting to turn north on Keele. This would increase the flow of traffic and disincentivize traffic cutting through William Baker. *Ben explained that the City is now removing slip lanes because of the safety danger they create. The Vision Zero plan prioritizes pedestrian safety.*

*Ben emphasized that City staff will review all comments from the public on the William Baker District Plan. Since the District Plan and development applications are with the City for review, it's no longer the time to ask Canada Lands to change the District Plan – instead, any comments should now be directed to the City. He said that sometimes community members feel that “no one is listening” when the community makes comments. He assured the YC SSC that this is not the case. All comments are treated very seriously, included in the public depository of comments, and will be subject to rigorous review by City staff.*

*James explained that through the Canada Lands-led community consultation process many people expressed an interest in seeing uses such as a small grocery store and coffee shop, along with places to park to access amenities. A road is important to making retail feasible, and there are ways to design the road to address the concerns YC SSC is raising – whether that be signage and reduced speed limits, speed bumps, or other traffic calming measures – all of which Canada Lands supports. He added that it's important to remember that one of the biggest concerns some people raise about Stanley Greene is the limited connectivity, and that's not a concern that Canada Lands wants here in William Baker.*

*Councillor Pasternak encouraged everyone to consider an example from Israel as a potential model for William Baker (see photo at right that was shared by the Councillor onscreen during the meeting). It has a real village feel, is pedestrian friendly, and serves a low density area. The Councillor also noted that while he was not the Councillor for Stanley Greene at the time it was planned, there are other lessons that can also apply to William Baker, including the importance of ensuring William Baker is better connected to Downsview Park, that retail be provided (Stanley Greene has no retail), and more ways to connect in, and especially out, of Stanley Greene. He would like to see “no bad deals, only smart choices” at William Baker. It needs to be a District for the people who live close by and for those in the wider Downsview community. This is a rare occasion where high order transit is available before development, and we need to make use of it.*



Photo of street from Israel that could be model for William Baker – shared by Councillor Pasternak

*Donna Hinde, Planning consultant to Canada Lands (from The Planning Partnership), cautioned the group to be careful with contemplating a cul-de-sac at William Baker because cul-de-sacs provide only one way in and one way out of communities. In her experience, commercial areas are not viable without good vehicle access. Spark Street in Ottawa and downtown Cornwall both are good examples of areas that have struggled without adequate vehicle access.*

Elizabeth commented that the professional designers' role is to provide an adequate and rich investigative process that is supported by many different visualizations, not only use one example provided by the Councillor (e.g. examples of internal service roads from different locations). An elected representatives' role is to support what a community wants and aspires to be. With a mostly Italian community in the William Baker area, they would love to feel that the envisioned design should strongly reflect their rich cultural heritage.

2. **YC SSC representatives need to be directly involved in co-creating an co-producing the programming of the community centre to ensure no duplication in function with their concept for YC SSC EVERYONE's Seniors Health Village (SHV™) at William Baker.** They asked that the Councillor include YC SSC in discussions regarding the future community centre.
3. **YC SSC representatives also expressed interest in understanding where Canada Lands is considering locating seniors uses.** *James said that Canada Lands envisions seniors co-located in the Neighbourhood Focus Area. He emphasized that, from the beginning, Canada Lands has been planning William Baker as a neighbourhood for all generations.*

James wrapped up the meeting by thanking all participants for attending and sharing great feedback. He shared his understanding that everyone in the meeting wants to see a complete community at William Baker. He encouraged YC SSC to formally share their feedback with the City, as Ben requested, and added that Canada Lands will continue to pay close attention and be in the loop.