

Roadmap for Redevelopment Plans
to Confront Systemic Racism

Danforth-Main Events Report

Emergent Actions & Next Steps

Event Dates:

Walk'n'Talk Workshop: July 8th, 2023

Inside Workshop: July 19th, 2023

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Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that Bangladesh Centre and Community Services is located on the traditional unceded territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples. In engaging with racialized communities around displacement and land use across Southern Ontario, we must acknowledge and prioritize the presence and leadership of the many diverse Indigenous groups, First Nations, Inuit and Métis people who were first displaced from this land. We commit to prioritizing actions to support Indigenous communities throughout all aspects of our work.

Introduction

Purpose of the Report

This report is a summary of the key takeaways from the 2 workshops held, the Danforth-Main Walk'n'Talk Workshop on July 8th, 2023 and the Danforth-Main Affordable Housing Workshop held on July 19th, 2023, at [Bangladesh Centre and Community Services](#) (BCCS) located at 2670 Danforth Ave in Toronto, Ontario. Both workshops were hosted by CP Planning and BCCS, and were attended by community residents, non-profits and housing experts.

The purpose of this summary is to communicate the information and discussions shared at the workshops including emergent action items to support the community engage key stakeholders to build affordable housing in Danforth-Main.

The objectives of these workshops were to:

- To receive community input on the barriers community members face relating to the preservation of affordable housing, and brainstorming ideas and strategies to increase housing supply.
- Identify potential sites for affordable housing to be supported by the Roadmap project.
- To assess interest and engagement opportunities for building an Affordable Housing Working Group consisting of partners and community residents to support racialized residents.

Background

CP Planning is a non-profit urban planning organization practicing a human rights approach to community planning. Through this approach, multi-sector and multi-disciplinary collaborations guide for land use planning reform that upholds the economic, social, and cultural rights of marginalized people to have access to good housing, good jobs, an adequate standard of living, and cultural expression.

BCCS is a non-profit, charitable organization focused on assisting Bengali newcomers and long-time residents integrate into Canada through knowledge, skills, and other support. Through partnerships and collaboration, BCCS strives to develop services and programs centered on the growing needs and initiatives around youth, women, and mental health.

Roadmap Description

This event was hosted as part of CP Planning's [Roadmap for Redevelopment Plans to Confront Systemic Racism](#) ("Roadmap").

The Roadmap builds the capacity of racialized communities to identify and lead the implementation of solutions to protect and increase affordable housing in areas experiencing

gentrification due to transit infrastructure investment. Priority cities of the Roadmap are Toronto, Ottawa, Peel, York, Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo. The Roadmap aligns with the National Housing Strategy goals to increase affordable supply and its key principle to account for a human rights-based approach to housing.

Summary

On July 8th, a Walk'n'Talk workshop was held to explore the neighbourhood, the options for housing and the upcoming developments in Danforth-Main. Community members and residents came together to learn, network, and voice their experiences in a rapidly changing neighbourhood.

With guest speakers Janice Peters Gibson from [Hope United Church](#), and Mark Richardson from [HousingNowTO](#), their insights provided details on future pending developments, the development of Hope United Church, and its impact on the community. Janice Peters Gibson discussed the importance of having cultural spaces and places of worship, bringing communities together and playing a significant role in creating more sustainable and inclusive cities. Mark Richardson, shared details of the pending future developments in Main Square ranging from 15 to 55 storeys. Overall, attendees left with knowledge of the upcoming changes in Danforth-Main.



On July 19th, a follow up workshop was organized to discuss solutions and challenges community members face in engaging key stakeholders to build affordable housing in their neighbourhood. During the workshop, attendees surfaced actions that could be taken to generate new affordable housing development.

The panel discussion featured two guest speakers with knowledge and expertise in the design and development of affordable housing: Tura Cousins Wilson, an architect with [SOCA Design](#) and Brian Stevens, Minister of [Hope United Church](#). Wilson shared the possibilities of developing affordable housing on sites similar to the Danforth-Main area. With experience designing culturally appropriate spaces and mixed-use development, Wilson showcased a range of examples of housing and mixed-uses. Hope United Church served as an example of locally provided affordable housing. Stevens highlighted how local organizations can play a pivotal role in creating affordable housing by leveraging their community connections, expertise, assets and resources to address housing challenges.

Later in the session, participants engaged in a community mapping activity to identify sites for affordable housing development within the Danforth-Main area. Overall, participants expressed interest and dedication in contributing to possible solutions to tackling the affordable housing crisis to address local needs.

Emergent Actions

The Emergent Action items fall within one of the five themes below. The action items will be prioritized and guide the next steps of catalyzing existing resources and addressing gaps as required to accomplish the overall goals of the Roadmap project in Danforth-Main.

Themes

Each of the Actions identified in this report are grouped under 1 of 5 themes:

Theme 1. Policies, Regulation, and Government Engagement

This theme focuses on the need for policies and regulations that support affordable housing development and the importance of government engagement in addressing housing challenges.

Theme 2. Community Engagement, Capacity Building, and Information Sharing

This theme emphasizes the importance of involving communities in decision-making processes, building capacity within communities to address housing issues, and sharing information to promote understanding and collaboration.

Theme 3. Funding and Financing of Affordable Housing Development

This theme highlights the need for innovative funding and financing mechanisms to support affordable housing development and increase access to capital for housing projects.

Theme 4. Equity and Community Understanding

This theme addresses the importance of promoting equity in housing initiatives and enhancing community understanding of affordable housing benefits and challenges.

Theme 5. Affordable Housing and Displacement

This theme addresses the strategies to prevent the loss of existing affordable housing units due to redevelopment or lack thereof, opportunities for revitalization of underutilized spaces, housing that is reflective of the community members and is culturally sensitive.

Guest Speakers

Mark Richardson, Technical Lead HousingNowTO

On July 8th, Mark Richardson discussed the pending development in the Main Square; he shared the plans for the expansion of five new buildings ranging from 15 to 55 Storeys, with 1543 new housing units. Richardson mentioned that as the development is in its early stages, there has been little discussion of how many of those units would be for affordable housing. Late in the tour, Richardson shared information on 8 Trent Avenue, the Options for Homes building by Main Station. Options for Homes delivers a ready program that delivers down payment support through shared equity; the building at 8 Trent Avenue provided 275 affordable ownership units. While affordable housing units are available in the Danforth-Main area, there is a lack of new affordable units to address the affordability crisis.

Theme 5. Affordable Housing and Displacement

Emergent Action Items

- Conducting research on up-to-date new developments in the Danforth-Main, to know the developers, planners, and stakeholders within the area.
- Seek opportunities to attend public meetings on proposed developments to encourage more affordable housing units.

To learn more about the Options for Homes, visit: <https://optionsforhomes.ca/ready-program/>

Janice Peters Gibson, Hope United Church Representative

On July 8th, Janice Peters Gibson shared the history of Hope United Church and the significance of places of worship in bringing communities together. She highlighted how churches have served as a hub for social activity and community engagement. Gibson shares how the Church offers a place to connect with others, find support, and to serve the local community.

Theme 2. Community Engagement, Capacity Building, and Information Sharing

Emergent Action Items

- Seek opportunities to hold community meetings at Hope United Church to build upon capacity and information sharing in the neighbourhood.

Tura Cousins Wilson, Architect

On July 19th, Panelist Tura Cousins Wilson, an architect from SOCA Design, highlighted innovative housing development solutions that embrace mixed-use concepts, showcasing how creative design and zoning strategies can optimize space for residential and commercial purposes. Combining residential units with culturally relevant businesses and communal areas, these developments foster culturally vibrant spaces and opportunities for new possibilities in urban development.



Theme 1. Policies, Regulation, and Government Regulation

Located with social housing in Amsterdam, led by Paul de Ruiter Architects, highlighting the different methods of including housing in projects.

Emergent Action Items

- Identify opportunities for collaboration and coordination with relevant government departments and agencies to enhance housing affordability.
- Engage with developers with interest in building and increasing the affordable housing supply.

Theme 5. Affordable Housing and Displacement

Wilson highlighted the importance of repurposing existing structures to accommodate a blend of residential, commercial, and communal functions, creating dynamic and vibrant spaces that serve multiple purposes.

Emergent Action Items

- Conduct matrix research of the existing housing market and trends to seek opportunities for adaptive reuse of existing properties.

Brian Stevens, Minister

On July 19th, Panelist Brian Stevens, a Minister from Hope United Church, exemplified the transformative potential of community-driven initiatives in addressing local housing challenges. Through innovative collaboration and leadership, Hope United Church successfully repurposed its spaces to create 48 units of rent-geared-to-income units. Stevens emphasized the critical role faith-based and community organizations can play in fostering inclusive development and foraging a path toward equitable housing solutions when they take calculated and informed risks to make a difference.

Theme 2. Community Engagement, Capacity Building, and Information Sharing

Stevens highlighted that local organizations possess a deeper understanding of their community's unique needs and challenges. By stepping up and taking action as champions to affordable housing initiatives, like-minded organizations and local leaders can drive meaningful change and create tangible pathways that result in new affordable housing supply. Stevens further emphasized that when local organizations and community members unite under a common goal, they amplify their impact where their collective voices carry weight in prioritizing affordable housing on the local agenda.

Emergent Action Items

- Foster relationships with like-minded organizations and local leaders interested in creating affordable housing and collaborating to design projects that meet community need and local vision;
- Engage with residents, community leaders, and stakeholders to gather insights and identify key priorities to understand specific affordable housing needs;
- Organize community visioning workshops where community members can collectively envision and articulate their desired future regarding housing and land use;
- Have confidence that communities can lead new affordable housing development, share that excitement with others,

Community Mapping Activities

Participants collaborated in community mapping activities during the walk on July 8th and the sit-down workshop on July 19th. These mapping activities focused on identifying and evaluating suitable locations for affordable housing within the Danforth-Main area. During the Walk'n'Talk, attendees considered the Secord School as a place to be revitalized to accommodate the growing number of students and an opportunity to consider including affordable housing. Through collaboration, participants felt affordable housing should be integrated around vital

amenities such as shopping areas along the Danforth, near Dentonia Park, and conveniently close to the Main and Victoria Park subway stations (see Appendix B). As Danforth-Main is a transit-oriented neighbourhood, access to sufficient and affordable housing is critical to meet the increasing influx of residents and new urban development. The mapping exercise provided participants with an open discussion to collaborate as a community in addressing residents' housing needs and access to essential services.



Theme 5. Affordable Housing and Displacement

During the activity, participants located the Secord Community Centre and school, as well as community owned properties as a potential site where they envision affordable housing being built as part of mixed-use redevelopment of the site. Their desire is to address the critical need for affordable housing, while also incorporating communal facilities. Through this mix, participants envisioned creating a dynamic and inclusive environment. Participants also raised active interest in finding opportunities to revitalize existing low-rise buildings into multi-story mixed-use housing designed to achieve affordable housing goals.

Emergent Action Items

- Consider the availability of essential infrastructure and nearby amenities that enhance the appeal of housing to residents;
- Engage with the local community to gather input, address concerns, and align future engagement with the needs and aspirations of residents.

Open Discussion

On July 19th participants engaged in an open discussion about the challenges and the possibilities they would like to envision for the Danforth-Main area.

Theme 1. Policies, Regulation, and Government Relations

Participants emphasized the importance of building relationships with government officials to support the needs of the community and to provide stable housing options for racialized communities and vulnerable populations. Community members expressed their willingness and motivation to drive change to support affordable housing initiatives.

Emergent Action Items

- Engage with local communities and stakeholders to identify and communicate consensus on zoning, land regulations, and human rights;
- Increase non-profit knowledge on development processes, policy development and upcoming affordable housing development.
- Identify members of government who would support the community's affordable housing development goals

Theme 2. Community Engagement, Capacity Building, and Information Sharing

Community organizing and capacity building are essential pillars to creating sustainable change in addressing and overcoming barriers to ensuring racialized communities have a role in affordable housing development. Participants felt there is a lack of initiative from municipal planning bodies to provide equitable engagement practices in their communities. As a result, participants expressed interest in filling the gap by collectively sharing their ideas with decision-makers to guide the development of policies that meet their needs.

Emergent Action Items

- Provide resources, tools, and training to community leaders and residents engaging in planning processes in support of affordable housing development and addressing the exclusion of racialized communities;
- Explore equitable engagement practices for community members to actively participate in decision-making processes related to affordable housing, including project planning, policy development, and governance structures;
- Design and distribute accessible tools and workshops that will assist residents without a planning or housing sector background to understand the planning processes in Danforth-Main;
- Establish resident-led working groups to address and overcome barriers to lead affordable housing development.

Theme 3. Funding and Financing of Affordable Housing Models

During the open discussion, participants identified barriers due to limited finances to fund new affordable housing development. In addition, participants placed a strong emphasis on community ownership and a stronger influence on development decisions and access to capital resources and funding from all levels of government.

Emergent Action Items

- Research and explore sustainable funding models for affordable housing, such as public-private partnerships, social impact investing, and community bonds;
- Identify members within the community who are willing to offer property or finances to generate new affordable housing development;
- Build relationships with private entities, impact investors, and community organizations, and governments to secure funding for affordable housing development.

Theme 5. Affordable Housing and Displacement

Participants envisioned opportunities to integrate housing in Danforth-Main on sites with existing retail uses and community services buildings. Placing residents at the foundation of the planning process would ensure affordable housing is inclusive and reflects the diverse needs of residents.

Emergent Action Items

- Conduct a needs assessment to understand the specific concerns and challenges related to housing development.

Next Steps

After the workshop, a feedback survey was distributed to all attendees requesting their input and suggestions from the workshop. Respondents were mostly satisfied and eager to learn the strategies of the Roadmap project, as well as the diverse issues experienced in each neighbourhood. Feedback included the desire to learn more on the ranges of housing options available for mixed income groups and interest to discuss opportunities for partnerships with potential developers and government stakeholders.

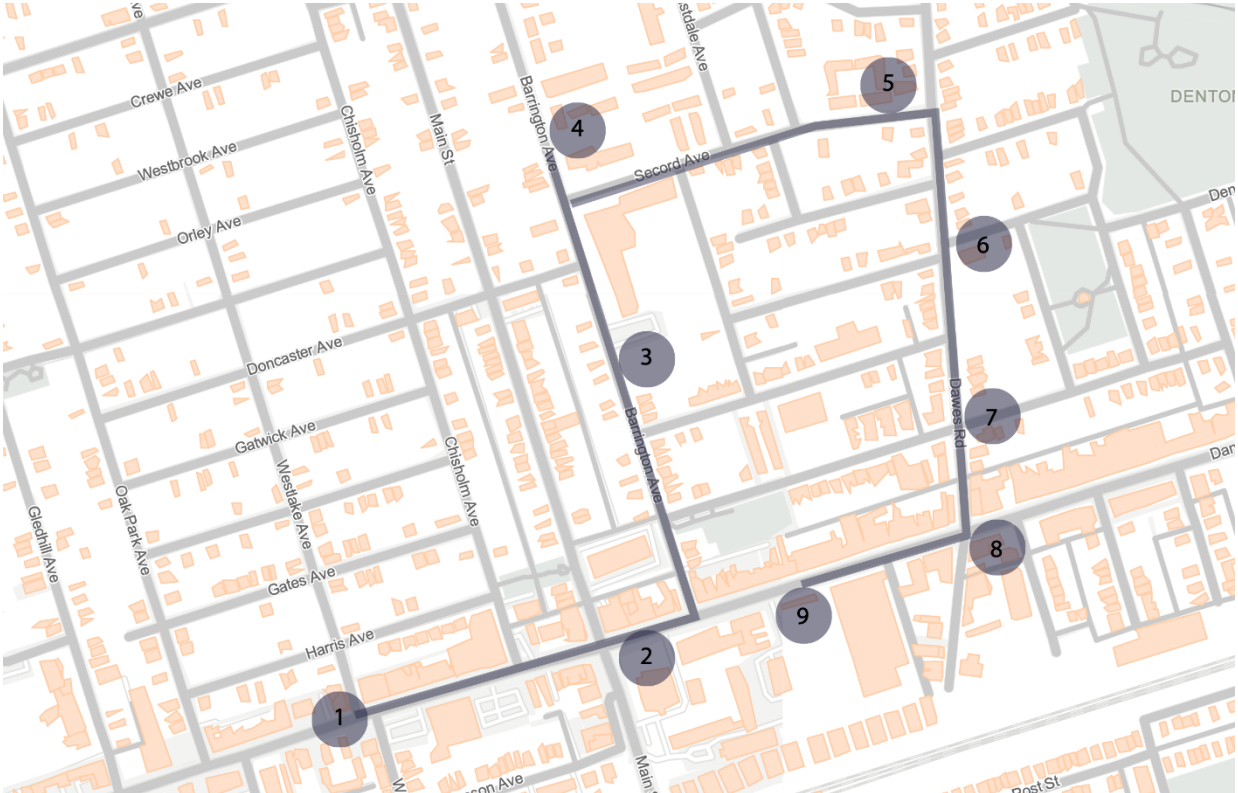
Following the various conversations and feedback received from participants and stakeholders, below are priorities and action items to support future housing opportunities in Danforth-Main:

- Explore **government engagement, incentives and policies** that support, and reduce barriers to attaining affordable housing for vulnerable populations;
- Create a housing task force for **knowledge building and learning sessions** to empower residents in making informed decisions in the development and policy process;
- Explore **partnership opportunities** between public and private sectors to advance funding for affordable housing;
- Host a follow-up workshop to **identify the key steps** required to support the building of affordable housing;
- Consider opportunities for **potential sites and government-owned land** to address housing needs and promote long-term sustainability;

- Apply **equitable engagement practices** to increase the capacity of racialized communities to build upon the skills and training when engaging developers, municipal bodies, and planners.

Findings from this report will guide the progress towards building networks and partnership with residents and local leaders to form an affordable housing working group. With the support of CP Planning and BCCS, these emerging action items will act as a guide to develop affordable housing and empowering community residents with the knowledge and resources to engage in decision-making processes.

Appendix

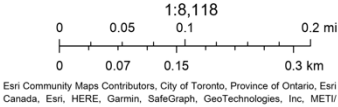


Appendix A: Tour route for the Walk'n'Talk Workshop, including 9 total stops as shown on the map above.

Visioning Danforth-Main



Focus Areas for Potential Affordable Housing



Appendix B: Community Mapping Activity created by layering generated maps from community members