



Don Mills Crossing: Community Building at Don Mills and Eglinton - Phase 1 Report

Date: December 7, 2016

To: Planning and Growth Management Committee

From: Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division

Wards: Ward 26 - Don Valley West

SUMMARY

Don Mills Crossing is a planning study initiated to shape and manage the anticipated development at the intersection of Don Mills Road and Eglinton Avenue East in response to the public investment in the Crosstown LRT and bus terminal at this location. Through the adoption of Eglinton Connects in 2014, City Council identified three corners of the intersection as a Focus Area for intensification and directed that a Secondary Plan be prepared to provide a comprehensive planning framework to manage future growth. More recently, Council settled an Ontario Municipal Board appeal for the 24 hectare parcel of land at the northwest corner owned by Celestica Inc. This settlement provides for these lands to redevelop into a complete mixed use community with a variety of employment, residential and community uses.

Building on the work of Eglinton Connects, Don Mills Crossing will integrate the Celestica lands with the directions for the Focus Area to create a planning framework for the area. This framework will be anchored by a new Secondary Plan alongside other implementation measures such as design guidelines, transportation and infrastructure master plans to support co-ordinated development of employment, residential and community uses. Over the next year and a half, Don Mills Crossing will answer key questions about what is needed to build a complete, well connected and walkable community at Don Mills and Eglinton.

This report marks the conclusion of the first phase of Don Mills Crossing presenting a profile of the study area and its immediate surroundings. The Don Mills Crossing Profile outlines how the study area is a collection of single use precincts, developed at a large scale between expansive natural valleys of the Don River. It focuses on the history and demographics of the study area, updating and confirming the findings of Eglinton Connects on community infrastructure needs. Based on a number of detailed technical reports completed as part of the Phase 1 work program, the Profile identifies key findings to inform future phases of Don Mills Crossing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division recommends that:

1. Planning and Growth Management Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact resulting from the adoption of the recommendations in this report.

DECISION HISTORY

There are a number of recent City Council decisions related to the Don Mills Crossing study area.

City Council Direction to Initiate Study

Council Direction to undertake Don Mills Crossing was provided through the following decisions:

- In August 2014, City Council identified Don Mills and Eglinton as a Focus Area for intensification around the Science Centre LRT stop along with a Community Services and Facilities Strategy to implement the community infrastructure required to support growth through the adoption of the Eglinton Connects Implementation Report. Council also provided direction to staff to develop a Secondary Plan for the Focus Area to advance these matters. The decision of City Council can be accessed via the following link:
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.PG35.3>
- In June 2016, City Council reached a settlement of an Ontario Municipal Board appeal for the Celestica lands which redesignated a portion of the site as Regeneration Areas and included a Site and Area Specific Policy requiring a comprehensive planning framework prior to new development occurring. The decision of City Council can be accessed via the following link:
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.CC19.8>

Don Mills Arena Replacement

In July 2016, City Council approved, in principle, the relocation of the Don Mills Arena to 844 Don Mills Road (Celestica site). This approval is subject to a number of conditions including the resolution of the Ontario Municipal Board appeal referenced above, the submission of a complete development application for the Celestica lands identifying an appropriate block size for a replacement arena and a timeline for replacement satisfactory to the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation. City Council authorized staff to advance negotiations with the owners of the Celestica site and report

back on the status of the conditions in the first quarter of 2017. The decision of City Council can be accessed via the following link:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.GM13.15>

Heritage Designation - 844 Don Mills Road and 1150 Eglinton Avenue East

In October 2016, North York Community Council considered a report regarding Intention to Designate under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act - 844 Don Mills Road and 1150 Eglinton Avenue East (the Celestica lands). Community Council referred the matter to the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division to allow any recommendations with respect to cultural heritage to be made in tandem with recommendations on the comprehensive development framework and the final report on the planning application for the lands. The decision of North York Community Council can be accessed via the following link:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.NY17.30>

COMMENTS

Background

The evolution of the Don Mills and Eglinton area has been closely tied to transportation infrastructure. The initial wave of urbanization was triggered by the extension of Eglinton Avenue over the Don River in 1956 and the construction of the Don Valley Parkway in the mid-1960s. The next wave of development in the area will be triggered by the construction of the Science Centre LRT station and bus terminal as part of the Crosstown LRT line.

City Council identified Don Mills and Eglinton as a Focus Area for intensification around the future LRT stop through the adoption of the Eglinton Connects Implementation Report in 2014. This came with a direction to develop a Secondary Plan to implement a number of planning objectives, including a community services and facilities strategy, for three corners of the intersection that consist of underutilized lands owned by the City and under the jurisdiction of Build Toronto. Eglinton Connects provided limited direction for lands northwest of the intersection owned by Celestica Inc. as it was anticipated that these lands would remain reserved for employment uses.

In 2016, City Council's adoption of a settlement of an Ontario Municipal Board appeal introduced the potential for additional uses on the Celestica lands. Site and Area Specific Policy 511 (SASP 511) was brought forward as part of the settlement and proposed a modification to Official Plan Amendment 231 requiring the replacement of employment uses and the introduction of other uses, including residential, through a comprehensive planning framework. At approximately 24 hectares (60 acres), the Celestica lands comprise one of the largest private redevelopment sites in Toronto, and SASP 511 acknowledges the potential for a complete and connected community on these lands.

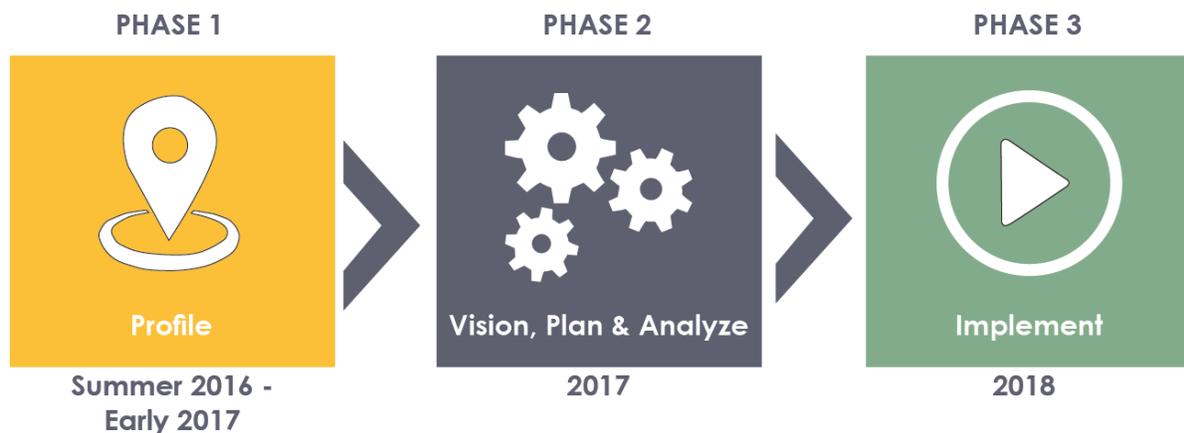
There are few forces as determinant in the building and design of a city as the provision and form of transportation infrastructure. The new Crosstown LRT stop at Don Mills and Eglinton is surrounded on three corners by lands that present an opportunity for

redevelopment as they are largely vacant and primarily in public ownership. This fact combined with the redevelopment opportunities presented by the Celestica lands provides for the consideration of a number of options to deliver a new public realm, a connected open space system, community facilities, additional employment uses, a range of housing and connections to the ravine system for the area. To advance a comprehensive planning framework for this area, City Planning is undertaking the Don Mills Crossing study.

Introducing Don Mills Crossing

Over the next year and a half Don Mills Crossing will answer key questions about what is needed to build a complete, well connected and walkable community at Don Mills and Eglinton. Building on Eglinton Connects, the work necessary to achieve this goal will be undertaken over three phases as outline in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Don Mills Crossing Phases



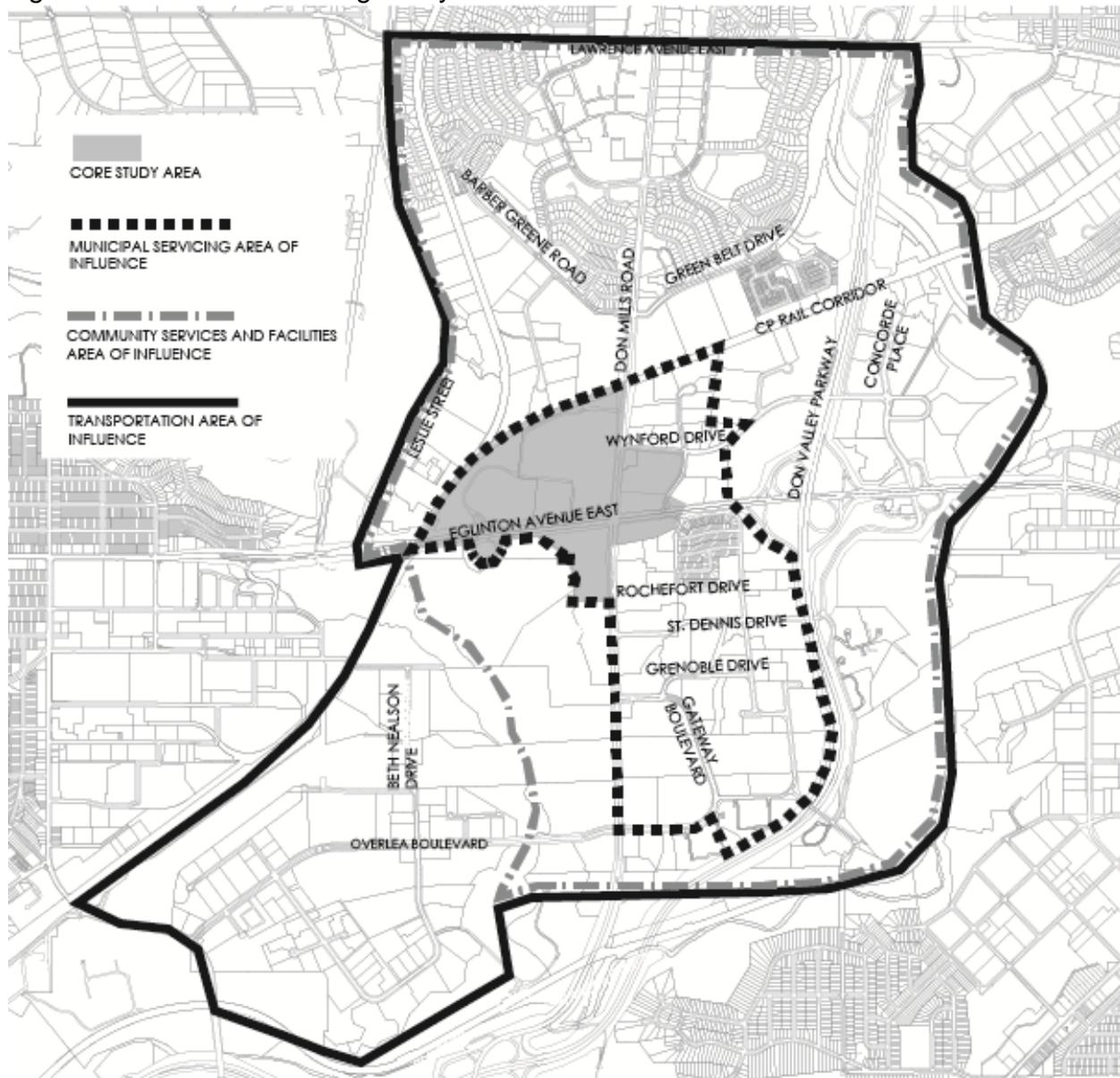
- **Phase 1: Profile**
The first phase of Don Mills Crossing focussed on understanding the study area and its surrounding context as well as identifying the necessary work to be undertaken for areas of future study. The Don Mills Crossing Profile and supporting technical analysis summarizes the work undertaken in this Phase.
- **Phase 2: Vision, Plan and Analyze**
The second phase of Don Mills Crossing will develop a vision for the study area, and analyze and test planning and design alternatives. At the conclusion of Phase 2 a preferred alternative will be recommended and advanced for policy development.
- **Phase 3: Implement**
The final phase of Don Mills Crossing will result in the development of Official Plan policies and implementation strategies for consideration by City Council.

The active involvement of residents, employees and business owners will be encouraged through each phase of Don Mills Crossing with various consultation events including pop-ups, public meetings, workshops and online engagement.

A Core Study Area with Areas of Influence

As illustrated in Figure 2, a Core Study Area for Don Mills Crossing combines the Celestica lands with the three corners of Don Mills Road and Eglinton Avenue identified as a Focus Area through the adoption of the Eglinton Connects Implementation Report. It is anticipated that any planning policies and implementation tools which emerge through Don Mills Crossing will apply to this Core Study Area.

Figure 2 - Don Mills Crossing Study Areas



Beyond the Core Study Area, larger areas of influence are being studied to enable a thorough understanding of the area context for different infrastructure elements:

- A transportation area of influence extends generally from Lawrence Avenue East towards Overlea Boulevard and the Thorncliffe community to obtain an understanding of the surrounding context as well as local transportation and travel

behaviour.

- A municipal servicing area of influence includes the Employment lands north of Eglinton Avenue East and a portion of Flemingdon Park north of the Hydro Corridor.
- A community services and facilities area of influence aligns with Segment 9 of the Eglinton Connects Planning Study. This allows for Don Mills Crossing to update the findings of Eglinton Connects, which had specific Council-adopted recommendations related to community services and facilities.

Policy Framework Guiding Don Mills Crossing

Don Mills Crossing will lay out a future for Don Mills and Eglinton guided by a policy framework that provides for the creation of a pedestrian scaled, walkable environment with an appropriate range and mix of uses along with appropriate supporting community infrastructure.

Don Mills and Eglinton is identified as a Gateway Mobility Hub by Metrolinx's "Big Move Regional Transportation Plan". These areas are encouraged to accommodate more jobs and residents to support the investment in transit and the efficient operation of the transit lines. To assist municipalities in studying and planning Mobility Hubs, Metrolinx prepared Mobility Hub Guidelines which provide guidance on creating places that promote seamless mobility through quality urban design that can be successfully implemented.

Similarly, the Official Plan provides for the integration of land use and transportation when creating new neighbourhoods centred on public focal points including parks, open spaces, public streets and community facilities. The policies of the Official Plan also provide direction on balancing growth and intensification anticipated by Don Mills Crossing with ongoing conservation of significant heritage properties as well as the natural heritage landscapes. The location, history and potential of the Don Mills Crossing study area presents the opportunity to implement successful city building principles upon which the Official Plan is founded.

The City of Toronto recently completed a review of the employment lands and a Municipally Comprehensive Review which resulted in Council's adoption of Official Plan Amendment No. 231. The Province approved the amendment with minor modifications in July 2014. A number of appeals were filed, including those by local landowners seeking conversion of employment lands for residential uses. A majority of the policies and a number of site specific appeals have yet to be heard by the Ontario Municipal Board including these local appeals. Don Mills Crossing will not consider land use changes from employment lands to non-employment uses as this may only be considered through the next City-initiated Municipal Comprehensive Review.

Don Mills Crossing Profile

Attachment 1 contains the Don Mills Crossing Profile which documents how the Don Mills and Eglinton area has grown and changed largely as a result of the construction of transportation infrastructure. In addition to outlining the existing conditions of the Core

Study Area and surrounding areas of influence, the Profile updates findings of Eglinton Connects in terms of the people who live and work in the area, and the services and facilities they use.

A number of detailed background reports, posted on the Study website (www.toronto.ca/donmillscrossing), serve as a foundation for the Profile and include:

- A development history of Don Mills and Eglinton which outlines the urbanization of the area over the last 60 years from an agricultural area to the large single use precincts seen today.
- A Community Services and Facilities Profile which updates the results of analysis undertaken through Eglinton Connects and confirms the findings of the Council adopted Community Services and Facilities Strategy for the Don Mills Focus Area.
- A geotechnical analysis of the valley lands southwest of the intersection of Don Mills Road and Eglinton Avenue East that established the top of bank from which development limits can be determined.
- A review of the natural environment and ecology of the valley lands adjacent to the Core Study Area which identifies the potential ecological impacts of new development on environmentally sensitive areas that contain terrestrial and aquatic natural heritage features.
- An examination of transportation conditions in the area of influence including a review of current travel patterns, physical barriers, transit and active transportation use, and potential areas of future investigation to provide a broader range of mobility options.
- A review of municipal servicing in the area of influence outlining water main capacity as well as storm and sanitary sewer capacity for infrastructure servicing the study area.

The Profile highlights the policy framework at the Provincial and municipal levels that will guide future phases of work and ultimately provides an overview of the city building challenges and opportunities to be addressed in Phase 2.

Public Engagement

Public engagement is a key aspect incorporated through all phases of Don Mills Crossing as a way for local residents, employees and stakeholders to actively participate in shaping the area's future.

The Don Mills Crossing study was initiated in June 2016 with a series of pop-up consultation events at local neighbourhood gathering places, along with an online commenting portal at www.toronto.ca/donmillscrossing. Don Mills Crossing formally launched with a public open house on October 13, 2016, at the Ontario Science Centre. In addition to community consultation, City Planning staff engaged various community groups and stakeholders through meetings of the Don Valley Neighbourhood Improvement Area round table and correspondence with Toronto's aboriginal community.

To date, over 400 people have engaged either in person or online, providing important feedback by answering questions about what participants like about their

neighbourhood and where they would like to see improvement. The following are key themes which were most often raised through the engagement activities:

- The facilities in the area are well used and enjoyed though over-subscribed and in need of upgrades. The libraries, community centres and Playground Paradise (a City-owned play facility) were often identified as those most used in the area. These same facilities were often cited as those most in need of renewal and investment.
- The open and green spaces are valued in the community and concerns were raised about ensuring the appropriate provision of open space with new development. A need for programmed spaces was frequently raised, especially in the Wynford Concorde area where a need for playgrounds was indicated.
- Connections to the ravine system are desired in the area. Though the ravine system was cited as a valued amenity in the area, access to the system is difficult, as there are few formal entry points. Accessibility was raised as a concern, especially the steep grade at the entrance to the East Don trail from Wynford Heights Crescent which makes access difficult for those with mobility devices and strollers.
- Interest for more and improved cycling infrastructure in the area. Connecting the rail spur bike path to the ravine system was frequently mentioned as were safety concerns for cyclists on Eglinton Avenue East and Don Mills Road.
- Traffic congestion was often discussed and there is a clear desire for congestion management in the area, or improved transportation choice as an alternative to driving.
- Pedestrian safety was a frequent topic at all engagement events. Eglinton Avenue East and Don Mills Road were highlighted as streets that should be made more pedestrian and cyclist friendly with an improved pedestrian experience, safety and a need from more pedestrian crossings.
- More amenities are desired in the area, especially retail options for day-to-day shopping needs and more café and restaurant options.

Many of these themes align with the research and technical analysis undertaken during Phase 1 of Don Mills Crossing, while others complement the findings. Continued input from the public will be a valuable part of the Don Mills Crossing planning process moving forward.

Moving Forward / Future Analysis

A legacy of the era during which it was primarily developed, the Don Mills Crossing study area is organized around the movement of private vehicles, a context into which significant transit investment is being made. The transformative nature of this investment represents a significant city building opportunity. Don Mills Crossing intends to leverage this public investment, advancing the key findings of the attached Profile with the next phase of work focused on the following themes.

Integrating the Don Mills Focus Area with the Celestica Lands

A number of key planning directions were identified for the three corners of the Don Mills and Eglinton intersection which comprised the Don Mills Focus Area including:

- The support for a mix of uses through redevelopment with an emphasis on office space to achieve an overall increase in commercial floor space within the area;
- The development of a hub for community uses by taking advantage of publicly owned land to help deliver new community services and facilities to meet existing and future needs;
- The implementation of a fine grain public street network and road connections to relieve the Don Mills and Eglinton intersection and provide alternative access points to development blocks; and
- The creation of direct pedestrian connections to the Don River Valley that supports a public realm network linking public locations like new parks and transit stations.

Phase 2 of Don Mills Crossing will integrate the Celestica lands with the Don Mills Focus Area and advance these key directions to all four corners of the intersection.

In doing so, these directions present city building opportunities on a property as large as the Celestica lands. At the same time, their inclusion brings with it a number of issues which did not directly apply to the Focus Area at the time of the adoption of Eglinton Connects. This includes the two heritage resources on the Celestica lands, both former headquarters of IBM and designed by prominent local architects, which will form an important part of the future planning process.

In addition, the size of the site and its development potential triggers additional needs for community infrastructure as discussed below. The Official Plan also provides for sites greater than 5 hectares to achieve a mix of housing in terms of building type and affordability. Balancing these multiple city building priorities is key to preparing a consistent policy framework for the Core Study Area of Don Mills Crossing.

Community Infrastructure and Parks

The community services and facilities strategy prepared as part of Eglinton Connects and adopted by City Council in 2014 recommended a number of priorities in the Don Mills Focus Area to address existing needs and support growth. These recommendations included:

- The addition of 1 to 3 non-profit child care facilities to address current unmet need and future demand;
- Improvements to and/or expansion of the Flemingdon Park Library and Dennis R. Trimbrell Resource Centre as well as potential upgrades to the Don Mills District Branch Library;
- The addition of 2 to 3 hectares of additional parkland within the Focus Area with potential connectivity to adjacent valley lands; and
- The provision of accessible agency space in highly visible location to be secured within redevelopment for use by human service agencies potentially co-located to maximize a wide range of program or services to be offered.

The community services and facilities work completed through Phase 1 of Don Mills Crossing has confirmed these findings. With additional development potential being examined through the integration of the Celestica lands, these needs will be amplified and additional facilities and programming will be required to support this growth. This

includes a suitable distribution of community infrastructure improvements to be prioritized both in the Core Study Area and surrounding area of influence.

The next phase of Don Mills Crossing will work to advance a community services and facilities strategy to determine how to comprehensively meet community infrastructure needs presented by existing and future growth potential. This will include working with Parks, Forestry and Recreation on the potential relocation of the Don Mills Arena onto the Celestica site as approved, in principle, by City Council in July 2016, and exploring opportunities to co-locate additional functions and services on the site. In addition, Don Mills Crossing will address the need for additional parkland necessary to support the redevelopment of the Celestica lands. Across the Core Study Area, a range of parks that serve local and regional functions will be examined, including the potential for connections to the adjacent ravine system.

Improvements to existing community services and facilities in neighbouring communities and the addition of smaller scale services and facilities close to new transit stops are also needed to meet existing demands. Like the new 'hard' infrastructure that will be introduced with the construction of the Eglinton Crosstown, community infrastructure improvements are necessary so that the revitalization spurred by this public transit investment can be meaningfully enjoyed by those living and working in the area in the present and future.

Connectivity

People come to and move through the Don Mills Crossing study area in many different ways, including walking, cycling, public transit and private vehicle. The Profile outlines how the existing mobility network provides poor connectivity to local destinations and the broader area. The rail corridor and natural valleys are physical barriers that interrupt the street network, forcing Eglinton Avenue East and Don Mills Road to carry high traffic volumes for all modes of transportation. This contributes to a range of impacts, including congestion-related issues for the provision of surface transit, and conflicts with pedestrians and cyclists trying to navigate a complex and difficult environment.

A key focus as Don Mills Crossing advances will be to increase connectivity through the implementation of a finer grain street network. Phase 1 work identified the geotechnical limits of the ravine lands south of Eglinton Avenue East which, along with the location of the LRT portal, will be an important factor in determining the location of north-south connections crossing Eglinton and providing access to future development blocks. Connectivity across the rail corridor will be explored, both as a potential addition to the street network, but also to extend the Don Mills cycling trail from its current terminus through the Celestica lands to connect with trails located in the ravine.

The Profile also provides insight into the difficulties encountered by pedestrians in the form of challenging grades and long walking distances required to circumnavigate large blocks and complex intersections. Overall an incomplete public realm supported by street-related uses make for uncomfortable walking conditions and limits pedestrian activity. Similarly a lack of adequate cycling infrastructure in the area can be a disincentive for cyclists. However, the data indicates that active transportation use

persists despite these challenges with higher volumes at intersections in the Don Mills Crossing area of influence than is observed in Toronto's other suburban higher density centres.

Ultimately, Don Mills Crossing will integrate land use planning and built form decisions with a multi-modal transportation approach required by the Official Plan. It will focus on opportunities to improve connectivity at a more local level, particularly for active modes of transportation, expanding a fine grain mobility network and public realm improvements onto the existing coarse block structure. In support of this broader work program, other transportation initiatives may be advanced through Don Mills Crossing, including Environmental Assessments to identify potential connections across the CP Rail and the Crosstown LRT corridors, and collaborating with Metrolinx and local landowners to implement the design vision for the Eglinton Avenue East cross section through the study area.

Natural Environment

A defining feature of the Don Mills Crossing study area is its proximity to the ravine system along the west branch of the Don River. Public consultation to date confirmed the ravine system is a highly valued but poorly connected part of the neighbourhood. There are only two formal connections to the ravine system in the broader area of influence and they are characterized by difficult grades and poor accessibility.

Local residents identified desire to see improved connectivity to the ravine system through new trails. Opportunities for any new trails may be considered in areas that have already been disturbed along with the removal of informal trails through areas containing Significant Wildlife Habitat as documented through the ecological analysis undertaken during Phase 1 of this study. Connections to the ravine system will also align with the City's development of a Ravine Strategy. The Ravine Strategy will guide policy, investment and stewardship related to ravines and will include a set of criteria meant to prioritize opportunities for identifying future portals into these natural areas. Phase 2 will look to explore the opportunity for sites within the study area to be considered as pilot projects for ravine portals or gateways under the Ravine Strategy.

The proximity of natural areas drives a number of other goals for the next phase of Don Mills Crossing. This includes strategies for increasing tree canopy within E.T. Seton Park and upland areas to maintain and enhance habitat connectivity. Also, within redevelopment areas the hydrology of the natural system should be considered to redirect storm flows away from the natural valley and locating infrastructure into or immediately adjacent to the Eglinton Avenue East right of way. These strategies will help to ensure that the natural heritage interests and environmentally sensitive areas are not put under additional pressure by future urban development. In doing so they will form part of the foundation for sustainable and resilient development in the Don Mills Crossing area as provided for by the Official Plan.

Co-ordination with Development Applications

Don Mills Crossing has benefited from the work of Eglinton Connects in advancing a number of key directions and planning objectives including recommendations on

community infrastructure. Similarly SASP 511 for the Celestica lands requires a comprehensive planning framework be in place to enable redevelopment. A significant amount of work remains to integrate the Celestica lands with the Focus Area and develop an appropriate Secondary Plan policy framework for the area.

Development applications have recently been filed for the Celestica lands to permit the redevelopment of the site pursuant to SASP 511. It is anticipated that during the course of the study other applications may be filed for lands in the Core Study Area or in the surrounding area of influence. Don Mills Crossing benefits from these active applications as it offers the opportunity to shape development proposals in the context of understanding the nature of potential intensification within the Core Study Area.

These applications will be reviewed concurrently with the Don Mills Crossing process and will need to respond to the initial findings as well as future directions. The strategic lens of the Study will allow for the co-ordination of application review and provide an overarching structure within which to identify key city building outcomes for implementation. Developing the Secondary Plan and processing the development applications in tandem affords the opportunity to ensure the coordinated implementation of the policy directions that emerge through Phase 2 of Don Mills Crossing. The timely delivery of required servicing infrastructure, parks, community facilities and affordable housing can advance through development approvals, some of which may precede the ultimate approval of a new Secondary Plan.

Conclusion

The Don Mills and Eglinton area developed in an era focussed on the mobility of the private automobile. Large amounts of land were dedicated to this function through expressway-style interchanges of wide arterial roads and large amounts of surface parking. Despite the area's collection of interesting architecture and corporate offices, the prevalence of auto-oriented infrastructure inhibited the area's ability to establish an identity of its own between the master planned communities to its north (Don Mills) and south (Flemingdon Park). As Don Mills and Eglinton readies for its next era of urbanization centred on the new transit infrastructure, Don Mills Crossing will capitalize on this key city building moment by advancing a new planning framework to guide future growth.

The Don Mills Crossing Profile is built on a foundation of extensive technical analysis prepared across a range of subject areas to document existing conditions, challenges and opportunities in the Don Mills and Eglinton area. The Profile identifies key city building themes to be advanced through public engagement and the development of planning and design alternatives in Phase 2. Shaped by ongoing public engagement, Don Mills Crossing will move towards a new planning framework that provides for building a complete community that transitions Don Mills and Eglinton into its own connected place after many years as a place between places.

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Don Mills Crossing Profile