



Takeaways from October 3rd Parent Think Tank

Thank you all so much for joining us and sharing your input last week. We received excellent questions and suggestions that will be extremely helpful to us as we move forward with the move to 30 Humbert Street. We have combined the notes from the discussions of each group and summarized common themes below. We want to be sure that our notes from the Think Tank are accurate and complete - if any of your questions or suggestions are missing from the summaries below, please email them to utsprincipalsoffice@utschools.ca.

We will be running focus groups with students starting in the middle of October and we will continue to consult both students and parents as we move forward. In the coming months, we are hoping to conduct community-wide online surveys to gauge interest in changes to the timetable, a potential shuttle bus, and catered lunch options. We will continue to update you on any developments related to the move and the new building, and on responses to the questions you have raised.

Transportation options:

- Transportation emerged as one of the biggest concerns for parents. The majority of parents reported that their student will take public transit to the new site. Many feel the increase to student's commute will be more than 15-20 minutes (each way). This could increase student stress and make it difficult to attend extracurriculars before/after school. There are concerns surrounding the TTC's ability to accommodate the influx of passengers, and requests that UTS meets with the TTC to discuss adding more Ossington busses. Additionally, taking a bus/streetcar instead of the subway means that students might have to wait outside during the winter, and transit times will be more vulnerable to weather and traffic.
- Parking for daily student drop-offs and big events was also raised as an issue. There were suggestions to hold events at another location (ideally around U of T campus) to avoid having to commute to/find parking in the neighborhood around 30 Humbert Street.
- Parents would like to find out more about bike routes around 30 Humbert Street
- There is a lot of interest in a shuttle service.
 - Cost: Parents would like to see estimates of what various shuttle bus arrangements/options would cost.
 - Locations: The shuttle should meet students at transit stops. 4 groups suggested a shuttle from Bloor/Spadina. 4 groups suggested a shuttle from Ossington. There were also suggestions for a stop at Union, Exhibition Go, Leslie/Don Mills, York Mills/Sheppard, Queen Station, and Kipling.
 - Frequency: Given different schedules and extracurriculars, some parents were hoping for a staggered shuttle service multiple times in the morning/evening. Others expected each shuttle would make only one trip.

- All groups expressed interest in a formal platform to coordinate car pools

Ensuring student safety:

- Some of the questions/concerns regarding student safety are possible for us to respond to now, whereas others require more research and will be addressed as we move forward. A few questions that we can address now include: proximity to the fire department - 30 Humbert is about 1.5k driving (5 minutes) from Toronto Fire Station 331. Safety alarms - 30 Humbert is wired with alarms that connect to TCDSB security and the Toronto Police. Visitor sign in - at 30 Humbert we will continue our current practice of requiring visitors to sign in, and because the temporary site is a closed building with locked doors, it will be even more effective. Hazardous materials - the Toronto Catholic District School Board (like the U of T and UTS) identifies, monitors and puts in place controls for hazardous materials such as asbestos and lead. Monitoring occurs regularly according to health and safety protocols to ensure student safety in the building. Furthermore, 30 Humbert Street was constructed in 1978 and is much newer than our current building at 371 Bloor.
- Many parents feel that there is an increased risk at 30 Humbert (especially during commutes and after dark) because it is in a more remote area. Some parents are concerned about 30 Humbert's proximity to CAMH. Additionally, parents mentioned alleys around the school as a potential danger.
- Parents are worried about students having to wait outside for a bus/streetcar. Multiple groups suggested a formal 'travel buddy' program so that students are not in the neighborhood alone at night. Parents also expressed concerns that the busses/streetcars and some of the stations students will transfer at are unsafe.
- Parents suggested additional security measures: shuttle busses, improving the lighting around the school, introducing crossing guards, and the buddy program mentioned above. They would also like to see outreach to Toronto Police and neighborhood residents.

Lunch Options:

- For students who like to purchase their lunches, some parents are concerned about lunch options in the neighborhood and their distance from the school.
- There is interest in catered lunches. It should be open to all grades, and every group indicated that having choice is important. This means we should try to avoid family-style setups in which every student is served the same meal and focus instead on individually ordered and packaged options. Parents are expecting to pay between \$5-10 per meal. Some groups requested that catered lunches be offered 5 days a week, which would be difficult to implement when we start the program but might be possible to phase in later. Regarding providers, there was interest expressed in the Rose Reisman program. Kidssentials was suggested but unfortunately the building is out of their district. We will continue to investigate healthy catered lunches and share this information with parents and students.
- Parents also suggested pizza/sub lunches, food truck event, and a neighborhood food tour

Making the experience of UTS students at the new site special:

- Parents feel that students will really miss the old building and Bloor/Spadina location, and they are especially concerned for the grades that will graduate from Humbert St.

- To recreate the UTS experience, parents suggest: continuing to have some events at 371 Bloor/ U of T campus, painting lockers and walls, and incorporating pictures or physical elements of the old building at 30 Humbert.
- To enhance the UTS experience, parents suggest: creating a student or parent-run tuck shop in the school, introducing the students to the building and neighborhood early (with a special event over the summer like a picnic, food tour, building painting, etc.), adding extra special student perks and amenities (bean bags, pool tables, outdoor table tennis, etc.), adding an outdoor lounge area, investing in the physical space and in mentorship/support for graduating students to make them feel special, and opportunities to get engaged in the new community (volunteering at CAMH, events at Trinity Bellwoods, etc.)

Timetable options:

- Parents are concerned that the extra commuting time will cut into family time, study time, and relaxing time.
- There are a huge range of preferences for start times. There is agreement that it would be helpful to avoid rush hour, but some parents prefer to shift the start time earlier to accommodate this whereas others prefer later.
- There is also interest in shortening the school day. Parents suggested shorter periods which could be created by adding in online coursework, scheduling extracurriculars on the weekends, adapting course requirements, scheduling spares as first/last period, and shortening lunch. That being said, there was no agreement on these suggestions - another group suggested lengthening lunch to allow students more time to buy food if necessary. Many parents expressed concerns with cutting into class and instructional time. Ultimately, it might be possible to create some flexibility with the timetable other than the start time, but UTS will continue to uphold ministry requirements for in-class instructional hours.

University of Toronto access

- Parents are concerned about access to U of T, especially for students in the upper three years. They are very supportive of a shuttle service from 30 Humbert Street to U of T/UTS campus as needed. They feel that the unique experience of being right on a university campus will be hard to replace. In general, facilities (Robarts and athletics) are a bigger concern than specific programs.
- Parents suggested that big events (graduation, Nocturne, music nights, Show, etc.) should be held on UofT campus or if possible in the UTS auditorium to maintain a connection to this campus and make commuting/parking easier for parents. They also suggested hosting professors/guest speakers at Humbert Street, and finding some kind of 'touch down' space for UTS students on U of T campus to maintain throughout the renovation process. Another recommendation involved looking into U of T facilities and those of other universities/colleges closer to the Humbert St. location.