

Toronto Community  
Housing Corporation  
931 Yonge Street  
Toronto, ON  
M4W 2H2

Development Division  
www.torontohousing.ca



Toronto Community Housing Design Review Panel  
Minutes of Meeting  
April 7, 2016

<b>Present:</b> Andre D'Elia, Superkul Mara Nicolaou, TCHC Alan Waterhouse, University of Toronto Roland Rom Colthoff, RAW Design David Anselmi, Canada Lands Company  Paul Bailey, York University (absent for part of Block 32) Ken Greenberg, Greenberg Consulting (absent for part of Block 32) Anne McIlroy, Brook McIlroy (absent for Block 17)	<b>Regrets:</b> Gunta Mackars, Stantec Shirley Blumberg, KPMB Architects Antoine Belaieff, Metrolinx Sybil Wa, Diamond Schmitt Architects David Leinster, The Planning Partnership
<b>City of Toronto Staff:</b> Jennifer Renaud, City Planning	<b>Recording Secretary:</b> Joanna Kolakowska

## Project Reviews

The following projects were reviewed by the TCHC Design Review Panel on April 7, 2016:

- Regent Park Phase 3 Blk 32 SPA (2<sup>nd</sup> review)
- Regent Park Phase 3 Blk 17N SPA (2<sup>nd</sup> review)

### 1.0 Project Review - Regent Park Phase 3 Blk 32 SPA

#### 1.1 Briefing Package

A briefing package with the following was provided to panel members one week prior to the meeting:

**Regent Park Phase 3 Blk 32 SPA (April 7, 2016)**

## 1.2 Project Information

Project type: Site Plan Application

Design Team: Regional Architects, Vertechs Design

Presenters: Sony Rai and Drew Sinclair, Regional Architects and Viive Kittask, Vertechs Design

Review: Second Review

Conflict of Interest: None declared

## 1.3 Matters for Consideration

Block 32 was introduced by Remo Agostino, who noted that the design team has worked on responding to the panel's comments from the previous review by focusing on the overall massing and breaking up elevations.

The consultants presented the amendments to the architectural and landscape design scheme of Block 32. Highlighted changes included articulation of the Sumach Street façade through a set-back on the upper floors and introduction of bronze metallic material to the overall palette, a re-organization of the ground plane to allow for more public use at the corner of Sumach and St. David, planning for potential future occupancy change, and use of landscape to help address screening of loading and garage entrance areas.

It was noted that TDSB has been approached about a potential elimination of surface parking at Nelson Mandela School but did not show any interest in pursuing alternatives.

## 1.4 Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects for Consideration

The consultants were commended for having a clear presentation, however, felt that accommodations in response to the first DRP review were insufficient, especially in regards to overall massing of building, garage entry ramp condition and adequately addressing the adjacent public realm.

The following is the feedback and recommendations of the panel on the matters for consideration. Unless otherwise noted, the following is the consensus opinion of the panel.

**Building Articulation** – The panel expressed a concern that there remains an ambiguity about the break-up of the building into two seemingly arbitrary volumes. The panel acknowledged that the subtle moves to articulate the volumes are successful on the East Elevation, however, generally felt that the North and West Elevations need more articulation to adequately address the street and express the presence of the townhome units at grade. Furthermore, cornice, parapet and canopy details, as well as shallow windows currently create monotony along the facades. Several members suggested that the city guidelines for midrise buildings should be carefully examined to help determine how setbacks could be used to make the overall volume feel lighter.

**Site Access and Entrance Conditions** – The panel expressed concern that the location of the garage entry ramp has not changed since the last review session. It was generally agreed upon that the amount of hardscape around the open air ramp and garbage sorting facility was excessive and did not contribute to forming a connection with the adjacent park-like sites. Further to this, the prioritization of the back entrance as a main access point was highlighted as having numerous issues. The porte-cochère strategy was felt to be too wide and overwhelming in its current configuration as well as the entry vestibule was deemed to be too restricted in its current configuration; there was a recommendation to rotate the space 90 degrees and remove some of the concrete planters that are impinging on the entry sequence.

**Interior Planning** – The panel expressed two main areas of concern for the panel in terms of interior planning of the current scheme. The first was the lack of transparency across the ground floor from the rear access through to the main lobby and exterior landscape areas. The second problematic area was the lack of provision of space in corridors for social space. The panel felt strongly that the corridors could benefit from an addition of alcoves or expansions to allow for seating or pause areas as well as a consideration of taking the corridors to the exterior walls to allow for natural light which would help residents with navigation. The Belmont House was cited as a worthwhile example to look at for guidance in terms of interior planning of common social space.

**Landscape and Public Realm** – The panel commented that the project does not attempt to venture beyond the boundaries of the site to engage the community. Several members expressed disappointment at the fact that an agreement could not be reached with TDSB to eliminate the surface parking lot. The improvements to the main entrance and commercial program were well received, including the location and grading; however, more landscape elements should be added for animating the streetscape along Sumach Street, more design attention should be given to the South corner in terms of opening it up to the public and further consideration should be given to the crosswalks linking this development with the adjacent school. The panel felt strongly that the private garden on the South end was too closed off and suggested looking at the West side of the building for this program. A final concern was expressed regarding the nature of the landscape and how it would function in the winter; it was generally felt that it may be too stark during the cold season.

## 1.5 Panel's Directions

Consideration for the following key issues should be contemplated:

1. More thought should be given to the massing of the building. Careful examination of the midrise design guidelines is recommended. The following strategies should be used amongst others: articulation of materials, cornice articulation and detailing, re-evaluation of west elevation to break up using material or step backs.
2. Reconsider the rear drop off and building access with the aim of making it more clear and friendly and eliminating the concrete planters to create entrance forecourt.
3. Provide more transparency between main and rear entrances at ground level.
4. The garage entry ramp is still problematic. The design should consider moving it inside by relocating it off of the porte-cochère, potentially moving townhome units off the ground floor.
5. Consider providing more social spaces in corridors at a minimum at ground level. Consider adding natural light to all corridors.
6. In the absence of TDSB cooperation, a decorative screen should be considered as screening along the west property line to separate the utilitarian space from "leaking out".

7. Reconsider how the south landscaping engages the public realm; it should be more open and social working with the streets; find ways to encourage the residents to feel integrated with the neighbourhood. Further to this, crosswalks along Sumach and traffic calming devices should be considered if road is not yet built.
8. Reconsider the location of the barrier free parking located at grade.

**NB: The panel requested that this project return for a third review so that the incorporation of the above recommendations can be reviewed.**

## **2.0 Project Review - Regent Park Phase 3 Blk 17N SPA**

### **2.1 Briefing Package**

A briefing package with the following was provided to Panel members one week prior to the meeting:

**Regent Park Phase 3 Blk 17N SPA (April 7, 2016)**

### **2.2 Project Information**

Project type: Site Plan Application (3rd submission for SPA)

Design Team: Wallman Architects, Thinc Design

Presenters: Rudy Wallman, Wallman Architects and Peter Heyblom, Thinc Design

Review: Second Review

Conflict of Interest: None declared

### **2.3 Matters for Consideration**

Block 17 was introduced by Heather Grey-Wolf (TCHC), who explained that Block 17 North is being brought to the panel ahead of the other three quadrants of Blocks 17/16 due to it being much further ahead in the approval processes. She acknowledged the need to consider certain shared aspects of these developments as a package and stated that these elements will be presented at a subsequent meeting. She informed the panel that a consultant has been engaged to consider the design of the public realm connecting the four developments. She highlighted the team's effort to address the panel's previous concerns of the permeability of the courtyard through a visually permeable screen to the public but listed the limitation imposed by TCHC operations of having a single controlled access.

The consultants presented the adjustments to the design in response to matters raised at the first review July 16, 2015. The laneway shifted north to accommodate more parking therefore increasing the overall height by one storey; creating a visual connection from the lobby into interior common rooms and into the courtyard to increase permeability; a re-examination of the provision of garbage maintenance services for high rise and townhouse units; improvements to character of at-grade townhome units through provision

of bay windows and privacy screens; further design development of the façade panels over inset balconies; as well as design development of the landscape both at grade and on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor outdoor amenity space.

## **2.4 Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects for Consideration**

The following is the feedback and recommendations of the panel on the matters for consideration. Unless otherwise noted, the following is the consensus opinion of the panel.

**Laneway Program** – Several panel members re-iterated the importance of considering the laneway design as early as part of a master plan. The panel expressed concern that given that the building for Block 17N is moving into working drawings, the laneway design and function may not be considered in a larger context. A suggestion was made to push the servicing to either end of the lane as well as to push the courtyard fence north, in order to open up the rest of the laneway for public programming. The panel cited examples from Phase 2 where laneways were designed as public spaces for pedestrian use and would liked to have seen the laneway act as a connection between the Aquatic Centre and the park on the East side of River Street.

**Loading & Maintenance Areas** – The panel commended **the** design team on the efforts to rationalize the maintenance spaces, especially for the provision of a dedicated garbage area for the towns. They recommended that the outside alcove be reconsidered and a securable door to the outside be provided. The members also felt that the loading area could further be consolidated from a 12m to a 6m curb cut. Further to this, given the relationship to the shared laneway, the removal of formalized curbs should be considered to prevent the space from reading as a vehicle only area. It was also noted that the current location of the hydro transformer blocks light into the lobby.

**Townhouse Exterior Condition** – The panel expressed the opinion that the articulation of the townhouses is an improvement from the previous scheme; however, the North towns along Oak Street need to be broken up a bit more as they read as too repetitive. Along the West side, there was a suggestion to potentially mirror units to align the front porch stairs with entrances as well as to consider the treatment of the backyards. In general, the new landscape strategy of wood screens was also seen as an improvement but there is still some concern that the front terraces are not private enough; a suggestion was made that perhaps using a more robust planting could help with this issue. It was acknowledged that having grass only as planting could be problematic over the cold season. Further to this, it was generally felt that both the wood material of the screen could have potential maintenance implications over time and would not look as good as in the original design in a few years.

**Massing & Façade Treatment** –The panel felt that the massing of the building is quite good and the animation of the elevations is appropriate. They commended the screens in front of balconies but recommended a further examination of the opening size to allow light passage to interior space. There was differing opinions regarding the colour scheme but it was generally acknowledged that it needs some further editing.

**Main Building Access** – Several members of the panel felt that along the River Street entry residents getting dropped off will encounter some conflict with cyclist/pedestrians; they recommended that the design team gives this further consideration.

**Rooftop Garden** – The panel highlighted that in the current scheme there is a single residential unit overlooking the gardens below and should be reconsidered as this creates a somewhat awkward relationship.

## **2.5 Panel's Directions**

Consideration for the following key issues should be contemplated:

1. Explore the design of the laneway further to improve the public realm. Servicing needs should be acknowledged but should not dictate the entire space. For each block, consider consolidating servicing into one area of the laneway and mirror the servicing locations on N-S blocks to open up more space as well as potentially eliminating the curb.
2. Consider adding more animation to the end of the townhouses in a more meaningful way than just adding windows.
3. Investigate the treatment of the rear yards for the townhouses.
4. Explore further the articulation of the towns to allow the front stoops and porches more privacy. Provide more robust planting. Also, reconsider the relationship between stairs and doors to allow some usable space on the front porch. Reconsider use of wood in terms of durability/maintenance.
5. Investigate options for the soffit on the bottom of higher volume.
6. Examine if balconies are too closed off.
7. Further develop the design of the main entry sequence. The location is appropriate at River but a bit more consideration to the interaction with the public realm should be given.