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Toronto
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Housing

Toronto Community Housing Design Review Panel
Minutes of Meeting
February 9, 2017

Present: Alan Waterhouse, University of Toronto Roland Rom Colthoff, RAW Design Gunta Mackars, Stantec Antoine Belaieff, Metrolinx Shirley Blumberg, KPMB Architects Anne McIlroy, Brook McIlroy Andre D'Elia, Superkul Ken Greenberg, Greenberg Consulting David Anselmi, Canada Lands Company Paul Bailey, York University Leslie Gash, TCHC	Regrets: Sybil Wa, Diamond Schmitt Architects David Leinster, The Planning Partnership
City of Toronto Staff: Seanna Kerr Cynthia Owusu - Gyimah	Recording Secretary: Joanna Kolakowska

DRP Protocols Discussion

The panel discussed the recommendations they put forward to TCHC for changes to the format and processes of the DRP. This discussion followed a previous working session held in November 2016 by members of the DRP, followed by meetings with TCHC to discuss proposed recommendations held on December 12, 2016.

Leslie Gash from TCHC confirmed that TCHC is happy to move forward with the implementation of the recommendations. The following recommendations were discussed:

1 – Residents Appointed to Panel:

- The panel acknowledged that there has been a past attempt to include residents in the DRP panel but with little success. Members felt it is imperative to have representatives of the major communities. The suggestion was to include one member from each of the following: Regent Park, Alexandra Park and Lawrence Heights. Resident panel members would be invited to each meeting but could attend on a rotating basis. TCHC was strongly encouraged to find a means of providing an honorarium in order to make resident participation more sustainable.
- Leslie Gash confirmed that TCHC will explore the potential of an honorarium and will engage RCS (Resident & Community Services) Managers to find members in each of the 3 main revitalization communities.

2 – Panel Involvement Prior to Design:

- Panel members felt strongly that they should be involved as early as possible in the planning and design process for the revitalization communities. Ideally, this could happen at the same time as the RFPs are released for development partners; it was noted that earlier review might pose a potential conflict of interest.
- Requests were made for the following information to be provided:
 - o A forecast of upcoming TCHC revitalization work for a period of 3-6 months
 - o A program and/or design brief (prior to specific building design review)
 - o A revised and original master plan (prior to specific building design review)

- Specifically, the panel would like to see the master plan for Phase 2 of Alexandra Park
- Panel members felt strongly that City staff need to be involved with the DRP early in the process in order to provide information regarding the context and other development in the same neighbourhood. At a minimum it was requested that the City provide an official response to the site planning or development proposal.

3 – Walking Tours of Project:

- It was agreed that the future chair will help coordinate any walking tours with TCHC staff.
- Two projects were identified as nearing occupancy, which would allow for tours: townhomes in Regent Park Block 22 and SQ condo building in Alexandra Park.

4 – Panel Member Presentations:

- It was agreed that time should be reserved on the DRP agenda once or twice a year in order for panel members to present an area of interest or expertise that is applicable in future design reviews

5 – Panel Member Orientation:

- Panel members requested that an in depth orientation for both new and old members be provided that would include information regarding the contextual information of the various revite sites – the history, the planning context, etc. There was also a suggestion that TCHC's developer partners could be invited to present such as Mitchell Cohen on Regent Park.
- Leslie Gash agreed that time should be added on the agenda for this

6 – TCHC Senior Staff Attendance:

- The panel requested that senior staff should be present from all three of the following stakeholders: TCHC, City (Councillors and Planning), and developers
- Leslie confirmed that for TCHC Greg Spearn will attend the DRP once a year, Leslie Gash and the Development Directors will attend all meetings

7 – Panel Feedback:

- The panel requested that resident feedback be included in formalized reports as a learning from lived experiences.

8 – Panel Format:

- The panel suggested that all project presentations take on the following format:
 - o presentation by TCHC Staff showing context and master plan
 - o presentation by the design team
 - o clarification question
 - o formal commentary
 - o subsequent discussion between panel members/TCHC/City (with Developer included for market buildings)
 - o a vote of “support, non-support, or support with conditions” at final project presentation
- The panel members would like to see a shift in emphasis from relationship between Panel-to-designer to relationship between Panel-to-TCHC
- Clarification is needed regarding how approvals work after the panel has expressed concerns about a particular project. If there are issues outstanding how does a project get approved by TCHC and/or the City to move forward without fixing the issues?
- The panel requested that an official response be issued by the Developer back to the panel. This response needs to be recorded in the minutes.

- The panel requested that a design brief or program be submitted for review as early as possible prior to project design being brought forward for review.
- The panel requested that lessons learned should be examined on a periodic basis to be able to better provide feedback moving forward. For lessons learned reviews, it would be also good to hear from a developer's perspective to understand what works financially (and what does not).

9 – Involvement in Public Space Design

- The panel members felt strongly that developers/TCHC need to be accountable for providing public space, not just grooming space around individual buildings. This includes careful consideration of the connectivity of the green space in a greater context.
- The panel suggested that these public spaces be added to the design briefs of individual projects; buildings or landscape.

10 – Sustainability:

- The panel requested that moving forward presentations include a clear demonstration of how TCHC buildings are sustainable – LEED or Toronto Green Standards, etc. As a general observation, the panel noted that objectives of sustainability could be met through simple passive systems given that TCHC is limited in terms of maintenance and user education.
- The panel suggested that life-cycle cost and resilience should be presented for TCHC buildings to make sure that they are exemplary as representative of long term maintenance/durability.

11 – Standardization of Requirement for Presentations:

- The panel requested that a formal package be put together for future presentation teams with specific requirements outlined based on suggestions in terms of context, social integration, and principles. This list of minimum requirements should include a submission of a

response showing how previous panel comments were addressed or not. It was pointed out that both the designer and TCHC should be responding to panel comments as well, as sometimes it is a TCHC decision.

12 – Incentives for Innovation in Social Enterprise, Built Form and Building Technology

- The panel requested that they be able to review and comment on potential innovation incentives that are being considered within the Revitalization communities. A question was raised whether there are possibilities to work with residents, TCHC maintenance staff, and other stakeholders to design buildings around passive technologies that are still under development (akin to research implementation by think tanks and grant based projects)?
- The panel expressed they would like to see more deliberate ways of bringing social innovation into TCHC communities. A question was raised as to whether there is a way for TCHC to work with the City to create incentives allowing for design to include social innovation, so that the design can become more than just aesthetics. It was felt that TCHC could expand panel expertise as necessary to be able to provide feedback in regards to innovation for social enterprise, built form and/or building technology.

1 – Election of New Panel Chair:

- Some of the responsibilities of the chair were identified as following: work behind the scenes on contentious issues, solicit input to eliminate conflict, liaise with TCHC staff for panel administration, help with logistics relating to project tours. A full list of responsibilities needs to be developed.
- Vice Chair or Co-Chair was recommended to help distribute responsibilities and prevent situations of conflict of interest.
- It was agreed that Leslie Gash will solicit panel members to submit an expression of interest via email.

Project Reviews

The following projects were reviewed by the TCHC Design Review Panel on February 9, 2017:

- **Allenbury Gardens Building C and Townhomes (1st review)**

1.0 Project Review - Allenbury Gardens Building C and Townhomes

1.1 Briefing Package

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

- **Allenbury Gardens Building C and Townhomes (Feb 2, 2017)**

1.2 Project Information

Project type: Pre Site Plan Approval

Design Team: Core Architects & Van Elslander & Baker Turner
Landscape Architects

Presenters: Bryan Sherwood (TCHC), Earl Mark (Core Architects) &
Deanne Christie (Baker Turner Landscape Architects),
Terence Van Elslander (V+A)

Review: Second Review Overall (First review of Building C &
Townhomes)

Conflict of Interest: None Declared

1.3 Matters for Consideration

Summary of Presentation

The project was introduced by Bryan Sherwood from TCHC who outlined the areas reviewed at the last DRP; mainly, Building D (market condominium) and overall landscape. This time the presentation focused on Building C (TCHC rental building) and the townhomes (combination of TCHC rental and market). Bryan gave an overall Master Plan and neighbourhood context overview and reminded everyone of the program design and objectives, which are: providing transitions between existing land uses, compatibility with the existing neighbourhood, creating a vibrant ground floor plane, establishing a cohesive and connected community through landscape, building a sustainable community.

The project is currently on track to have an SPA submission ready in March; there is a minor variance requested to the current zoning that would allow for re-orientation of the townhome blocks and adding an additional storey to the rental RGI building. Phase 1 of the Allenbury revitalization is under construction with first occupancy expected in July 2017 for both market units and RGI units.

Deanne Christie presented the concepts behind the layout and design of the landscaped areas. The three main areas of focus are: the central courtyard, the service court situated between the two towers, and the treatment of private amenity space at ground level. The design aims to emphasize pedestrian flows, connecting the development with the main public flow along Fairview Mall Drive. Circulation is based on the idea that every front door meets a walkway that connects to the rest of the development. Bike parking is scattered throughout at nodes, along paths and at each townhome.

In terms of the central courtyard design, larger areas are designated for tree planting – both to meet required soil volumes but also to break up views to create a sense of privacy across the courtyard. There is a central area with some natural elements for casual play. This is to supplement the amenities provided in the park adjacent to this development, which include, a playground, splash pad, games tables, dog park, etc. Seating is also a key element that will be added in a variety of climatic conditions.

The strategy behind the design of the service court is to demarcate between private and shared space using paving patterns and or textures to create a visual buffer from adjacent units. For the car drop off, the idea is to provide a more decorative surface to make it feel less car oriented. This will be furthered by the elimination of curbs to create continuity and encourage pedestrian use as well.

For the design of the private amenity spaces at ground level the key is the separation of private from public; a low barrier is proposed to allow for “eyes on the street” while still creating separation from the public realm. Privacy screens between units will be installed.

Earl Mark presented the design for Building C. The overall aesthetic is a result of developing a cladding concept that addresses TCHC requirements for energy efficiency, which allows for a maximum of 40% openings on the building façade. Other considerations include material selection that reflects durability and construction cost, differentiation from the previously built market building, and a consideration of context. Ultimately the design proposes to use a window wall system above the 2nd floor of the building. The intent is to create a primary grid of metal panels along the slab edge and partitions within the building plan, with an overlaid secondary grid of mullions within the glazing.

The massing of the building maintains a 4 storey street height podium to match the other buildings along Fairview Mall Drive. The ground level is treated with a different material - potentially white terra cotta – with an emphasis on the main entrance using a white concrete frame. The design uses individual canopies to demarcate at-grade uses with the TCHC office and back side of the lobby being differentiated as a glass box.

Terence Van Elslander presented the townhome design. The phase 2 townhouses are meant as a continuation of phase 1 and generally have the same interior plans. They are split into 3 blocks; 2 blocks of RGI units and a single block of market units. The units are serviced by a shared parking garage that is accessed by an entrance on either side of central block to the parking garage. Also, exterior garbage storage spaces are provided. The massing of the towns is set up to provide a gradation of height away from the tower shifting from 3 storeys to 2 as you move toward the low rise residential homes located north of the site. In terms of materiality, the

towns are designed in brick with third floor metal panel cladding and the addition of some wood at grade to add emphasis to entrances.

1.4 Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects for Consideration

The panel offered the following feedback and recommendations for consideration by the design team. Unless otherwise noted, the following is the consensus opinion of the panel.

Site Layout & Program

Overall, the panel felt that there are some key areas to be further explored with the current site plan. Members of the panel expressed the opinion that the site plan does not reflect the stated "guiding principles" of the revitalization or the Urban Design Guidelines.

The panel felt that some of the issues with regards to the site plan are the result of insufficient programming and lack programmable social development spaces. The panel felt there is no evidence of neighbourhood amenities including daycares, recreation facilities, playgrounds, community gardens, retail and cafes, etc. The concern is that if these amenities are not within a reasonable walking distance, this development will feel like an old fashioned public housing project which exists in isolation and lacks social development programs. The panel suggested that a map of walking distances to other community spaces be considered to demonstrate that no additional amenity within the master plan needs to be provided. It was felt that the current plan is missing consideration of the daily routine of people's lives.

The length of Block 6 was a key issue that was identified as being problematic. It creates long access routes for tenants and limits connectivity of the site with the adjacent neighbourhood. The travel distance to the front door of units in the middle of Block 6 were deemed unreasonable from an accessibility perspective.

The positioning of Block 5 was also seen as problematic. Its close proximity to the rental tower podium feels too tight and creates what appears to be a tight and dark passageway cutting off the site from the adjacent park. The panel felt that re-positioning this block to align with Allenbury Gardens should be considered.

Panel members expressed wanting to see a stronger pedestrian connection between the inner courtyard and Fairview Mall Drive. Additionally, they felt that some commercial opportunity along the street elevation would help enhance the public realm of the community. In general, it was stated that phase 2 feels uninviting and lacks connections to the adjacent community.

Courtyard Design

The panel members expressed concern that the courtyard seems very empty. Even with the adjacent park, they recommend that at a minimum, more gathering space and some play equipment should be considered that could be passively supervised by surrounding units. They felt that the lack of programming indicates that the user experience has not been sufficiently considered.

The grade differential between the at grade entrances to the towns and berming of the central courtyard was also identified as problematic. Some issues with the raised elevation of the central space is the reversal of sightlines as it would be preferred that the townhomes could passively observe the central space and not vice versa. It was also of concern that a raised planting area could have implications on the accessibility of the space.

Service Court Design

The panel expressed that the current design of the service court between the two buildings allows for too much congestion. They recommend

internalizing the Type G loading into building C. Furthermore, the material quality of the service court should be reconsidered to be more consistent; identifying the “utilitarian” areas should be avoided and emphasis should be given to creating a more pedestrian friendly environment. The landscaped area between drop off and front door should be reconsidered as it will likely become a default walking route.

Building C Design

A member of the panel commended the design team on the overall form and aesthetic of the building; however, several issues were identified. Several members expressed that the extensive use of spandrel panels is not recommended due to poor performance as a cladding material. Also, the lack of balconies for a large number of the units was felt to be inconsistent with the neighbouring condominium buildings.

Another key issue was the location of the amenity space. The panel felt that it would be better used if the outdoor amenity area, in particular, had more access to sunlight and did not overlook the vehicular drop-off area.

Along the ground plane there were two areas that were identified as needing further consideration. The first recommendation was to consider a hybrid live/work unit strategy for units located along Fairview Mall Drive. The second recommendation was to add more glazing to the lobby space to visually connect to the drop off area; potentially, the main entrance could be shifted closer to the service court.

Finally, the panel felt that the design team should look for ground floor space for bicycle parking. If all bike parking is to remain underground, then a secondary access such as a broad stair with channel needs to be added.

Townhome Design

In addition to some comments outlined above under “Site Layout & Program”, several members noted that the patios of the towns should be

raised above the level of the at grade green space in the courtyard. Additionally, the exterior garbage area was felt to be in need of further development. It was felt they provided poor adjacency to the neighbouring units and that efficiencies could potentially be achieved through a strategy of bulk garbage storage within the main building. Finally, the panel urged that the use of individual water heaters and furnaces be reconsidered as they require too much maintenance and are not seen as a wise choice in terms of life cycle costing.

1.5 Panel's Directions

Consideration for the following key issues should be contemplated:

1. The site design should be revisited with a focus on the following areas:
 - a. Orientation and size of Block 5 should be reconsidered to allow a better separation between its South Elevation and the adjacent building.
 - b. The length of Block 6 needs to be redesigned to reduce travel distances to courtyard facing units.
 - c. Connectivity to adjacent neighbourhood should be further developed.
 - d. Further consideration should be given to the inclusion of live/work units along Fairview Mall Drive.
2. The design of the service courtyard should be further explored; emphasis should be placed on pedestrian friendly design.
3. The central courtyard design should be reconsidered in terms of programming and its elevation relationship to the townhomes.
4. Exterior garbage areas and the bike parking strategy need further consideration.

5. The design of the townhomes should investigate the following:
 - a. A raised front porch
 - b. The elimination of individual water heater and furnace units in favour of a shared mechanical system.
6. The design of the tower should investigate the following:
 - a. The location of the amenity space.
 - b. The addition of more balconies.
 - c. A reduction or elimination of spandrel panel.

Members of the panel and TCHC staff agreed that the next review for Allenbury will include buildings C & D as well as townhomes and the landscape combined. The panel will vote on the project at the next presentation.