



Toronto Community Housing Design Review Panel  
Minutes of Meeting  
August 10, 2017

The Design Review Panel met on Thursday August 10, in Ground Floor  
Amenity Room, 246 Sackville St, at 12:00pm

Present:	Regrets:
Andre D'Elia, Superkul Ken Greenberg, Greenberg Consulting Sybil Wa, Diamond Schmitt Architects Antoine Beliaeff, Metrolinx (Vice Chair) Paul Bailey, RIVIVE	Roland Rom Colthoff, RAW Design Gunta Mackars, Stantec Shirley Blumberg, KPMB Architects* David Anselmi, Canada Lands Company Anne McIlroy, Brook McIlroy (Chair)* David Leinster, The Planning Partnership
TCHC Staff	City of Toronto Staff:
Vincent Tong Jason Chen Kelly Skeith Shawni Lo Michael Lam Akshay Deshpande Allison Lebow Cristina Raviele	Leo Desorcy Michael Sakalauskas Barry Brooks
Recording Secretary:	
Joanna Kolakowska	
*provided notes for project review	

## **Cladding Discussion:**

Prior to Project Review, TCHC with LMDG Code Consultants Ltd. presented an overview of the current TCHC approach to re-cladding projects.

Michael Lam (TCHC) identified that the TCHC building portfolio will be undergoing extensive re-cladding work in the near future as the majority of the buildings in the portfolio are constructed with uninsulated masonry and need to be upgraded to allow for better energy efficiency. He provided current examples of TCHC re-cladding projects – 20 Vanauley Street and 250 Davenport and outlined TCHC strategies for ensuring that fire safety is met. He noted that TCHC is engaged on an ongoing basis with City Building Department as well as industry consultants to consult on best practices and assurances regarding building materials and legislation.

James Ware (LMDG Code Consultants) presented an overview of the potential issues that led to the Grenfell Tower tragedy in London. He then outlined the relevant Ontario Building Code that governs cladding fire safety and identified how each safety issue is addressed. He noted that Canada has very strict testing requirements that were more stringent than the ones that existed in England at the time of the Grenfell Tower fire.

## **Project Reviews:**

The following projects were reviewed by the TCHC Design Review Panel on August 10, 2017:

- **250 Davenport (2<sup>nd</sup> Review)**
- **Lawrence Heights (Block 1D & 1F Site Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Review))**

## 1.0 Project Review –250 Davenport (2<sup>nd</sup> Review)

### 1.1 Project Information

Project type: Site Plan Approval

Design Review: Second review

Design Team: TACT Architecture & Janet  
Rosenberg Studio

Presenters: Prishram Jain (TACT) & Janet  
Rosenberg (JRS)

Conflict of Interest: None

Vote: Redesign – 0

Refine – 5

Fully Support – 0



### 1.2 Introduction

The project context was presented by the design team who gave an overview of the surrounding neighbourhood context and conditions of the public realm. They outlined the zoning history of the site and presented the design changes that have resulted from the last DRP commentary (October 2015).

### 1.3 Panel Commentary

The panel commended the team on the design development in response to the Panel's previous comments. In general, the panel members received the proposal positively and were particularly impressed how far the design team has pushed the permeability of the site in order to remove the inequality of the space that existed in the earlier design.

## **Building Massing**

The panel felt that the design refinement of the massing has come a long way. Specifically, there was an appreciation of the current break down of towns at ground level that helps reinforce the human scale at grade. Two members pointed out that the tower still feels oppressive over the towns in part due to the articulation on the top which may be taking away from the strategy of keeping the eye low on the ground. The panel suggested that tower articulation could be further explored.

## **Landscape**

The panel felt that the team has responded well to the topographical challenges of the site; however, they cautioned that the success of the project will be in the details of the design devices used to mitigate the topography such as the relationship of the rise and run of the public stair, how the railings integrate into the public realm, how the planters are finished, etc. Additionally, one panel member pointed out that the current placement of the community garden adjacent to Davenport Road is awkward and should be located further away from traffic.

## **Vehicular Spaces**

The panel expressed some concerns about the harshness of the vehicular spaces around the existing TCHC tower; both the front entry driveway as well as the service driveway. They suggested that there be a further exploration of surface treatment to integrate these better into the surrounding pedestrian realm.

## **Consideration of Future Maintenance**

The panel expressed concern over the public realm being divided between 3 separate entities (two central POPs spaces and the public park on the east side of the existing building) and recommended that a maintenance program be jointly developed and coordinated in order to ensure equal upkeep of all public outdoor spaces within the development.

## **Bike Parking**

One member of the panel expressed concern over the ratio of car parking to bike parking being provided. It was suggested that the team look at potential of some additional bike parking, preferably at ground level.

## 1.4 Chair's Summary

The panel commended the team on their efforts in furthering the design and were impressed how comments been addressed from previous review. They well very supportive of the design moves that have made the proposal much better integrated between the TCHC property and the market condo. The panel offered the following suggestions to help further refine the scheme:

- Explore opportunity to soften the vehicular identity of spaces and generally ensure spaces appear people friendly
- Further develop landscape details to enhance the public realm
- Keep in mind value engineering and maintenance
- Keep working on the relationship between tower and towns to make sure the towns aren't oppressed
- General comment to TCHC to consider some accessibility for town homes

## 2.0 Project Review – Lawrence Heights Block 1D & 1F Site Plan

### 2.1 Project Information

Project type: Pre Site Plan Approval

Design Review: First Review

Design Team: Tact Architecture &  
MBTW Group

Presenters: Jason Chen (TCHC),  
Prishram Jain (TACT) &  
Gus Maurano (MBTW)

Conflict of Interest: None



Vote: Postponed – The panel agreed on a follow-up presentation that re frames the focus of the presentation on context, amenity, livability and variability, and consideration of alternate movement methods.

## **2.2 Introduction**

The project was introduced by Jason Chen who presented the existing neighbourhood context and gave an overview of the development and zoning history of Lawrence Heights, pointing out that the redevelopment is in Phase 1 of four phases that is expected to be a 20-25 year process. Prior to the design presentation, Leo Desorcy from the City of Toronto presented 6 questions that Urban Design staff wanted the panel to address.

The current project proposal for the Block 1D & 1F Site Plan was presented by Prishram Jain (TACT) and Gus Maurano (MBTW). The design presentation focused on the layout of laneways and blocks throughout the development as well as the design of Ridgevale Mews. Two options were presented for the laneway connection at the North East corner of the site.

## **2.3 Panel Commentary**

The panel found the proposal and presentation to be heavily focused on the vehicular movement without any discussion about the human scale. Panel members identified several issues with the scheme that fail to meet two TCHC mandates: one providing vibrant communities, and second integrating into the existing context. The members recognized that there is certainly a political history that makes integration into adjacent neighbourhoods difficult; however, they felt that further changes are required and identified several areas for improvement.

### **Overall Community Vision**

The panel felt that the scheme as presented was not anchored to a clear vision for the community like Regent Park, but more a technical exercise to arrange townhouses, parking and roads in the most efficient way possible. The DRP is hoping to see a vision for the community reflected in the design

so that it too could become a place that we are proud of and that becomes a vibrant community in the future. Examples of elements mentioned:

- Understanding of who lives there and what they do
- Attention to kids and seniors specifically
  - E.g. think carefully about how each home will access schools
- Park programming
- Social amenities and third places, stores, seating etc
- Ways to attract the broader community to the neighbourhood, as it has been carefully integrated into Regent Park

### **Neighbourhood Connectivity**

The panel had concerns about the insular nature of the development with a lack of connectivity to the surrounding neighbourhoods. They acknowledged that given political opposition and Council approved Secondary Plan, the strategy of incorporating the Mews as a future vehicular connection is a move in the right direction. While the panel recognized the existing planning policy regulations that set the road network and connectivity, they felt, there should be an opportunity to push back on community opposition in order to fully realize the goals of the TCHC revitalization sites. They pointed out that for any residents to drive their kids to school, they will not be able to take a direct route but will need to circumnavigate the development to make their way back to Varna Drive. They strongly encourage more thought be given about how to push connectivity into the greater context.

### **Site Circulation**

Overall, the panel expressed their concerns that the primary design driver is the consideration of vehicular layout, with little evidence of design for cyclists and/or pedestrians. They felt that the design should look for ways to incorporate cycling lanes along the roads and laneways as well as more pedestrian paths. Specifically, the panel recommended the following:

- The east-west connection needs to be reconsidered in terms of cycling as it is not clear that it is a permissible use of the Mews.
- The generous width of the rear lanes needs reconsideration as there is an overwhelming amount of asphalt in the scheme.
- The width of the walkways at 2.4m needs reconsideration as it feels narrow and should be expanded to allow for maintenance and pedestrian friendliness.

- Re-examine the number and width of curb cuts from laneways in the block to the southwest of the park.
- Provide more direct routes for access to schools.
- The design of street A needs more thought – it should be a tighter angle at street E to minimize speeding.
- Consider reducing the number of laneways in the block to the north of street C.

A few members expressed their preference for the alternate option of the lane at the North East corner of the development, which pushes the lane to the East edge and allows the housing blocks to be more contiguous.

### **Laneway Space**

The panel felt that the design of the green space along the rear laneways needs further consideration. There was a concern raised that the rear laneways will become the dumping ground for stuff and a place for anti-social activity. They recommended that the team look for ways of encouraging more visibility in that space. One panel member suggested to look at opportunities to create pedestrian traffic through the laneway.

### **Public Realm Amenities**

The panel questioned the lack of adequate representation of public amenities in the presentation. They felt that the scheme does not allow for public spaces that promote social interaction. They also expressed a desire to see a community hub integrated into the scheme in order to help create an attraction that would draw outside residents to this community and help integrate it with the adjacent neighbourhoods. One member recommended that if the mews scheme ends up with a “detached” house as per one of the options, the team should use this opportunity to create a club house or common space for the community. There was also a suggestion to break up the Street C blocks of townhouses with a parkette that connects into the central park.

### **Building Variety**

The panel felt that at this scale of development there should be an exploration of various built forms or typologies to provide variety. They felt that the architectural typology needs to be broken up to prevent uniformity

and sterility. Currently, the townhouses are perceived as repetitive with the same size and materiality. The panel felt that in order to respond to the diversity of the community in terms of family social mix, etc. more flexibility in the typologies should be considered. They recommended also looking at strategies of articulating the architectural expression along the streets in a less monotonous way and providing further porosity through the townhome blocks.

### **Ridgevale Mews**

The panel felt that the design of the Mews at the intersection of the vehicular lane needs further consideration to ensure that the pedestrian realm will be emphasized over the vehicular, including a careful consideration of safety. One panel member noted that having the street trees in planters highlights the lack of connection to the adjacent existing neighbourhood. Finally, it was also noted that the ground level grass planting needs to be reconsidered to ensure it is a usable area that can be easily maintained.

### **Unit Layout**

A member of the panel expressed concern regarding the interior layout of the TCHC Units; she noted that the proportion of the living space is meager given the total number of bedrooms and that there should be a further consideration of flexibility to arrange that space to allow for shared experience for a large family.

## **2.4 Chair's Summary**

The panel felt that the overall vision for this portion of Lawrence Heights needs to be bolder in its ambitions and recommended that the team look to carry over some of the standards implemented in Regent Park. They made the following suggestions:

- Examine the boarder neighbourhood connectivity and reconsider the ability to reconnect the street (in lieu of the Mews)
- Further explore cycling and pedestrian infrastructure

- Further consider the number of laneways and curb cuts to ensure the creation of a safe space along the rear lanes
- Explore a variety of typology and architectural expression to create a distinct identity for each block
- For future presentations, include a more thorough Context Presentation including a mapping of existing and future amenities (where is shopping, schools, rec centres, corner stores, bike shares, etc)

A discussion ensued after the panel presented its commentary between panel members, the design team, and City staff. The City staff provided the political context and planning background, while the design team explained the challenges and constraints that they are working with due to the political context and existing planning regulations. They also provided further information in regards to the proposed pedestrian environment including the community being used as pilot project for the City's Complete Streets initiative as well as surrounding cycling infrastructure and public amenities within present and future phases of Lawrence Heights. The panel agreed to postpone the vote until a subsequent presentation. Leo Desorcy from the City made a commitment to bring forward the panel's concerns regarding connectivity to the executive at City Planning.