

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
Friday, October 12, 2018

The Design Review Panel met on Friday, October 12, 2018 at
246 Sackville Street, Ground Floor Amenity Space 12:00pm

Present:	Regrets:
Anne McIlroy, Brook McIlroy (Chair)* Antoine Belaieff, Metrolinx (Vice Chair) Graeme Stewart, ERA Architects William Shane, Alexandra Park Resident Sybil Wa, Diamond Schmitt Architects Shirley Blumberg, KPMB Architects Paul Bailey, REVIVE Roland Rom Colthoff, RAW Design Samuel Abebe, Lawrence Heights Resident Ali Elchanti, Regent Park Resident David Leinster, The Planning Partnership	Rubesha Zia, Regent Park Resident Berhane Abraha, Lawrence Heights Resident David Anselmi, Canada Lands Company Gunta Mackars, Metrolinx Andre D'Elia, Superkul Labib Chowdhury, Alexandra Park Resident
TCHC Staff	City of Toronto Staff:
Tyler Baker Juliet Dixon Andrew Goodyear Catherine Pan Vincent Tong Elvira Vigo	
Recording Secretary: Derek Brunelle	

Project Reviews

The following projects were reviewed by the TCHC Design Review Panel on October 12, 2018:

- **Alexandra Park Phase 2A**
- **Firgrove Master Plan**

Project type: Site Plan Approval
Design Review: First Review
Design Team: CS&P Architects,
SvN Architects, and
Janet Rosenberg &
Studio
Presenters: Tyler Baker, TCHC
Maureen
O'Shaughnessy,
Paul Cravit, CS&P
Architects
Greg Warren, JRS
Studio



Conflict of Interest: N/A
Vote: Redesign - 0
Refine - All
Fully Support – 0

1.1 Project Information

Tyler Baker from TCHC introduced the Alexandra Park Phase 2A project with an overview of the built form, a description of the neighborhood and adjacent communities, and an outline of the development history to date. Mr. Baker indicated that this is a multiphase project, with the master plan having been approved by the City of Toronto in 2013 and site specific zoning and Official Plan amendments for Phase 2A approved in July 2018.

Maureen O'Shaughnessy and Paul Cravit from CS&P Architects presented the design for Phase 2A, which consists of two buildings – a 13-storey, 176 unit tower intended for market use, and a 14-storey, 104 unit tower reserved for the Atkinson Co-op. Both buildings will share a masonry podium and the towers are visually similar with glass facades and a grid structure wrapping the balconies. Every unit will have a balcony.

A landscaped amenity area is proposed between the buildings, to be shared by tenants of the Atkinson building and the market condominium which includes a stairway connecting exterior amenity spaces. The exterior amenity also includes a shared community garden above a 3-storey retail podium fronting on Dundas Street West. The project architects asserted that the exterior stairs are intended for seasonal use only and would not be maintained through the winter months. All exterior amenity spaces can be accessed from the buildings, including for users with accessibility needs.

The project architects indicated that the building's design creates opportunities for small and medium-scale retail storefronts along the Dundas frontage, as well as retail that may partially wrap along Denison and Augusta Avenues. It is intended that a portion of the base of the Atkinson Building will include a child care facility, as well as offices for the Atkinson Co-op.

A 'mews' is intended to provide pedestrian connectivity across the site and vehicular access to underground parking and garbage collection. This mews runs south of Dundas Street between Denison and Augusta Avenues.

Floor plans for the building have considered the City of Toronto's Growing Up guidelines to support family living in vertical communities. This is evident with the number of two-bedroom units (77 for the market condominium and 52 for the Co-op) and three-bedroom units (24 for the market condominium and 13 for the Co-op). Natural light is prioritized in the design of units.

1.2 Panel Commentary

The Panel commended the team on a clear and well organized presentation. Below are several key topic areas that emerged through questions and comments.

Building Design

Overall, the building design received a positive review by the Panel. It was generally agreed that the two-tower design was the most effective way to approach the mix of TCHC and market buildings on a single site.

Some of the Panel's criticism focused on the internal service mews, with suggestions to improve lighting and visual connections, especially with the bicycle storage area. Some panel members commented that the mews, despite its proposed height, may feel like a tunnel.

Interior Park

Panel members reacted positively to the idea of the shared interior park, and that it functioned as a 'backyard' for both the Co-op and market users. While the architects insisted that the interior park's stairs would be decorative in the winter, panel members wished to see more consideration to year-round usage. One idea that arose was the use of the space as a toboggan path or winter play area.

The Panel requested further clarification as to how the public will interact with this space, if at all.

Retail

The presenters emphasized the need for smaller-size commercial spaces along the Dundas frontage to better correspond to the eclectic retail vernacular of nearby Kensington Market.

Panel members were supportive of retail uses at grade, and several asked the architects to consider this mix of uses beyond the Dundas frontage and onto Denison and Augusta Avenues. Some Panel members supported the idea of live-work units in the proposed townhomes along Denison Avenue.

Parking

The project architects indicated that there would be approximately 300 parking spaces as part of this design. Panel members insisted that the team revisit and work toward reducing this requirement, especially in the context of City and Regional transportation planning initiatives.

Sustainability

Panel members reacted positively to the elevated green spaces and planted features along the towers, as well as the architect's commitment to LEED certification. Other sustainability elements, such as storm water management (retention and re-use on site), were viewed positively.

1.3 Chair's Summary

At the conclusion of the Panel discussion, Co-Chair Anne McIlroy restated that the Panel felt that the proposal represented a positive direction, and identified the following key recommendations:

- Greater consideration toward accessibility, access, and community safety;
- Greater focus on building, mews, and internal courtyard in relation to the broader public realm. For example, more clarity needs to be placed on the overall 'porousness' of the site;
- More consideration needed in the activation of internal courtyard in winter;
- Further exploration of retail/flexible uses on Decision (such as live/work arrangements);
- More in-depth assessment of parking requirements and transportation in relation to Regional transportation vision.

Firgrove Master Plan

Project type:	Master Plan
Design Review:	First Review
Design Team:	The Planning Partnership
Presenters:	Catherine Pan, TCHC David Leinster, The Planning Partnership Dean Goodman, LGA Architects
Conflict of Interest:	David Leinster
Vote:	Redesign - All Refine - 0 Fully Support – 0



1.3 Project Information

Catherine Pan from TCHC introduced the Firgrove Master Plan project with an overview of the history of the site and rationale for revitalization. Designed and constructed in the early 1970s, the 13.5 acre site is located southwest of the Jane and Finch intersection, containing 386 residential units in total. A portion of the site – one 12-storey high rise and several townhouses, consisting of 152 units – will not be subject to redevelopment.

Existing amenities include a playground, a basketball court, an outdoor pool run by TCHC, a Childcare facility run by city of Toronto, and a Community centre run by FLICC (Firgrove Learning and Innovation Community Centre)

Ms. Pan indicated that there is a commitment from the City of Toronto to expand the childcare facility in the new plan. Ms. Pan also indicated that a Social development plan (SDP), focusing on Community Economic Development and social cohesion, will be a major part of this revitalization.

The proposed design includes a new street network with a central park. The proposed massing involves a mixture of mid-rise and townhouse blocks. The presenters explained how the area is targeted for higher-level transit, with future plans for the Finch W and Jane Street LRTs.

1.1 Panel Commentary

The following key themes emerged from the discussion:

Street Layout

The proposed plan includes both public and private streets, with Needle Firway as a major spine on the west side of the site. Private streets are intended to be paved in a different way, discouraging vehicular activity. Panel members commented on how cycling infrastructure needs to be better understood. As well, Panel members expressed a need for narrower streets to discourage through-traffic.

The Panel expressed concern over what design strategies can be employed to make the neighbourhood safe from a pedestrian perspective.

Central Park

Panel members were supportive of some elements of the central park idea, particularly with regards to the presenters' allusions to Bellevue Park (Kensington Market) and the small-scale central parks located in Toronto's Annex neighbourhood.

Panel members expressed concern over potential safety issues – such as gun violence – and design strategies that may mitigate this.

Social Development Plan

In creating a Social Development Plan, Panel members insisted that there is a need to understand both economic and community safety needs at Firgrove. Members stated that policies around safety and crime prevention through design will be important for redevelopment in this part of the city. Panel members expressed the need for equity-based planning at this early design stage.

Sustainability

Panel members wished to see more attention placed on the overall sustainability planning for the site. One area that requires further exploration is district energy and localized energy management.

While the Panel recognized TCHC's requirements to replace similar styles of housing (i.e. townhouses), they asserted that grade-related units are not as sustainable as high-density housing.

Transportation

The Panel expressed that more attention was required with regards to transportation (both within the community and the relationship that the new community will have to its surroundings). In particular, it was suggested that more attention needs to be placed on the incoming Jane and Finch LRTs and how this will connect Firgrove to the rest of the City and Region.

Density

Many of the Panel members insisted that the design team revisit density on the site, suggesting that more could be available. There was a strong desire by Panel members to not recreate suburban conditions. Rather, there was a focus on finer-grain street networks, mobility, mixture of uses, and the establishment of more urban, 'complete,' environments.

There was a focus on understanding the new Firgrove as a 'destination' – a place to walk through or to visit.

Panel members insisted that the design team revisit the public realm model – have more mews, prioritize the pedestrian, include more passageways, bike lanes, etc. It was generally agreed that having a finer grain and mixing of buildings will be helpful to achieve a more successful public realm.

1.3 Chair's Summary

At the conclusion of the Panel discussion, Co-chair Antoine Beliaeff restated that the Panel felt this project required revisions, and identified the following key recommendations:

- The plan needs to emphasize more on connections (pedestrian, cycling, or other mobility) through the site internally
- Community centre and programming – allow to be open to rest of the community, e.g. farmers market
- Density – it could be more aggressive and dense. Higher density is more sustainable.
- There is a strong park concept, but the plan needs other pieces that show ambition.
- How can these blocks function as more than a suburban block?
- What is the idea for Jane Street? What can this site do that is indicative of 21st century design
- Focus on narrower streets
- Conversation about market buildings – TCH buildings in the interior; market buildings on Jane only. Can this be reconsidered?
- 2 storey bases – why not bump to 4 storeys? 2 storeys makes for an awkward condition on the ground floor with a massive tower on top.
- Tower blocks look like tower renewal scheme – replicate slabs. Too long – shadow impacts.
- Difficult site but setting good precedent for area. Park condition is not urban. Need something to animate on the other side.
- N/S road is really important – need to accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, etc. Respond to transit coming to Jane St in a bold way.
- The plan is strongly horizontal – have N/S facing buildings to be optimized for District Energy.
- There needs to be stronger integration of market and social buildings.