



Toronto Community Housing Design Review Panel  
Minutes of Meeting  
Thursday, December 13, 2018

The Design Review Panel met on Thursday, December 13, 2018 at  
**931 Yonge Street, Conference Room, at 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 Ali Elchanti, Regent Park Resident David Leinster, The Planning Partnership David Anselmi, Canada Lands Yiwen Zhu, Urban Strategies	Rubesha Zia, Regent Park Resident Berhane Abraha, Lawrence Heights Resident Gunta Mackars, Metrolinx Andre D'Elia, Superkul Labib Chowdhury, Alexandra Park Resident Samuel Abebe, Lawrence Heights Resident
TCHC Staff	City of Toronto Staff:
Tammy Chou Juliet Dixon Kelly Skeith Catherine Pan Vincent Tong	Ellen Standret, Community Planning, Etobicoke York District
Recording Secretary: Derek Brunelle	

## Project Review

The following project was reviewed by the TCHC Design Review Panel on December 13, 2018:

- **Firgrove Master Plan**

### Firgrove Master Plan

Project type: Master Plan

Design Review: Second Review

Design Team: The Planning Partnership

Presenters: Catherine Pan, TCHC  
David Leinster, The Planning Partnership



Conflict of Interest: David Leinster

Vote: Redesign - 0

Refine - 4

Fully Support – 3

### 1.1 Project Information

Catherine Pan from TCHC re-introduced the Firgrove Master Plan project with an overview of the history of the site and an explanation of the revitalization process. 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. Ms. Pan indicated that the area is characterized by a mixture of apartment buildings and suburban blocks with single and semi-detached homes.

Addressing the comments and concerns from the October 12, 2018 DRP session, Ms. Pan and consultants from the Planning Partnership presented an overarching vision for Firgrove, which focused on connectivity, transition, identity, frontage, and open/public spaces. Ms. Pan asserted the ways in which the proposal is a community-driven plan that identifies priorities and resources to enhance social and economic development opportunities.

To date, there have been three major community workshops, each with an average of 50-70 attendees. In addition to tenant consultation, TCHC has engaged with community groups, agencies, school boards, and other external stakeholder committees. The plan has evolved from early meetings, and the final submission has taken consideration of all feedback, including the October 12, 2018 Design Review Panel.

Ms. Pan identified the proposed timeline for submission and reminded the Panel that this project is within the Master Plan stage, and that more detailed, building-related discussions will take place as the project enters later phases.

## **1.2 Panel Commentary**

The following key themes emerged from the discussion:

### **Street Layout**

The proposed street plan has been modified to demonstrate a finer-grain block pattern. This specifically addresses prior concerns over pedestrian safety. The revised plan showcases areas with different forms of paving and areas to the east and west of the proposed park that could be cordoned off to restrict vehicular access. The presenters asserted that the

new plan would encourage greater pedestrian and non-automotive transportation uses.

## **Central Park**

Panel members were supportive of the new design for the central park. Members claimed that the multi-use pathways to the east and west sides of the park created greater fluidity for the site. Members agreed that the new design would better address potential safety concerns, stressing the significance of greater visibility and proximity to active areas, such as the recreation center.

## **Social Development Plan (SDP)**

Members were encouraged that the SDP would be formulated in 2019. In creating this plan, Panel members insisted that there is a need to understand both economic and community safety needs at Firgrove. Panel members expressed the need for tangible examples how the SDP would improve the lives of those living in the community.

## **Sustainability**

Panel members were encouraged by the inclusion of more sustainable, or 'green,' elements to the revised design. During this presentation, greater attention was placed on green roofs and the inclusion of sustainable building elements. In addition, presenters indicated that the parking would be entirely underground.

Panel members wished to see more attention placed on the 'big picture' sustainability planning for the site, particularly in relation to district energy and localized energy management. Members expressed that environmental sustainability metrics need to be set. Members asserted that the revitalization at Firgrove can set an example for sustainable development in the inner suburbs.

## **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. Members asserted that more attention needs to be placed on the lived experience of future transit users.

## **Density**

The density of Firgrove was reexamined in the new proposal. One major change involved the removal of a townhouse block and the inclusion of the townhouse built form within mid to high-rise buildings throughout the site. This change was received positively among Panel members, who agreed that shorter blocks would encourage greater pedestrian activity. Some members returned to the idea of small-scale retail or other mixed uses within the new street network, as a ‘constellation’ away from Jane Street. Some viewed this as a way of creating more animation in the areas surrounding the proposed central park.

While the revised plan demonstrates an increase in overall site density, some Panel members asserted that more could be achieved, that opportunities for growth could be ‘built-in’ to the master plan itself.

### **1.3 Chair’s Summary**

At the conclusion of the discussion, Co-chair Anne McIlroy restated that the Panel felt that the design for this project had undergone major revision, and provided the following comments and recommendations:

- Generally, there was a clear belief that a lot of improvement has been done;
- Architects should explore greater variety in podiums, could consider wood frame construction;
- Loading should not be located on mews;
- Community centre is seen as an anchor for the neighbourhood;
- Food security needs to be addressed on site, perhaps with smaller grocery shops within the community, other types of fresh food programming;

- The user experience for transit riders needs greater clarification, particularly with regards to TTC stops and access;
- Parking should be reduced as much as possible to encourage the use of public and active transportation modes;
- Bicycle storage and circulation needs to be more clearly identified;
- Waste collection and storage needs to be more clearly identified;
- The southern edge of the site requires further definition;
- The vision of the social development plan requires further exploration;