

Tower Infill Design in the High Park Neighbourhood

by

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FOREWORD

This major project aims to critically analyze Toronto's High Park neighbourhood through an urban design lens in order to provide a further understanding as to what guides development and design, and how City policy may affect this process. Throughout my Plan of Study I have set out to develop a working understanding of urban design principles while developing the skills to apply my learned knowledge in the urban planning field. I have strived to gain an understanding of planning policy, practice and regulations in Ontario, and furthermore have attempted to study the urban environment through a variety of urban scales and lenses which present various perspectives on how to address contemporary urban challenges.

This project has helped me achieve the objectives I have set out throughout my time in the MES program by presenting an opportunity to critically analyze a neighbourhood that is facing challenges and putting myself into a situation where I am providing my own critiques and opinions based on the literature I have studied. In the time it has taken to complete this major project I have transitioned through several chapters and stepping stones in my life, many of which have been difficult to overcome, while others helped provide additional knowledge to my work. Perhaps the most important goal for me throughout my Plan of Study, and in my time in the program in general, was to prepare myself for the real world of working in the planning field. I entered the program without any practical skills for the workplace and I now leave with invaluable work experience at a private Planning Consulting Firm and with the immense knowledge I have obtained over these past few years at York.

This project has contributed to the success I have achieved and is a by-product of the journey I have gone through. It illustrates everything I have learned, from the basic design principles which laid the foundation for my studies, to the conclusions with my own critical analysis, critique, design proposal, and design recommendations. I would humbly like to thank everyone who has been a part of my journey through this program and who has contributed to the beginning of what I hope to be a long and exciting career as an urban planner.

ABSTRACT

The High Park neighbourhood in Toronto has recently been experiencing an influx of infill development proposals. This project will critically analyze the built form of the neighbourhood along with the existing proposals and the City policies which provide guidelines for them. The specific research question that will be answered will be whether or not the High Park neighbourhood's new tower infill proposals are appropriately designed to integrate the newly built form into the existing urban fabric. The City's existing and proposed policies are hanging onto the ideal of towers-in-the-park as a means of preserving character, while hindering their options for alternatives to high-rise infill. I have found that these policies limit what can be done in terms of built form, and as such find myself criticizing the provisions for infill development as the root of the problem. While the current proposals are questionable, as they seek approval based on claiming to fit in with the existing high-rise built form, and don't represent sound planning and urban design as I understand it from urban design literature, I believe instead that the lamentable state of the proposals is due to the City's policies and regulations—the proposals are a reflection of what is envisioned by the policies. The findings of this analysis have shown that the most appropriate form of high-density infill development for the High Park apartment neighbourhood is mid-rise infill, with low-rise townhomes at-grade. The study area is dominated by existing high-rise towers and presents a drastic lack of transition in scale to the adjacent low-rise neighbourhoods. By utilizing alternatives to high-rise infill it is possible to achieve comparable levels of density while maintaining adequate levels of open space, and further transforming the built environment to enhance the public realm. Low-rise and mid-rise infill will provide the necessary transition in scale that the area is lacking and will present opportunities to help the existing tower-in-the-park sites interact with the public realm.

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INTRODUCTION

Toronto's High Park neighbourhood has recently been experiencing an influx of development proposals which seek to infill the existing space between high-rise towers. These proposals have caused local residents some concern for the future of their community due to the inevitable increased density and physical built form heights. This project will critically analyze the built form of the neighbourhood along with the existing proposals and the City policies which provide guidelines for them. The specific research question that will be answered will be whether or not the High Park neighbourhood's new tower infill proposals are appropriately designed to integrate the newly built form into the existing urban fabric.

The study area was developed much like the rest of Toronto's apartment neighbourhoods in the mid-20th century – through the practice of modernist architecture and planning which allowed the automobile to rule. “Expressways were a sign of sure progress – and the built environment grew upward into residential highrises and office towers downtown and along major transportation arteries in the suburbs, and outward into a patchwork of suburbs” (Desfor et al., 2006, p. 133). Le Corbusier led the charge for modernist architecture with his ‘towers-in-the-park model’ which Toronto so widely adopted, along with many North American cities. He believed that the design of cities was too important to be left to the people, which highlighted his top-down planning approach. Le Corbusier also felt that cities should have separated land uses, which resulted in a separation of social groups (Hall, 2002, p. 224). Over the next few decades modernism took much critique and backlash as an inadequate way of planning and designing cities for the people who lived there. Jane Jacobs, for one, believed that high densities were necessary in the inner-city, but they must be achieved through mixed-use functions, walkability, and bringing life back to the street. The blocks should be short and have a mix of new and old buildings and the area must have a dense concentration of people. Her idea of keeping ‘eyes on the street’ was a direct response to Le Corbusier’s towers-in-the-park which developed a reputation for creating unsafe spaces and undesirable environments (Hall, 2002, p. 255).

A number of major development proposals from Lormel Homes, Minto and GWL Realty in the High Park neighbourhood are stirring up some debate as to whether the proposed designs and intense densification are appropriate for the adjacent sites. Lormel Homes is proposing an 11-storey building with a 4-storey podium at the corner of Glenlake Avenue and Pacific Avenue.

"Minto's application to the city late last year includes 37 three-storey townhouses, one 33-storey tower, one 29-storey tower, an eight-storey podium and a new two-storey amenity pavilion, while GWL Realty's application includes a 39-storey tower, a 34-storey tower, a 29-storey tower, and an eight-storey tower" (Pelley, 2017). The neighbourhood is divided by residents who have lived there for many years and by future renters who need housing in the ever-growing city. Signs are littered across front lawns reading: 'Say NO to Double Density!' - residents are concerned by the thought of their community being overwhelmed by new tenants and new traffic. "One of the biggest concerns is losing the character of the neighbourhood" (Talotta, 2017), said a local home owner near the site. Density is a necessity for Toronto's future, but it will be the composition of that density that will determine the success of the design.

In this project I have undertaken a study of proposed tower infill development in the High Park neighbourhood, while critiquing current proposals and the City's approach to dealing with the planning and design of apartment neighbourhoods. Particularly in High Park, the City's existing and proposed policies are hanging onto the ideal of towers-in-the-park as a means of preserving character, while hindering their options for alternatives to high-rise infill. I have found that these policies limit what can be done in terms of built form, and as such find myself criticizing the provisions for infill development as the root of the problem. While the current proposals are questionable, as they seek approval based on claiming to fit in with the existing high-rise built form, and don't represent sound planning and urban design as I understand it from urban design literature, I believe instead that the lamentable state of the proposals is due to the City's policies and regulations—the proposals are a reflection of what is envisioned by the policies.

The findings of my analysis have shown that the most appropriate form of high-density infill development for the High Park apartment neighbourhood is mid-rise infill with low-rise townhomes at-grade. The study area is dominated by existing high-rise towers and presents a lack of transition in scale to the adjacent low-rise neighbourhoods. By utilizing alternatives to high-rise infill it is possible to achieve comparable levels of density while maintaining adequate levels of open space, and further transforming the built environment to enhance the public realm. Low-rise and mid-rise infill will provide the necessary transition in scale that the area is lacking

and will present opportunities to help the existing tower-in-the-park sites interact with the public realm.

Methodology:

I have undertaken an urban design analysis of two city blocks in the High Park neighbourhood and have created a new design proposal and recommendations that I have deemed appropriate for high-rise infill development on this particular study site. In analyzing the city blocks I have critiqued the current development proposals, undertook an urban design study, and created my own proposals which aim to address what is missing on the site. I completed a number of site visits where I studied the experiences and trends of individuals on and around the site. I aimed to find out how people are using the space, and how the space could be improved with new development. During my various site visits I focused my attention on the spaces in between the towers, physical built form, streetscape design, open space, the public realm, and the movement systems of people and vehicles. Generally, I attempted to gain an understanding of how members of the community felt in their everyday lives in the High Park neighbourhood.

In the early stages of my research I used visual research methods such as photography, combined with my various site visits which consisted of observational research, to provide me with a basis of how the community occupies the space. Stephen Spencer tells us that research can be enhanced with visual material because it can provide a broader context and understanding of everyday social life (Spencer, 2011, p. 2). Accompanying written notes in my site visits has helped me contextualize the situations in front of me while also keeping a record of the environment I am studying. Further research was undertaken on the history of how the towers-in-the-park were developed by using the Toronto Archives as a resource. I retrieved a number of past zoning by-laws through a formal request with the archives, many of which were site specific by-laws, which contained the policy that guided the development of the high park neighbourhood. These by-laws dated back as early as 1964 and were the original development criteria for the area, which offered me an excellent technical comparable for my design proposal. I initially planned to conduct an interview with local residents or a planner who was involved with the community consultation process, however I found that the information available through online resources and the High Park Apartment Neighbourhood Character Area Character Study

website provided insight which could not be as comprehensively replicated through my own means. I decided to use the excellent resources from the community consultation for my project and based portions of my analysis and recommendations on stated community desires.

Background research on urban design and design principles, from the basics of urban design theory to the finer details that create complete neighborhoods, has been necessary for my project. Researching more contemporary urban design literature and practice has allowed me to see how urban design and planning have progressed over the decades since the High Park neighbourhood was built. We have seen the rise of several new movements or ways of thinking towards improved design of communities. These include New Urbanism and Smart Growth as two prominent alternatives to past regimes. New Urbanism is a professionally based movement which aims to combat sprawl and create compact, walkable neighbourhoods. New Urbanists hold community building and livability in high regard, aiming to cultivate socially and environmentally responsible urban development (Congress for the New Urbanism, 2007, p. 308).

The Smart Growth Manual is a set of design guidelines which emulate the principles of New Urbanism. The Smart Growth Manual advocates for the principles of mixed uses and building types, compact walkable neighbourhoods, the preservation of open and greenspaces, diversity in transportation and housing types, development within existing neighbourhoods, and community engagement. Complete streets are yet another approach that I considered, which generally include elements such as narrow travel lanes (to reduce speeds), on-street parking, bicycle facilities, ample sidewalks, street furniture and lighting, continuous tree cover, and supportive building frontages (Duany et al. 2010: 8.1).

As part of this research, I created an urban design study of the High Park neighbourhood while also critiquing the current proposals. After analyzing all of the above and applying my learned knowledge of design principles and approaches, such as complete streets, compact city form, mixed uses, the pedestrian realm, Smart Growth, and New Urbanism, I have proposed what I believe to be the most appropriate design for tower infill development in the High Park neighbourhood. I have created three different design alternatives to the current development proposals, all of which use the same building footprints and podium stepback sizes while changing the building heights to achieve varying densities. Furthermore, all of my proposed options strictly use low-rise and mid-rise built form as infill development, and specifically

refrain from using any additional high-rise form. In the end I selected one of the three options for each proposed development site (within my study area) which I believe to represent the most appropriate form of high-density infill.

The process of determining my proposed density included mathematical calculations for all 13 of my proposed buildings. This presented a lot of work to accurately create a realistic design proposal which considered key aspects of design and development criteria, such as percentage of landscaped open space, gross floor area (GFA) of each new and existing building, and floor space index (FSI) which is representative of density on a site. My main unit of comparison between my new proposal and the existing proposals by Minto, GWL Realty, and Lormel Homes was GFA, as it represents the livable space within a building. I created a number of tables with the calculations and data which I produced which are at the basis of my design and argument for my proposed density and form. The new site plan proposal was created using AutoCAD, while editing programs such as Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator were used to polish off the work and images throughout the project. The final product of this major project is in the form of an urban design analysis and urban design proposal, accompanied by recommendation for the future of the High Park neighbourhood.

LOCATION AND CONTEXT

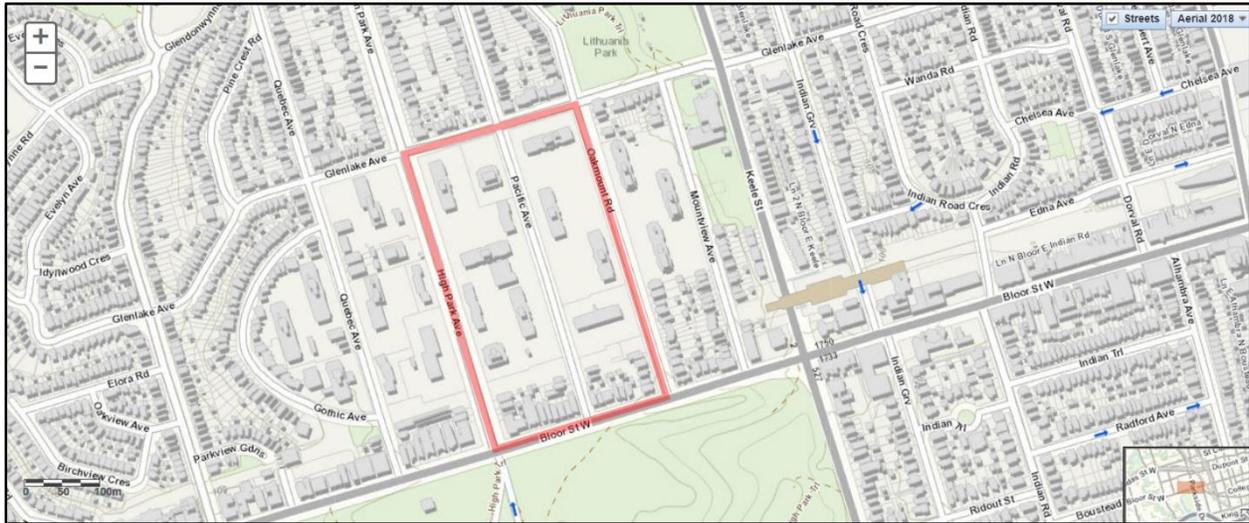


Figure 1: Two block study area outlined (Image source: <http://map.toronto.ca>)

The focus of this project and urban design analysis will be on two city blocks which are bordered by Bloor Street West to the south, Oakmount Road to the east, Glenlake Avenue to the north, and High Park Avenue to the west. High Park, a vast park with forest and open green space that stretches between Bloor Street West and The Queensway, is located on the south side of Bloor Street, across from the study area. High Park is a geographical landmark in the neighbourhood, as well as for Toronto as a whole. The study area's existing primary uses are residential, with the exception of two convenience stores at the base of apartment buildings and a mixed-use building on Bloor Street West which houses several retail units and a public plaza at-grade. The High Park neighbourhood is located in Toronto's west end, and is serviced by two TTC subway stations – High Park Station, at the western border of the study site, and Keele Station, two blocks east of the site. This is a major reason why the area has been the subject to many development proposals. It is a desired location to intensify and provide increases in density since the means to accommodate the increased density exist. Furthermore, the proximity to such large amounts of greenspace creates an environment which is not too common in the City. High Park provides the best of both worlds to its residents, who have transit available to go downtown, while remaining far enough out of the core to hang on to the suburban character depicted by the available open space.



Figure 2: Outlined study blocks with individual parcel lines in yellow (Image source: ESRI GIS aerial imagery)

The eastern study block, bordered by Oakmount Road on the east side and Bloor Street West on the south, contains four high-rise apartment towers and one mixed-use tall building along Bloor Street West. The western study block, bordered by High Park Avenue on its western edge, is comprised of five high-rise apartment towers and two small blocks of townhouses, both of which are proposed to be demolished for the new infill proposal at the 35 High Park Avenue site. There are also some low-rise duplexes and triplexes along the southern border of the western block which line Bloor Street West. As can be seen in Figure 2, three of the parcels on the blocks make up a majority of the total area. These three parcels are the sites that currently have infill development proposed on them, and will be the main focus of this project moving forward. Minto has a proposal for the 111 Pacific Avenue Site on the eastern block, GWL has its proposal on the 35 High Park Avenue site, and Lormel Homes has proposed its development at 299 Glenlake Avenue.

LAND USE REGULATIONS AND POLICY REVIEW

Toronto Official Plan:

The project site in the High Park neighbourhood is designated as ‘apartment neighbourhoods’ (Map 17, Toronto Official Plan, 2015), and is located along Bloor St. W., which is considered an ‘avenue’ (Map 2, Toronto Official Plan, 2015). Section 4.2 of the Official Plan (Toronto, 2015) describes ‘apartment neighbourhoods’ as “stable areas of the City where significant growth is generally not anticipated. There may, however, be opportunities for additional townhouses or apartments on underutilized sites and this Plan sets out criteria to evaluate these situations” (Toronto, 2015).

Section 4.2.2. looks deeper into the specific criteria for future development, where issues such as transitioning built form and scale, shadow impacts, and animating the street and public realm are highlighted. Clauses 4.2.2(c) and 4.2.3(c) state that locating and massing new buildings the frame the edge of streets will improve quality of life (Toronto, 2015).

Section 2.2.3. tells us that “the Avenues are important corridors along major streets where reurbanization is anticipated and encouraged to create new housing and job opportunities while improving the pedestrian environment, the look of the street, shopping opportunities and transit service for community residents” (Toronto Official Plan, 2015). The section also mentions that there is no “one-size-fits-all” program for successfully reurbanizing the avenues, and that individual Avenue studies will help determine the appropriate development (Toronto Official Plan, 2015, S.2.1.). This is important to note for the purposes of my project and the study area since new policies have recently been introduced for the future infill development of the High Park apartment neighbourhood. These policies will be discussed and analysed in the sections to follow.

Section 3.1 of the O.P. discusses the Built Environment, specifically the Public Realm, Built Form, and Tall Building guidelines. Of notable importance are sections 3.1.1.1 and 3.1.2.1 which state that new developments must enhance the quality of the public realm, and new developments must fit appropriately and transition into the existing built environment. (Toronto Official Plan, 2015). Section 3.2.1 states that “appropriate transition in scale can be achieved with many geometric relationships and design methods in different combinations including

angular planes, stepping height limits, appropriate location and orientation of the building, the use of setbacks and stepbacks of building mass. The larger the difference in scale of development the greater the need for transition” (Toronto Official Plan, 2015).

Site Specific Policy 436:

Site Specific Policy 436, as illustrated on Map 28 – Site and Area Specific Policies – permits office use, services, and small scale retail at 1844-1854 Bloor Street West, 35 and 37 Pacific Avenue, Part of 18 and 18A Oakmount Road and 6-14 Oakmount Road. Medium scale retail is also permitted within mixed use buildings (*Toronto Official Plan, 2015, Chapter 7, pg. 350*).

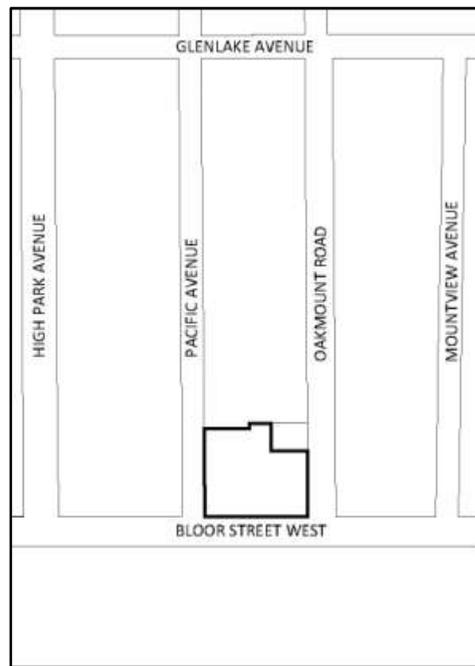


Figure 3: Site Specific Policy 436 (*Toronto Official Plan, 2015, Chapter 7, pg. 350*)

OPA 419 and SASP 551:

In April, 2017, City Council advised staff to conduct what would later be known as the High Park Apartment Neighbourhood Area Character Study in accordance with Official Plan policy 2.3.1.3, which recommends that studies be undertaken for large intensification proposals. The end goal was to create a set of urban design guidelines as well as a Site and Area Specific Policy in the Official Plan which would implement the findings of the character study.

and as such we will analyze them primarily. The purpose of the R–Residential–Zone is to provide areas which generally permit parks, local institutions and the following building types: detached houses, semi-detached houses, townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, and apartment buildings (Toronto, Zoning By-law 569-2013, p. 5). The numerical figures within brackets following the R–Residential–Zone symbol on the zoning map represent the permitted density and any site or area specific exceptions pertaining to the lands. Although the R(d0.6)(x737) and R(d2.0)(x334) appear to only permit densities of 0.6 and 2.0 times the lot area, site specific exceptions 737 and 334 provide additional development criteria for the existing buildings on the lands. The entire area also has a maximum building height provision of 10.0 metres, but similarly, site specific exceptions 737 and 334 relieved all of the existing apartment towers of this compliance dating back as far as 1964. Additionally, it is important to note that both of the site specific exceptions limit infill development since they only permit the existing buildings and their associated densities, gross floor areas, built form, landscaped open space, and setback provisions. This means that zoning by-law amendments must be proposed for any new development on the lands since new buildings will be introduced and the limits to provisions such as gross floor area, maximum number of dwelling units, and building height will need to be adjusted, among other things.

Former City of Toronto Zoning By-law 438-86:

The study area has three different zoning designations under the Former City of Toronto Zoning By-law 438-86, and the two relevant to the three current proposals are the R2 Z2 and R2 Z4 zones. Site specific exceptions 737 and 334 have been consolidated into the current Zoning By-law 569-2013 as well as the Former City of Toronto Zoning By-law 438-86, and as such provide the same stipulations as discussed above. New development will need zoning by-law amendments to permit any infill.

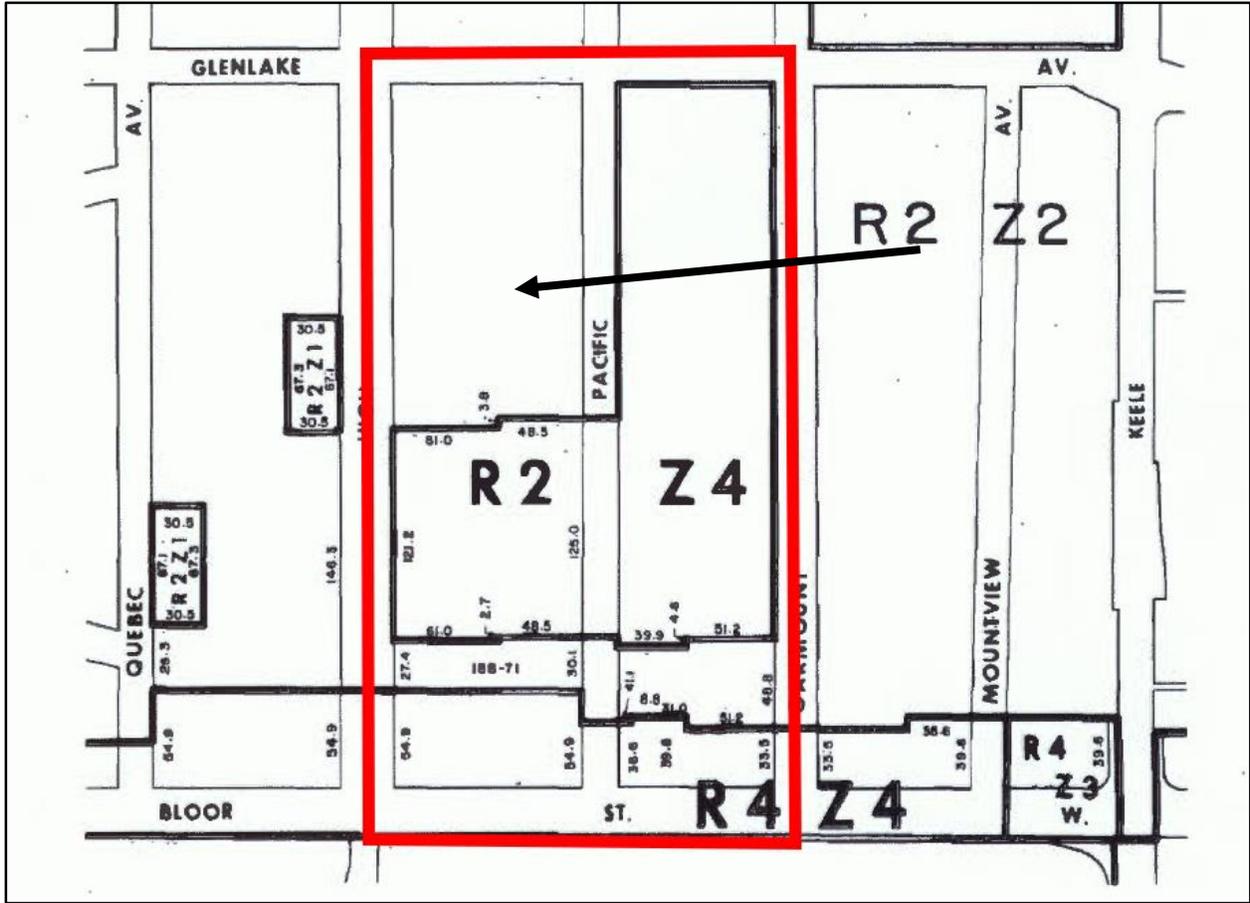


Figure 5: By-law 438-86 zoning map with study area outlined (Image received electronically through formal City of Toronto Archives request)

DOUBLING THE DENSITY IN HIGH PARK

Public Consultation and Community Feedback:

A total of two public consultations and six community working group meetings were held between October 25, 2017 and May 7, 2018, as part of the City-led High Park Apartment Neighbourhood Area Character Study. A study website was also created (through www.toronto.ca) which provides planning process updates and general information for public access. Local residents and stakeholders were invited to take part in neighbourhood walks, design charrettes, presentations and in-depth discussion pertaining to the concerns and desires of the community. Over the course of several months the results of the public consultation process revealed key messages, issues, concerns, and recommendations from the community members, with a primary focus being on the principles of: open space and natural features, routes and connections, and built form (Toronto, High Park Apartment Neighbourhood Area Character Study website, 2018).

The results of the public consultations revealed that the community would like to preserve the park-like character of the neighbourhood and maintain green space, sunlight, and existing views where possible. A major concern for community members is losing High Park's natural character with increased density. Green roofs and rooftop amenity areas, such as community gardens, were suggested in an attempt to maintain space while infilling the sites. An interesting finding from the second community consultation meeting, held on March 8, 2018, was that individuals felt that the "parks within the study area are not used as often as High Park" (Toronto, Community Consultation Meeting #2, study website, 2018). These comments and findings from the community meetings provide valuable information to consider when proposing increased density through infill development. This feedback can help propose built form alternatives which local residents may find more appealing than current high-rise tower infill.

Public feedback suggests that bike lanes should be added to local streets, such as High Park Avenue and Pacific Avenue. Additionally, local concerns for traffic calming measures were echoed throughout the various public meetings, as well as a desire to increase the width of sidewalks to comfortably accommodate more foot traffic. With the increased density proposed this is critical to consider in order to appropriately plan for mobility and ease of movement. The

residents mention that they do enjoy having foot paths through the apartment blocks, however some aspects such as lighting, safety, and practicality of existing open space were noted concerns.

The proposed high-rise built form in the area lead to major concerns for the community. The findings yielded opinions which were not in favour of developing any more high-rise towers in the apartment blocks, and even more specifically that no new development should be taller than the existing towers. It was rather clear how people felt about the proposed infill, and there appeared to be a strong effort made throughout the public meetings to propose alternatives to high-rise built form. The community supported the idea of creating density through low-rise and mid-rise built form, with building heights of 7- to 8-storeys being common. “Less space between buildings” was a comment received, which is helpful in coming up with alternatives to high-rise built form, since lower building heights and larger building footprints may be able to provide similar increased density. More specific alternatives were also mentioned by the public, such as stacked townhouses and duplexes. Another common theme in regards to built form discussions was the importance of providing a transition in scale between the apartment neighbourhood and the surrounding low-rise neighbourhood. This is complementary to the comments on building new development close to the street in order to preserve open space within the blocks. But not everyone was in agreement on preferred setbacks, as some people would prefer to maintain large setbacks, as are currently existing. (Toronto, Community Consultation Meeting #1 and Meeting #2, study website, 2018). The current existing built form already lacks transition, so infill development may be the solution to this issue if it is appropriately designed.



Low-rise detached homes along Glenlake Avenue with signs on their lawns stating: “Say No to Double Density”

Current Proposals:

The following section will describe the three existing infill proposals at 35 High Park Avenue, 111 Pacific Avenue, and 299 Glenlake Ave. The infill development currently proposed does not provide for an appropriate transition in scale with the surrounding neighbourhood. The proposals aim to provide as much density as the City will permit, but there are alternative built form options which can yield similar increases in density while filling the gap in missing built form.

35 High Park Avenue (GWL):

The subject site is located between High Park Avenue to the west and Pacific Avenue to the east. The lands are north of Bloor Street West, while not fronting onto it, and a portion of the site stretches up to Glenlake Avenue on the west side of the lot. The site currently has an area of 3.07 hectares (30,700 m²) and there are four existing apartment buildings, as well as two blocks of townhouses, which provide 20 dwelling units combined. The new proposal will retain the existing apartment buildings but will demolish the townhouses along High Park Avenue (964 of 988 total units proposed to be retained) (Bousfields Inc. Planning and Urban Design Rationale, 2016, p. 3).

1,031 total new dwelling units are being proposed within four new rental buildings at building heights of 39, 34, 29 and 8 storeys. This will provide an additional gross floor area (GFA) of 81,474 m² to the site, which is well over double the existing GFA of 69,826 m², and will create a density of 4.93 floor space index (FSI) (Bousfields Inc. Planning and Urban Design Rationale, 2016, p. 20).

‘Tower A’ (as can be seen labeled on the proposed site plan) will be made up of a 39 storey tower with a two- to four-storey podium at its north end, housing 375 total residential units. The ground floor will provide a significant amount of retail space which has the capacity to contain a grocery store or other larger scale retailer. The site plan provides setback measurements for ‘Tower A’, although it should be noted that these setbacks are to the property line and not to the public right-of-way, in this case the sidewalk. This creates an additional setback distance of approximately four metres, which is rather significant. The front yard setback (along High Park Avenue) will be 5 metres; the distance between ‘Tower A’ and the existing

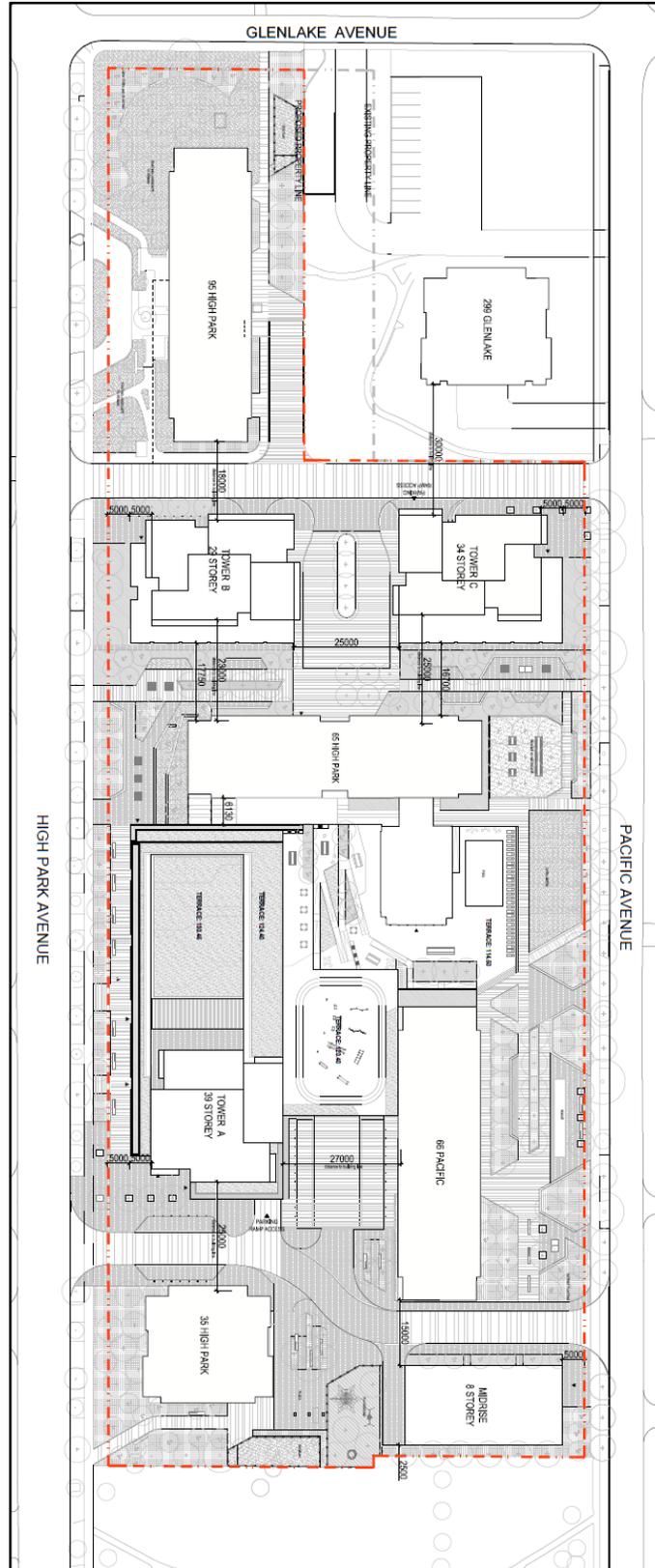


Figure 6: Proposed Site Plan for 35 High Park Avenue site (Zeidler Partnership Architects, 2016).

apartment at 65 High Park Avenue will be 6.13 metres; the distance between ‘Tower A’ and the existing apartment at 35 High Park Avenue will be 25 metres; and the distance between ‘Tower A’ and the existing Apartment at 66 Pacific Avenue will be 27 metres (Bousfields Inc. Planning and Urban Design Rationale, 2016, p. 17).

‘Tower B’ will be composed of a 29-storey tower with a two-storey podium and will only have residential use on site. Townhouse units will be located at ground level and the building will have a total of 264 residential units. Starting at the third level the building will step back from the south and east and the rooftop will have amenity space adjacent to the mechanical penthouse. The proposed front yard setback (along High Park Avenue) will be 5 metres; the distance between ‘Tower B’ and the existing apartment at 65 High Park Avenue will be 17.75 metres; the distance between ‘Tower B’ and the existing apartment at 95 High Park Avenue will be 18 metres; and the distance between ‘Tower B’ and the proposed ‘Tower C’ will be 25 metres (Bousfields Inc. Planning and Urban Design Rationale, 2016, p. 17).

‘Tower C’ is quite similar to ‘Tower B’ in that it is also limited to residential use and has townhouses at-grade with access from the street. The step backs on the third level are also the same, however the tower steps back from the south and west, rather than the east. ‘Tower C’ is proposed to have a total of 318 residential units. The proposed setback to Pacific Avenue will be 5 metres; the distance between ‘Tower C’ and the existing apartment at 299 Glenlake Avenue will be 30 metres; the distance between ‘Tower C’ and the existing apartment at 65 High Park Avenue will be 16.7 metres; and the distance between ‘Tower C’ and the proposed ‘Tower B’ will be 25 metres (Bousfields Inc. Planning and Urban Design Rationale, 2016, p. 17).

Lastly, the proposed ‘Mid-Rise Building’ will be located at the southeast corner of the site along Pacific Avenue and will be eight-storeys in height. The building will contain a total of 74 residential units, including townhouses accessible from the ground level. Just like ‘Tower B’ and ‘Tower C’ the ‘Mid-Rise Building’ will not be mixed-use, but rather will be restricted to residential use. The ‘Mid-Rise Building’ will have a front yard setback of 5 metres to Pacific Avenue; the distance between the ‘Mid-Rise Building’ and the existing apartment at 66 Pacific Avenue will be 15 metres; and the ‘Mid-Rise Building’ will have a side yard setback of 2.5 metres to the southern property line of the site (Bousfields Inc. Planning and Urban Design Rationale, 2016, p. 17).

The proposal for 35 High Park Avenue requires an Official Plan Amendment (OPA) as well as Zoning By-law Amendments (ZBA) to both the current City of Toronto Zoning By-law 569-2013, as amended, and Former City of Toronto Zoning By-law 438-83, as amended. The proposed OPA will seek permission to permit medium-scale retail on site to accommodate the aforementioned grocery store or other anchor retailer. The draft Official Plan amendment submitted with the proposal to the City specifically requests the following amendment to Chapter 7 – Site and Area Specific Policies: “In addition to small-scale retail, services and office uses that serve the needs of area residents, medium scale retail uses are permitted within a mixed-use building” (Bousfields Inc., Draft Official Plan Amendment, 2016, p. 2).

The proposed Zoning By-law Amendments generally seek relief from the maximum height and density provisions of the By-laws, as well as modifying the permitted uses on site. The Draft Zoning By-law Amendment to the Former City of Toronto Zoning By-law 438-83, as amended, requests that ‘Mixed Use Building’, ‘Commercial Parking Garage’, and an extensive list of ‘Non-Residential Retail and Service Shops’ be added as permitted uses (Bousfields Inc., Draft Zoning By-law Amendment to the Former City of Toronto Zoning By-law No. 438-86, 2016, p. 2). The Draft Zoning By-law Amendment to City of Toronto Zoning By-law 569-2012 also requests the same additional permitted uses be added, and seeks to increase the maximum permitted height and density to accommodate the tallest proposed building at 117.5 metres and 39 storeys (Bousfields Inc., Draft Zoning By-law Amendment to City of Toronto Zoning By-law No. 569-2013, as amended, 2016, p. 3 and p. 9).

111 Pacific Avenue (Minto):

The subject site is located between Oakmount Road to the east, Glenlake Avenue to the north, and Pacific Avenue to the west. The site is north of Bloor Street West, but does not front onto it, as the lands only occupy the northern half of the block. There are currently three existing apartment buildings on the site, with two additional residential towers (one of which is mixed-use) adjacent to the site on the same block. The existing buildings have heights of 12, 17, and 23 storeys and provide a total of 750 dwelling units. The two buildings to the south are 17 storeys (apartment building) and 14 storeys (mixed-used building). The subject lands have an area of 2.3 hectares (22,715 m²) while enjoying significant frontage lengths of 248 metres, 91 metres, and

250 metres along Oakmount Road, Glenlake Avenue, and Pacific Avenue respectively (WND Associates, Planning and Rationale Report, 2017, p. 4).

The proposed development consists of four new buildings, including a 29-storey tower with eight-storey podium along Oakmount Road, two blocks of townhouses along Glenlake Avenue, and a 33-storey tower with townhouses at ground level on Pacific Avenue. The new buildings will provide 768 new rental units, which will combine with the existing 750 units for a total of 1,518 units on site. Furthermore, the new buildings will create an additional 58,939 m² of GFA to the existing GFA of 54,392 m² for a total of 113,331 m² (WND Associates, Planning and Rationale Report, 2017, p. 8).

‘Tower 1’ and the attached ‘Block C’, as labeled on the proposed site plan, consist of a 33-storey mixed-use building at a height of 108.4 metres with a row of 3-storey townhouses at-grade which will contain 6 dwelling units. This mixed-use building will have 450.9 m² of retail space on the ground floor and a service building will also be constructed at the southern portion along a newly proposed driveway (WND Associates, Planning and Rationale Report, 2017, p. 9). The front yard setback (along Pacific Avenue) will be 5 metres; the distance between ‘Block C’ and the existing apartment at 111 Pacific Avenue will be approximately 6.8 metres; the distance between the service building and the existing apartment at 66 Oakmount Road will be approximately 15 metres; and the side yard (along the southern property line) will be 12 metres (Hariri Pontarini Architects, Site Plan / Ground Floor, 2017).

‘Tower 2’ and the attached ‘Building 3’ consist of a 29-storey tower standing at 94.4 metres and an 8-storey building addition and podium. There is also a proposed 2-storey amenity building attached to this development along the interior portion of the site. ‘Building 3’ will have 125 units and 14 townhouses along Oakmount Road, while ‘Tower 2’ will provide 296 dwelling units (WND Associates, Planning and Rationale Report, 2017, p. 10). The front yard setback (along Oakmount Road will be 5 metres; the distance between ‘Building 3’ and the existing apartment at 66 Oakmount Road is 7.8 metres; the distance between the amenity building and the existing building at 111 Pacific Avenue is 11 (29 metres from ‘Building 3’); and the distance between ‘Building 3’ and the existing apartment at 255 Glenlake Avenue will be 25.5 metres (Hariri Pontarini Architects, Site Plan / Roof, 2017).

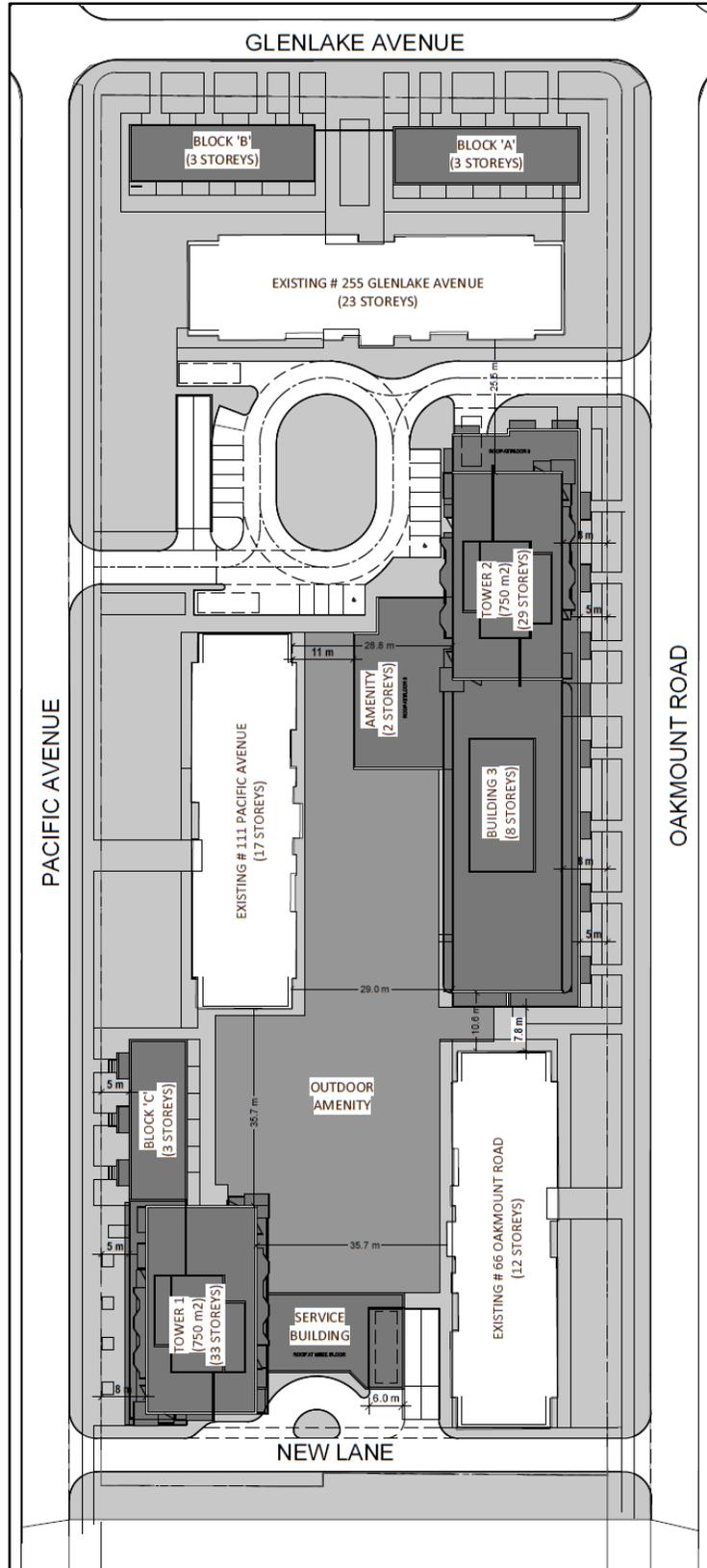


Figure 7: Proposed Site Plan for 111 Pacific Avenue site (Hariri Pontarini Architects, 2017)

Lastly, townhouse ‘Blocks A and B’ will contain 7 dwelling units each (14 total) and the height of the 3-storeys will be 11.8 metres. The proposed setback front yard setback along Glenlake Avenue will be 5 metres; the distance between ‘Block A’ and the existing apartment at 255 Glenlake Avenue will be 10.9 metres; the side yard setback for ‘Block A’ along Oakmount Road will be 5 metres; the Distance between ‘Block B’ and the existing 255 Glenlake Avenue will be 11.4 metres; and the side yard setback for ‘Block B’ along Pacific Avenue will be 5 metres (Hariri Pontarini Architects, Site Plan / Ground Floor, 2017).

The proposal requests Zoning By-law Amendments to both the current City of Toronto Zoning By-law 569-2013, as amended, and Former City of Toronto Zoning By-law 438-83, as amended. The proposed amendments to By-law 438-83 request additional uses to be permitted on site, and an increase in permitted height, GFA, permitted dwelling units, and parking spaces. Specifically, the addition of an apartment building, rowhouses, retail store, car-share parking, and a temporary leasing office are sought to be permitted, while increasing maximum height provisions to 109.5 metres (WND Associates, Draft Zoning By-law Amendment to Former City of Toronto Zoning By-law No. 438-86, as amended, 2017). The same requests are contained within the proposed By-law amendment to the City of Toronto Zoning By-law 569-2013.

299 Glenlake Avenue (Lormel Homes):

The subject site is located at the south west corner of Pacific Avenue and Glenlake Avenue. The lot currently has an area of 0.43 hectares (4,300 m²), however a proposed lot adjustment severance will be sought through a separate application which may potentially see the site expand to an area of 0.58 hectares (5,800 m²). The site currently has an existing 30 storey rental apartment building which contains 233 units, and the GFA of the existing building is 750 m² (SGL Planning Rationale Report, 2019, p. 3).

The application for 299 Glenlake Avenue proposes an 11 storey tower with a 4 storey podium containing 123 new rental units. The floorplate of the podium will be 1,235 m² and the floorplate of the tower will be 789 m². The front yard setback (along Glenlake Avenue to the north) will be 6 metres. The interior side yard setback (along the western lot line) is proposed to be 7.5 metres, and the corner side yard (along Pacific Avenue on the eastern lot line) will be 14 metres (SGL Planning Rationale Report, 2019, p. 8).

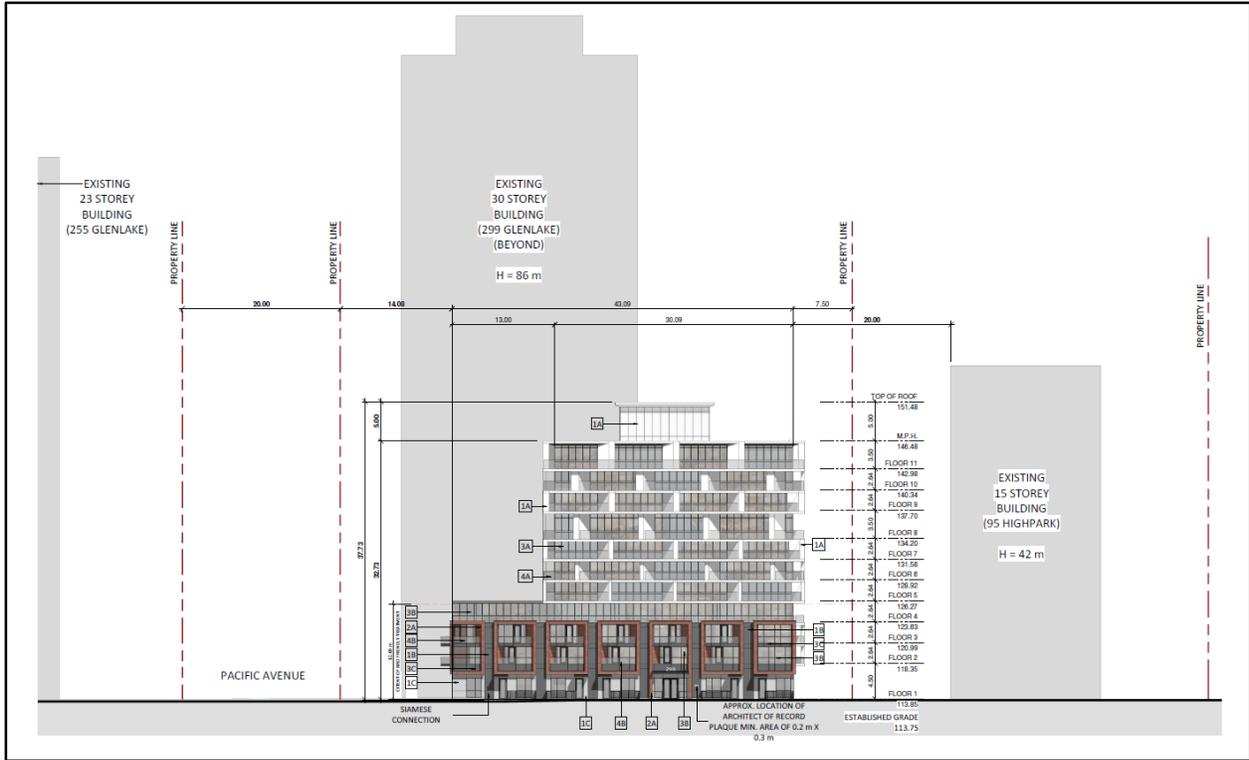


Figure 8: North Elevation of 299 Glenlake Avenue proposal (Turner Fleischer Architects, January 25, 2018)



Entrance to 299 Glenlake Avenue site – Looking west from Pacific Avenue

The main entrance to the proposed building will be located along the Glenlake Avenue frontage, while a second entrance will be next to a drop off circle along Pacific Avenue, adjacent to the existing apartment high-rise to the south. Furthermore, an existing driveway and parking ramp to the west of the proposed building will be modified to accommodate ingress and egress traffic flow for the new 299 Glenlake Avenue proposal. The current driveway is used solely as an exit from the two underground parking levels and surface parking lots (SGL Planning Rationale Report, 2019, p. 12)

Outdoor amenity space will be provided to the south of the new building. There is currently existing greenspace on site in this same location, however, as can be seen in the proposed site plan, there is a proposed reconfiguration of the existing walkways and greenspace.

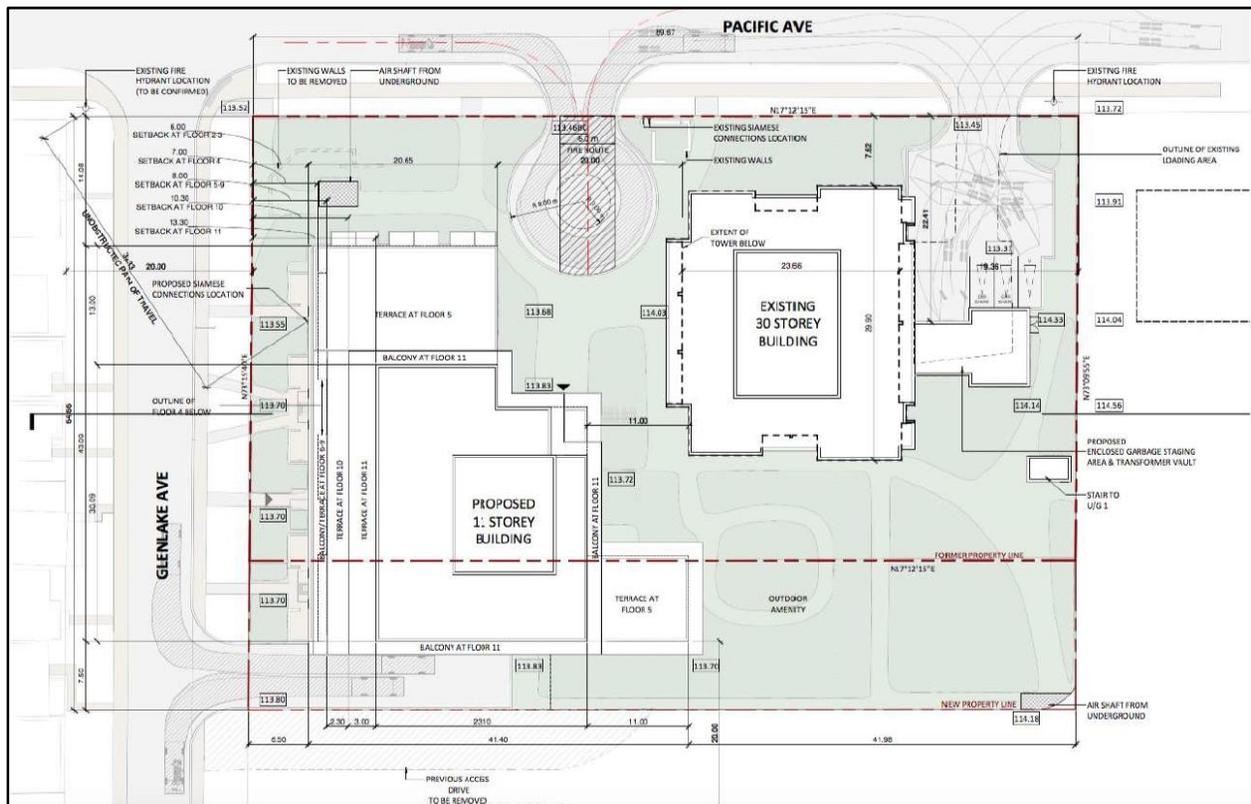


Figure 9: Proposed Site Plan for 299 Glenlake Avenue site (SGL Planning Rationale Report, 2019, p. 10)

The proposal for 299 Glenlake Avenue includes Zoning By-law amendments to both the Former City of Toronto Zoning By-law 438-86, as amended, and City of Toronto Zoning By-law, as amended. The amendments seek to permit an increase in GFA, a lot coverage ratio of 35 % (being equal to 65% landscaped open space), and a height increase to 38.5 metres (SGL Planning and Design Inc., Draft Zoning By-law Amendment to City of Toronto Zoning By-law

No. 569-2013, as amended, 2019). These requests are based on the thought process that since there are existing high-rise apartment towers on the blocks these new proposals should be justified in their built form. If similar zoning provisions are requested, including setback and landscaped open space provisions the City will presumably be more in favour of the proposals on the basis of maintaining the existing character of the area.

URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

I undertook this urban design analysis and will now discuss the existing conditions of the study area in terms of built form, character, public realm conditions and social fabric. I will provide commentary on various design elements which will be complemented by photographs (taken over a series of site visits) and aerial imagery of the site. As Kevin Lynch stated in *Site Planning* (1984, p. 4), "the site is not simply a collection of buildings and streets but a system of structures, surfaces, spaces, living things, climates, and details". A site begins as the existing elements that new development must work around or incorporate. But one must always think of the missing aspects or needs of a site when thinking about future design. By observing the everyday activities and routines on site we may develop an understanding of how the neighbourhood functions and what elements may be considered for improvement. The physical environment should respond to the needs of people, especially infill development in this case, where there is a unique opportunity to provide the missing mid-rise built form which would satisfy both the increased need for density in such a prime transit-oriented location, and appropriately transition the built form and scale with the surrounding built form.



Figure 10: High Park Apartment Neighbourhood – Looking north (Image source: Google Maps)

Built Form:

The study area was primarily designed using the Le Corbusian ‘Towers-in-the-park’ model of the 1960’s and 1970’s Modernist era, with the addition of a more recently-developed 12-storey mixed-use building on Bloor Street West and a row of older duplexes and triplexes along Bloor, on the western study block. Tall high-rise residential apartment towers dominate the site, surrounded by luscious green lawns and internal roadways through which vehicles navigate to underground and at-grade parking lots. The building lobbies are also accessible from these internal roadways, along with their entrances which often face towards the inside of the blocks.



Entrance to existing 255 Glenlake Avenue apartment depicting surface parking and open space– Looking west from Oakmount Road

The study area is bound by single-detached Victorian homes along Oakmount Road and Glenlake Avenue, and the low-rise built form continues east to Keele Street and north to Dundas Street West. The difference in built form scale between the study area and the surrounding neighbourhood is rather drastic.

Towers-in-the-park have taken their fair share of criticisms over the past half century, as was seen through the downfall of Modernist planning and design principles. Le Corbusier was

criticized for cutting off the building from the land (Bacon, 1967, p. 215), which results in a lack of connection to the people that walk at ground level, and to the street itself. Additionally, he “was blind to the design requirements of relating his buildings to the city, and, indeed, of relating his buildings to one another” (Bacon, 1967, p. 219). These are lessons that we have learned through history, but as we can see here there are many instances of towers-in-the-park still existing in Toronto. This tower neighbourhood is no different in this sense. The buildings all feel like individual structures with no relation to each other, to the street, or to the people.

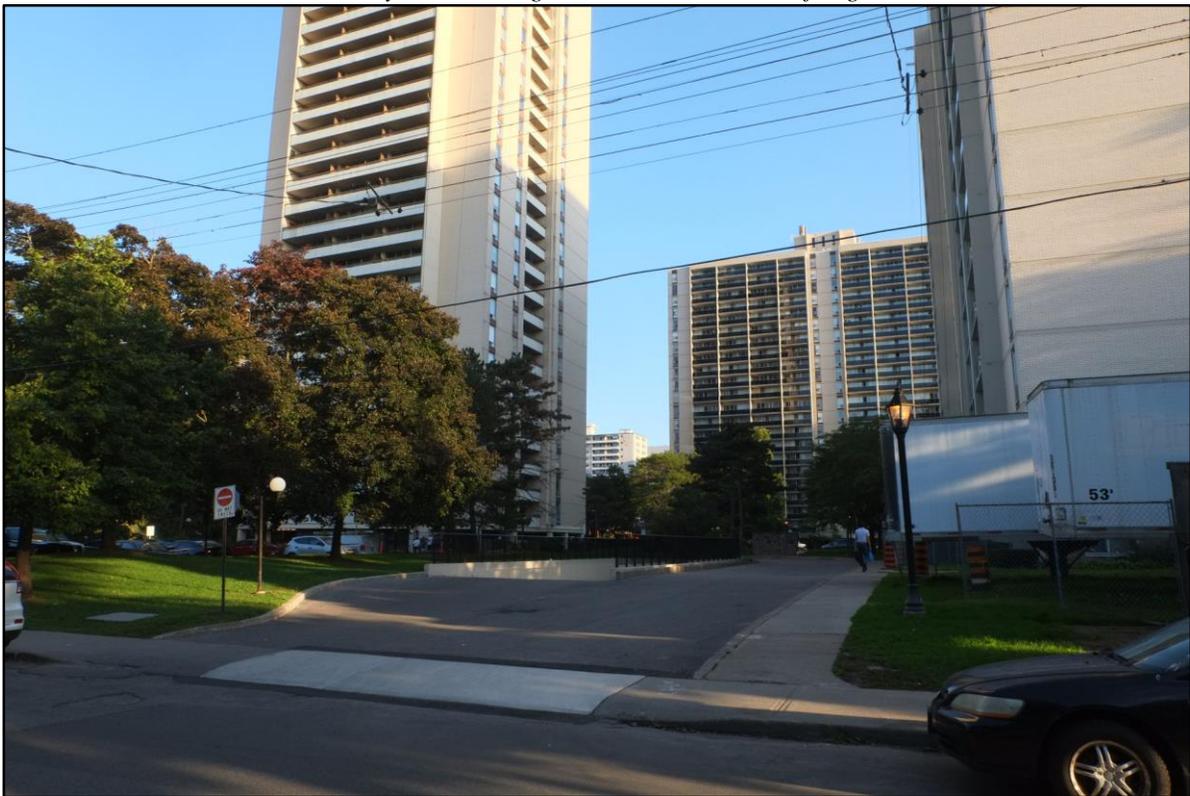


Looking south through the towers from the parking lot of 111 Pacific Avenue

There is no transition in built form between apartment neighbourhood and the surrounding low-rise neighbourhood. Furthermore, the vast setbacks, excess open space, and lack of any street frontage or streetwall create a drastic change in character from the surroundings. Appropriate infill development would see that a street wall was established closer to the public right-of-way in order to create a streetscape that is more interactive (Duany et al. 2010: 10.1).



Detached two-storey houses along Glenlake Avenue, east of High Park Avenue



Directly across the street from detached houses on Glenlake Avenue



High Park Avenue just north of Bloor Street West – Looking north-east towards the study area

Open Space:

Although Jane Jacobs and her ideologies may have been seen as a counter-attack to Le Corbusier's regime (Hall, 2002, 254) she did agree that there was nothing wrong with high urban densities as long as they did not lead to overcrowding in buildings. She did, however, believe that it was necessary to get rid of excess open space (such as in between towers-in-the-park) in order to densify successfully and desirably (Hall, 2002, 254). The open space on the High Park site is primarily in the form of lawns that stretch between the towers. People are not seen using this space very much, and this is likely due to the confusing nature of these spaces. They are not welcoming spaces that signal to pedestrians to use the grassy areas or to even walk across them. It is unclear as to what the space is meant for. A feeling of a boundary resonates from the open space, particularly between the parking lots within the towers where the greenspaces take the forms of small mounds or hills. This feeling intensifies at night when only the sidewalks and streets are lit up, leaving the greenspaces rather dark and supporting yet another one of Jane Jacobs' thought on the necessity of having 'eyes on the street'.



Landscaped open space as provided within the tower blocks



Looking west from Glenlake Avenue, just north of Bloor Street West

Sidewalks:

The sidewalks are lined by trees of varying maturity, at times creating a canopy effect which seems to help mediate the intense scale of the towers in relation to people on the ground. “Today, with the tower dimensions of so many structures, the designer must devise new means for establishing a connection between the building he creates and the people on the ground” (Bacon, 1967, p. 27). Although the trees may help, the proportion and scale of the buildings on the site are rather large when considering the surrounding streets to the east and north are single detached homes. The block west of the site is a similar tower neighbourhood. You feel ‘small’ walking through the towers and even along the sidewalks next to them. Additionally, the massive setbacks of the towers to the sidewalks and street create a disconnect between the people and the buildings, and vice versa. The sidewalks are fairly quiet with foot traffic primarily moving north and south to-and-from Bloor Street. It appears that most of the people on the sidewalks are residents, especially on pathways and sidewalks between the towers. When I walked in between the towers there were barely any people around, and the primary use of the inner sidewalks was

to get to and from the parking lots. The sidewalks do not lead to many spaces that would make one stay a while. They are simply connections for the movement of people.



Looking south down Pacific Avenue



Facing north on High Park Avenue

Streets / Streetscapes:

Pacific Avenue and High Park Avenue could be considered throughways for cars and bicycles to head north into The Junction neighbourhood on Dundas Street West, but otherwise the residential streets north of Bloor are not too heavily travelled. As mentioned earlier, the roadways within the towers are generally for cars going into parking areas and up to the doors of the towers. Cyclists share the road with vehicles and can be seen quite often. Movement systems and the tempo at which people travel in space are something discussed by Edmund Bacon and further adopted by *The Smart Growth Manual*. The design principles of complete streets offer some insight into how to moderate traffic speeds and tempo by using narrower streets with ample sidewalks and cycling infrastructure. Furthermore, straight-away vistas can create an environment which is desirable for drivers to speed down, so combining the various elements which make up complete streets will help combat undesirable movement speeds (Duany et al., 2010: 8.1)



High Park Avenue, looking north east



Bike share infrastructure provided along High Park Avenue, across from High Park subway station

Bloor Street has a faster pace, since there is much more automobile traffic, but overall the study area holds a slower tempo. Walking on Bloor Street is more comfortable than walking on the streets north of it due to the elimination of building setbacks and through the inclusion of retail space and a public square/plaza. The plaza offers a space to stay and enjoy a coffee or snack or just enjoy the weather on a nice day while sitting across from High Park to the south.



Looking east along Bloor Street West

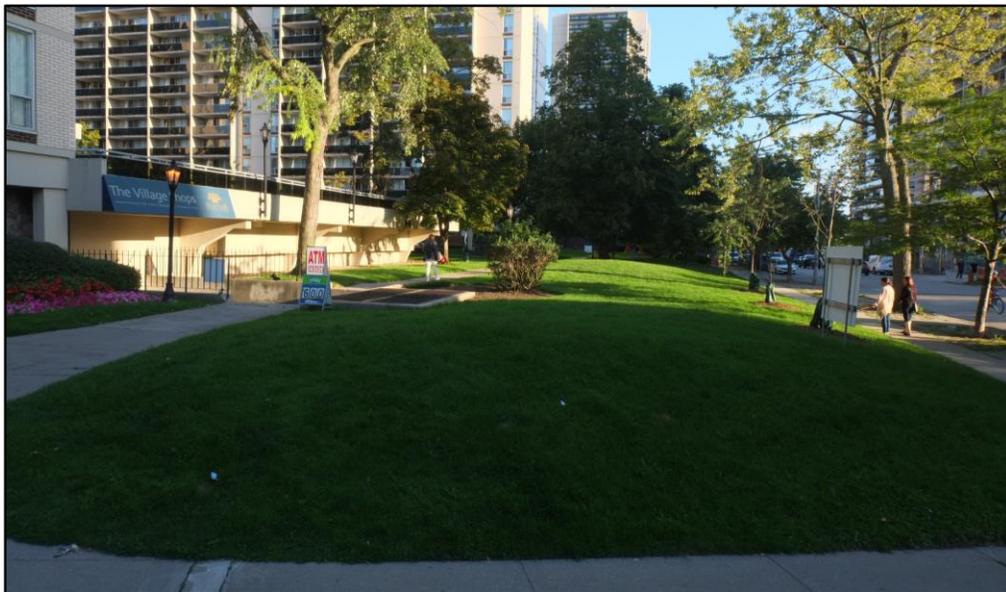


Building Setbacks:



Figure 11: Illustrated setback between property line and sidewalk (image source: map.toronto.ca)

Figure 11 illustrates an additional setback distance of approximately four metres between the property line and public right-of-way. The entire study area experiences this same ‘additional setback’ with varying distances between two- to four metres. The setback provisions provided for the area start at the property line, and as such additional setback space is enforced inadvertently. In my opinion there should be shorter setback provisions to the property line to combat some of this excess open space for future development.



East side of High Park Avenue, looking south. (Lawn of existing tower at 95 High Park Avenue)

The above lawn itself is approximately 13 metres from walkway to walkway, and the building setback to the property line is 14 metres (Google Maps, 2019). If considering the additional 4 metres of open space between the property line and the sidewalk, as illustrated above, the total setback between the building and sidewalk is approximately 18 metres.

The Urban Design Compendium states that “minimising setback distances increases the ability of a building to interact with the public realm” (Yeang, 2000, p. 88). Creating shorter setback provisions and allowing buildings to be built closer to sidewalks will not only provide a desirable environment, but it will also provide more building footprint area to provide an alternative to high-rise development. In the case of the High Park neighbourhood, if high-rise development is not desired in a neighbourhood which already has a large number of existing towers, then any further proposed density should be provided through high density mid-rise and low-rise built form. Alternatives in built form do exist, however, if the policy provisions for the High Park neighbourhood prefer to maintain such excess amounts of landscaped open space rather than permitting larger footprints for shorter buildings, then there will always be a conflict with infill proposals. New development is so constrained by setback provisions, building distance minimums and landscaped open space minimums that there is nowhere to build but upwards.

It is my opinion that the intentions of the Toronto Official Plan to preserve existing neighbourhood character in the High Park neighbourhood will result in the creation of development criteria which shall inevitably shape more high-rise infill development. The findings of the High Park Apartment Neighbourhood Area Character Study are also a key contributor to the newly proposed design guidelines for the High Park apartment neighbourhood. Although I agree with many sentiments and concerns voiced during the public consultation process, it seems that the cost of providing mid-rise infill development is sacrificing some landscaped open space.



Large existing setback onto Glenlake Avenue from the 299 Glenlake Avenue proposal site

ANALYSIS OF DESIGN POLICY AND CURRENT PROPOSALS

In this section I will analyze the new design guidelines and infill development policies which were created through the findings of the High Park Apartment Neighbourhood Area Character Study (the Study) and implemented through Official Plan Amendment (OPA) 419 as Site and Area Specific Policy 551 (SASP 551). For the purposes of this project I will refer to the policies and development criteria contained in OPA 419 and implemented through By-law 1230-2018 as SASP 551. SASP 551 contains the same policies and performance standards as the newly proposed High Park Apartment Neighbourhood Design Guidelines, which are also based on the findings of the same High Park Apartment Neighbourhood Area Character Study. I will analyze these policies in unison with the analysis of the current infill proposals, as it is my opinion that the proposals are a product of the policy provided by the City.

Site and Area Specific Policy 551:

SASP 551 is firmly rooted by its principles of preserving the existing park-like character of the High Park apartment neighbourhood. Many of the requirements listed in the policy base their built form criteria on maintaining a very similar minimum landscaped open space ratio as the original towers-in-the-park. This is further maintained by the minimum setback requirements which, when combined with the 65% minimum landscaped open space criteria, influences new development proposals to request zoning by-law amendments in favour of increased building height.

Below are a selection of relevant goals and provisions set out in SASP 551. They provide an idea of what the character study findings yielded, and the way that City staff have responded in what they believe to be appropriate planning policy measures.

“The generous landscaped setbacks, in combination with the placement, orientation and separation of buildings, allow for sunlight and sky views along streets, lot frontages and within the long north-south blocks, as well as maximizing light and ventilation, enhancing privacy and directing views within the Area and beyond” (Toronto, By-law 1230-2018, 2018, p. 4).

“Goals.

d. respect the existing physical character and enhance the quality of buildings and open space within and adjacent to the High Park Apartment

Neighbourhood, and protect Neighbourhoods from negative impact;” (Toronto, By-law 1230-2018, 2018, p. 5).

“Open Space.

i. A minimum of 65 percent of the total lot area will be open space, and a maximum of 35 percent of the total lot area may be covered by buildings and/or above grade structures;

iii. The maximum total building frontage along each street property line will not exceed two thirds of the total lot frontage of each street. If any portion of a building is set back greater than 30 metres from a street property line(s), that portion of building frontage may be excluded from the calculation of total building frontage;” (Toronto, By-law 1230-2018, 2018, p. 12)

The sentiments towards keeping built form which resembles towers-in-the-park is a contentious precedent for policy guiding future infill development. Mid-rise and low-rise buildings also have the ability to preserve sunlight through their shorter building heights. This is an excellent alternative which is desired by the local residents, as is evident through the findings of the public consultation meetings. Furthermore, the strict open space provision of 65% is only 5% difference from the original site-specific by-laws for the sites, which date back as far as 1964 (Toronto, Former City of Toronto By-law 22318, 1964). The original By-laws created strict built form criteria which only apply to the existing high-rise towers. By this I mean that the site specific By-laws solely permit the individual buildings, while any building excluded from the By-laws is governed by the surrounding low-rise neighbourhood development criteria of the R Zone (Toronto, Zoning By-law 569-2013). This means that any infill development will need to request a Zoning By-law amendment, and that seems to have provided the opportunity to request similar high-rise tower standards that are already in place as a means of justification. Further to the discussion of preserving inadequate built form, the maximum frontage provision also contradicts the benefits of providing some semblance of a street wall or variation of continuity along the public right-of way (Duany et al. 2010: 10.1).

b. “outdoor amenity spaces will:

i. Have direct access to sunlight;

ii. Be located primarily at grade, with visual and/or physical connections to the public realm where appropriate;” (Toronto, By-law 1230-2018, 2018, p. 12)

“Built Form.

e) development/redevelopment will be compatible with the existing built

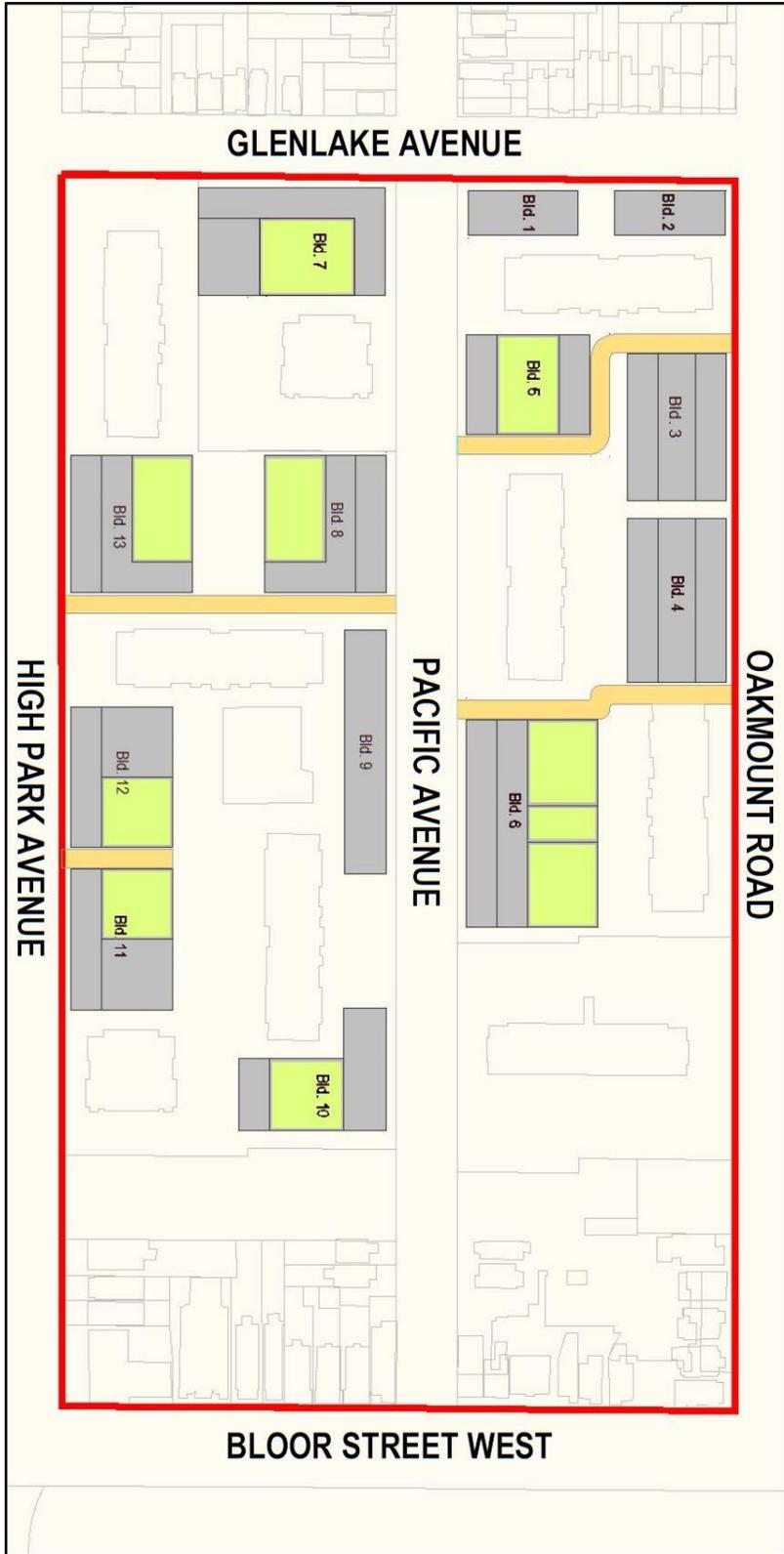
form character of the area and will be encouraged to use simple building forms and massing and limit the number and extent of building step-backs;” (Toronto, By-law 1230-2018, 2018, p. 13).

The criteria for outdoor amenity spaces creates yet another barrier to limiting high-rise infill proposals. Forcing amenity spaces to be primarily at-grade eliminates a lot of potential footprint area for high-density low-rise and high-density mid-rise buildings. Furthermore, I do not agree that building step-backs should be limited by provision ‘e’ above. Step-backs can be very useful in creating a transition in built form, which the area desperately needs. It is not always best to mimic the existing surroundings if the existing surroundings are problematic to begin with. The City must supply professionals in the field with the appropriate tools and criteria to guide well designed neighbourhoods. Policy is perhaps the most powerful tool in shaping our cities. If it is in the best interest of the private sector, for instance, to propose the ‘highest and best use’ for a parcel of land, then any amendments which may increase profits and use will be targeted. The proper policies would prohibit certain undesirable design from overwhelming an area while still providing opportunities for similar density and best use.

DESIGN PROPOSAL

I have created an alternative site plan proposal for the two study blocks which provides a significant increase in density while only using mid-rise and low-rise built form for infill development. I believe that, when implementing mid-rise infill, the existing apartment towers on site already provide the necessary high-rise built form to achieve an optimal high density neighbourhood. There is no further necessity for high-rise infill development when similar levels of density may be achieved with an alternative built form. In order to create a transition in scale, which is needed for this particular neighbourhood, the space available for infill should provide the missing built form in the area. Low-rise development, generally in the form of two- to three-storey homes, makes up the entirety of the area north of Glenlake Avenue, while the existing high-rise towers dominate the lands south of Glenlake Avenue. What is missing here is mid-rise built form. This is the missing transition that is mentioned repeatedly throughout the City of Toronto's Official Plan policies, as well as the various studies and site specific policies which have been, and continue to be proposed for the High Park apartment neighbourhood.

This site plan proposal uses the same three development sites as the existing Minto, GWL and Lormel Homes proposals at the 111 Pacific Ave, 35 High Park Avenue, and 299 Glenlake Avenue sites respectively to allow for a direct comparison between the existing proposals and my proposal. Below are a series of tables which display a few options to achieve different levels of density using mid-rise and low-rise form. The purpose is to demonstrate how close this alternative to high-rise development can come to achieving the same density as the current proposals by Minto, GWL, and Lormel Homes. This is done by using the same building footprints and podium stepbacks throughout the options while changing the height of buildings. Gross floor area (GFA) is the main unit of comparison for the proposals, as it represents the liveable space within a building. GFA is roughly 80%–85% of the total building floor area, which generally excludes utility space, mechanical rooms, elevators, stairways and space between walls. For the purposes of this project I will use the lower end of that range and calculate approximate GFA using 80% of the total floor area.



New proposed site plan for the study area (New buildings in grey; new mid-block connections in yellow; new green rooftop amenity space in green)

A few key design principles rooted in this site plan proposal include: active frontages and streetwalls, human scale, transition in scale, ease of movement, walkability, as well as mixed density and built form. Sufficient greenspace and open space is also provided both at-grade as well as through the use of rooftop amenity space. I propose minimum building setbacks of three metres to the property line and a minimum building separation distance of six metres. As discussed earlier, the two study blocks have an additional two-to-four metres of landscaped open space between the property line and the sidewalks. With my proposed three metre setbacks this will combine for approximately five metres, which is ideal for maintaining a streetwall and interacting with the street in a high density neighbourhood. Not only do these shorter setbacks offer benefits to the street and front yard, they create extra GFA space within the proposed buildings without sacrificing more landscaped open space in the rear yards. Similarly, the proposed six-metre minimum building separation distance offers more GFA space without the need to propose high-rise built form. Another technique used to preserve viable land at-grade is the decision to relocate surface parking lots to the existing underground parking garages on site, expanding them as necessary. Driveways leading to the parking garages will also be relocated so that they enter through the sides of new buildings and are less visible as part of the streetwall. This not only saves at-grade space for GFA and landscaped open space, but also screens undesirable driveways and garage entrances from public view.

Using these techniques and principles I have been able to achieve a few density options which, at the higher end, can provide 111 Pacific Avenue with approximately 91% of the GFA which Minto's proposal offers, 75% of the GFA proposed by GWL at 35 High Park Avenue, and 96% of the GFA proposed by Lormel Homes at 299 Glenlake Avenue. Achieving nearly the same density as the existing proposed high-rise towers, which reach heights of over 30-storeys, is a remarkable example of how different types of built form may offer the same density. However, replicating the density of the existing proposals is not the end goal of my proposal. The different density options I have explored for each of the three sites are merely tools for determining the ideal balance between desired building height and desired density. It is my opinion that high-density infill is appropriate for the High Park apartment neighbourhood, but not through high-rise infill. And although proposing the maximum height possible for a site may yield the most profit, finding the appropriate infill design to satisfy the needs of the neighbourhood is more important. Therefore, the final options I have chosen for my proposal (which, as can be seen

below, are referred to as Option 2 for 111 Pacific Avenue, Option 3 for 35 High Park Avenue, and Option 3 for 299 Glenlake Avenue) yield the following results in comparison to the existing proposals by Minto, GWL, and Lormel homes.

111 Pacific Avenue (Option 2):

PROPOSED BUILDING STATISTICS: 111 PACIFIC AVENUE						
	Ground Floor Footprint Area	Ground Floor ~GFA (80%)	1 st Stepback Area	1 st Stepback ~GFA	2 nd Stepback Area	2 nd Stepback ~GFA
Bld. 1	526 m ²	421 m²				
Bld. 2	526 m ²	421 m²				
Bld. 3	1,556 m ²	1,245 m²	590 m ²	472 m²	m ²	m ²
Bld. 4	1,731 m ²	1,385 m²	658 m ²	526 m²	m ²	m ²
Bld. 5	1,321 m ²	1,057 m²	666 m ²	533 m²	m ²	m ²
Bld. 6	2,913 m ²	2,330 m²	2,235 m ²	1,788 m²	641 m ²	513 m²

PROPOSED OPTIONS (GFA): 111 PACIFIC AVE.			
	Option 1 (2-3; 3; 2 storey stepbacks)	Option 2 (3-4; 3; 2 storey stepbacks)	Option 3 (4; 6; 1 storey stepbacks)
Bld. 1	2 Storeys	3 Storeys	4 Storeys
Bld. 2	2 Storeys	3 Storeys	4 Storeys
Bld. 3	6 Storeys	7 Storeys	10 Storeys
Bld. 4	6 Storeys	7 Storeys	10 Storeys
Bld. 5	6 Storeys	7 Storeys	10 Storeys
Bld. 6	8 Storeys	9 Storeys	11 Storeys
Total New GFA Proposed	31,740 m² (~76% of Minto Proposal)	38,603 m² (~82% of Minto Proposal)	48,376 m² (~91% of Minto Proposal)
Total Combined GFA	86,312 m² (~76% of Minto Proposal)	92,995 m² (~82% of Minto Proposal)	102,768 m² (~91% of Minto Proposal)

At 111 Pacific Avenue I have proposed a total of six buildings (Buildings 1-6 on the site plan) which vary in height between three-storeys for Building 1 and Building 2, to a maximum of nine-storeys in the tallest stepback podiums for Building 6. This is referred to as Option 2 in the tables provided. Building 1 and Building 2 are three-storey townhomes located along Glenlake Avenue which provide a transition in scale between the existing tower blocks and the

low-rise built form to the north. Similarly, all of the other newly proposed buildings have four-storey townhomes lining Oakmount Road and Pacific Avenue, with a 10-metre stepback to another three storeys. Building 6 is the only building to exceed seven-storeys, where another 10-metre stepback offers two more storeys in two smaller point towers at nine-storeys. The new low-rise and mid-rise infill lines the streets and keeps short distances between buildings, while also providing breaks in the building walls for improved ease of movement and walkability. This proposal for 111 Pacific Avenue can offer ~54% landscaped open space without even using any rooftop amenity space for additional open space. And with the addition of rooftop amenity space on Building 5 and Building 6 we are able to achieve a total of ~64% landscaped open space for the site. This is yet another example of how much density can be offered through alternative built forms and still yield incredibly large amounts of landscaped open space in the process. Even more open space could be provided if we were to use every rooftop in the same way, however I have left the remaining rooftops to be used as more environmentally serviceable greenroofs or for private amenity space for townhouse units, rather than trying to use extreme measures to inflate numbers.

35 High Park Avenue (Option 3):

PROPOSED BUILDING STATISTICS: 35 HIGH PARK AVENUE						
	Ground Floor Footprint Area	Ground Floor ~GFA (80%)	1 st Stepback Area	1 st Stepback ~GFA	2 nd Stepback Area	2 nd Stepback ~GFA
Bld. 8	1,787 m ²	1,430 m²	1,340 m ²	1,072 m²	694 m ²	552 m²
Bld. 9	1,096 m ²	877 m²				
Bld. 10	1,313 m ²	1,050 m²	809 m ²	647 m²	574 m ²	459 m²
Bld. 11	1,995 m ²	1,596 m²	1,072 m ²	858 m²	536 m ²	429 m²
Bld. 12	1,995 m ²	1,596 m²	1,072 m ²	858 m²	536 m ²	429 m²
Bld. 13	1,787 m ²	1,430 m²	1,340 m ²	1,072 m²	694 m ²	552 m²

PROPOSED OPTIONS (GFA)			
	Option 1 (3; 4; 2-4 storey stepbacks)	Option 2 (4; 4; 3 storey stepbacks)	Option 3 (4; 6; 1 storey stepbacks)
Bld. 8	9 Storeys	11 Storeys	11 Storeys
Bld. 9	3 Storeys	4 Storeys	4 Storeys
Bld. 10	9 Storeys	11 Storeys	11 Storeys
Bld. 11	11 Storeys	11 Storeys	11 Storeys
Bld. 12	11 Storeys	11 Storeys	11 Storeys
Bld. 13	9 Storeys	11 Storeys	11 Storeys
Total New GFA Proposed	44,173 m² (~55% of GWL Proposal)	54,627 m² (~67% of GWL Proposal)	61,379 m² (~75% of GWL Proposal)
Total Combined GFA	113,999 m² (~55% of GWL Proposal)	124,453 m² (~67% of GWL Proposal)	131,205 m² (~75% of GWL Proposal)

For the 35 High Park Avenue site I have proposed another six buildings which have a minimum height of four-storeys and a maximum height of 11-storeys (Option 3). Following the same design principles, I have located the shortest portions of buildings along Pacific Avenue and High Park Avenue, with 10-metre stepbacks leading to six additional storeys, and another stepback to one-storey for the tallest portions. Buildings 8, 10, 11, 12 and 13 provide rooftop amenity open space which combines with at-grade landscaped open space to provide a total of ~54% open space on site. The results from the public consultation meetings suggested that the existing indoor pool amenity at 65 High Park Avenue (which is a separate building on site) be maintained in future proposals, and as such it has remained as part of my proposal (as can be seen located in the middle of the site, between Building 9 and Building 12). A new mid-block connection road runs through the site just south of Building 8 and Building 13, which provides

additional ease of movement through the once uninviting inner-portion of the site. By limiting the new proposed buildings on site to mid-rise form the new site will offer a pleasant transition to the surrounding neighbourhood while still offering a significant increase in density.

299 Glenlake Avenue (Option 3):

PROPOSED BUILDING STATISTICS:						
	Ground Floor Footprint Area	Ground Floor ~GFA (80%)	1 st Stepback Area	1 st Stepback ~GFA	2 nd Stepback Area	2 nd Stepback ~GFA
Bld. 7	2,144 m ²	1,715 m ²	1,282 m ²	1,026 m ²	501 m ²	401 m ²

PROPOSED OPTIONS (GFA)			
	Option 1 (2; 4; 4 storey stepbacks)	Option 2 (2; 2; 4 storey stepbacks)	Option 3 (2; 3; 4 storey stepbacks)
Bld. 7	10 Storeys	8 Storeys	9 Storeys
Total New GFA Proposed	9,138 m² (~96% of Lormel Proposal)	7,088 m² (~74% of Lormel Proposal)	8,112 m² (~85% of Lormel Proposal)
Total Combined GFA	31,412 m² (~96% of Lormel Proposal)	29,362 m² (~74% of Lormel Proposal)	30,386 m² (~85% of Lormel Proposal)

Lastly, my proposal for the 299 Glenlake Avenue site consists of just one new building which has a total height of nine-storeys (Option 3). This site, although small in size, is an important transitional site to the surrounding neighbourhood, as it is located along Glenlake Avenue at the study area’s northern border. Although Option 1 can offer 96% of the GFA that Lormel Homes has proposed, it is my opinion that creating a slightly more modest building here would benefit the transition in built form. Therefore, Option 3 is my preferred choice for 299 Glenlake Avenue. It offers ~85% of the GFA while placing two-storey townhomes along Glenlake Avenue, and modestly steps back to three-storey and four-storey stepbacks. As mentioned earlier, the driveways leading to underground garages will be incorporated in the buildings to minimize the placement of garages along the streetwall. My proposal for this site

also creates ~64% landscaped open space when combining the rooftop amenity space, but could still provide an impressive ~50% without any rooftop space.

When combining my three new site proposals they create a high-density neighbourhood which provides an appropriate transition in scale and maintains significant levels of landscaped open space using only low-rise and mid-rise built form. The calculations are approximate, but the basis of the outcomes suggest that it is very possible to suggest alternatives to high-rise infill development and still yield similar density figures. Although it is difficult to implement policies which can easily differentiate between limiting certain types of building heights while still allowing for high density development, solutions must be explored. New infill proposals should be evaluated on a site-by-site basis and should undergo more scrutiny for the ratio of low-rise, mid-rise, and high-rise built form. Not every neighbourhood is the same, especially compared to the High Park apartment neighbourhood which contains a unique contrast in built form, but dissecting each project with a more critical lens will reveal what is most needed for the site.

CONCLUSION

The High Park neighbourhood has experienced an influx of development proposals over the past few years which aim to increase density significantly. The proposed means of accomplishing this heavily lean on adding high-rise infill to the already existing high-rise towers on site. These existing proposals are problematic for the area due to the lack of transition in scale between the high-rise towers and the surrounding low-rise neighbourhood, while also doubling the density of an area which fears for losing its character. The arguments for high-density in an urban area that is so heavily serviced by transit outweigh the negative impacts of too much density, so the solution to providing the best infill development for the High Park neighbourhood lies at the basis of appropriate transition in scale.

By using key design principles such as active frontages and streetwalls, human scale, transition in scale, ease of movement, walkability, as well as mixed density and built form, I have managed to provide a number of design options which can offer between ~75% to ~96% of the proposed GFA, as well as maintaining between ~58% to ~64% of total landscaped open space on site. I propose this by only using low-rise and mid-rise built form to complement the existing high-rise towers on site. It is my opinion that, when utilizing mid-rise infill, the existing apartment towers on site already provide the necessary high-rise built form to achieve an optimal high density neighbourhood. There is no further necessity for high-rise infill development when similar levels of density may be achieved with an alternative built form. While refraining from proposing any more high-rise infill I have successfully created a built form which smoothly transitions in scale to the surrounding area.

This project has critically analyzed the study area through an urban design lens which has yielded alternative built form proposals to the existing Minto, GWL Realty, and Lormel Homes proposals. Furthermore, an in-depth analysis of the urban design policy for the High Park apartment neighbourhood was undertaken and revealed that the existing proposals from Minto, GWL, and Lormel are not to be at the root of the blame for their high-rise infill design. Rather, the City's policies themselves have created an opportunity for developers to propose similar building heights as the existing high-rise towers, which lead to the proposals for towers over 30-stories. I have found that the City's policies limit what can be done in terms of built form, and as such find myself criticizing the policies for infill development as the root of the problem. While

the current proposals are questionable, as they seek approval based on claiming to fit in with the existing high-rise built form, and don't represent sound planning and urban design as I understand it from urban design literature, I believe instead that the lamentable state of the proposals is due to the City's policies and regulations—the proposals are a reflection of what is envisioned by the policies. A firm stance must be taken towards deterring such proposals that are based on inappropriate comparisons such as this, while determining what is needed in an area in terms of missing built form.

The most appropriate form of high-density infill development for the High Park apartment neighbourhood is mid-rise infill with low-rise townhomes at-grade. The study area is dominated by existing high-rise towers and presents a drastic lack of transition in scale to the adjacent low-rise neighbourhoods. By utilizing alternatives to high-rise infill it is possible to achieve comparable levels of density while maintaining adequate levels of open space, and further transforming the built environment to enhance the public realm. Low-rise and mid-rise infill will provide the necessary transition in scale that the area is lacking and will present opportunities to help the existing tower-in-the-park sites interact with the public realm.

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APPENDIX A: Major Project Report

In this major project I set out to conduct an urban design analysis of the High Park neighbourhood while reviewing and critiquing relevant urban design policy, and preparing a number of site design alternatives. In doing so I emphasized the importance of physical built form and how low-rise and mid-rise infill may yield similar density to the existing high-rise infill proposals. My theoretical framework for my analysis was based on my knowledge of urban design principles developed through my review and analysis of practical and theoretical urban design literature and case studies. Urban design principles such as active frontages and streetwalls, human scale, transition in scale, ease of movement, walkability, and diversity in density and built form were key influences of my final site plan. This project has helped me achieve the learning objectives I set out to meet in my Plan of Study and throughout my time in the MES program by presenting an opportunity to critically analyze a neighbourhood that is facing challenges and putting myself into a situation where I am providing my own critiques and opinions based on the literature I have studied. The research question I aimed to answer was whether or not the High Park neighbourhood's new tower infill proposals are appropriately designed to integrate the newly built form into the existing urban fabric. The findings of my analysis have shown that the most appropriate form of high-density infill development for the High Park apartment neighbourhood is mid-rise infill, with low-rise townhomes at-grade. And as such, it is my opinion that the existing proposals do not represent the most appropriate form of infill development.

The foundation of my major project, and largely of my program as a whole, as articulated in my Area of Concentration, is urban design theory and practice. I set out to create a project for myself that would allow me to critically analyze an area of the city through an urban design lens in order to gain knowledge and skills in urban design in support of my professional planning career. In order to accomplish this, I conducted several independent studies where I read, analyzed and reflected on traditional and contemporary design literature. I produced several written pieces on my understanding of the literature and what design principles were expressed or were lacking in the built environment in High Park. I also completed an IDS in the form of a block study to prepare me for the challenges of my major project, which would entail the

analysis of multiple city blocks and new site design proposals. With the learned knowledge I obtained through my learning strategies as set out in my POS, I was able to critically analyze my project study area and comfortably apply what I learned to create a set of design and policy recommendations for the High Park neighbourhood. Throughout the process of conducting my design analysis I learned that there are many different perspectives to consider when analyzing a site. Different individuals (e.g., residents, passers-by, cyclists) use the space uniquely from others, or at different times of day. Some may never use certain areas of the site, while others have embedded routines into their everyday lives revolving around otherwise neglected spaces. We must always consider for whom a space is designed and how the site may best serve those individuals, as well as all individuals who move through the site.

An important part of my major project was my review and critique of the City's development and design policies for the High Park neighbourhood. I set out to understand the basis on which the existing proposals were grounded, and how the criteria that the City has provided influences development proposals. I reviewed the applicable zoning and performance standards for the study area and compared the as-of-right conditions with the former by-laws which initially permitted the towers-in-the-park. This provided a comparison which showed that the current policies are trying to preserve the character of the towers-in-the-park, which is a questionable direction for future infill development in Toronto as the outcome is more towers in less park. What I learned through my policy review and critique is how important it is to set a precedent for good design through the policy itself. Although it is best to approach each site on a case-by-case basis, the foundational design principles must be rooted in the City's policies. From there, the individual proposals must uniquely address the needs of the neighbourhood and the existing community. It is far too common for proposals to request amendments and variances to increase height and density based on the existence of other tall buildings. Density is a vital urban design principle, but there are alternatives to high-rise which provide similar density and diversity in form and scale.

The core purpose of my major project was the creation of three site designs, which would provide alternatives to the existing high-rise infill proposals. Before I could even begin applying my theoretical design knowledge to site planning, I needed to gain the technical skills to produce a site plan. I took the initiative to take an AutoCAD course at George Brown College as an IDS

where I learned the basics of the program and the importance of applying it in my role as a future planner. One of my biggest learning objectives for my program was to obtain practical and technical planning skills which I could translate to the workplace. Learning to use AutoCAD during the summer term at George Brown provided me with the basics I needed to continue to master the program on my own. I practiced by creating preliminary designs and brainstorming design possibilities. As mentioned earlier, urban design principles such as active frontages and streetwalls, human scale, transition in scale, ease of movement, walkability, and diversity in density and built form were key influences of my design proposals. I created a base design and from there I adjusted the number of storeys and podium heights to provide various new density yields. The process for calculating my new density results was rather strenuous as I had a total of 13 new buildings proposed on my study site. My reasoning for proposing more buildings at modest heights was to reinforce the importance of short blocks to the design of a neighbourhood; short blocks highlight the principles of ease of movement and human scale. I created numerous tables containing my calculations, with additional pages of analysis written by hand as well. I had results that provided modest to very high density infill, but I concluded that the most appropriate infill would remain quite high due to the proximity of the site to various means of transit. I learned a lot throughout the process of creating my site designs, which should go without saying after learning AutoCAD as I progressed. The importance of visualization and even simply putting pen to paper when brainstorming was a key starting point to a more in-depth design analysis. At times a certain idea may seem appropriate until you see just how it really fits amongst its surroundings. The bigger picture is always important to remember when you get deep into the creation of your site plan proposal.

While setting out to accomplish a number of goals and components for my major project I did have time to reflect on what could have been improved, what I could have done differently, and generally some important things I did not emphasize. The scope of my project was demanding in the sense that I tried to learn a lot of things about which I did not previously have knowledge. This required a lot of time and attention in terms of visuals, graphics, and discussions of design theory. Although I attempted to touch on a lot of different material and topics it was difficult to get in-depth on all of the topics I covered. My site plan proposal provided an idea of what the physical built form of my site would look like. It painted a clear picture of the buildings and the newly proposed mid-block connections and pathways. In

reflecting on my design I have acknowledged that more description or detail of the open spaces and amenity spaces would be valuable to the proposal. It is important to think about the spaces in between buildings, and how people use these spaces, as most people experience their environment on the ground. The fine details of a site are extremely important to the overall product, but this was not necessarily emphasized by the final site plan for logistical reasons. Another change that I would propose for my major project would be to reconsider my decision to not conduct primary interviews with local residents or planners and designers involved in the projects. I was able to access valuable information on public consultations that took place in the neighbourhood, but speaking with planners and designers could have informed my work regarding the design process and choices made with respect to design decisions.

Overall, I have accomplished what I set out to do in my major project by completing an urban design analysis, reviewing and critiquing design policy, and creating my own site plan proposals. My time spent in the MES program prepared me for the completion of this project and for the challenges I have already begun to face as a planner. I now leave the program with a Junior Planning position at a private planning consulting firm and am thrilled with how my career has started. I am very excited to find out what lays ahead and I am grateful for the journey that I have been through at York University. I will continue to apply what I believe to be the most appropriate urban planning and design principles to my future work and hope to contribute to the creation of well designed cities and neighbourhoods for future generations to come.