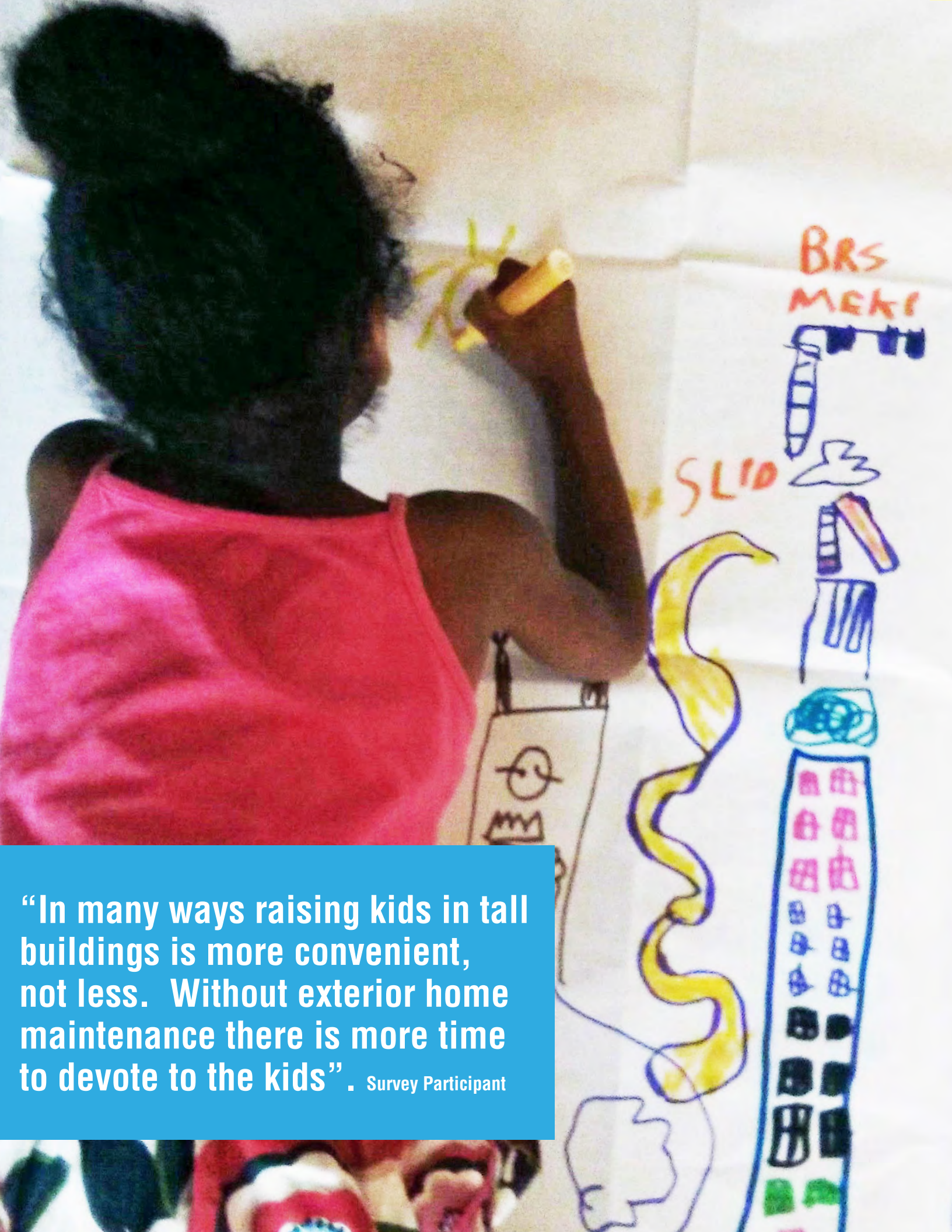


Growing Up

Planning for Children in New Vertical Communities

Phase 1 Summary Report



“In many ways raising kids in tall buildings is more convenient, not less. Without exterior home maintenance there is more time to devote to the kids” . Survey Participant

Toronto has a long history of housing families in tall buildings. Toronto's first housing boom took place during the 1950's to the late 1970's and was characterized by the construction of approximately 2000 modernist 'tower in the park' slab buildings. The apartments were actively marketed to families and featured open space, ample parking, tennis courts, outdoor pools and a range of unit types from two to four bedrooms.

Today's housing boom has seen the proliferation of hundreds of tall buildings, predominately in the Downtown and Centres. While these developments are concentrated near transit, the units are generally small, and the majority of the units are one bedrooms. They are marketed to the children of baby boomers – young, single professionals or couples – or to empty nesters. Despite this, there are many families with children already living in Toronto's higher-density buildings. In the Downtown for example, 66% of households with children live in buildings five storeys or taller, while at the city-wide level only 27% of families with children live in tall buildings. (2011, Census).

Phase 1 of Growing Up: Planning for Children in New Vertical Communities sought to understand the challenges and opportunities of raising children and youth in high density housing. The discussions and the feedback is grouped into the three study scales: the unit, the building and the neighbourhood. Consultation undertaken in Phase 1, dubbed "CondoHack", was designed to better understand how families "hacked" their homes to deal with the realities of living with children. *What trade-offs are families making? What changes or renovations have they made to accommodate a growing family?*

Very little is known about how families make use of their space in the context of Toronto's latest high-rise housing boom. The CondoHack concept applies equally to the other groups that were consulted in Phase 1, including the design and development communities. Together, designers and developers deliver vertical communities; how they consider children when designing new buildings and units for families is equally important. This report provides a summary of the various consultation activities undertaken as part of Phase 1 of the study.

Phase 1 work also included extensive background research. Demographic and housing profiles were created for the seven study areas including Downtown, Etobicoke Centre,

North York Centre, Yonge Eglinton Centre, and Scarborough Centre as identified on Map 2 Urban Structure of the City of Toronto's Official Plan as well as two additional new high rise communities – Humber Bay Shores and the Sheppard Corridor. Precedents from Toronto and abroad were selected as case studies to showcase how good design at the unit, building and neighborhood scales can improve the livability for current and future families residing in vertical communities. Both the case studies and study area profiles can be found on the study website: www.toronto.ca/growingupTO.

Phase 1 consultation activities undertaken include:

- an online survey that attracted over six hundred respondents;
- nine household visits with families currently living in high density neighbourhoods across Toronto;
- workshops with children and youth including a kindergarten class charrette and a full day walkshop at Jean Vanier Catholic Secondary School;
- interviews with 8 developers;
- workshops with architects, interior designers, landscape architects, planners and urban designers; and
- presentations to the City's Design Review and Planning Review Panels.

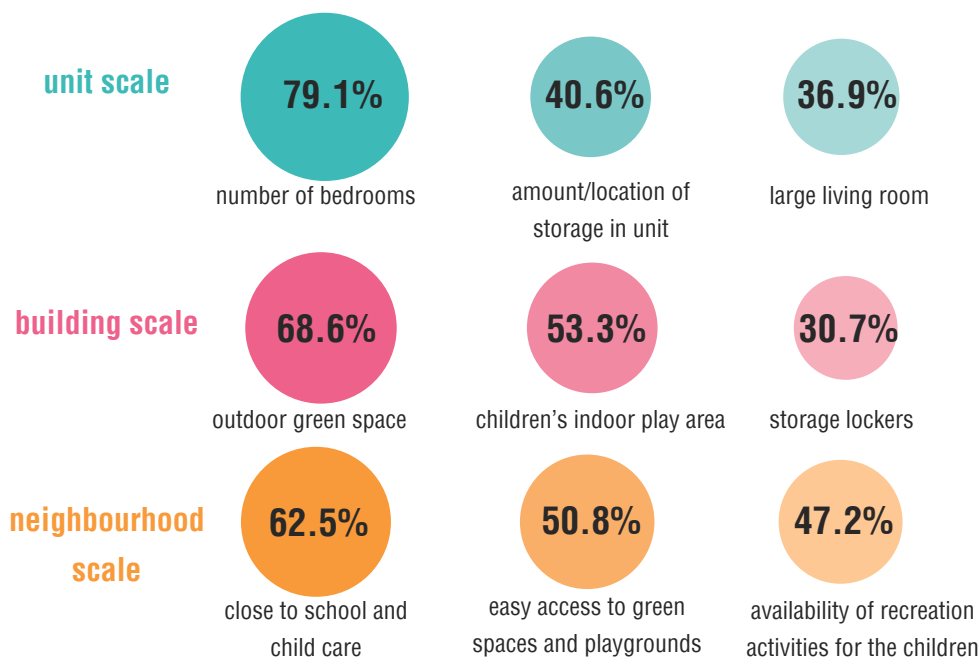
1.0 FAMILIES & CHILDREN / YOUTH

The intent of the study is to make living in a high density community more attractive, feasible and practical to families with children. Hearing directly from families currently living in tall buildings is essential to understanding their motivations to live where they do. It was also helpful to gain insights about their decisions to stay or leave their current home.

1.1 Survey

To uncover insights, a survey was developed and posted on the project website that asked families what works and what could be improved in their current living situation, following the study's three scale structure (unit, building and neighbourhood). Respondents were asked if they had "hacked" their unit to specifically address living with children and youth. The survey received over 600 responses from across the city, with the greatest number of responses received from residents in the Downtown and Centers where the bulk of multi-unit residential buildings have been built. The majority of survey respondents owned their home (56%) lived in a household with two adults (79%) and had at least one child between the ages of zero and four (61%). A list of survey questions can be found in Appendix 1.

At the **unit scale**, respondents indicated that the 3 most important design features of a unit are: number of bedrooms; amount and location of storage; and size of the living space. 69% of respondents reported "hacking" their units to accommodate children. Changes include: repurposing rooms such as turning a den into a bedroom; adding custom



The 3 most important design features of the unit, the building and the neighbourhood indicated by the survey respondents

built-in storage; and reconfiguring the space in a kitchen or bathroom to better suit the family's needs.

At the **building scale**, respondents indicated that the 3 most important features of a building are: outdoor children's play areas (green space or open space); an indoor children's playroom; and storage lockers.

At the **neighbourhood scale**, respondents told us that the 3 most important features of high-density neighbourhoods are: proximity to schools or child care; proximity to

green space and playgrounds; and availability of recreation activities for children, such as community centres, libraries, pools, etc. Respondents would choose to improve their existing neighbourhoods by increasing the safety of the public realm (wider sidewalks, greater separation from cars, better street lighting, etc.) (31%), and by having more parks and open spaces for children to play (27%). The survey asked respondents about their plans to stay in their current home. 56% of respondents indicated

that they plan to move in five years or less, while 23% indicated that they have no intentions of moving. Among the top reason to move were the need for more bedrooms (26%), the need for a bigger home (26%), to have easier access to open space and/or recreation programs (11%) and to live closer to a school or child care (10%).

Beyond the Building

The survey questions were designed to allow families to share and elaborate on other issues faced when raising children in high density communities. In addition to the issues identified at each scale and noted above, respondents highlight three additional areas of concern:

1. the affordability of housing;
2. safety in the public realm; and
3. the quality and or availability of schools.

These issues require the commitment of several levels of government and are not necessarily unique to families living in vertical communities but are of concern to many households with children across the city.

Affordability was listed as a top concern of survey respondents and families that participated in the interviews. Simply put, families want (or need) more space but bigger homes cost more money. Maintenance fees were often cited as a large and growing expense, especially in older condominium buildings. Parents often make the decision to stay in smaller units,



“Superclub,” a recreation centre in the City Place neighbourhood, is shared by five residences and funded by their condo fees. Amenities include a toy room, gym, playground and pool.

and make do with the space they have as their family grows because they cannot afford a larger unit in the same neighbourhood. Although this illustrates that need for more flexible units that can accommodate households as they grow and change, affordability continues to be an issue for Toronto. Current housing policies such as rental replacement and new or ongoing programs such as the Mayor’s Open Door Policy and the Province’s future policies for inclusionary zoning will help to ease Toronto’s growing affordability problem.

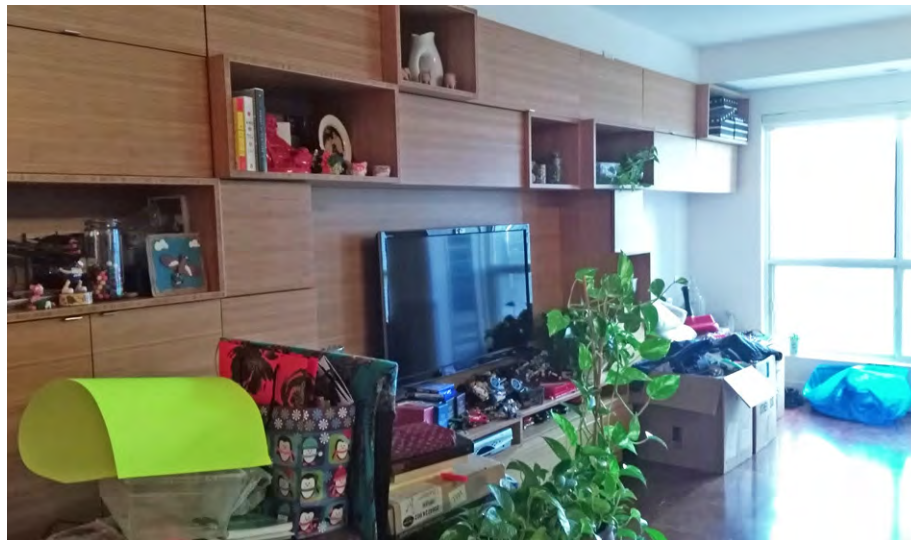
Metrolinx’s Big Move sets out a vision that 60% of children in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area will walk or cycle to school by 2031. In response, Metrolinx is working with a variety of stakeholders to explore policy, planning and programming that can support parents and children to walk, cycle and use other active and sustainable methods safely and comfortably.

Schools serve as gathering places for many families with children – they are the heart of neighbourhoods often functioning as hubs of learning, recreation and play. Parents noted schools played a deciding factor when choosing where to live and that the availability and quality schools in the city’s growth areas is of concern. In some neighbourhoods such as Yonge Eglinton or North York Centre the difficulty lies in over capacity, while in others such as City Place the distance to schools is an issue. Compounding this, parents often rely on the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) scores to determine the “good schools” which is only one variable that should be taken into account. While Toronto’s school boards have responded in a number of ways including specialized programs and exploring the possibility of securing schools in the base of tall buildings, the city must continue to explore the future of schools in the context of new vertical communities.

Family Visits – Documenting the Lived Experience

To understand the lived experience in depth interviews, household visits and neighbourhood walks with nine families living in high density housing in key growth areas across the City were conducted. Parents and children discussed the design and operational challenges they faced in their units, buildings and neighbourhoods, as well as the interventions and adaptations they've made in response. This participatory consultation approach asked people for their opinions and insights while observing how families live in tall buildings. All visits were documented with photographs and sketches. This research constitutes important first hand recommendations and innovations for further testing, exploration and refinement in Phases 2 and 3. The CondoHack household visits have been summarized individually (available at www.toronto.ca/growingupto and in Appendix 2).

Though each living situation and family is unique, some common themes emerged.



This family in the Esplanade (see Esplanade CondoHack) renovated their living area by installing a custom floor-to-ceiling wall system to increase the amount of storage space in their home.

Choosing the apartment or condo lifestyle

Families who live in tall buildings with older or multiple children have made a **conscious choice** to make their homes work for them. Rather than “hacking” their unit to fit their lives, they have “hacked” their priorities to respond to the realities of living in a smaller space.

The “other” family wheels: life with a stroller

A specific and recurring issue was the need to accommodate **life with a stroller**. In many cases the entry to the unit was not wide enough to accommodate storing a stroller, which required it to be stored in the living area; we observed families storing strollers in the middle of the kitchen and in the bathtub. As more families choose to live in higher-density areas, they often also make the choice to do so without a car, or with only one. In the early years with children, we found that the stroller is as important to a family's mobility as a car might otherwise be.



Lorena, a parent to an 8 year old Sophie says the unit is flooded with sunlight and a panoramic view of the lake. (see Liberty Village CondoHack).



This family frequently used the building's outdoor terrace (see Kennedy and Sheppard CondoHack).

Where to put stuff? The need for storage

The majority of families visited all agreed that **more storage** would vastly improve the use and enjoyment of their home. Children come with a significant amount of “stuff” and while the sharing economy has facilitated moving that “stuff” onto another family once it has been used, many families indicated they also want to be able to keep the large, bulky, often expensive items to pass on to siblings. This is

not only an issue for families with young children – having a place to store an “ExerSaucer” also means having a place for equally bulky hockey equipment... or a tuba! The families we met have done their best to maximize storage and use multi-functional furniture to make the best use of largely limited space. In some cases, they have demonstrated great creativity - often also at great expense - to carve more space out of their homes by installing custom storage furniture.

The need to play

Although families often taken advantage of neighbourhood parks and amenities, many have indicated that having **a place to play** (indoors and/or out) “at home” would be much more convenient, especially in winter months. Until the teenage years, toddlers, children and pre-teens all like and need to be active and “blow off steam”. Places within the building, or complex to accommodate that activity would be welcomed by the families we met. Without those spaces, families either have to make a trip to the local park or recreation center, or will “hack” the building by using the party room, exercise room or hallways for those activities. Unfortunately, this may lead to conflicts with neighbours, and may not be permitted in the condo documents.

“Despite what many think, it is definitely possible to raise children in a tall building! We are close to museums and parks and a plethora of activities. The Toronto islands are our backyard.” Survey participant



A bathtub doubles as a place to store a stroller.



Bike parking incorporated into the vehicular parking spot.

1.3 Activities with Children and Youth

1.3.1 Kindergarten Charette

Urban Strategies hosted a school group of 25 six-year-olds for a participatory consultation activity. The children were asked to imagine that a developer wanted to build a high-rise on top of a grocery store in their neighbourhood, and their job was to make sure it would be a good place to live.

After a brief introductory discussion, we posed a few questions to the class:

- What is a tall building?
- Do any of you live in a tall building?
- Have you ever visited a tall building?
- How would living in a house be the same or different from living in a tall building?

The class was divided into three groups: “the unit”, “the building”, and “the park”. We asked:



One of the participants in the building group drawing her vision for vertical communities.

- the unit: what would your apartment look like?
- the building: how can a tall building accommodate the activities you usually do?
- The park: what should the park have for people who don't have a yard?



The team considering “the park” envisioned open spaces and a public realm designed for families...including plenty of pools!

Each child was provided with a large sheet of paper for drawing based on the team they belonged to. Their work was presented in a short concluding discussion, which demonstrated that children have a great ability to imagine a wide variety of living situations facilitated by the liberal use of slides!

The drawings highlight the value children place on places to play and socialize. The images produced specifically point to the importance of recreational facilities in the city as many of the drawings included swimming pools, play structures, dog parks, gardens and in some cases all of these combined at once.

The children also had varying ideas of what a tall building looks like. Some drew the shape of an oversized single detached house with a pitched roof, while others drew more realistically configured towers. Some children pictured amenities in the building's “back yard,” whereas others saw them provided vertically on the roof of the building. The exercise demonstrated that this particular group of Toronto children have diverse ideas about what vertical living looks like.



The 25 six-year-olds were divided into groups to discuss: the unit, the building and the park.

1.3.2 ICE Challenge at Jean Vanier Catholic Secondary School

The day constituted part of the Ontario Ministry of Education's Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship (ICE) training to help prepare students for the future. Students in grades 11 and 12 were given an introduction to City Planning and the Growing Up study and were tasked with making recommendations to improve their commute from Kennedy Subway Station to school. Jean Vanier is located at 959 Midland Avenue in Scarborough, approximately 800 metres from Kennedy Station.

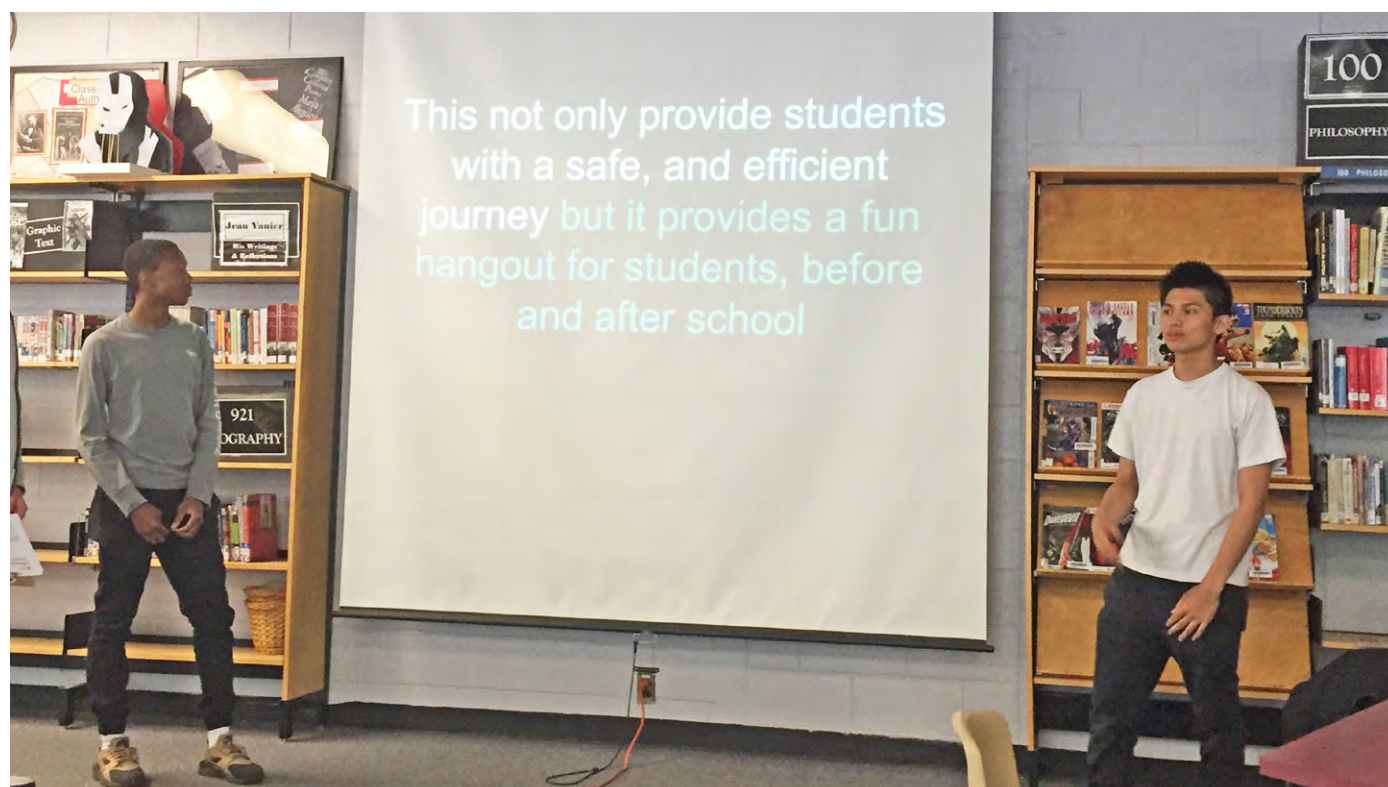
Together with City Planning staff, the students participated in a walking audit which focused on identifying

intersections and areas that could be improved to make the walk safer and more enjoyable.

At the end of the day, three groups of students made presentations to teachers and City staff. Recommendations included exploring opportunities to repurpose the parking lots under Eglinton Avenue East, adjacent to the station. Using Underpass Park as an example, students thought part of the parking lot could be transformed into basketball courts. Students also focused on the underground walkway between the eastern entrance of Kennedy Station that connects to the fare collection area. Here, the

students saw an opportunity to make the space more hospitable through programming – monthly art exhibits for example, which would provide for more “hang” space and make the walk more enjoyable and interesting.

Through this exercise students demonstrated how underused spaces can be transformed or repurposed to become multi-functional spaces that serve the population in the area. The needs of high school students need to be considered just as much as the needs of children. This exercise illustrated the need for “hangout spaces” that are safe, welcoming and engaging.



Students from Jean Vanier Secondary School presented their ideas on how spaces between Kennedy Subway Station and the school can be improved and reprogrammed to be safer and more inviting.

2.0 DESIGNERS

2.1 Designer Roundtables

In addition to talking to families with children living in vertical communities, roundtables with the design community including architects, interior designers, landscape architects, planners and urban designers were organized. (Attendees are listed in Appendix 3.) The roundtable began with designers providing (“show and tell”) examples of vertical communities that are more sensitive to the needs of families with children. The local and international precedents became the basis for a lively conversation about what was possible and/or acceptable in Toronto, helping to prioritize areas for further exploration by the study team.

Unit features and layout

- Unit sizes are typically bigger in cities where apartment living is a cultural norm. Such cities also tend to have a rich public realm to support spending time in parks and open spaces, activity on the street and opportunities for active transportation.
- Size matters – in increasingly dense communities people need space to retreat. Home should be a sanctuary, so while there are many efficiencies that can be done to make it easier to fit more people into the typical units being produced, at some point a unit is too small to be considered suitable for a family even if it has three bedrooms.



At one of the designer roundtables, architects discussed local and international precedents for unit features and building designs suitable for family-friendly vertical communities.

- Focusing on unit size instead of number of bedrooms could allow for spaces to be changed over time as the dynamic of the family changes. A generous two bedroom may be attractive to a couple who is starting a family, but could become a three bedroom in time as the family grows and ages in place.
- Some participants remarked that flexibility can be achieved through new approaches to interiors such as greater reliance on mobile, room-scaled furniture as opposed to fixed cabinetry, millwork and partition walls.
- Construction methods can also influence potential flexibility. In Toronto we tend to build with concrete shear wall construction which impacts the ability to combine units over time.
- Balconies are often provided for marketing purposes (purchasers want outdoor space) but are kept small to reduce costs. Many smaller balconies are generally unused or used as storage for larger items such as bikes (a symptom of not having enough storage inside). Participants remarked larger balconies that could function as an “outdoor” room are more useful for families.
- The design process typically strives to maximize living spaces, so closet space and storage are often minimized. It’s hard to “sell” lots of storage at the apparent expense of other unit space.

- Vertical space has not been exploited.
 - Closets are typically the full height of the wall (eight to ten feet), however closet doors are typically between six to eight feet limiting the usable storage space.
 - Bunk beds should be anticipated and outlets and light switches should be located so that they are accessible from the top bunk.

Building design

- “Family” units should be clustered on lower levels of the building to:
 - allow easier access for families to the ground floor by reducing vertical travel (elevators);
 - allow for freer range of mobility in children, while potentially maintaining a visual connection to the ground level or to rooftop amenity on the lower portion of a building; and
 - encourage families and children to meet and build community.
- Many of the workshop participants pointed to Toronto Community Housing as the leader in building family friendly vertical communities. As a result of their recent revitalization efforts in communities, such as Regent Park, Lawrence-Allen and Alexandra Park, TCH has learned a great deal about how to design



Schoolyard to Playground Initiative identified spaces in neighbourhoods with a high need for open space and opened them year round for public use, after school and on weekends.

units and buildings to best suit the needs of their tenants who are predominately families with children. In Phase 2 the City should continue to learn from the TCH experience and design practices.

- The study should recognize the potential of circulation space to encourage social interaction and function as the “front porch” of the home. These spaces also have the potential to function as spill out spaces for children to play. Improved sound proofing between units and corridors as well as more resilient finishes are needed to facilitate this.
- Similarly, if stairwells are treated with attractive finishes and/or natural light, they would be more regularly used while at the same time take pressure off elevators.
- Bulk storage (lockers) located on

the same floor as the units they serve are a desirable feature but hard to design as they take away from saleable (unit) area.

- The lobby has the potential to function as more of a social space where lingering is designed for and encouraged.



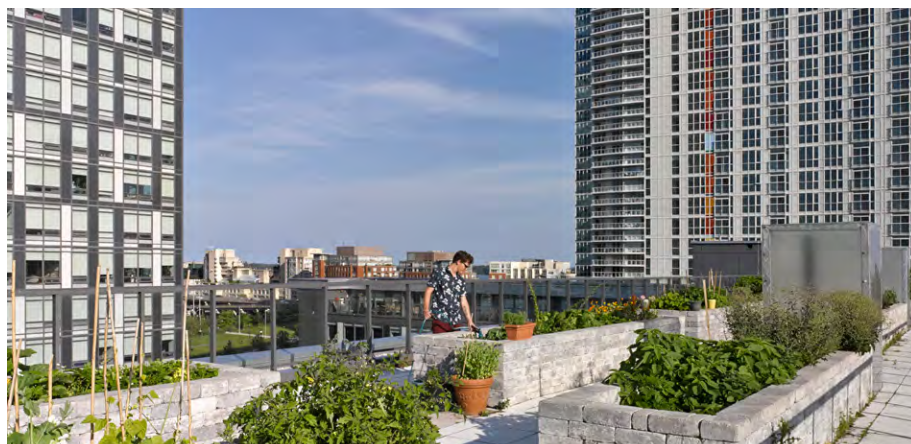
Discussed at the designer roundtables, The Stockholm Royal Seaport features a broad mix of amenities and businesses that characterize an inner-city neighbourhood.

Amenities

- Families often need somewhere to be messy – fix a bike, wash off a stroller, paint a school project. What building space can replace the basement laundry room or garage?
- Think about the needs of youth too: places to “hang out” or do homework.
- How we use communal /social spaces is changing. Communal furniture is encouraged. Wi-fi in common areas (indoors and outdoors) would encourage their use by both adult and younger residents.
- Outdoor space for children that is fully enclosed with areas/ benches for caregiver supervision is ideal. It need not be designed as a playground, and can still be attractive to adults but should be robust to withstand and encourage active play.
- Many residents in vertical buildings would love the opportunity for gardening, which is also a great learning experience for children and a way to build community ties.

Neighbourhoods

- Schools are natural gathering places for families. They are also public assets and in many cases informally function as community hubs. Some designers highlighted the opportunity for school yards to function more like public parks during non-school hours, effectively increasing the amount of parkland in the City through already publicly owned assets. The feasibility of this idea should be explored further in association with the school boards and the City’s Parks, Forestry & Recreation Division.
- In some cases, City Planning along with its divisional partners have successfully located new community facilities in the ground floor of new residential developments. The City should continue to expand community facilities such as child care, libraries, community centers and schools by allocating space in new tall building developments.
- Consider a hierarchy of open spaces in the neighbourhood. There is value in a chain of many smaller spaces on the



Outdoor rooftop community garden at 150 Dan Leckie Way. Outdoor courtyards provide open spaces for residents and play areas for children.



Community gardens encourage groups of all ages to participate, learn and build relationships. Gardens are a great opportunity for families to produce their own organic fruits and vegetables.



Quality outdoor play environments can offer rich educational opportunities for children that stimulate imaginative play and curiosity.

way to larger spaces in order to accommodate the journey by different age groups – a five minute walk radius for a pre-schooler is different than that of a teenager. Rest stops with benches along the way can function as a chain of motivation for both children and seniors.

- The scale of the block is important. Consider the mixed-use nature of the block: ideally most daily needs and local services should be available in close proximity or ultimately on your block. Urban granularity and diversity becomes important (milk, aspirin, pizza, shoe repair). While convenience is important for families on-the-go, this consideration could also enable childhood independence: a child can begin to run local errands without having to cross the street (a huge barrier, whether real or imagined).
- In space-constrained urban environments all elements may need to be multi-functional. A level splash pad in a park can also host community events, and can then transform to a rink in the winter.
- The winter season should be thoroughly considered. Material finishes are important: recycled rubber might be more expensive, but it drastically extends the outdoor play season.
- Children (and adults) need to see and interact with nature while living in an urban environment. Trees are important on the building property and on streets, throughout the neighbourhood.
- Families will move or stay in neighbourhoods for all kinds of



The second designer round-table discussed local, diverse amenities and the importance of fostering family-friendly neighbourhoods.



At Harbourfront Community Centre and School, the multi-functional open spaces can accommodate different age groups and host a variety of community events. In this case, basketball nets encourage youth to play outdoors.

reasons, but most commonly, they will move for “better” schools, further emphasizing the importance of the quality (or perceived quality) of schools for families.

- There are territorial conflicts between dogs and children. Separate space is required for both in order to avoid conflicts at the community level. The design of the built environment should be delightful, joyous and whimsical to help people rejoice in the small pleasures of their community.



In 2007, New York City launched the ‘Schoolyards to Playgrounds’ Program, which used a participatory design process to transform schoolyards across the city into playgrounds.

In addition to design considerations, the workshop participants offered insight into other aspects of the development process:



Regent Park Aquatic Centre is located in Regent Park, Canada's oldest and largest social housing project. This civic amenity is part of a revitalization plan to increase housing density and integrate social housing with market-value units.

Marketing

- What sells often drives design, as opposed to what ultimately is a preferred living condition (e.g. having even a small balcony on the plans helps to sell condos but they are rarely used).
- Children (and their stuff) are rarely shown in marketing materials, but they have started to be.

Implementation

- The design community welcomes the idea of the handbook and suggests a performance based approach – identify the issue and the desired outcome and allow creativity to solve the problem in the specific context of the site, building or unit.
- Incentives such as the Toronto Green Standard's Tier 2

Development Charge rebate may be helpful to kick-start the industry.

- Consider if certain sites or areas in the city should be deemed "child friendly" based on proximity to key features such as schools, parks, libraries, community centres etc. and therefore focus efforts on child-specific buildings in those locations as opposed to everywhere.
- Part of the challenge involves a shift in the notion and definition of "home". Toronto's population will continue to grow and the majority of the housing to accommodate that growth will be in a tall building form. As such, the design of future buildings and the units contained within, need to respond to the diversity of household types including those with children.



Shops at Don Mills contains a variety of uses and leisure amenities. There is a central square in the middle of the complex featuring art, fountains and a skating rink.

2.2 Design Review Panel



Originally a leftover space at a Shanghai intersection, Kic Park was transformed into a resting area for the urban community.

The Design Review Panel is comprised of private sector design professionals – architects, landscape architects, urban designers and engineers – who provide independent, objective advice to city staff aimed at improving matters of design that affect the public realm. The Panel provides advice for both private development and public projects, including advice on new urban design policy.

On May 5th, 2016, City Planning staff presented the Growing Up study to the Panel, seeking guidance on elements that should be addressed at each of the study's three scales.

Panel members were supportive of this initiative and noted that studying how our city should respond to the needs of children and youth is long overdue. The panel welcomed new guidelines and performance standards as a tool for both City Planning and other City

divisions to evaluate and measure the child-friendliness of proposed developments.

At the unit scale the panel offered the following advice:

- Storage is crucial and should be provided in the unit. The study should explore international examples, such as Unite d'Habitation.
- Minimum standards for bedrooms should be established to define basic quality of space for children.
- Flexibility within the unit should be encouraged. The Panel provided the example of tall ceilings heights to allow for another level of habitation.

At the building scale the panel offered the following advice:

- Family units should be sited at lower levels to provide views onto outdoor play spaces and to have quick access to grade.
- Hallways and corridors should be encouraged as gathering/social spaces rather than a conduit.
- Skip-stop corridor typology, such as 150 Dan Leckie Way could be encouraged because it enables efficiencies by eliminating a corridor on every floor and allows cross ventilation in the two story unit.
- The spaces in front of houses were noted as important for play and social interaction. This design element should similarly be provided in tall buildings.
- Buildings should provide communal spaces that allow children to explore their curiosities and encourage sociability. These spaces should be "semi-secure"



Award winning parks along the Southeast False Creek in Vancouver offer continuous opportunities for families to play along the waterfront. Park designs include soft and hardscaped surfaces, shrubs and tree canopies, blocks for sitting and climbing, play structures, plazas and public art.

and not require intense supervision which will help provide children with “focused freedom”.

- The rooftop should become a resource and be coupled with the programming of sympathetic uses such as a laundry room that overlooks a rooftop play area.

At the neighbourhood level the panel offered the following advice:

- The study should consider establishing metrics to evaluate proposed developments against new family-friendly standards.
- The study should determine what the ideal distance to open spaces and schools should be.
- Light and view access requirements for children and families should be considered. Any requirements should complement and work with other City guidelines.



Hammarby Sjöstad in Sweden contains a variety of well-connected outdoor spaces that offer plentiful options for outdoor recreation and education.

The Central Courtyard is the main architectural feature of Via Verde in New York City. It connects the residents and provides a landscaped play space for children and youth of all ages.



2.3 Planning Review Panel

The Planning Review Panel is made up of 28 Torontonians selected at random. The Panel was created in 2016 so that a representative group of Torontonians could help the City Planning Division guide growth and change in Toronto. More information about the Planning Review Panel can be found at www.toronto.ca/planning/tprrp

On May 14th, 2016, the Panel met to offer input to the Planning Division and its partners on the Growing Up study. The Panel was joined by guests Rafi Ghanaghounian and his son Sako Ghanaghounian, who advocate for families living in downtown Toronto through their *Live in the City* campaign.

The Growing Up team provided the Panel with a list of issues faced by families living in vertical communities. These issues were split into the three study scales and formed the basis of the Panel's group discussions. The Panel was

asked to first identify any issues that were missed and second, prioritize the issues within the three scales. Detailed minutes from the panel session can be found on the Toronto Planning Review Panel [website](#).

Priorities at the unit scale

Panelists discussed the need for flexibility and soundproofing at the unit level. The group felt that units had to be designed in ways that allowed their configuration to be changed as the needs of the families changed — to increase storage space or change sleeping arrangements, for example. There was also broad agreement that soundproofing in units was an important issue faced by families with children. Panelists also felt soundproofing guidelines should be strictly enforced by the city to better address sound and noise concerns.

Panelists also believed that the

affordability of units was also an important issue for families, and that, in addressing other issues, the City should be careful not to make family-friendly units more expensive. Considering the lack of affordable housing in the city, especially for families with children, Panelists believed that it is important to work towards creating affordable housing units through the Growing Up Study.

Of the identified issues the Panel agreed the most important issues that the Growing Up Study should prioritize improved soundproofing between units and the corridors, the flexibility of units, affordability of units, and safety within the units.

Priorities at the building scale

Panelists agreed that the lack of sufficient and appropriate common areas made tall buildings less attractive to families with children. For panelists, common



Water fountains and splash pads are popular spots for families to cool off and play in the summer Hammarby Sjöstad in Sweden.

areas included indoor play areas for children throughout the building, common terraces, cafes and restaurants on lower floors, and rooms for families to rent out. These spaces would give children a place to play as well as provide families an opportunity to interact with others in the community. They also suggested that these spaces be distributed throughout the building rather than only on the ground or basement floor. By distributing them throughout the building, they will be easier for families to access.

General building safety for children was seen also mentioned. Considering the limited amount of space within units, Panelists suggested there be extra locker or storage spaces in buildings for families to use.

The Panel also highlighted that families sometimes are forced to move out of a building when their needs outgrow their unit. Panelists

believed that all buildings should have a good mix of unit sizes within them so that families are able to move from unit-to-unit as their needs change, without having to move out of the building or the neighbourhood.

Panelists felt families with children need easy access to outside spaces and buildings could be configured so that family-appropriate units have easier access to the ground-level.

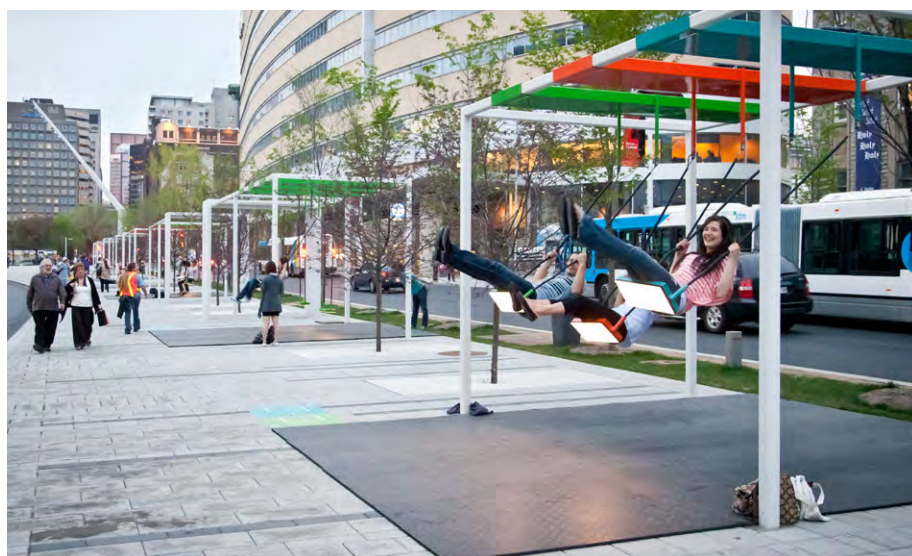
Priorities at the neighbourhood scale

The Panelists emphasized the need to focus the provision of key services and amenities for families within the local neighbourhood. Panelists believe it is extremely important to build communities where there are enough schools, child care facilities, parks, public spaces, and play spaces in close proximity to the tall

buildings. Ongoing neighbourhood planning was seen as a way to help ensure these services were available over time.

The group called for more collaboration between developers and the City to invest in large, shared public spaces that families and communities can use, rather than limiting people to seeking amenities in their buildings or in City-owned facilities. These partnered spaces would help create a better sense of community among families, which the Panelists felt is often difficult in a tall building environment.

Spacious and safe design of streets would make it easier for families to walk, bike, and use public transit to get to and from local services and amenities.



The installation 21 Balançoires (21 Swings) in Montréal, Canada encourages people to collaborate together in a musical experiment. Each differently coloured swing lights up and emits a unique sound when in motion. When swung in unison, different melodies emerge.

3.0 DEVELOPERS

Phase 1 also included interviews with developers who build Toronto's vertical communities. The interviews included large and small scale condominium and purpose-built rental developers who produce both mid-rise and tall buildings. We asked 8 developers to describe their challenges in producing larger (family) units from both a construction and market perspective. We also asked them how they currently factor families with children into the design and planning of new developments and how they might in the future. The commentary resulting from the interviews has been grouped into the following themes: market considerations, marketing to families, amenities, the end user, location and disincentives.

Market Considerations

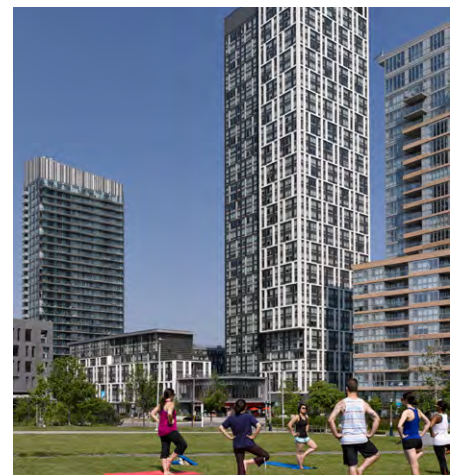
The most common issue raised by the developers was the slow pre-sales of the larger (three bedroom) units. Typically, three bedroom units are the last to sell during the pre-construction phase. This is likely due to a number of factors. First, there appears to be a price threshold after which purchasers are reluctant to buy off plans, but they may consider the purchase after a walk through, once built. Second, the time between the purchase of a pre-construction unit and the date the unit is ready for occupancy is generally too long for families who need more space sooner rather than later. The time between purchase and occupancy can take between two and six years in some cases.

In the instances where developers have marketed a building with three bedroom units, they make sure the units can be converted into one and two bedrooms in case the three bedrooms fail to sell, effectively limiting their market risk. Rental developers also noted that three bedroom units are the most

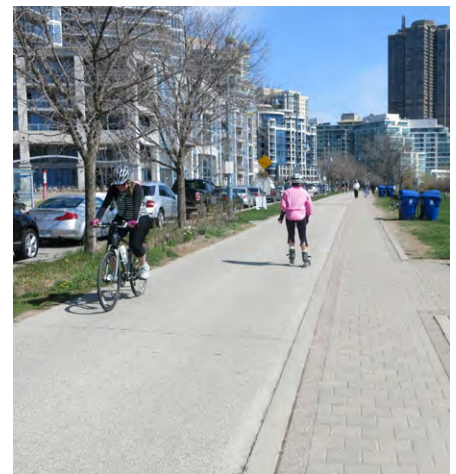
difficult to rent out, mostly due to affordability reasons.

Having said this, one developer remarked at the length of time developers let larger units "sit" on the market is not very long, noting that there is opportunity to encourage a longer selling time for larger units.

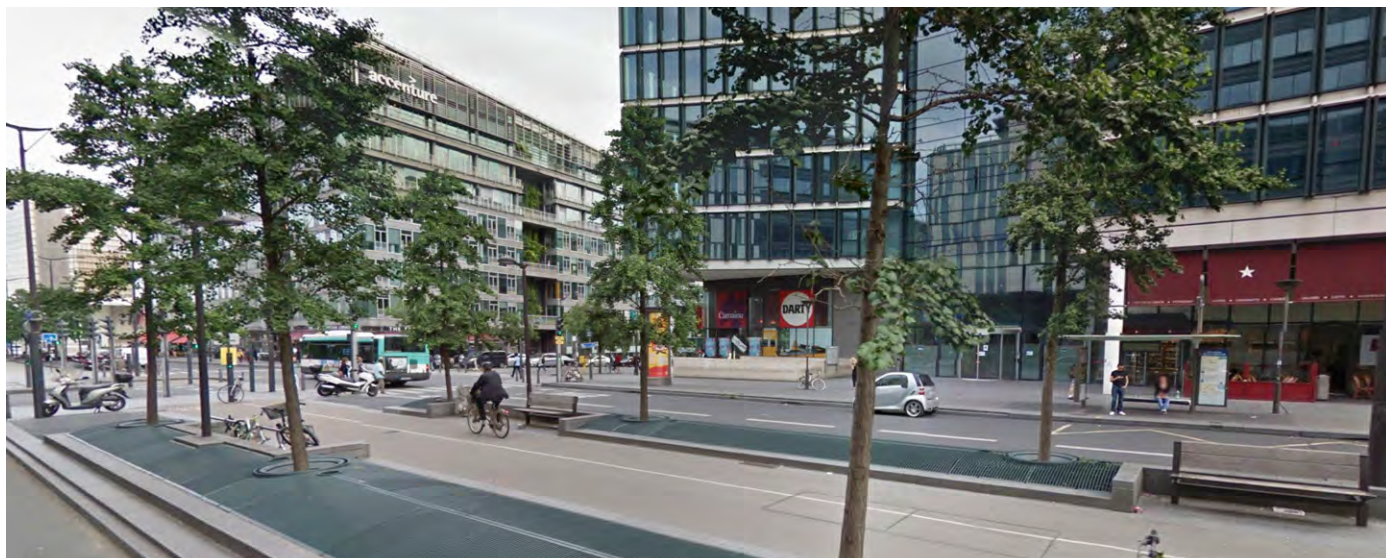
Related to absorption rates is the issue of financing. Given that to-date they have taken longer to sell, developers have indicated that some lenders/investors have shown reluctance to support such projects or will only provide financing once a certain percentage of the building is sold. There is a perception in the industry that there is not yet a strong market for larger units, therefore providing them now is a risk. Phase 2 of this study will explore this issue more fully. The 8 developers interviewed are listed in Appendix 4.



Large open spaces support a variety of activities at 150 Dan Leckie Way.



Humber Bay Shores has an abundance of trails, parks and nearby open spaces.



The Avenue de France spans the length of Paris Rive Gauche and is a central transit spine. Buses and cycle tracks are separated by a planted median strip, providing safety across multiple modes of transportation.

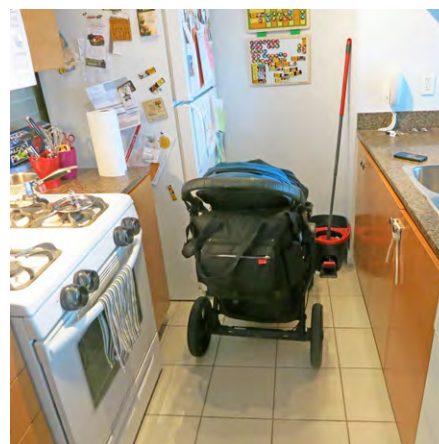
Marketing to and amenities for families

Very few developers we spoke to are currently marketing to families. While there have been some recent examples, many developers felt that the market is not yet ready. One developer noted that although Toronto has grown up, people have not yet adopted high-density living as a viable option for their family.

Market readiness is directly tied to the amenities provided in new buildings. Even if a developer is required to provide 10% family units, the challenge then becomes how to design 10% of the amenity space for those families. One developer emphasized the need to design flexible amenities that can accommodate a range of uses – rooms that could be used as play spaces for children during the day and party rooms in the evenings.

The end user

A number of developers highlighted issues related to ensuring the end users of larger three bedroom units are in fact families. At the moment there is no mechanism to guarantee that larger units are purchased and lived in by families. Rental developers also noted that the 3 bedroom rental units are typically harder to rent and are usually rented by students. Having said this, family rental tenants are considered ideal as they tend to be long term tenants which effectively reduces turnover costs.



In many cases, unit entries lack adequate space to store a stroller, necessitating creativity and compromise.

Geographic Location Disincentives

The majority of developers noted that geographic location plays a substantial role for the potential success of family-specific projects (e.g. ones with larger number of three bedroom units). Families are more likely to select a neighbourhood with a healthy mix of child-specific amenities such as recreation programs, libraries and parks. Schools are likely the primary consideration when a family chooses where to live.

A number of developers highlighted this as the “mid-rise advantage”. Since the Avenues are generally adjacent to established neighbourhoods, they act as a natural place for families considering condos. The adjacent neighbourhoods typically have the community infrastructure families look for. This is why it's critical to deliver neighbourhood amenities in newly developed communities. Timing matters: if the school isn't built yet, families won't move in. To this point, Regent Park was mentioned in a number of interviews as an excellent example of a new community that is desirable for families given that community infrastructure (school, aquatic facility and community centre) was phased in with development.

In addition to slower absorption rates, there are a number of disincentives developers asked the city to consider. The first is related to parking. Since parking rates are higher for three bedroom units, there is a reluctance to include three bedrooms units in new developments. High parking rates increase the number of below grade parking floors which substantially increases construction costs. Developers also raised the issue of affordability or “market accessibility” specifically with respect to condominium fees. Since fees are calculated on a per square foot basis, larger units would translate into higher carrying costs for families. Lastly, the issue of design was identified. A number of developers highlighted two issues for the City to consider. Both relate to urban design and include the need to balance a “build to” podium with allowing room for grade related outdoor amenity space and secondly, the 750 square meter floor plate requirement and preference for a square tower, limits flexibility in unit design and layout.

Future Participation

On the whole, both rental and condominium developers supported the study and looked forward to future participation in Phase 2 including the possibility of developing a pilot or prototype family unit.



Outdoor courtyard at 150 Dan Leckie Way.



Located in a 230m² parking lot between buildings in downtown San Diego's East Village, this pocket park is a collaborative effort by the community, a local architecture firm and the developers who own the site.

In Phase 2, the team will analyze the background research and precedents as well as the informative comments and questions raised by respondents to the survey, families that participated in our household visits, and the design and development communities. Using the three scales, our CondoHack discussions have identified key areas for further exploration, including:

Unit

- Designing for flexibility
- Sizing of entryways, bedrooms and living spaces
- Design and size of balconies
- Maximizing in-suite and bulk storage
- Improving sound attenuation between units and the corridor

Building

- Child-specific indoor and outdoor amenities
- Youth-specific indoor and outdoor amenities
- Circulation space (hallways, stairs and lobbies) as social spaces
- Location of family units within the building
- Siting of community facilities in new developments

Neighbourhood

- The location and availability of community facilities (child care, schools, community centers, parks and libraries) in the neighbourhood
- Design of the public realm
- Design of the roads to promote safe walking and biking routes
- Materiality of play areas
- Joint-use facilities in the neighbourhood such as school yards

A toolkit of policy and design directions will be developed. Staff will discuss the directions with stakeholders to ensure they are instructive and can be implemented.



The design of the Tumbling Bay Playground at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London, England embeds play within the landscape and promotes ecological education. Pines and felled oaks represent the local woodland ecology and offer a stimulating structure of treehouses, tunnels and netted bridges. The playground encourages children and youth to push their comfort levels and test the limits of their courage and ability.

Appendices

Appendix 1 SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. What type of home do you live in?

- House (detached, semi-detached, row, etc.)
- Mid-rise building (up to 11 storeys)
- High-rise building (greater than 11 storeys)

2. Please select the statement that best applies:

- I own my home
- I rent my home
- I live in supported housing
- Other ? _____

3. How many adults live in your home, including yourself?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

4. Do you have children (under the age of 18) living at home?

- Yes
- No

General Information

4a. How many children in each of the following age groups live in your home?

0 to 4

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

5 to 9

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

10 to 14

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

15 to 18

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Questions about your home (unit)

5. When it comes to raising children, what are the three most important features of your home (unit)?

- number of bedrooms
- number of bathrooms
- amount and location of storage
- balcony/patio or other outdoor space
- large windows in the living area
- windows in the bedroom
- large kitchen
- large living room
- dining area with space for a table and chairs

- amount of entryway/hallway space
- good lighting/number of outlets
- other (please elaborate) _____

6. Have you made any changes to parts of your home (unit) to accommodate your children?(For example, changing the purpose of a room – turning a den into a bedroom; adding shelving or storage; reconfiguring your kitchen or bathroom; installing a fold-down bed; etc.)

- Yes
- No

Questions about your home (unit)

6a. Where have you made these changes? Please choose all that apply.

- bedrooms
- bathroom
- kitchen
- flooring
- storage
- entryways
- living rooms/dens
- balcony/patio
- Other? (please elaborate) _____

Questions about your building

7. When it comes to raising children, what are the three most important interior features your building currently has or should have>

- children's play room
- youth homework room
- multi-purpose (party) room
- en-suite laundry facilities
- fitness room
- pool
- storage lockers
- bike parking

- concierge
- good hallway/entryway design
- availability and number of elevators
- washrooms near common areas (lobby, play spaces, etc.)
- Other (please elaborate) _____

8. When it comes to raising children, what are the three most important exterior features your building has or should have?

- outdoor open space/plaza
- outdoor green space
- resident parking
- visitor parking
- children's play area
- sports court
- active recreation activities for adults
- active recreation activities for children
- amenities for relaxation (e.g. benches, picnic tables)
- design of walkways leading to building entrances
- other (please elaborate) _____

9. What is the single most important thing you would change about your home or building to make it easier to raise children?

Questions about your neighbourhood

10. When it comes to raising children, what are the three most important qualities of your neighbourhood?

- Close to work
- Close to schools or child care
- Easy access to fresh food
- Easy access to shops (corner store, hardware store, pharmacy, etc.)
- Availability of recreation activities for the children (community centre, library, public pool, arena, etc.)

- Availability of recreation activities for adults (library, gym, yoga studio, etc.)
- Easy access to green spaces and playgrounds
- Easy access to public transit
- Safe
- Other? _____

11. When you are with your children, how do you move around your neighbourhood?

	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
On foot or by bicycle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public transit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taxi, car-share, or rental car	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family-owned vehicle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. What is the single most important thing you would change about your neighbourhood to make it easier to raise children?

Just a few more questions!

13. How much longer do you plan to stay in your current home?

- Not planning to move
- Less than five years
- Six to 10 years
- 10 or more years

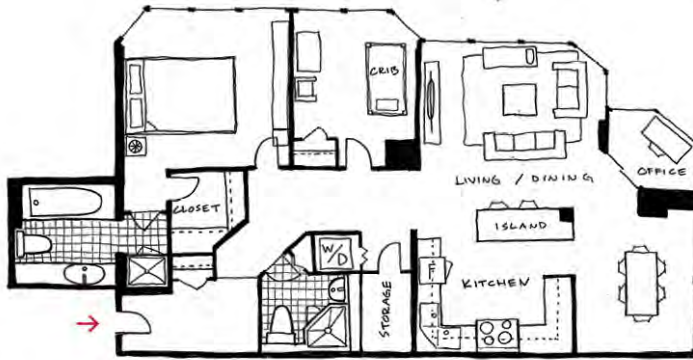
13a. What is motivating you to move?

- Need a bigger home
- Need more bedrooms
- To live in a different neighbourhood
- To have easier access to green space or recreation programs
- To be closer to work
- To be closer to family
- To be closer to school/child care
- Other (please elaborate) _____

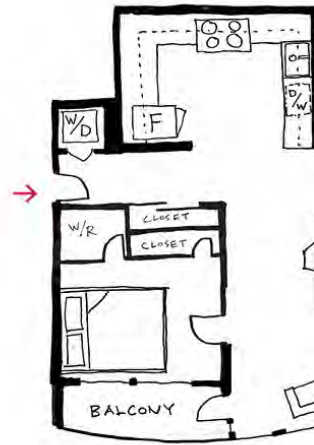
14. Is there anything else you would like us to know about raising children and youth in mid and high-rise buildings?

15. What is your postal code

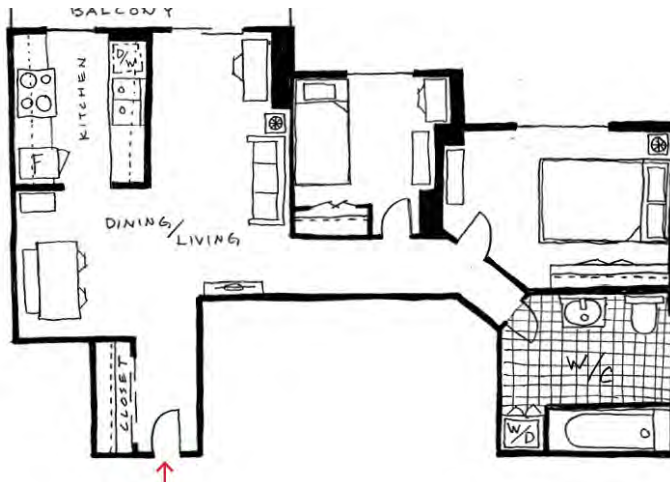
Appendix 2 CONDOHACK HOUSEHOLD VISITS



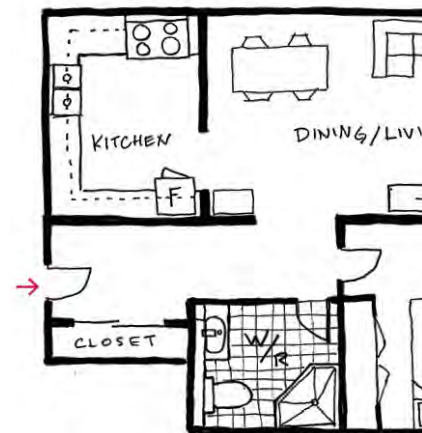
Humber Bay Shores



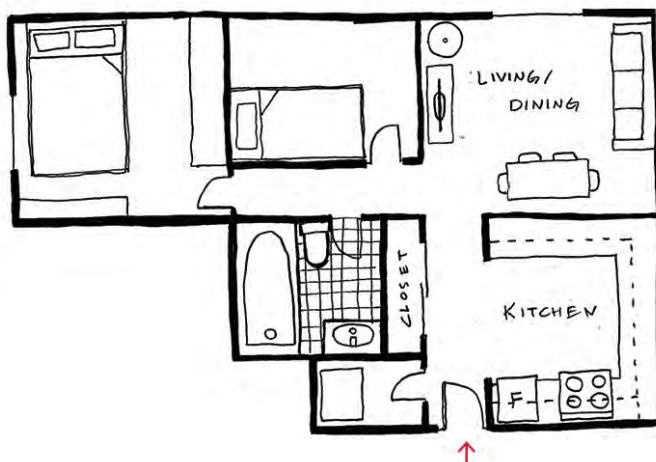
Kennedy & Sheppard



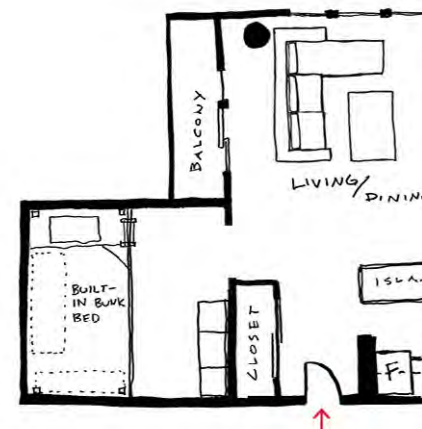
Mount Pleasant & Davisville



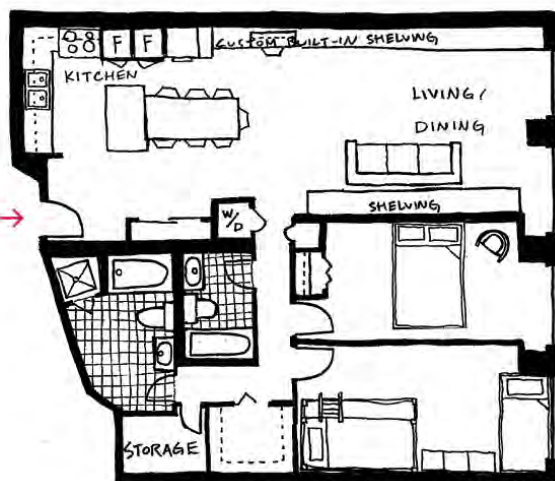
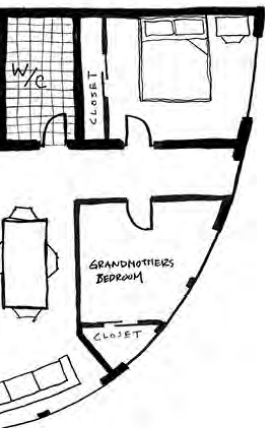
Yonge & Sheppard



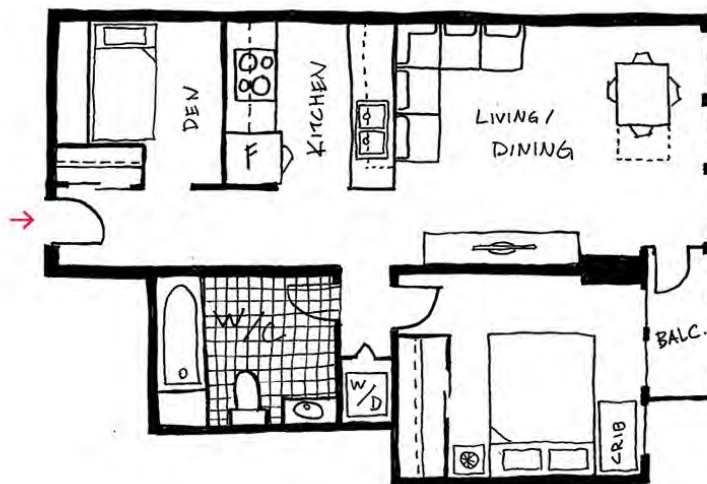
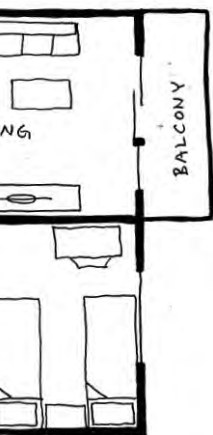
Scarborough Civic Centre



Liberty Village



The Esplanade



City Place



North York Civic Centre

The Esplanade

PROFILE:

Shuang, parent
Joe, parent
Carter, age 12
Aiden, age 10
Max, age 7

PURCHASED: 2001

UNIT:

- 129m² (1388ft²), no balcony
- 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms
- 26th floor of 33 storey building

There are some pros and cons of living in a high rise according to the three brothers who share a bedroom, “we keep our stinky basketball stuff in the bathroom,” explains 7 year old Max. “But in a small place, you don’t lose stuff because you don’t have to look far to find it”, says Aiden who sleeps on the top bunk. “And you get a good view of the fireworks every time,” notes Carter.

Since their parents Shuang and Joe moved in 14 years ago, they estimate they’ve spent over \$100,000 in upgrades to make the unit work efficiently for their active family. The kitchen was completely redone with a kitchen island, custom wall units and space-saving appliances, walls were removed, closets added, cork floors installed to reduced noise and bathrooms enlarged.

The kitchen flows seamlessly into the living area so the family can cook, eat, do homework, play games and lounge on the couch all at the same time. They don’t use the party-room much now but as kids they wandered in and played at no cost if



● CondoHack ● Schools ● Libraries ● Subway ● Streetcar ● Parks/Open Space

“We keep our stinky basketball stuff in the bathroom. But in a small place, you don’t lose stuff because you don’t have to look far to find it.”

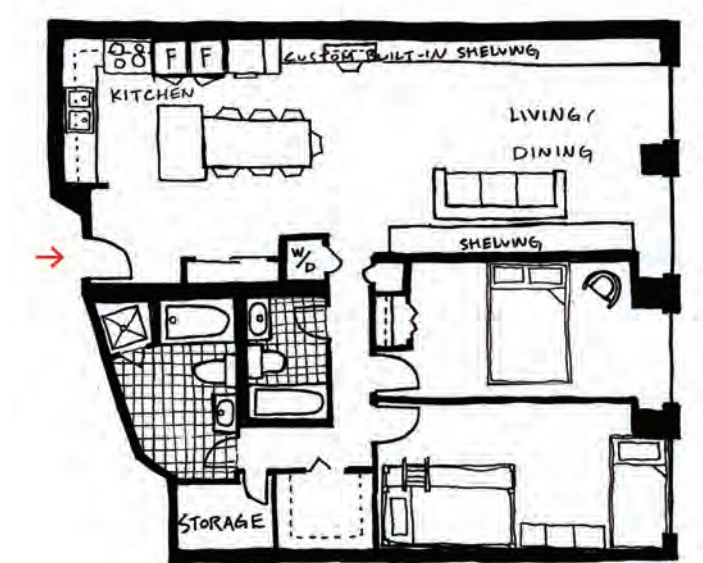
it wasn’t in use. They all use the roof top and terraces, especially the 6th floor patio with BBQ’s, picnic tables and space to hang out with other families. The boys are quick to say that if they could add only one thing it would be a gymnasium where they could shoot hoops.

Joe works in Mississauga but only commutes twice a week, spending the rest of his time visiting clients downtown and working from home. The kids take transit or get a drive to their school located near Spadina and Bloor. They have bikes but don’t feel safe riding on most city streets and know that they’re not supposed to ride on sidewalks. Shuang has a 15 minute walk to work. They’ve considered moving to a house to allow them to spread out a bit, but when they start looking they realize they don’t get a lot more square footage, they just

get a lot further from the services and amenities they use daily, like grocery stores, parks and transit, which then requires a second car. “I don’t want to be part of creating sprawl, or commuting, and eating up farmland. That is very important to me,” says Shuang.



Over the years, the children have marked their heights on a wall to see how much they have grown



Unit layout - 129m² (1388ft²) with 2 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms



Kitchen layout - Long island is utilized as an eating, studying and hang out spot



Custom built-in shelving in living/dining area and extra storage space



Skateboard storage under the beds

LIKES

- + Close proximity to local amenities, The St. Lawrence Market, grocery stores and transit.
- + The kids go outside a lot to David Crombie park.
- + About 40 families are active on a Parent Network Facebook page that organizes weekly play days, toy swaps and seasonal events in the building.
- + Like living in a vertical community and not contributing to urban sprawl.

CHALLENGES

- There is a workout gym in the building but not everyone likes it when kids are in the room.
- They could use more shelving and storage space but are mindful that lack of space is a natural way to minimize purchases.
- The three boys share the larger, master bedroom, where they each have a chest of drawers.
- The children do not feel safe cycling to school.

HACKS

- Removed a wall to open up kitchen and added a long island as main eating, hang out and homework table.
- Moved a wall to enlarge one shower, and replaced one tub with a shower.
- Installed cork flooring to dampen sound transfer to the unit below.
- Problematic HVAC so they added vents at considerable cost to vent the kitchen better and improve air flow.

WISHLIST

- * A bigger unit, but would likely cost them \$1.5 million including increased taxes and fees making it unaffordable.
- * Play space and gym equipment for kids and teens.

Mount Pleasant & Davisville

PROFILE:

Joel, parent
Frances, parent
Cormac, age 5

PURCHASED: 2009

UNIT:

- 83m² (897ft²), plus 9m² (100ft²) balcony
- 2 bedrooms, 1 bathroom
- 7th floor of 18 storey building

Frances and Joel first moved into their two bedroom, 897 square foot condo in 2009. When their son Cormac was born, the second bedroom, which functioned as an office, was transformed into a nursery. Their home's functionality was improved through space-saving solutions such as a "boffice" – a fold down desk that converts into a discreet liquor cabinet.

Frances and Joel are active participants in the community, she runs a local farmer's market and together they organize movie nights in June Rowlands Park. Frances has helped to improve the social life of their condo building. As a member of the board she has initiated a building Christmas and Halloween party, ice cream social and summer barbecue.

Joel and Frances prioritize community and friends over space but don't feel they've had to sacrifice access to the outdoors. They say their balcony is like having a second living room and added a security lock to the balcony door so Cormac can't wander out on his own.



● CondoHack ● Schools ● Libraries ● Subway ● Bus Route ● Parks/Open Space

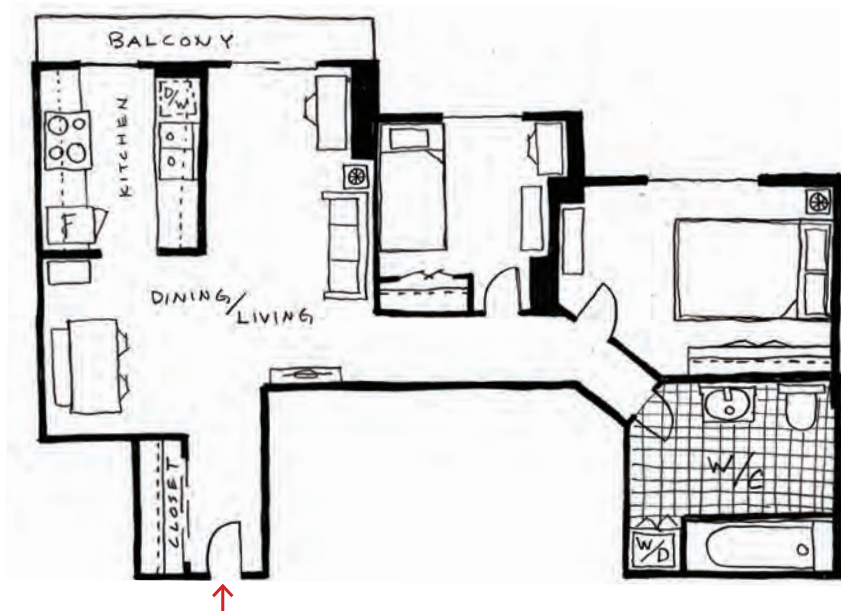
“We don’t see the value of moving...We have friends with large homes and they are constantly working on it, and we’re like ‘bye, we’re going to the ROM’. That’s what we try to remember when it gets cramped and crazy in here.”

While they have a car in the garage, they rarely use it, preferring to get around on foot and scooter, and routinely access the nearby parks and ravine trails down to Evergreen Brickworks.

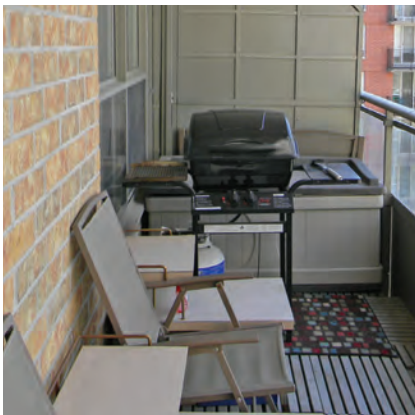
Frances and Joel's home is a hub of activity for friends and children who are drawn to the welcoming, adaptable space they've created. They have a large modular couch they can expand and contract as needed – providing seating for up to 7 people or even a place for a young visitor to sleep in a pinch. Their fridge overflows with fresh food and greens, so they've added a bar fridge under the counter facing the living room for snacks and drinks.

Joel and Frances dream of buying a place out of town where they would have more

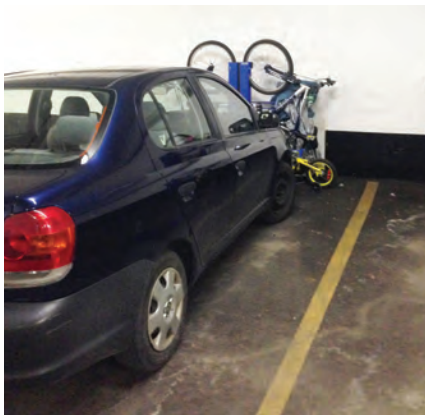
room, be able to grow some vegetables and still hang on to this place in town, but that won't be happening soon. “We don't see the value of moving, we might get \$500K for this place and we can't afford to pay \$1 million to get a place that's too big and too much work. We have friends with large homes and they are constantly working on it, and we're like 'bye, we're going to the ROM'. That's what we try to remember when it gets cramped and crazy in here.”



Unit layout - 83m² (897ft²) with 2 bedrooms and 1 bathroom



Large balcony allows for more storage, entertainment and can be used year round



Bike storage in the car parking



Toy and storage area in Cormac's bedroom



Flexible and adaptable furniture

LIKES

- + Open kitchen allows for food prep and help with entertaining.
- + The party room is opened all day, has wi-fi and can be booked free of charge.
- + Cormac's school is close so he can get there by scooter.
- + Proximity to public parks and open space - they make regular use of the Beltline, the Brickworks ravine trails and June Rowlands Park.
- + Not having to spend time and money maintaining a house.

CHALLENGES

- Inadequate closet doors and shelving.
- HVAC system with open vents allows noise to travel between the kitchen and Cormac's bedroom.
- No access to vegetable garden.
- Moving to a larger unit is unaffordable.

HACKS

- ➔ Adaptable furniture that saves space.
- ➔ Removed interior partitions to create more kitchen storage space.
- ➔ Added a security lock on the balcony and main entryway so their child can't wander outside or into the hallway.

WISHLIST

- * An overhanging counter for kitchen island to accommodate sitting, dining.
- * Closet doors and shelving that extend to the ceiling.
- * An enclosed balcony so that it can be used year round.
- * More traffic signals and crosswalks due to busy arterial traffic.
- * More recreation programs with an online registration system.
- * More storage for toys and games in the party room closet space.

Liberty Village

PROFILE:

Lorna, parent
Sophie, age 8

PURCHASED: 2011

UNIT:

- 59m² (635ft²), plus 5m² (50ft²) balcony
- 1 bedroom plus den, 1 bathroom
- 7th floor of 30 storey building

Lorna and her 8 year old daughter Sophie were instantly smitten with the friendly, lively feel of their neighbourhood and proximity to programs and places to go. Lorna grew up in the suburbs but says she can't imagine living there now. She's seen an increase in young families in their building who connect and network easily around child-care options, activities and getting to and from school. "And there's a baby girl in unit 706 who's my friend now" adds the sprightly Sophie.

The unit is flooded with sunlight and a panoramic view of the lake. Storage space is at a premium but Lorna has maximized efficiency by adding a custom wall unit in her bedroom, minimizing purchases and tucking everything away neatly. Sophie's bedroom in the converted 9X9' den is a model of efficiency and order. The 9.5 foot high ceilings allow for a loft-style bunk bed with a full six feet of accessible and bright space underneath, "it's big enough for me to hula-hoop" Sophie declares with a demonstration. Lorna says she doesn't



● CondoHack ● Schools ● Libraries — Streetcar ■ Parks/Open Space

"People here knock on your door, invite you over, I really like the social vibe."

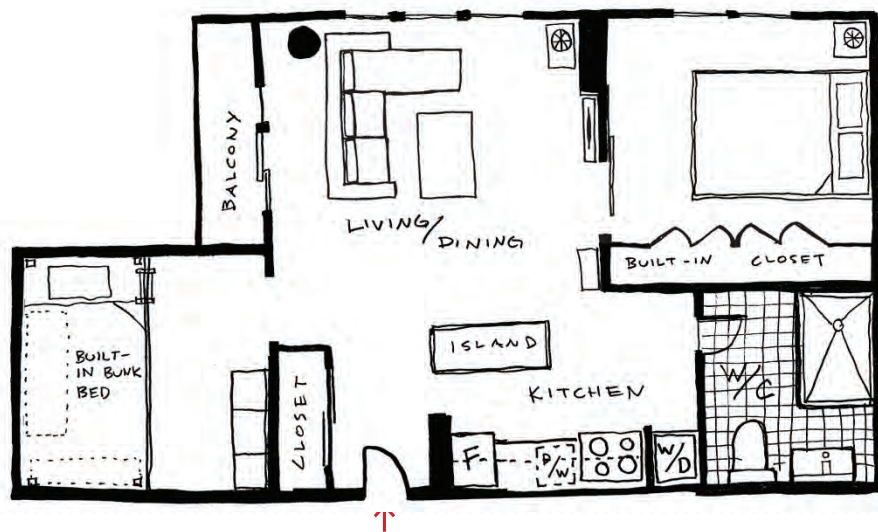
use the small balcony much, but that might change when the adjacent construction and dust stops. The bathroom and shower stall is roomy but what they really miss is a bathtub - Sophie struggles to reach the taps and showerhead.

Lorna appreciates the full size kitchen appliances but laments the lack of an overhang on her island countertop that would allow them to use it as a dining table with stools. Instead the two usually dine sitting on the couch, resting plates on the coffee table. It's the sort of small space trade-off they're used to, like avoiding bulk purchases, relying on regular trips to the nearby grocery store, and being very conscientious about purchases. "We have a storage locker that is packed full of stuff but in general I am good at getting rid of stuff when we don't need it anymore." The two of them remain committed to their home

and the neighbourhood for the long haul in part because of their satisfaction with the school Sophie attends in nearby Parkdale, "the most important thing is quality teachers, and the teachers there are great."



Sophie's bedroom has a large opening, no door, and relies on borrowed light



Unit layout - 59m² (635ft²) with 1 bedroom plus den and 1 bathroom



The unit is flooded with sunlight and a panoramic view of the lake



Custom Ikea wall unit in Lorna's bedroom



Storage space for Sophie's books and toys



Kitchen layout and configuration

LIKES

- + Good sound separation.
- + Wide entryway to fit a stroller.
- + A lively social media presence, makes it easy to connect with the community and other parents.
- + Pleased with the school Sophie attends in Parkdale. Lorna volunteers there on the Parent Council.

CHALLENGES

- High ceilings allow for additional storage but closet doors don't go to the ceiling so it's difficult to access.
- Storage unit is secure with her possessions, but others report high rate of theft from wire-mesh storage lockers, including bicycles.
- A salt water pool in the building is coming soon but has been unusable due to harsh chlorine reactions.
- A dedicated play space for children nearby is well resourced but at \$13 a visit, it is unaffordable for them.

HACKS

- High ceilings allow for a 6 foot clearance under Sophie's bunk bed effectively doubling the floor space available in her bedroom.
- Custom closet and storage unit added in master bedroom to maximize space and eliminate sliding track closet doors that block access.

WISHLIST

- * A door on Sophie's bedroom, which was converted from a den.
- * The local park is close but needs swings, more play structures for older kids, and rubberized surfaces that don't get muddy.
- * Access to recreation programs is restricted and they wish there were more available and easier to enroll in, with an online system.

Yonge & Sheppard

PROFILE:

Ivonka, parent
Anton, parent
Vadim, age 15

RENTED: 2015

UNIT:

- 60m² (640ft²), plus 6m² (60ft²) balcony
- 1 bedroom, 1 bathroom
- 7th floor of 29 storey building

“The big house brings many problems, always fixing, cleaning, lots of money and time wasted,” declares 15 year old Vadim who grew up in a 9 storey building in Armenia until he moved to Toronto last year with his parents. There they had a large two bedroom apartment with two balconies and a big kitchen but here in Toronto they’re renting a one bedroom in a tall building that’s compact and sparsely furnished. But they don’t seem to mind the downsizing, “after all the things we’ve been through - war, instability, losing my home twice - you learn you don’t need much stuff to be happy,” explains Ivonka. Vadim adds that he likes living in a smaller space, and being in a big home would just make him feel lonely.

Before arriving in Toronto, Ivonka and her husband Anton spent hours researching school rankings online and scouring google streetview to decide where to live. They chose the Yonge and Sheppard area to be close to transit, a good high school and rental apartments.



“The big house brings many problems, always fixing, cleaning, lots of money and time wasted.”

The unit has a decent sized balcony but no furniture. Ivonka plans to use it more in the summer, “to drink tea when my husband comes back.” Vadim has a small desk where he does homework in the bedroom, with a shelf full of academic awards and medals “I was the national champion of draughts” he says, “I think you call it Russian checkers.”

Vadim has an 8 minute walk to Earl Haig HS and is flourishing in sports and academics. Ivonka takes the subway and busses to her work in the financial services sector. She finds the local grocery stores expensive so she brings small loads back on her way home from work. The ventilation in the building is poor, “you can smell everyone’s dinner”, but she’s fine with the small galley kitchen and appliances.

Anton has returned briefly to Armenia to attend to some family matters so Ivonka and Vadim share the bedroom for now in two beds. They may have to move to a bigger unit when Anton returns, though finances are tight already. Anton had a car in Armenia and would like to get another one eventually, but first he’ll have to learn English and get a good job – he was a history professor in Armenia.

Vadim wants a bicycle and Ivonka doesn’t see the need for a car, preferring walkable neighbourhoods served by transit. She visited friends in Vaughan recently and found the streets empty and alienating, “what if I need some milk or eggs, what am I going to do, drive a car to the city? Maybe this time will come for us, to live like that, but for now, I would rather own a condo.”



Unit layout - 60m² (640ft²) with 1 bedroom and 1 bathroom



Bedroom layout and organization



Dining/living area layout



Vadim's medals from playing draughts



Outdoor sitting area

LIKES

- + Compact scale of apartment living.
- + Proximity to local shopping, transit and schools.
- + Safe, clean and friendly building.
- + Adequate storage.

CHALLENGES

- Getting groceries back home on transit, finding affordable food and grocery stores.
- Monthly rent is \$1400 which is challenging on service sector wages.

WISHLIST

- * A membership at the fitness club and pool in their building.
- * Vadim wants a bicycle
- * Better ventilation so they can't smell other people's cooking.
- * To purchase a condo and stay in the neighbourhood.

Kennedy & Sheppard

PROFILE:

Devyani, parent
Raj, parent
Arif, 12
Uzma, grandmother

PURCHASED: 2009

UNIT:

- 92m² (985ft²), plus balcony
- 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms
- 36th floor of 40 storey building

Raj adores his panoramic south-facing view from the 36th floor, and in spite of the breeze, uses his balcony to grow a few tomatoes and soak up the sun. The unit generally suits their needs and the family likes the numerous amenities and terraces the building has to offer - Raj has even stepped up to become the VP on the condo board. But they say the building lacks a community, connected feel that they were hoping for when they moved to Toronto from New York City. "People come home and never leave their unit".

Devyani and Raj regularly enjoy the building amenities - a pool, gym, terraces, a billiards room - but few residents enjoy them. "70% of the residents are renters and are not invested in making community where they live," says Raj. As VP of the condo board he helped organize and promote bbq's, parties and buffets through newsletters, social media and bulletin



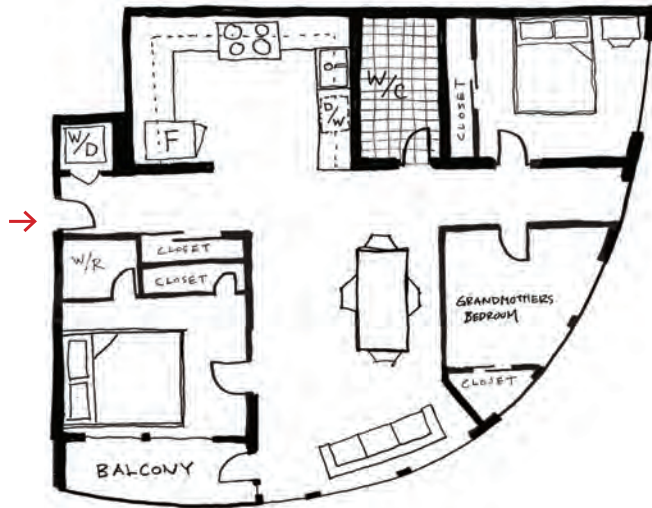
“My son learned how to walk on Broadway, in New York City. Here, we use the car for everything.”

boards, “but only a small percentage of residents came, and even then, sometimes they just fill their plates and take it upstairs to eat.”

The building is a 15 minute walk from the Agincourt GO station, which Devyani uses daily to get to work in under 30 minutes. Raj drives 15 minutes to his wholesale business in the east end. Their son, Arif, takes two busses to get to school in about 25 minutes, though they yearn for school bus service to make it easier and safer. Sending their 12 year old out to negotiate multi-lane arterials like Kennedy causes them great concern.

Devyani says that they moved to Toronto not knowing the city well, and now, having lived here for 5 years, they’re thinking they will move to a house in a more connected,

walkable neighbourhood with a good high school and more room for the grandmother who will be moving here permanently from India. “My son learned how to walk on Broadway (in New York City),” says Raj. “We were always walking there. And buying everything we needed from local stores on our way home.” Raj laments that he too has grown accustomed to the car. In New York he put 2,000 miles on his car annually and in Toronto, it’s more like 15,000 kilometers. “Here, we use the car for everything.”



Unit layout - 92m² (985ft²) with 3 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms



Kitchen and dining area



Local park in neighbourhood



Outdoor ground floor entrance



Outdoor terrace amenity

LIKES

- + Lots of morning sun, panoramic view.
- + 3 bedrooms allows for regular visits from grandmother in India.
- + Neighbourhood and building feel safe.
- + Agincourt GO Station is 15 minutes away on foot.

CHALLENGES

- The building lacks a community feel, high percentage of renters.
- Walking anywhere is difficult, heavy traffic makes it unsafe and unpleasant.
- The park in the centre square is pleasant but dog waste is a problem.

HACKS

- ➔ When the grandmother is not visiting and using the third bedroom, they convert it into a prayer room.

WISHLIST

- * Bigger kitchen, with more cupboards, counter space and gas stove.
- * More room for the grandmother who is moving here permanently.
- * A pedestrian bridge to the local Agincourt GO Station.
- * School bus service for their son to go to school instead of taking transit.
- * A friendlier, more social building where people are more invested in creating a community where they live.

City Place

PROFILE:

Larissa, parent
Stuart, parent
Sarina, age 3
Henry, age 6 months

PURCHASED: 2007

UNIT:

- 60m² (650ft²), plus small balcony
- 1 bedroom plus den, 1 bathroom
- 33rd floor of 49 storey building

Larissa bought her unit in 2007 when she was single. Stuart moved in, they got married and by 2015 they had two small children sharing the small space with them. Their first instinct was to think about moving somewhere they could afford in the suburbs or further. This would certainly make Stuart's daily commute an hour outside the city easier, but they gradually had a shift in thinking. They concluded that the benefits of living in a maintenance free, compact home situated in a walkable, connected community outweighed the upheaval, dislocation and car-dependence of a suburban home. "We love being able to walk out the door for groceries, visit a nearby museum and just hop on transit outside my door."

Their condo includes en-suite laundry facilities, an open kitchen with an island and a small balcony. They've converted the den into a nursery adding a sliding door and shelving and Henry sleeps in a crib in the parents room. Larissa says compact

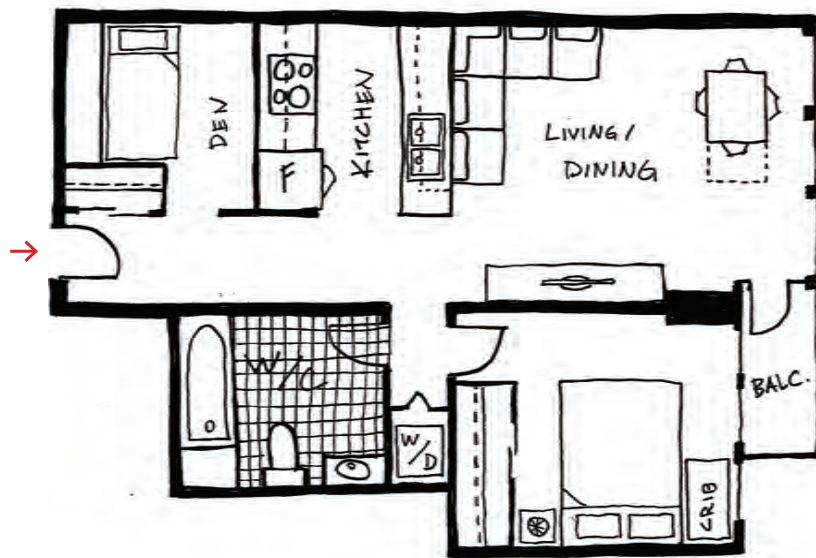


"We love being able to walk out the door for groceries, visit a nearby museum and just hop on transit outside my door."

living is challenging at times, but on the whole freeing, "it forces you to rethink what you need, I had to let things go. Now every time we break something like a plate or bowl, we say 'yay, less stuff!' And we don't replace it." They feel they'll need more room eventually, but so far, the cost and benefits of staying in place and adding innovative storage solutions outweighs the expense of moving to larger unit in the same building.

Social media and the sharing economy has been a boon to Larissa who has been able to buy, sell and share baby items online. She reports that the neighbourhood is undergoing a baby-boom with 30-40% of households having children by her count, adding up to a total of 250 kids under the age of eight in the immediate vicinity.

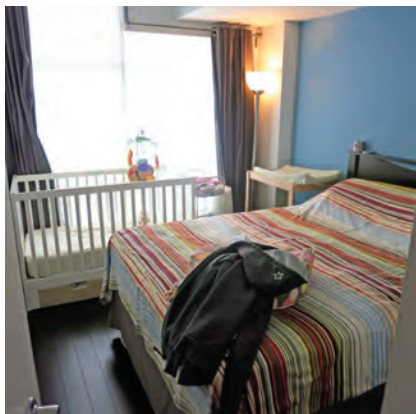
The most significant amenity that Larissa's home offers is the "Superclub," a recreation centre in the Cityplace neighbourhood that is shared by a cluster of five condos and funded by their fees. Amenities include BBQ's, bowling, a dog run, toy room, gym, movie theatre, playground and pool. Larissa and other parents successfully lobbied the board for the creation of kids amenity spaces, toy purchases and programming fees for things events like a magician, family BBQ and Christmas party.



Unit layout - 60m² (650ft²) with 1 bedroom plus den and 1 bathroom



Living/dining area- featuring a galley kitchen and compact storage space



Henry's crib in the master bedroom



Super Club's toy room

LIKES

- + Access to transit and walking distance to cultural attractions and amenities.
- + Maintenance free living.
- + Good sound separation between units.
- + The adjacent Superclub's gym, play room and outdoor spaces with BBQ's.
- + Many family households in area makes it easy to connect with other families.

CHALLENGES

- Stroller impedes entryway, sometimes parked in kitchen blocking fridge.
- Open concept kitchen doesn't allow for much storage & prep space.
- The two children will share a double bed in the den but in the near future they'll need separate beds.
- Balcony is off limits to the children and they've added a security lock.
- Elevators are frequently congested.

HACKS

- ➔ Custom wall unit added in living room.
- ➔ Added bike racks in car parking spot.
- ➔ Sarina sleeps in the den, where they've added a sliding door that allows in light.
- ➔ Henry sleeps in a crib in his parents room for now.

WISHLIST

- * Free programming in local libraries and rec centres are frequently over-booked or crowded.
- * To have stroller access through the underground connection to the Superclub. Currently, they must travel outside to use the amenity which is especially inconvenient in the winter.
- * Concerned about the quality of local schools and lack of day care.

Scarborough Civic Centre

PROFILE:

Ying, parent
Hai, parent
Dandan, age 18 months

RENTED: 2015

UNIT:

- 65m² (700ft²), no balcony
- 1 bedroom plus den, 1 bathroom
- 32nd floor of 35 storey building

Ying, Hai and their young daughter moved to Canada from the US in 2015 where they had both been finishing graduate degrees. They opted to rent a one bedroom plus den in the vicinity of the Scarborough Civic Centre so that Hai can be close to the U of T Scarborough Campus where he is pursuing a post-doc in environmental sciences. Ying worked as an urban planner in China but for now is taking care of Dandan full time.

They live in the Lee Centre where she has connected with neighbours easily, in part using the WeChat app with fellow Mandarin speakers. Dandan and Ying visit the park and playground directly in front of their building daily to enjoy physical activity and fresh air, “part of the reason we left China was our concern for the air quality.” Ying likes walking, and can reach grocery stores, shops and the public library within five to fifteen minutes with the toddler in a stroller. Her husband just

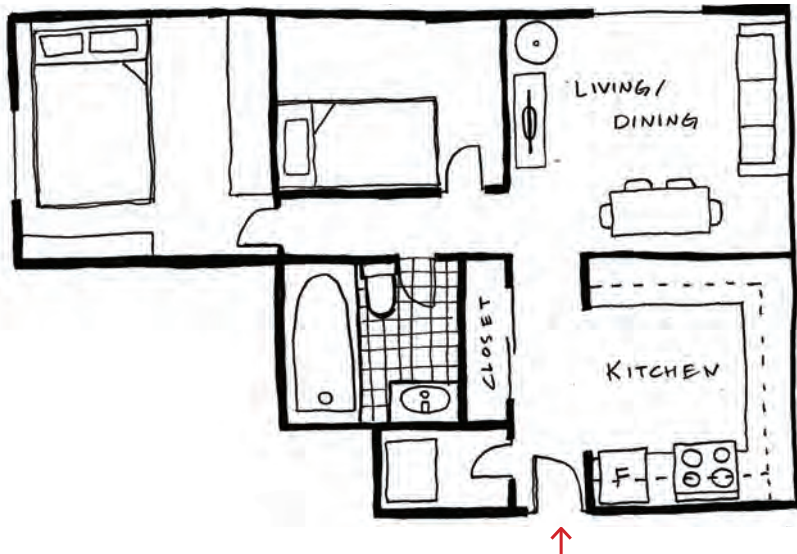


Ying likes walking, and can reach grocery stores, shops and the public library within five to 15 minutes with the toddler in a stroller.

purchased a bike to get to UTSC, which is twenty minutes quicker than transit. Ying works out often in the building gym but they don't use the party room or amenity spaces, which cost money to book and have no programming for children. Still, she likes the area, attends classes on citizenship and engagement at the public library, is looking into good schools for Dandan and wants to put down roots.

Ying says that living in vertical communities comes easily to her as she grew up in six storey mid-rise with her mother, father and brother in a medium sized city in China. Despite this, Ying says that her decision to stay in the highrise building or move to a house will be determined by job and career prospects and having a second

child, which she believes will necessitate living in a home with a backyard. She enjoys the maintenance-free convenience of condo living but says she thinks having a backyard would be ideal, “kids can play there any time, we could do some gardening and have a clothes line. And dryers are good, but there's just a good effect with air and sunlight.”



Unit layout - 65m² (700ft²) with 1 bedroom plus den and 1 bathroom



Ground floor entrance into their building complex



Waiting area in front lobby



Dandan and Ying at the park in front of their building

LIKES

- + Walkable and safe routes to shops, groceries and the library.
- + The green space and playground in front of the building is used daily and includes a climbing gym, sandbox area and splash pad.
- + Friendly, social and diverse neighbourhood.
- + Easy to connect with other Mandarin speakers and families via WeChat.

CHALLENGES

- The family makes little use of the party room amenities due to cost and lack of opportunities to use them as a family.
- Socializing in the lobby area is actively discouraged with a sign that reads 'for waiting only'.
- The large windows make it warm in the winter but Ying is concerned that it will be too hot in the summer, the cooling costs would be wasteful.
- Hai takes the bus to UTSC daily which takes approximately 30 minutes but recently got a bike to enjoy the freedom, exercise and get there faster.

WISHLIST

- * Their unit has no balcony. Ying would like access to fresh air and have the option to dry laundry outdoors.
- * Dandan wants to go out all the time, which is making her parents think that condo-living will not provide her with adequate access to the outdoors.

North York Civic Centre

PROFILE:

Carol, parent
Alejandro, parent
April, age 8
Gwyneth, age 4

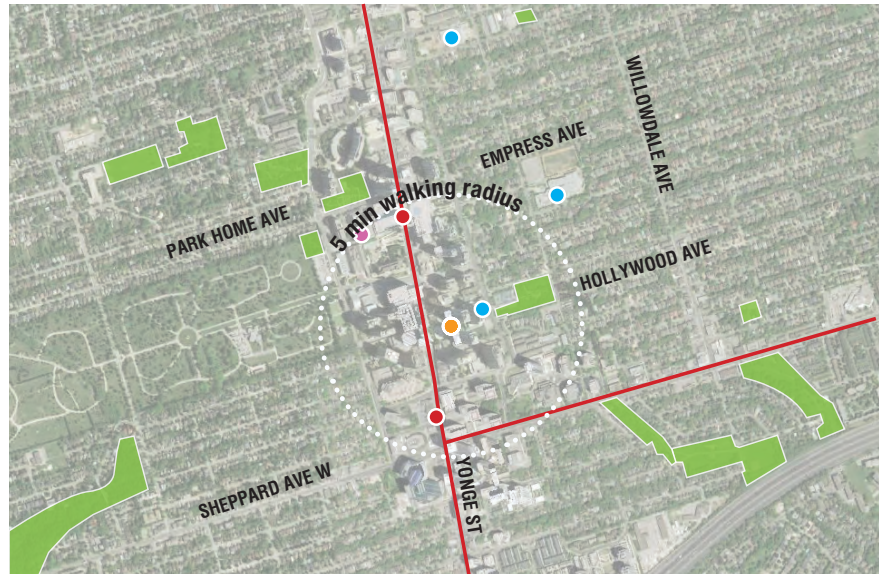
PURCHASED: 2007

UNIT:

- 81m² (867ft²) plus balcony
- 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms
- 6th floor of 40 storey building

Carol and her young family put a premium on getting outside to experience all that Toronto has to offer in terms of cultural attractions, parks and neighbourhoods. “Condo-living gives us more time to do fun outdoor things and explore the city. We don’t spend time raking leaves or doing repairs, we just get up and go.” Carol is involved with the ‘Friends of Dempsey Park’ nearby, helping animate the park with family games nights, pumpkin parades and bike tune-ups. When not hanging out in local parks or libraries, the whole family often jumps on the subway to scope out distant parks, ravine trails, toboggan hills, museums and outdoor pools.

Carol and Alejandro are committed to the trade-offs of living a compact and environmentally sustainable lifestyle feeling they reap enormous benefits by cutting down on purchases, and preferring “to spend money on experiences rather than possessions.” Carol grew up in BC and her husband in Europe and don’t buy into the notion that



● CondoHack ● Schools ● Libraries ● Subway ● Parks/Open Space

“We don’t buy into the notion that you need large living spaces. We both know that you won’t die if you grow up sharing a room with your sibling.”

they need large living spaces, “we both know that you won’t die if you grow up sharing a room with your sibling.”

Carol says even she was surprised by how many kids live in their building. Of the 25 residents living in the ten units on their floor, there are five kids, including one teenager, and only one single person. Family friendly features like the bowling alley, pool, billiards room and 12-person movie theatre make their home feel bigger. A social committee organizes annual events, BBQ’s and a garage sale. Suggestions by residents have resulted in positive additions to the building like bike parking and picnic tables. Still, the unit has its challenges with a very small kitchen and shortage of counter and prep space. They have a hard time containing their

books and toys in shelves, and closets are jammed to capacity with clothes and storage boxes.

With two growing children Carol speculates that they could stay here a long time. “We will have the mortgage paid off in seven years. Convention dictates that we should upsize to a big house in the suburbs now that we have kids, since it would cost the same anyway. Forget that! We’re happy where we are.”



Unit layout - 81m² (867ft²) with 2 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms



The family regularly visits and volunteers in local parks like Willowdale Park



Bike parking in the underground parking lot



The children's bedroom and storage

LIKES

- + Pool, library, study room and guest suite are greatly valued.
- + 2 bathrooms is convenient.
- + Minimal noise transfer between units.
- + Having the children's play structure on the property.
- + Storage locker is included.
- + TriSorter disposal system on each floor for garbage, recycling or organics.
- + Being able to walk to the grocery store, library, classes, restaurants and Willowdale Park.

CHALLENGES

- They don't use their balcony often due to second-hand smoke and garbage being blown onto it.
- Condo fees include everyone's heating and hydro which removes the incentive to save money, turn the heat lower, be energy efficient.
- The party room costs \$300 to rent so they've only used it twice.
- Stroller parking was a chronic space problem when the kids were little.
- Visitor parking is off-putting for friends to use.

WISHLIST

- * Open up kitchen with a food prep area and seats that swing under counter.
- * Bi-fold closet doors would make it easier to access closets, storage areas
- * They sense that living in a different catchment area would give them access to better school.
- * Require developers to use energy efficient lighting & wider gauge pipes .
- * Install systems in new builds that make the AC turn off when windows or sliding doors are open.

Humber Bay Shores

PROFILE:

Kali, parent
Alok, parent
Ravi, age 18 months

PURCHASED: 2006

UNIT:

- 130m² (1400ft²), no balcony
- 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms
- 30th floor of 47 storey building

Kali bought and moved into her condo in the Humber Bay Shores neighbourhood in 2006 knowing this was the place she wanted to stay for a long time. Typical of buildings built in the 1980's, her unit has ample closet and storage space, two full bathrooms with a bath in the master, an open concept kitchen and living room area in addition to room for a home office off the dining room. There's no balcony but Kali and her husband Alok say they don't miss it – the rooftop garden is always available. There was no question they'd stay to raise their child, 18 month old Ravi, reasoning "we have more space in this condo than many of our friends have in a detached home, on top of access to the lake, beaches, running and biking trails and zero yard work!"

The young family makes the most of what their building and neighbourhood has to offer – regular walks by the lake, visits to nearby parks and playgrounds, and almost



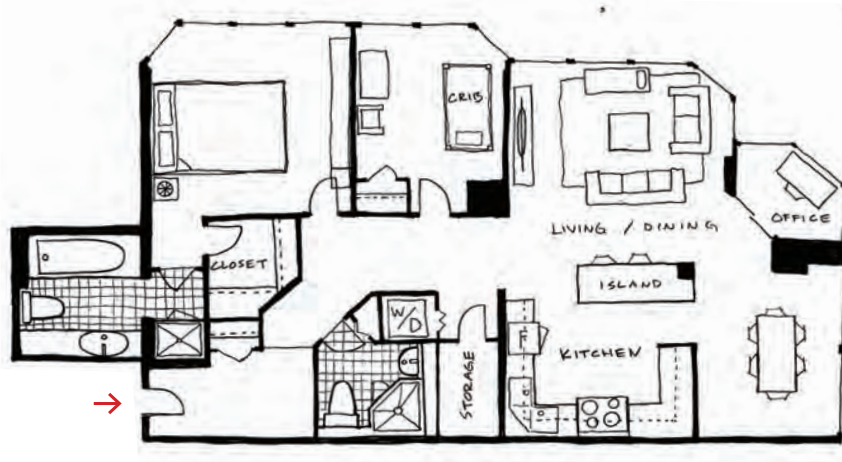
● CondoHack — Streetcar — Bus Route ■ Parks/Open Space

“We have more space in this condo than many of our friends have in a detached home, on top of access to the lake, beaches, running and biking trails and zero yard work!”

daily visits to the pool, games room, roof garden and activity rooms inside their building. Alok and Kali explain that while the condo fees are comparatively high at over \$900 a month, but they feel that they get good value because they use the amenities regularly. They sense an increase in kids and families in the building these days – a conversation has started about converting one of the buildings guest suites into a play room with toys and table for arts and crafts.

The challenge comes with neighbourhood connectivity, limited walkability and resulting car-dependence. They explain that transit can be time-consuming and undependable, so they've worked out reliable and efficient alternatives. Alok

drives to work in Mississauga (often carpooling with a neighbour) and Kali takes her building's dedicated shuttle bus to Union Station. They both leave at around 7 am, beating the rush hour in both directions, and have their commuting time down to a tight 15 - 20 minutes each way. A busy pair of professionals, their focus is minimizing time away from the family. "This condo is not 'walkable' per se, but it is connected for the car travel and shuttle bus routes we rely on daily," explains Ravi.



Unit layout - 130m² (1400ft²) with 2 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms



The apartment entryway



The bathtub is also used as a place to store the stroller



Living/dining area



View from window of nearby trails, parks & open spaces

LIKES

- + Big rooms, ample storage, two complete bedrooms big enough for full size beds.
- + 8 inches of concrete between floors offers good sound separation.
- + Adequate space for stroller in entryway
- + Large parking spots makes getting in and out easy.
- + Upgraded elevators roomy & frequent.
- + Lots of trails, parks, beaches and open spaces for recreation and walks.
- + Well situated for their commuting needs, ie close to highway and a dedicated shuttle bus service.
- + A new grocery store and pharmacy are welcome local amenities.

CHALLENGES

- No balcony but there's a large roof deck they can access and windows in the unit open slightly for fresh air.
- There are no other children Ravi's age that they know of so he goes to drop in centres and play dates by car.
- Limited connectivity, amenities difficult to navigate with child.
- Transit can be undependable and takes up to an hour to get downtown.

HACKS

- kitchen renovation is open, making it easy to keep an eye on the toddler during meal prep.

WISHLIST

- * They are likely to send Ravi to school outside the neighbourhood due to low rankings in catchment area
- * Closer amenities.

Appendix 3 DESIGNERS WORKSHOPS ATTENDEES

City Staff and Project Team

- Ann-Marie Nasr, Manager, Strategic Initiatives, City Planning Division, City of Toronto
- Emilia Floro, Manager, Urban Design, City Planning Division City of Toronto
- Andrea Oppedisano, Planner, Strategic Initiatives, City Planning Division, City of Toronto
- Julie Bogdanowicz, Urban Designer, Urban Design, City Planning Division, City of Toronto
- Michel Trocme, Partner, Urban Strategies
- Emily Reisman, Partner, Urban Strategies
- David Pontarini, Principal, Hariri Pontarini Architects
- Naama Blonder, Urban Designer, Urban Strategies
- Cathy Knott, Director of Interior Design, Hariri Pontarini Architects
- Vanessa Guillén, Director of Communications, Hariri Pontarini Architects
- Anna Ingebrigtsen, Urban Designer, Urban Strategies

'Unit And Building' Workshop

- Carlo Trevisan, Italinteriors
- Joanne Lam, Raw Design
- John Shnier, Partner, Kohn Shiner Architects
- Jude Thomson, Associate, Cecconi Simone
- Peter Clewes, Principal, architectsAlliance
- Prish Jain, Head Architect, TACT
- Ralph Giannone, Principal, Giannone Petricone Associates
- Shirley Blumberg, Founding Partner, KPMB Architects
- Sybil Wa, Associate, Diamond Schmitt architects

'Building And Neighbourhood' Workshop

- Dean Goodman, Partner, LGA Architectural Partners
- Jessica Hutcheon, Janet Rosenberg & Studio
- Megan Torza, Partner, DTAH
- Paul Marsala, Founding Partner, Terraplan
- Victor Ford, Victor Ford & Associates
- Victoria Bell, Scott Torrence Landscape Architecture
- Ron Bernasch, Principal, JSW+ Associates
- Susan Lewin, Principal, CS&P Architects

Appendix 4 INTERVIEWS WITH DEVELOPERS

Concert Properties

- Andrew Gray, Vice President, Eastern Region
- Kelly Wilson, Vice Presentent, Development
- Jennifer Glassford, Development Coordinator

Daniels Corporation

- Remo Agostino, Vice President Development

Edilcan

- G.P. Del Rocco, Vice President

Medallion Corporation

- Howard Paskowitz, Senior Development Manager

Rockport Group

- Jack Winberg, C.E.O.

Streetcar Developments

- Les Mallins, Founder & President









Tridel Corporation






- Andrea DelZotto, Executive, Communications
- Steve Daniels, Director of Planning & Development
- Danielle Feidler, VP Customer Care






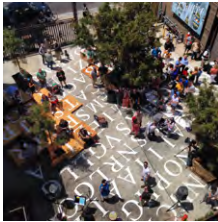

Westbank Corp

- Peter Venetas, Project Manager

Appendix 5 PHOTO SOURCES

Page #	Photo	Source	Page #	Photo	Source
2		Project Team	8		Project Team
5		Project Team	8		Project Team
6		Project Team	8		Project Team
6		Project Team	9		Project Team
7		Project Team	10		Project Team
7		Project Team	11		The Trust for Public Land
7		Project Team	11		Megan Torza, Partner, DTAH

Page #	Photo	Source	Page #	Photo	Source
12		KPMB Architects	14		City of Toronto
12		Geoff Peters	15		3GATTI
12		TDSB: Landscape and Child Development	16		PWL Partnership
13		Project Team	16		ERA Architects
13		City of Toronto	17		David Sundberg, Esto
13		The Trust for Public Land	18		Marco Felica
14		MacLennan Jaunkalns Miller Architects	19		Photographer: Olivier Blouin, Design: Daily tous les jours

Page #	Photo	Source
20		KPMB Architects
20		Project Team
21		Google Street View
21		Project Team
22		KPMB Architects
22		RADLabSD
23		Photographer: David Grandorge, Design: ERECT Architecture

