

ALEXANDRA PARK

Urban Design Guidelines

August 2013



GRANGE AVENUE

DUNDAS STREET WEST

GRANGE COURT

AUGUSTA AVENUE

DENISON AVENUE

**URBAN
STRATEGIES
INC**



Alexandra Park
Building Great Neighbourhoods





Aerial view of Alexandra Park looking west from Cameron Street

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Purpose and Objectives

The Revitalization Plan for Alexandra Park envisions a vibrant, mixed-use residential neighbourhood that relates to its urban context and supports retail and commercial uses and parks and open spaces. The Guidelines will ensure that a high-quality public realm, open spaces and architectural attributes are achieved across the Site.

The purpose of the Urban Design Guidelines is to provide parameters for the design and design evaluation of the Alexandra Park community. It is premised on the Guiding Principles developed in consultation with Atkinson Co-operative and TCH residents (see Page 13) and depicts the vision for the site. It both illustrates and describes a detailed urban design framework for Alexandra Park's buildings, streets, public and private open spaces as well as the interfaces between the built and public realm.

Application of the Document

Toronto City Council, Staff and relevant advisory committees, as well as developer partners, will use this document when producing and evaluating development proposals and when preparing and reviewing applications for Site Plan Approval. This document is to be used in conjunction with the City's broad range of planning control documents, including:

- the Official Plan;
- Zoning by-laws;
- Mid-rise Guidelines, Tall Building Guidelines, and Townhouse Infill Guidelines;
- the Development Infrastructure Policy and Standards; and,
- the Green Development Standards.

Site Context

Alexandra Park (the 'Site') is adjacent to several of Toronto's most well-known neighbourhoods, including Kensington Market, Chinatown and Queen West (Figure 1 – Context Map). It benefits from its prime downtown location and is well-served by public transit and a variety of retail, commercial, recreational and social amenities.

South: Small scale (2 to 4 storey) mixed retail and residential uses characterize the vibrant Queen Street West. Further south, the buildings increase in size as part of the King Spadina District, comprised of new and restored office and residential buildings with retail at-grade.

West: A neighbourhood comprised of low-rise residential buildings including single and semi-detached houses, townhomes and apartments. This residential character continues further west across Bathurst Street.

North: 1 to 3 storey residential buildings with retail at-grade front the north side of Dundas Street West. The retail in this area tends to be fragmented as compared to Spadina Avenue. Further north of Dundas is Kensington Market, which consists primarily of low-rise residential buildings, most of which have been converted to retail and market-style operations.

East: Spadina Avenue consists of a broad range of mixed use building types, generally ranging in height from 3 to 6 storeys. However, the west side of Spadina Avenue between Queen Street West and Dundas Street West is dominated by three 10-storey residential buildings, one of which (Chinatown Centre) is a large slab building that creates a hard wall against much of the east side of the Site.



Figure 1: Aerial view of Alexandra Park and its surrounding context



Dundas Street West across from Alexandra Park



Kensington Market



Chinatown



Queen Street West

Site Description

Alexandra Park is primarily a residential community with an approximate size of 7 hectares (18 acres) and an approximate population of 2,500 people.

The Site is within a large city block defined by Dundas Street West, Bathurst Street, Queen Street West and Spadina Avenue, and is specifically bounded by Dundas Street West to the North, Denison Avenue and Augusta Avenue to the West, the buildings on the north side of Queen Street West to the South, and Cameron Street to the east.

First built in 1968, with additional development in 1986, Alexandra Park today consists of 806 residential units, nearly all of which are rent-geared-to-income:

- Atkinson Co-Operative: 263 townhouse units and 147 apartment units in two mid-rise apartment buildings
- Queen-Vanauley (20 Vanauley Street): 135 apartment units in a midrise apartment building (includes 81 market-rent units)
- 21 - 23a Augusta: 4 townhouse units
- Alexandra Park Apartments (senior's residence): 257 apartment units in a high-rise apartment building

In 2003, after many years of planning, the Atkinson Housing Co-operative was created, the first public housing project in Canada to convert to a non-profit housing co-op. Today, much of the Site is managed by the Atkinson Co-operative, while the Alexandra Park Apartments and Queen-Vanauley Apartments are managed directly by TCH.

One of the challenges the community has been struggling with is that Alexandra Park is currently insular, structured by inefficient green spaces and a meandering pedestrian network. Alexandra Park does not have internal vehicular connections and vehicular access into the Site is limited to emergency and service access. Drop off and delivery to individual units is difficult, particularly for the elderly and those with mobility challenges. The design of the community prohibits a diversity of uses, limits connections with its surroundings and creates concerns for personal safety.

Though challenged by its design, social bonds within the neighbourhood thrive. While intensification of the Site must establish a permeable, inviting and spirited public realm, it must also retain a strong community legacy.

For further details regarding existing conditions and other contextual information for Alexandra Park, refer to the Alexandra Park Planning Rationale, by Urban Strategies Inc., March 2011, Addendum #1 February 2012 and Addendum #2 March 2013.



Atkinson Co-Operative



Alexandra Park Child Care Centre



Vanauley Walk

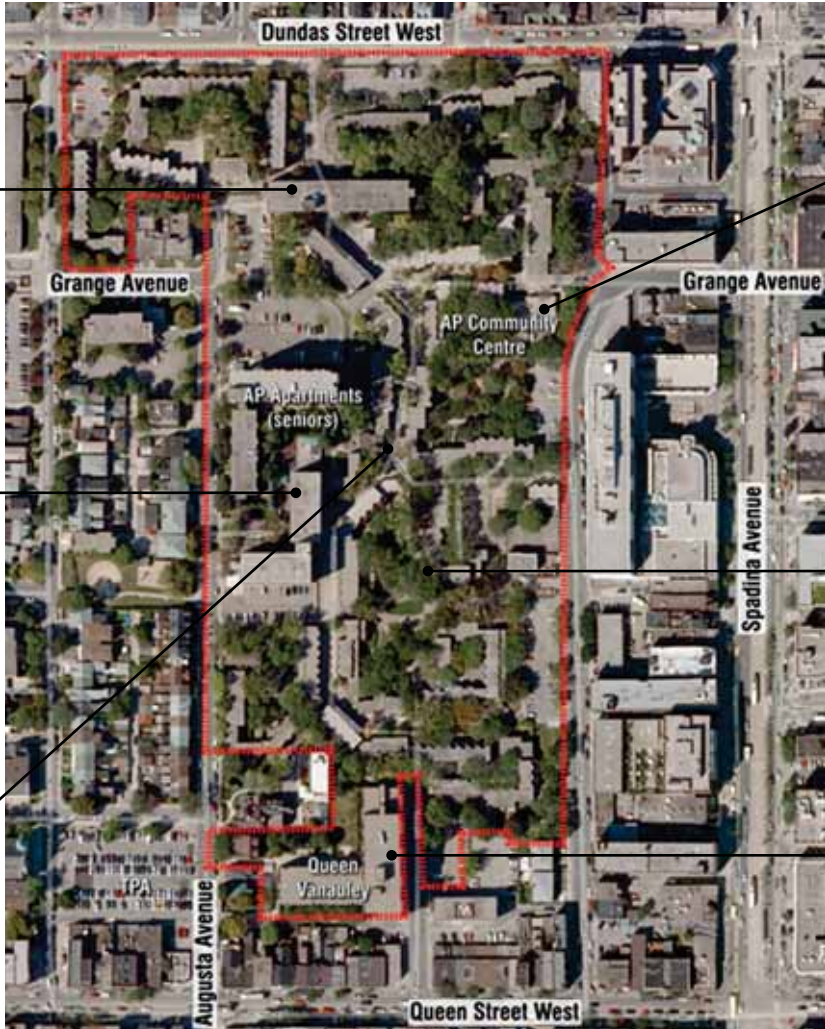


Figure 2: Existing Alexandra Park Site Aerial



Alexandra Park Community Centre



'The Mound', Central Open Space



20 Vanauley Street

LOOKING FORWARD

Vision

The Revitalization Plan proposes a mixed-income neighbourhood, new land uses and a varied built form within a setting of attractive and accessible open spaces and high quality architectural expression.

The revitalization of Alexandra Park will be achieved through the introduction of market residential and retail uses and the refurbishment and redevelopment of Atkinson Co-Operative and TCH residential units.

Revitalization promotes environmental health by increasing density, managing water on-site for the apartment and townhouse blocks, protecting existing, healthy trees where possible and if not, replacing trees on site, and emphasizing walkability. Social continuity is fostered with Zero Displacement: a complex program for redevelopment which ensures that current residents may continue to live in their community throughout the phased process.

The Revitalization Plan also enhances community facilities and services with a central community space, new recreational open spaces, a refurbished daycare and retail stores.

The streets proposed in the Revitalization Plan are designed to improve connectivity while also creating marketable development parcels. New units will front onto public streets, public landscaped open spaces, and/or private driveways, reinforcing the distinction between public and private space and providing the passive-surveillance that is lacking today.

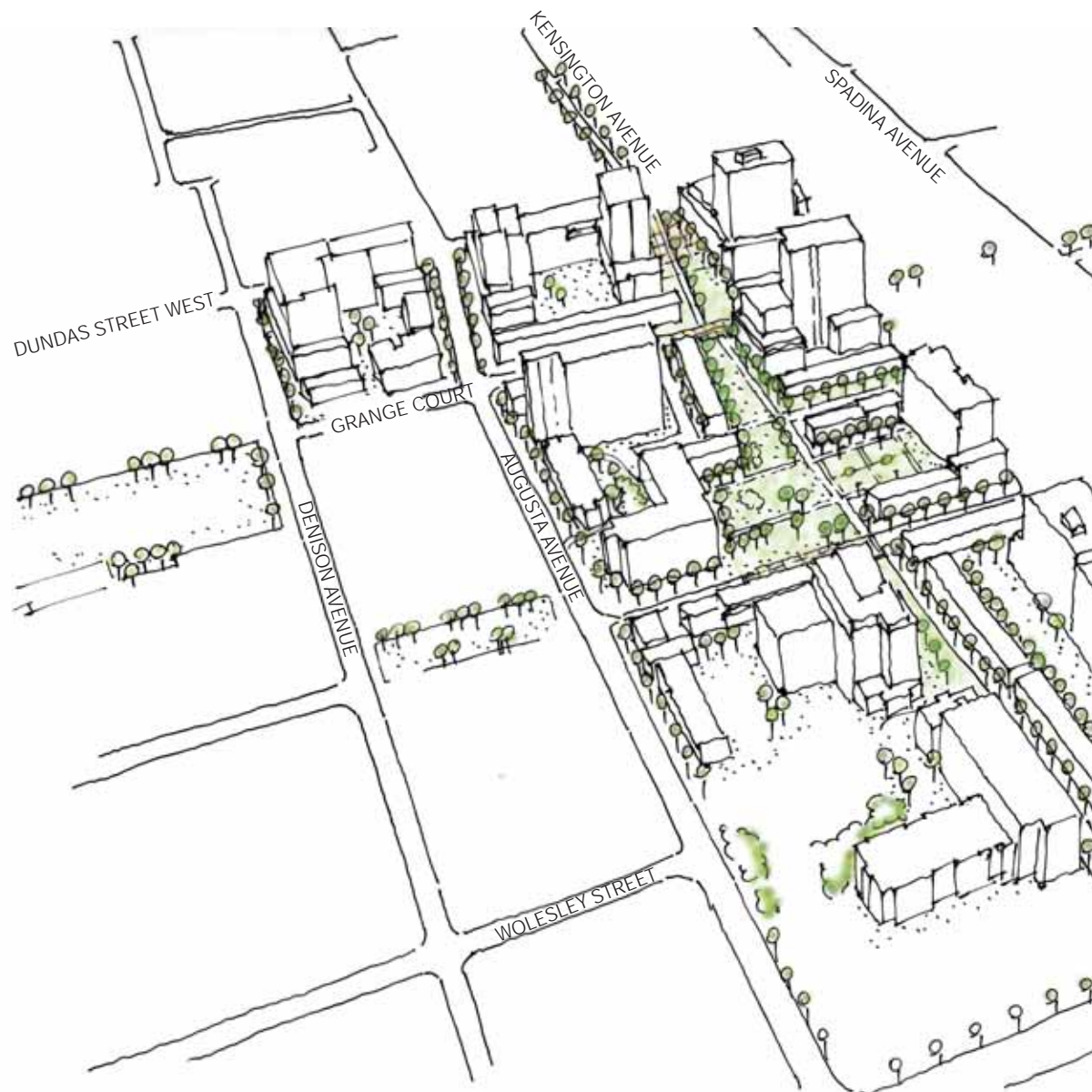
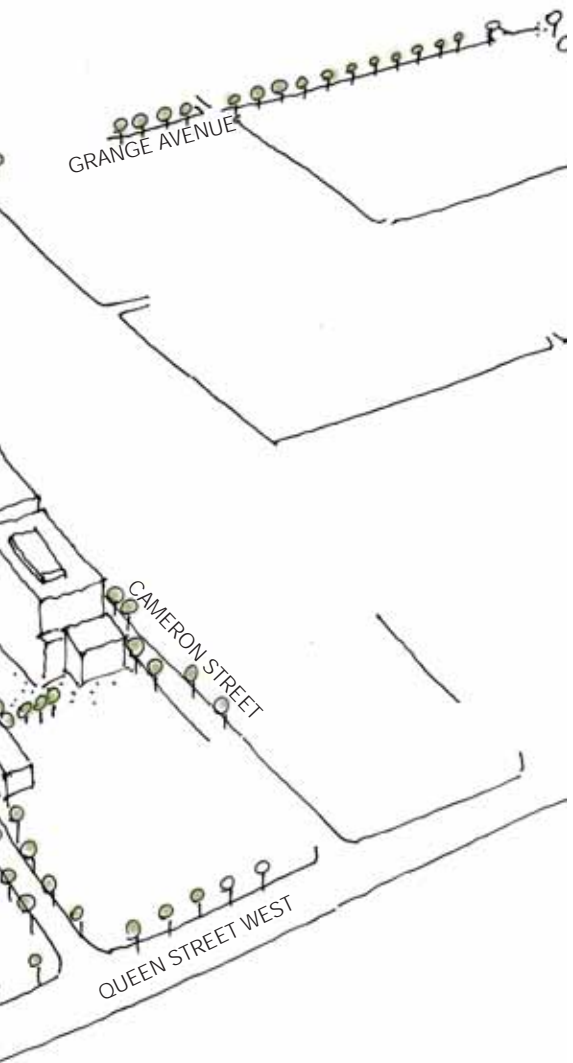


Figure 3: Conceptual sketch of proposed Alexandra Park Redevelopment



Community Principles

Early in the consultation process, the TCH community participated in the development of the Guiding Principles on which the Revitalization Plan is based. These principles are:

- 1 Zero Displacement;
- 2 Providing good housing;
- 3 Providing more than housing;
- 4 Planning together first;
- 5 Minimizing disruption;
- 6 Protecting tenants' rights;
- 7 Developing connections;
- 8 Ensuring participation;
- 9 Nurturing a green, clean and beautiful community;
- 10 Enhancing social, recreational, learning and economic opportunities.

These Guiding Principles distinguish Alexandra Park's revitalization process from any other that has been conducted by TCH to date. Specifically, the principle of Zero Displacement ensures that no one currently living on the Site will be required to relocate off-site at any point during the revitalization process. Residents desiring to relocate during construction will move off-site, to a similar TCH unit, and will move back to Alexandra Park should they choose to do so as units become available.

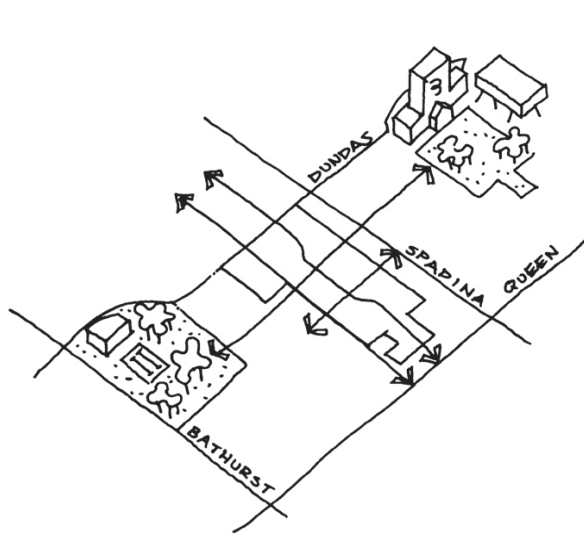
To achieve Zero Displacement, the Revitalization Plan phasing program is built on the premise that residents choosing to remain on-site during revitalization will be relocated on-site, within existing vacant units, or directly into a new unit, before their building can be demolished.

MASTER PLAN CONCEPT

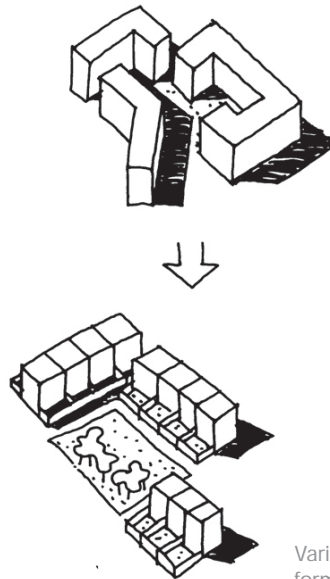
The Revitalization Plan proposes a new mixed-use, mixed-income neighbourhood, with improved housing for Toronto Community Housing and Atkinson Co-Operative tenants.

It encompasses the principles and design goals developed during the community engagement program and the technical analyses conducted by the project team. Most importantly, it incorporates all of the critical pre-conditions for a consensus-based plan.

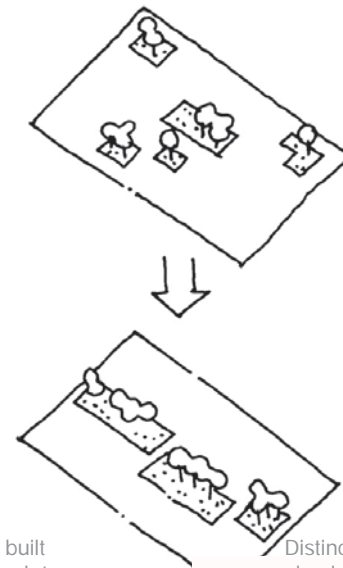
The Revitalization Plan will reinforce and protect the culturally rich areas and physical or built form character of Kensington Market, Spadina Avenue and Queen Street West by massing which is responsive to adjacent areas. It will respond sensitively to existing Neighbourhoods designated areas and provide rear yard setback and transition in massing as per City Guidelines. Appropriate transition and stepbacks will be applied to protect and reinforce the existing heritage and culturally-rich context to the north, east and south.



Re-connected street network: promote permeability and reduce confusion



Varied and responsive built form: integrated approach to redevelopment



Distinctive open space system: clearly defined public and private open space



Figure 4: Proposed Alexandra Park Revitalization Plan