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April 09, 2025

Planning & Housing Committee
City of Toronto
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON
M5H 2N2

RE : PH20.8 - Swansea Mews Initial Development Proposal

Members of the Planning and Housing Committee:

Our **HousingNowTO** civic-tech and affordable housing volunteers from across Toronto – have actively watched Toronto Community Housing’s challenges on the Swansea Mews lands near High Park since the structural failure of the old 1970’s stacked townhomes in May of 2022, and the required evacuation of those failing 50+ year-old low-rise buildings containing 154 social-housing units.

Since those TCH social-housing townhouse blocks at Swansea Mews were condemned in 2022, our HNTTO volunteers have closely watched the progress on other TCH rezoning and redevelopment sites - like Don Summerville, Regent Park phases 4 & 5 and Firgrove – in order to determine market-viability including the [size and scale of the new redevelopment that will be needed](#) in order to make any future reconstruction of Swansea Mews financially viable in the coming years.

We have submitted previous letters on this topic to the TCHC Board – (see attached) and our initial analysis of the current “Initial Development Proposal” (IDP) from the TCHC staff, including our concerns about the [low-ratio of only 4.5-to-1 Market-to-RGI units](#) given current residential-market conditions in the GTHA (*700 Market + 154 RGI = 854 total).

Our HNTTO volunteers would encourage the City of Toronto to take a much bolder stance on the redevelopment of Swansea Mews (*target between 1,075 – 1,240 total units) – and focus on maximizing your opportunities to deliver net new social housing and workforce-rental housing on these valuable City-owned lands near High Park.

As always, our open data and civic-tech volunteers are happy to answer any questions the committee or TCH staff may have on our affordable-housing development best practices advice – and how to make most effective use of City-owned Lands to help alleviate Toronto’s rental-housing crisis.

Yours,

Mark J. Richardson
Technical Lead – [HousingNowTO.com](https://housingnowto.com)

[1] Attached APPENDIX – HNTTO Letter to TCHC Board on Swansea Mews redevelopment (October 15, 2024)



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October 15, 2024

Toronto Community Housing

ATTN : Board of Directors

931 Yonge Street

Toronto, ON M4W 2H2

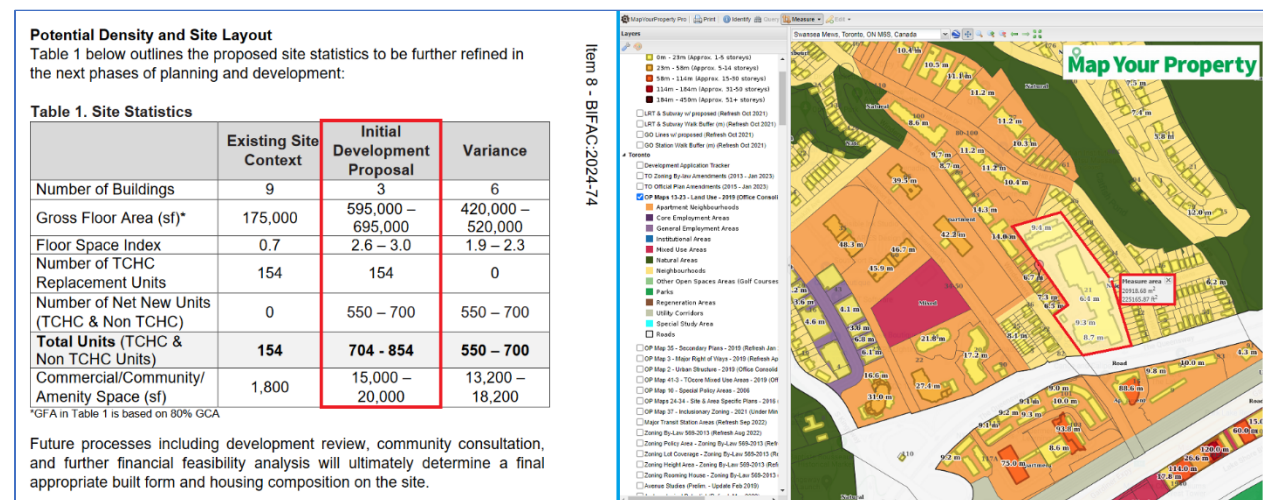
REPORT : TCHC 2024-63 - Swansea Mews Revitalization

TCH Board Members,

Our **HousingNowTO** civic-tech and affordable housing volunteers from across Toronto – have actively watched Toronto Community Housing’s challenges on the Swansea Mews lands near High Park since the structural failure of the old 1970’s stacked townhomes in May of 2022, and the required evacuation of those failing 50+ year-old low-rise buildings containing 154 social-housing units.

Since those TCH social-housing townhouse blocks at Swansea Mews were condemned in 2022, our HNTD volunteers have closely watched the progress on other TCH rezoning and redevelopment sites - like Don Summerville and Regent Park phases 4 & 5 – in order to determine the [size and scale of the new redevelopment that will be needed](#) to make any future reconstruction of Swansea Mews financially viable in the coming years.

Our volunteers, have read the staff report from your Acting Chief Development Officer – and fully agree that the rebuild of Swansea Mews presents an opportunity to re-envision and build back a stronger, more economically-diverse community that attempts respond to the City’s urgent need for more rental housing of all kinds, while replacing the 154 social-housing, rent geared to income (RGI) units that were on the original site.



However, based on our experience from dozens of other affordable housing development sites in the City of Toronto under the Housing Now, ModernTO and Rapid Housing programs we would like to raise the following concerns about the current “Initial Development Proposal” (IDP) for your large Swansea Mews (5.3 acre) property, near High Park - as presented in the [TCH staff report](#) -

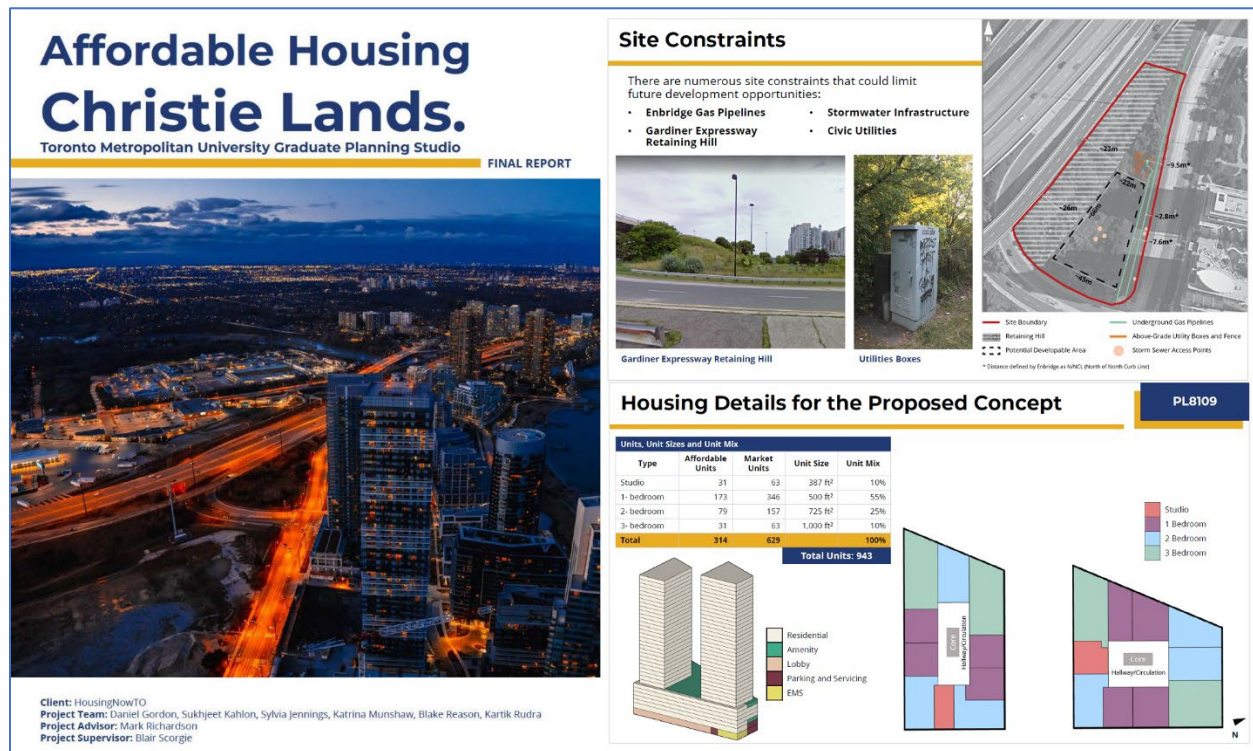
- 1.) The highest total unit estimates in the IDP for Swansea Mews (~854 total units inc. ~154 Social Housing replacement units) – are unlikely to meet the bare minimum of what you will need to make this project financially viable, given the current down-market for development land-values in the GTHA in 2024.
- 2.) Our HousingNowTO volunteers would advise the TCH to create an enhanced alternative design proposal for Swansea Mews with a much higher minimum density-target of approx. **~1,232 total units** (inc. ~154 Social Housing replacement units).
- 3.) While the current IDP for Swansea Mews was developed in consultation with the “interdivisional City working group” – our HNTD experience is that the initial development proposals created by similar interdivisional City working group processes on Housing Now and ModernTO sites like 140 MERTON AVE, 777 VICTORIA PARK AVE and 931 YONGE STREET have produced proposals that needed much-greater density in order to be viable – and qualify for available development funding sources.

CITY SITE	ORIGINAL UNIT COUNT	REVISED UNIT COUNT
<u>140 MERTON AVE</u> (Housing Now)	<u>2019</u> 15-Storeys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 150 - Total Apartments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 75 - Market Rental ○ 75 – Affordable Rental 	<u>2023</u> 29-Storeys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 294 - Total Apartments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 147 - Market Rental ○ 147 – Affordable Rental
<u>777 VICTORIA PARK AVE</u> (Housing Now)	<u>2019</u> 22-Storeys & 11-storeys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 450 - Total Apartments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 225 - Market Rental ○ 225 – Affordable Rental 	<u>2024</u> 35-Storeys & 12-storeys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 705 - Total Apartments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 449 - Market Rental ○ 256 – Affordable Rental
<u>931 YONGE STREET</u> (ModernTO)	<u>2022</u> 21-Storeys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 165 - Total Apartments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 75 - Market Condo ○ 75 – Affordable Ownership 	<u>2023</u> 32-Storeys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 250 - Total Apartments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 165 - Market Rental ○ 85 – Affordable Rental

- 4.) There is a lot of language in the current IDP for Swansea Mews redevelopment that speaks to concerns about the sites - *“proximity to the lower rise neighbourhood”* – and how - *“Massing considerations of these blocks should consider the nature of the surrounding context and appropriately address any transitions in height”* – essentially this is DEFAULT Toronto City Planning language for – minimize your development in order to - *“defer to the backyards of millionaire homeowners on Coe Hill Drive and Ellis Gardens”*.

Our HNTD volunteers would encourage TCH to take a bolder stance on the redevelopment of Swansea Mews – and instead focus on maximizing your opportunities to deliver net new social housing and workforce-rental housing on these valuable City-owned lands.

We have attached links to a recent TMU SURP graduate planning studio project that our HNTO volunteers completed in December 2022 on a parcel of City-owned lands near the new Park Lawn GO station. We hope that example will help to inform TCH's improved redevelopment proposal for your Swansea Mews lands in 2025.



TMU School of Urban & Regional Planning (SURP) -


<https://www.torontomu.ca/city-building/news-research/2023/05/christie-lands-studio-report/>

As always, our open data and civic-tech volunteers are happy to answer any questions the committee or TCH staff may have on our affordable-housing development best practices advice – and how to make most effective use of City-owned Lands to help alleviate Toronto's rental-housing crisis.



Yours,

Mark J. Richardson
Technical Lead – [HousingNowTO.com](https://www.housingnowto.com)

APPENDIX 1 – 931 YONGE STREET – TCHC HQ (ModernTO)



931 YONGE STREET

Key Statistics	Original Application (December 2022)	Revised Application (November 2023)
Site Area	837 m ²	835 m ²
Total Gross Floor Area	12,226 m²	18,726 m²
Residential GFA	12,062 m ²	18,576 m ²
Non-residential GFA	164 m ²	150 m ²
Density	14.6 FSI	22.4 FSI
Height	21 Storeys 66 metres plus a 7-metre mechanical penthouse	32 Storeys 99.3 metres plus a 7.7-metre mechanical penthouse/amenity level
Total Units	165 (100%)	250 (100%)
One-Bedroom	124 (75.2%)	184 (75%)
Two-Bedroom	24 (14.5%)	36 (15%)
Three-Bedroom	17 (10.3%)	30 (10%)
Amenity Space	660 m² (4 m²/unit)	897 m² (3.6 m²/unit)
Indoor Amenity Space	330.0 m ² (2 m ² /unit)	506 m ² (2 m ² /unit)
Outdoor Amenity Space	330.0 m ² (2 m ² /unit)	391 m ² (1.6 m ² /unit)

223

Bedrooms

346

Bedrooms

✓

✓