

SWANSEA MATTERS — CRITIQUE MEMORANDUM
Swansea Mews Rezoning — Five Critical Deficiencies

21 Windermere Avenue — Does the February 2026 Decision Report Meet Council's Requirements? — March 2026

Subject site	21 Windermere Avenue (1–154 Swansea Mews), Toronto — Ward 4 Parkdale–High Park
Reference documents	IDP Report (March 27, 2025); City Council Decision PH20.8 (April 23–24, 2025); Decision Report — Approval in Principle (February 10, 2026); City Council Decision PH28.3 (September 26, 2025) — Demolition Approval
Date of review	March 2026
Classification	Rezoning Compliance and Governance Assessment
Scope	This critique assesses the February 2026 Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment application — the rezoning — against the specific commitments made in the March 2025 Initial Development Proposal (IDP) and the seven operative clauses of City Council's April 2025 decision (PH20.8). The demolition approval (PH28.3, September 26, 2025) is not under review here.

VERDICT

The February 2026 Decision Report partially meets IDP and Council direction but contains five critical deficiencies that render it procedurally and substantively incomplete as a standalone approvals instrument. The most serious is that the Stage 2 Actions Report — explicitly directed by Council in April 2025 as a prerequisite to planning approval — has never been tabled. Council is being asked to approve planning instruments that lock in density, form, and use mix without having approved the project's financial model, delivery framework, or partnership arrangements. This sequencing failure is precisely what the 2019 approvals framework was designed to prevent. An alternative proposal at 331–461 units in 14 mid-rise buildings, prepared by local architect David Peterson and publicly available since late 2024, meets the IDP's housing objectives, responds to the community's documented preferences, and has never been formally evaluated or placed before the community in any consultation session.

1. Background and Procedural Framework

The Swansea Mews revitalization operates within a multi-stage approvals framework adopted by City Council in 2019 (PH7.4). That framework was designed to ensure that TCHC revitalization projects advance through defined stage gates — each requiring specific deliverables — before proceeding to the next. The stage gates exist precisely because these projects involve public land, displaced low-income tenants with a legal right to return, and significant public subsidy. The framework is not advisory. It is a governance mechanism.

Stage 1 — IDP (March 2025)	City Council endorsed the Initial Development Proposal in principle (PH20.8, April 23–24, 2025), establishing the housing objectives, built form parameters, and seven binding directions for Stage 2.
Stage 2 — Actions Report (directed Q4 2025)	Council directed that an Actions Report be tabled containing the project budget, financial feasibility analysis, delivery model options, procurement strategy, and partnership framework — before or concurrent with planning approvals.
Stage 2 — Planning approvals (February 2026)	The Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment were recommended for approval in the February 10, 2026 Decision Report and considered at Committee on February 26, 2026 (PH28.2). The Actions Report has not been tabled.
Council ratification (March 25–27, 2026)	City Council is scheduled to ratify the Committee’s recommendation. Once ratified, the planning instruments are in effect and the built form, density, and use mix are locked in.

2. Compliance Summary Matrix

The following matrix assesses the February 2026 Decision Report against each IDP and Council commitment:

IDP / Council Requirement	February 2026 Report Position	Status / Gap
154 RGI replacement homes on-site	154 RGI replacement units confirmed	MET
Stage 2 Actions Report to Council before planning approvals (Q4 2025)	No Actions Report tabled. OPA/Zoning proceeding without it.	CRITICAL — Sequencing failure; governance framework bypassed
Actions Report to assess non-profit, co-op, and private partner options	No partner analysis presented. TCHC-only development proceeding by default.	CRITICAL — Council’s explicit direction unmet
Internal road network creating street connectivity	Single consolidated driveway only. No new road network.	CRITICAL — IDP connectivity and safety principle unmet
Three development blocks (A, B, C) as per IDP block plan	Two buildings only. Block C concept abandoned without explanation.	CRITICAL — Material design departure, no Council notification
Engagement with Ontario Minister of Municipal Affairs	No evidence of provincial engagement reported.	CRITICAL — PH20.8 Clause 8 direction unmet
550–700 net new units beyond replacement	495 net new units. 10–30% below IDP range.	PARTIAL — Shortfall not acknowledged or explained
1,400–1,860 sq m commercial/community space	1,204 sq m delivered (654 retail + 550 community).	PARTIAL — At least 196 sq m below lower IDP bound
Third-party funding secured or progress reported	Aspirational reference to Build Canada Homes only. No commitments reported.	PARTIAL — \$116.4M City incentives approved without confirmed co-funding
Detailed Tenant Relocation Plan at OPA stage	Deferred to separate February 26 report (PH28.2).	PARTIAL — OPA and relocation plan decoupled

Improved useable park and open space	POPS provided. No formal parkland dedication. Parkland exemption invoked.	PARTIAL — POPS is not a park; IDP open space principle not met
Toronto Green Standard Tier 2 compliance	Requirement confirmed; metrics deferred to Zoning By-law.	PARTIAL — No performance data presented

3. Critical Deficiencies — Detailed Analysis

3.1 CRITICAL: The Stage 2 Actions Report Has Not Been Tabled

The single most serious procedural deficiency is the complete absence of the Stage 2 Actions Report that City Council explicitly directed staff to bring forward in April 2025.

Council Direction — PH20.8, Clause 7 (April 2025)

City Council requested the Deputy City Manager, Development and Growth Services, the Executive Director, Housing Secretariat, and the Executive Director, Development Review to report to City Council for approval of both an Actions Report and Planning Report for Swansea Mews in the fourth quarter of 2025.

The Actions Report was not tabled in Q4 2025. It has not been tabled as of March 2026. The planning approval is proceeding without it. The specific governance failures this creates are:

- No approved project budget or cost estimates have been presented to Council, despite the IDP identifying TCHC’s ongoing monthly carrying costs of approximately \$75,000 for the vacant buildings as a stated financial urgency
- No analysis of delivery model options — public developer only, non-profit partnership, private sector partnership, or co-operative housing component — has been provided, despite Council’s explicit direction that these be assessed
- No market sounding or procurement strategy has been brought forward, meaning the financial viability of the project as structured has not been independently validated
- The development is proceeding as a de facto TCHC-only project without the partnership framework analysis that both the IDP and Council’s decision mandated
- The confidential financial attachment from the March 2025 IDP has not been disclosed to Council. Council is being asked to approve a \$116.4 million incentive and tax exemption package without access to the project’s underlying financial model

The February 2026 report acknowledges only that TCHC and City staff ‘will report back to TCHC’s Board and City Council in 2026 with further details on the financial impact.’ This is a deferral, not compliance. Council directed the Actions Report as a prerequisite to planning approvals. That sequencing has been reversed.

3.2 CRITICAL: Block Structure Divergence from IDP — No Explanation Provided

The IDP's block plan established three distinct development blocks: Block A at the Queensway/Windermere corner (highest density), Block B along the internal street (transitional), and Block C adjacent to low-rise residential (lowest density). This three-block structure expressed the IDP's principle of creating 'a street network that promotes safety and connection within the property and surrounding neighbourhood.'

The February 2026 report consolidates the site into two buildings with no Block C, no internal road network, and a single private driveway in place of the envisioned street. No explanation is provided for why the three-block concept was abandoned. City Council was not informed of this material design departure. The change has not been subject to a formal IDP amendment or Council direction to modify the design concept.

3.3 CRITICAL: No Evidence of Mandated Government Engagement

PH20.8, Clause 8 directed staff to forward the IDP to the Ontario Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to request program and financial support, and to engage with CMHC and Housing, Infrastructure, and Communities Canada to examine funding and low-cost financing opportunities.

The February 2026 report makes only a passing reference to a funding request submitted to Build Canada Homes in December 2025 as part of the TCHC envelope. There is no evidence of the specific provincial engagement directed by Council, no confirmation of CMHC discussions, and no disclosure of whether any funding or financing commitments were secured. Council is being asked to approve \$116.4 million in City incentives and tax exemptions without knowing whether any provincial or federal co-funding has been committed.

3.4 CRITICAL: No Partnership or Delivery Model Analysis

Council's April 2025 direction explicitly required that the Actions Report assess non-profit, co-operative, and private sector delivery model options. The February 2026 Decision Report contains no such analysis. TCHC is proceeding as the sole developer on public land, subject to a \$116.4 million City incentive package, without the partnership framework assessment that Council mandated. The Swansea Park proposal demonstrates that a co-operative or non-profit delivery model at this site is architecturally and financially conceivable. It has never been formally evaluated.

3.5 CRITICAL: Built Form Exceeds What Community Consultation, Infrastructure, and Planning Evidence Support

The TCHC proposal was not generated by the community consultation process. It was generated by an internal TCHC financial model, the basis of which has no publicly available or producible report behind it. City Planning Senior Planner Doris Ho confirmed in writing on March 3, 2026: 'There is no report that I can point you to on the determination of the estimated increase of roughly 550–700 homes. TCHC completed that background analysis and I am not privy to it.' The community was asked to respond to a density figure whose analytical foundation it was never given access to.

The resulting built form is at odds with all three infrastructure constraints documented in this record:

- Transit: Route 77 Runnymede is the only TTC bus connecting High Park to Humber River. No transportation capacity study has confirmed that it can absorb the additional ridership generated by 649 units at this location, in addition to the approximately 1,920 private market units already approved at the Queensway/Windermere intersection
- Schools: Swansea Junior and Senior Public School is rated at 84.1% below the state of good repair. The community estimate of 138 to 198 additional children from this development was never formally assessed by the TDSB or addressed in the February 2026 Decision Report
- Grocery: 125 The Queensway — the only full-service grocery anchor in the corridor — is subject to an active Ontario Land Tribunal appeal on a proposed conversion from General Employment Area to seven mixed-use buildings. That fact was not disclosed at the February 26, 2026 Committee hearing

These are not planning objections to housing on this site. They are specific, documented infrastructure constraints that were before the consultation process and were not answered.

4. The Swansea Park Alternative — What Was Never Put to the Community

The Swansea Park alternative proposal, prepared by local architect David Peterson and publicly available at swanseapark.ca, has been known to TCHC and to Councillor Perks since at least Fall 2024. It was never disclosed to displaced tenants. It was never presented in any consultation session. It was not included in the materials distributed at the November 20, 2025 Open House or discussed at the February 26, 2026 Committee hearing.

The proposal offers:

- 14 mid-rise buildings with a maximum height consistent with the surrounding neighbourhood — no high-rise towers
- 331 to 461 units, including the 154 RGI replacement homes — satisfying the IDP's core housing obligation
- 60% open space — including a community park, greenways, and connections to Swansea Park
- Mass timber construction — lower embodied carbon than concrete towers
- An FSI of 1.42 — within established planning parameters for the corridor
- Co-operative tenure eligibility — directly addressing the partnership and delivery model analysis that Council directed and TCHC never completed

The IDP's unit range of 550–700 net new homes was described explicitly as a preliminary estimate to be confirmed 'through the rezoning process, community consultation, and further financial feasibility analysis.' That process has now concluded with a proposal that falls below the IDP's

net new unit range (495 net new, versus 550–700). The IDP did not mandate a 35-storey tower. It mandated a process. The Swansea Park proposal is a credible outcome of that process — one that the community was never asked to evaluate.

A community consultation process that withholds a credible, publicly available alternative from community engagement does not satisfy the requirements of the Planning Act or the Official Plan. The community's right to meaningful participation includes the right to evaluate alternatives. That right was denied.

5. Material Gaps and Secondary Deficiencies

5.1 Tenant Relocation and Right-to-Return Protections

The IDP identified 108 households with a right to return. These households have been displaced since May 2022 — nearly four years. The February 2026 Decision Report defers the entire Tenant Relocation and Assistance Implementation Plan to a separate report considered at the same February 26 Committee meeting. The OPA and Zoning report is largely silent on the lived experience of these households, the specific right-to-return protections secured on title, and the timeline for their return. These are not secondary considerations. They are the reason the approvals framework exists.

5.2 Parkland and Open Space

The IDP committed to 'improved useable park and open space.' The February 2026 report confirms the development is exempt from parkland dedication under the Toronto Builds incentive structure. The Privately-Owned Publicly Accessible Space (POPS) and internal courtyard are not a park. They carry no public access guarantee, no programming commitment, and no permanence protection equivalent to a dedicated park. The report does not assess whether the POPS adequately fulfils the IDP's open space principle.

5.3 Financial Transparency and the Confidential Attachment

The March 2025 IDP contained a Confidential Attachment with financial information that remains confidential. The February 2026 report's financial section presents \$116.4 million in estimated incentives and tax exemptions without linking this to any project financial model. Council is approving planning instruments without access to the financial feasibility analysis that underlies the project. This is the structural transparency problem the stage-gate framework was designed to prevent.

5.4 Site Safety — Methane and Groundwater

The February 2026 report acknowledges that a Methane Gas Study found concentrations slightly above the screening level for hazardous conditions, and notes that the January 2026 sinkhole on Windermere Avenue is attributable to aging infrastructure. The report commits to gas control systems in general terms but does not confirm specific mitigation measures, their cost, or how

they will be secured through the approval process. Given that a structural failure of the original buildings triggered the entire displacement of 108 households, the report's treatment of ongoing site safety risks is insufficient.

6. What Compliant Approval Would Require

City Council should not ratify the OPA and Zoning By-law Amendment at its March 25–27, 2026 meeting until:

1. The Stage 2 Actions Report is tabled and approved — containing a comprehensive project budget, financial feasibility analysis, delivery model options assessment (including non-profit and co-operative models), procurement strategy, and confirmation of provincial and federal funding engagement outcomes
2. The Swansea Park alternative proposal is formally evaluated and placed before the community in a consultation session that meets the procedural requirements of the Planning Act — with results reported to Council before ratification
3. A service capacity analysis is completed and reported, addressing cumulative transit, school, and grocery impacts in the context of all approved and proposed development within 1 km of the site
4. The material design departures from the approved IDP — two buildings versus three blocks, single driveway versus internal road network, 495 net new units versus 550–700 — are formally acknowledged, justified, and accepted by Council
5. Right-to-return protections for the 108 displaced households are secured by covenant on title, with a confirmed construction phasing and return timeline registered as a condition of the planning approval

If the planning timeline makes full compliance impractical before March 25, Council should adopt the OPA/Zoning conditionally, with a prohibition on Site Plan Application submission until the Actions Report is tabled, the alternative proposal is evaluated, and the service capacity analysis is completed.

7. Conclusion

The 108 households displaced from Swansea Mews since May 2022 are entitled to a revitalization process that is both expeditious and rigorous. The February 2026 Decision Report is not rigorous. It bypasses the governance framework that City Council established to protect the public interest in exactly these circumstances. It advances planning approvals without the financial and delivery model analysis Council required. It locks in a built form — a 35-storey tower — that the community consistently opposed, that exceeds infrastructure capacity, and that was generated by an internal TCHC analysis that no one outside TCHC can examine.

An alternative exists. It has existed since Fall 2024. It has never been put to the community, never been formally evaluated, and never been acknowledged in any consultation record. That is not an oversight. It is a governance failure with a face.

RECOMMENDATION

City Council should not ratify the OPA and Zoning By-law Amendment for 21 Windermere Avenue on March 25–27, 2026 until: (1) the Stage 2 Actions Report is tabled; (2) the Swansea Park alternative proposal is formally placed before the community in a compliant consultation process; (3) a cumulative service capacity analysis is completed; and (4) material design departures from the approved IDP are formally justified and accepted. If ratification proceeds without these conditions, it proceeds in direct contradiction of the governance framework City Council adopted in 2019 and the specific directions Council issued in April 2025.