

Building Principles for the Future of Swansea Mews

By We, the Residents, Neighbours, and Friends of Swansea Mews

For more than fifty years, Swansea Mews has been part of the social and architectural fabric of our community — a place where families grew up together and neighbours looked out for one another. When the roof collapsed and residents were displaced, it exposed not only a structural failure, but a deeper planning failure. Now, as the site is being redeveloped, we have a shared responsibility to ensure that what comes next truly serves both people and place.

Design with Nature, Not Against It

Swansea sits between lake, ravine, and parkland — a landscape that should guide design, not be erased by it. Green space must be the organizing structure of the site, integrating trees, naturalized stormwater systems, and biodiversity corridors. Buildings should frame nature, not dominate it.

Human-Scale, Livable Design

We believe homes should belong to a neighbourhood, not a skyline. Buildings should be mid-rise, 4–8 storeys, stepping down toward existing homes and parks. This ensures sunlight, privacy, and a sense of community — rather than anonymity.

Housing with Dignity for All

Every home — rent-geared-to-income, affordable, or market — deserves equal design quality, light, and materials. Families must have access to spacious, functional units and the right to return without compromise. Affordable housing must not be hidden; it must be integrated and celebrated.

A Connected, Walkable Community

We envision streets for people, not just cars. Safe, well-lit walkways, cycling routes, and public courtyards should link homes, schools, and The Queensway, creating a seamless extension of Swansea's existing fabric.

Sustainable and Buildable

We favour efficient, low-carbon mid-rise construction — less expensive to build, easier to maintain, and more energy-efficient than towers. Durable materials and simple building systems will ensure longevity and affordability for generations.

Inclusive Co-Design

The new Swansea must be built with residents and neighbours, not for them. Former tenants, local residents, and design professionals should share decision-making power throughout the process — from planning through construction and beyond.

Introducing: The Swansea Park Concept: <https://www.swanseapark.ca/>

To embody these principles, architect David Peterson, a Swansea resident, has proposed the Swansea Park concept — a nature-first, community-scaled alternative to the current City/TCHC plan. Instead of a 35-storey tower and over 800 units, Swansea Park envisions a green central park surrounded by mid-rise homes, pedestrian streets, and community spaces — a model of sustainable urbanism that integrates housing, ecology, and belonging.

Comparison: City Plan vs. Swansea Park Concept

Principle	City / TCHC Plan (IDP)	Swansea Park Concept
Design with Nature	Small internal courtyards; fragmented green space around towers.	Central continuous naturalized park as organizing feature; green infrastructure integrated.
Human-Scale Design	One 35-storey tower and several mid- to high-rise buildings (up to 20+ storeys).	Mid-rise buildings (5–10 storeys) framing open space; step-down edges to fit neighbourhood.
Housing with Dignity	154 RGI units replaced, but mixed with 500–700 market units in tower formats; limited control and smaller units for returning tenants.	400 Co-op units, equal-quality design for all homes; family-sized units, private and public outdoor space.
Connected, Walkable Community	Internal private courtyards; vehicular focus along The Queensway.	Pedestrian-first streets, continuous public paths, cycling routes, and open community porches.
Sustainability & Buildability	High construction and maintenance costs; complex tower systems.	Low-carbon modular mid-rises; efficient, cost-manageable, and locally maintainable.
Neighbourhood Integration	Abrupt height transition to existing homes; potential shadowing and privacy loss.	Gentle transition to surrounding streets; design continuity and visual harmony.
Co-Design & Transparency	City-led, consultant-driven process with limited resident input after IDP approval.	Resident-led participatory planning with transparency and local decision table.

We, the Residents, Neighbours, and Friends of Swansea, call upon the City of Toronto and Toronto Community Housing to revisit the Swansea Mews redevelopment using the Swansea Park principles — to create a community that is green, human-scaled, inclusive, and lasting.