

SWANSEA PARK

Housing Proposal *FORMER SWANSEA MEWS*

FALL 2024



Presented by



Architecture, Landscape, & Design

SWANSEA PARK HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

This document is a development concept for the Swansea Mews, the Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) site located in the west-end neighbourhood of Swansea. The proposal seeks a balance between social, ecological, and functional concerns. This is accomplished by knitting together natural and urban systems. **Being first with nature, the proposal places a naturalized park at the heart of the urban scheme.** The park provides an ecological and social basis for the adjacent midrise housing blocks that surround it in a crescent shape. A public porch is created along The Queensway, the arterial street that serves the site. The public space is conceived as an amenity and threshold to the park. The already vibrant social life of the west-end neighbourhoods will find new public space to host special events and daily activities. **Nature and urban life are a comfortable pairing already seen in the Swansea neighbourhood.** The proposal follows this example while increasing the density of the site. The density is achieved with mid-rise buildings that are based on modular design principles. Narrow building widths and simple building shapes allow cladding modules to be factory-built and achieve tremendous cost efficiency.

A public park and modular housing, admittedly, these are not new ideas. Seeing these ideas to fruition requires **innovation in design and public administration.** See this document as imbedded in the public Request for Proposals (RFP). Imagine it as the conceptual framework that bidders use as guidance in their cost development submission. Essentially, bidders are to deliver a site organization with a park and modular buildings with a specified density. Fundamentally, industry will have to innovate to meet the RFP brief. The expectation is that new development teams will emerge to answer the brief. In doing so, we could start a trend where innovation in housing sees the creation of celebrated public building projects.

Developed by David Peterson Architect for the Swansea Community independent of the City of Toronto or its subsidiary organizations.



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CONTENTS

LIFE

1 Understanding the Site

1.1 Environmental Context

1.2. Environmental History & Social Context

1.3. Site Context

1.4. Reclamation of Materials

2 Swansea Park Proposal Overview

2.1 Design Objectives & Key Features

2.2 Landscape & Biodiversity

SPACES

3 Public Spaces

3.1 Canopy

3.2 Streetscape + Walkability

3.3 Porches

BUILDINGS

4.1 Building Form

4.2 Building & Project Statistics

References About

“First **life**, then
spaces, then
buildings
- the other way
around never
works”

Jan Gehl



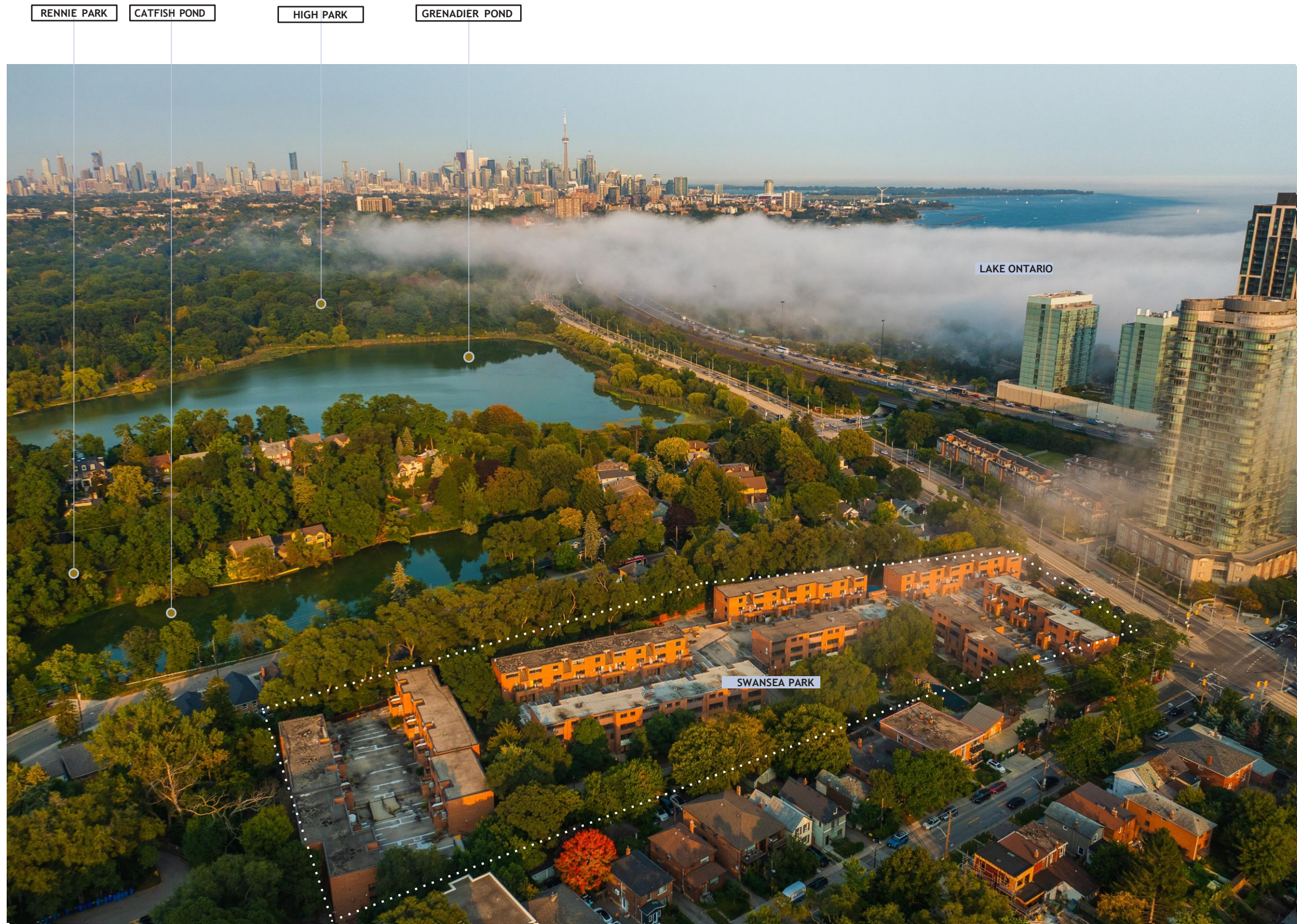


Fig. 1. Aerial Image of High Park and Swansea neighbourhood showing the existing conditions as of October 2024.

1.1

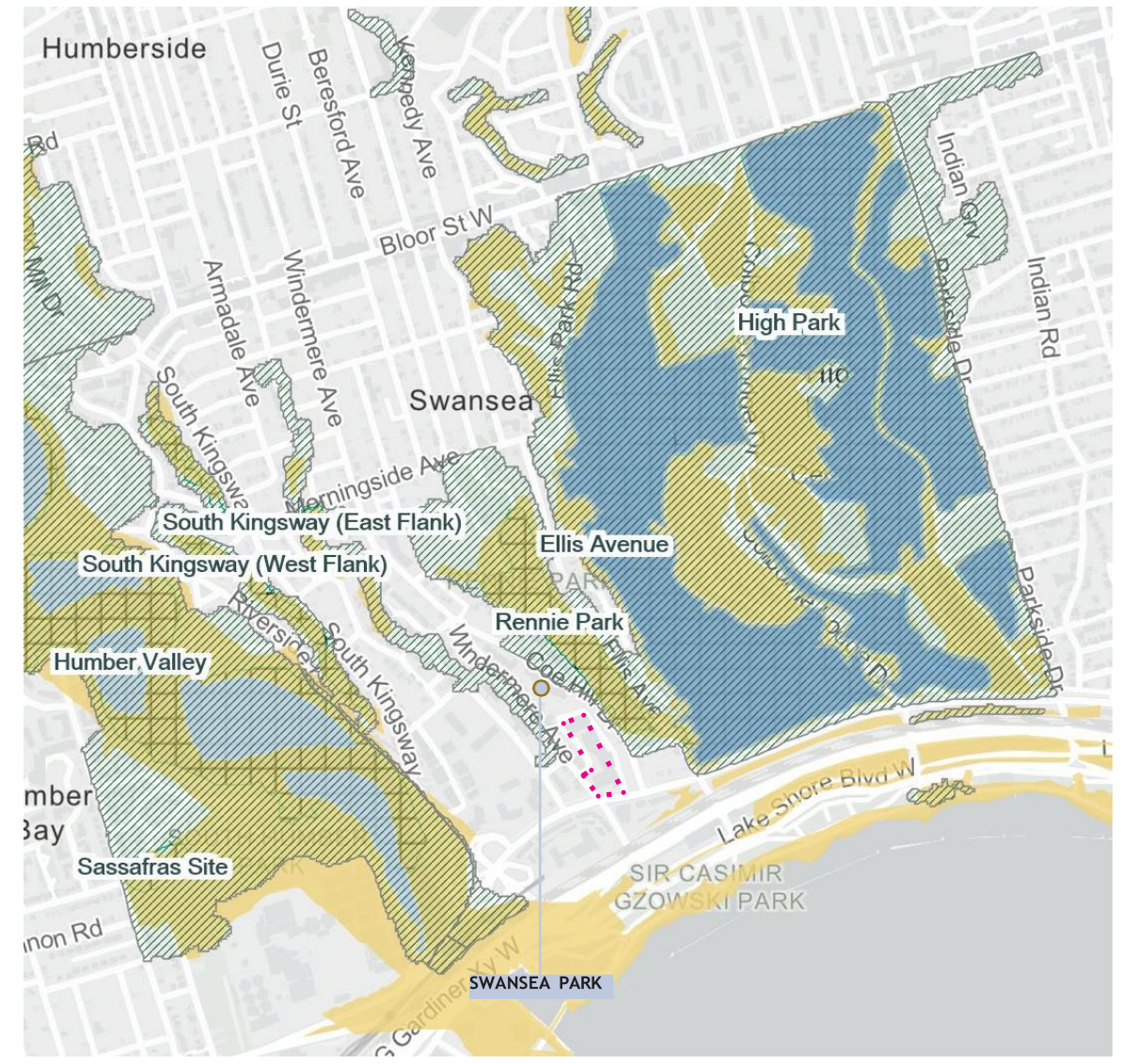
- 1 Understanding the Site
 - 1.1 Environmental Context
 - 1.2 Environmental History & Social Context
 - 1.3 Site Context
 - 1.4 Reclamation of Materials
- 2 Swansea Park Proposal Overview
 - 2.1 Design Objectives & Key Features
 - 2.2 Landscape & Biodiversity



Fig. 2. Map of Swansea in 1890 from Swansea Historical Society archives.

SWANSEA

1.1 ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT



■ Natural Heritage System identified in Toronto Official Plan
 ■ Environmentally Significant Area
 ■ Provincially Significant Wetland
 ■ Ravine & Natural Feature Protection By-Law
 ● Site Boundary

Fig. 3. City of Toronto Environmentally Significant Areas Map <https://www.toronto.ca/explore-enjoy/parks-recreation/places-spaces/ravines-trails-natural-parklands/environmentally-significant-areas/>

BIODIVERSITY OF SWANSEA

In the recent publication Biodiversity Strategy for Toronto, the City designates much of Swansea as an Environmentally Significant Area, including spaces immediately to the northwest of the proposed development. The site is also in close proximity to provincially significant wetland and parts of the Natural Heritage System highlighted in the Toronto Official Plan.

SWANSEA

1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

Located in Toronto's west-end, Swansea is a neighbourhood is bordered by Humber River to the west and High Park to the east.

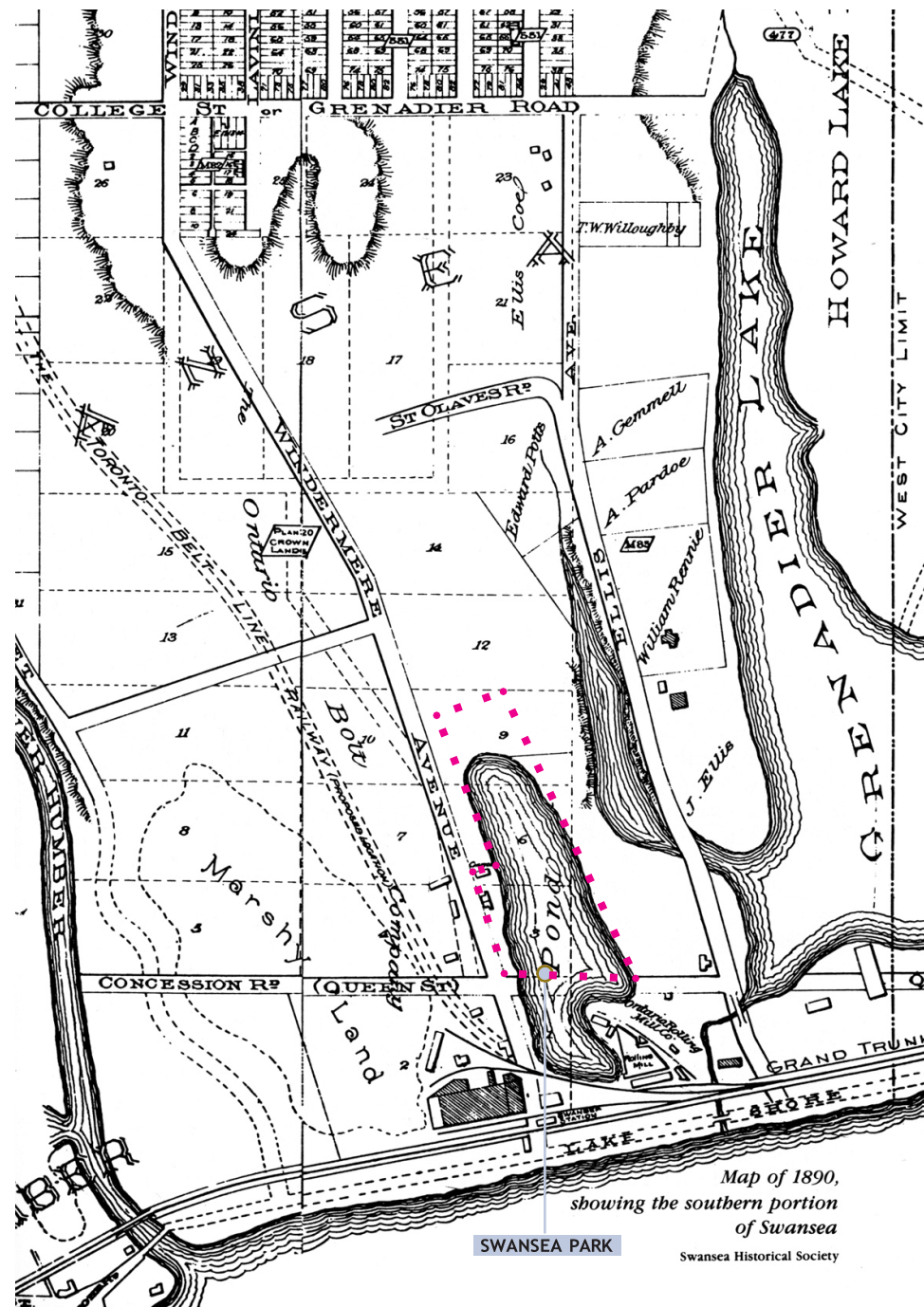


Fig. 4. Map of Swansea in 1890, showing the southern portion of Swansea. The site of the proposed development was originally a pond. Image from Swansea Historical Society Archives.

ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

The west-end neighbourhood of Swansea was first inhabited by First Nations members hundreds of years ago. The map from 1890 shows that two ponds were originally located in proximity of Swansea Mews housing development. The existing Catfish pond stands on the east end of the development, whereas the pond towards the southwest has been built upon.

SOCIO-ECONOMICAL CONTEXT

The High Park Swansea neighbourhood has a middle-aged community, with 48% of people between the ages 25 to 54 (City of Toronto Neighbourhood Profile Data, 2021). The neighbourhood has a large working age population and a higher median family income compared to the City of Toronto average. While several mid-rise developments are located along Bloor and the Queensway, the dominate built form of the neighbourhood is characterized by low-rise residential buildings.

•••• Site Boundary

SWANSEA

1.3 SITE CONTEXT

TRANSPORTATION + TRANSIT ACCESS

The site is a minute walk from the 501 and 504B TTC streetcar. The closest TTC subway station is Jane Station, which is a 20 min walk. A TTC bus stop is located at the corner of Windermere and Queensway.

NEIGHBOURHOOD AMENITIES + POPS

The neighbourhood is served by Swansea Public School. Existing Public Owned Private Spaces (POPS) are clustered on Bloor street and along the Lakeshore. Travelling to businesses on Bloor St. and Lakeshore by foot requires close to 30 min. Proposed commercial units on site will shorten travel distances from Swansea Mews to a commercial area by 50%.

CURRENT STATE

Swansea Mews is currently awaiting demolition at the recommendation of structural engineers who deemed the housing complex unsafe for occupancy following a ceiling collapse in 2022. Tenants have been relocated to housing complexes across the city.

DEMOLITION, RECLAMATION & RETENTION

The proposal calls for a deconstruction strategy as part of the demolition phase. This will allow for the reclamation of construction materials that can be reused in the new housing development. Existing brick and concrete can be reclaimed, reducing the amount of construction waste produced. The proposal also advocates for the retention of trees on site. A significant number of trees and old growth trees are within the site boundary. The retention of these trees is not only crucial for the High Park-Swansea natural habitat, it also retains the character of the residential neighbourhood.



Fig. 5. Existing construction materials can be reused for the proposed redevelopment.



Fig. 6. Entrance to Swansea Mews, a Toronto Community Housing Project.

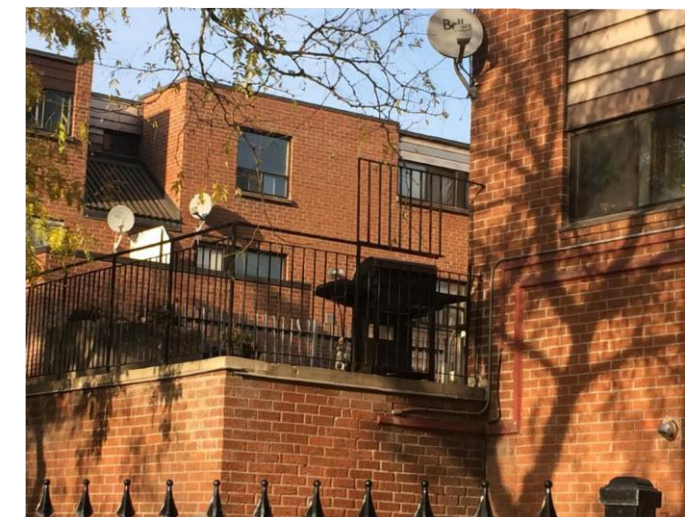


Fig. 7. Existing brick cladding at Swansea Mews. Image from Toronto Star.

SWANSEA

1.4 RECLAMATION OF CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS

RECOVERY OF BRICK & CONCRETE

Brick and concrete that are part of the former housing project can be reclaimed and reused in the proposed redevelopment through a process of sustainable demolition and deconstruction. This presents an opportunity to create a new residential community while retaining collective memory of the site from reclaimed construction materials.



Fig. 8. Aerial image of the existing condition of Swansea Mews in October 2024.

RECLAIMED CONCRETE

The large volume of concrete used in Swansea Mews can be deconstructed and reused in the central landscape mound of the proposed housing development. Reclaiming concrete will reduce the carbon footprint of the new development and will serve as the foundation for the landscape in the proposed design.



Fig. 9. Site Plan for proposed Swansea Park.

RECLAIMED BRICK

Brick originally used in Swansea Mews can be deconstructed and reused in the paving of the proposed housing development. Using reclaimed brick will retain the character of the neighbourhood and serve as the building blocks of a reimagined Swansea community.

SWANSEA PARK PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

2.1 DESIGN OBJECTIVE + KEY FEATURES



Fig. 10. Reimagined masterplan of Swansea.

RETAINED TREES RESTORED POND CENTRAL LANDSCAPE PUBLIC CANOPY

DESIGN OBJECTIVE + KEY FEATURES

Swansea Park is a proposed community housing development at the corner of Queensway and Windermere. The development will create 331 residential units, two commercial units, and a public park. The design concept centers around creating a naturalized public park of Swansea within the development, following the complex ecological systems offered by the nearby High Park, Humber River Valley, and Lake Ontario. Sustainable strategies are employed early in the process with the reclamation of construction waste from the demolition of Swansea Mews, incorporation of mass timber as the primary construction material, and energy creation with solar voltaic panels.



Fig. 11. Entrance path to residences passes through a canopy and pond

SWANSEA PARK PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

2.2 LANDSCAPE + BIODIVERSITY

One of the key features of the development is a central landscape, created with reclaimed construction waste from the demolition of Swansea Mews. This landscape will be a microcosm of Swansea's rich biosphere, capturing the flora and fauna of the neighbourhood within the development. The landscape includes native tree species such as white birch, honey locust, and red maple, which will create habitats for birds, insects, and fish that inhabit the neighbourhood.

Pathways along the central landscape encourages circulation and movement. Benches around the landscape creates a place for rest and for residents to socialize. Plaques providing educational information about ecology

The planting of tall native trees in the central landscape provides an increased level of privacy for residential blocks looking towards the center of the site. The layers of planting also act as a sound barrier against traffic noise from the Queensway.

BIODIVERSITY

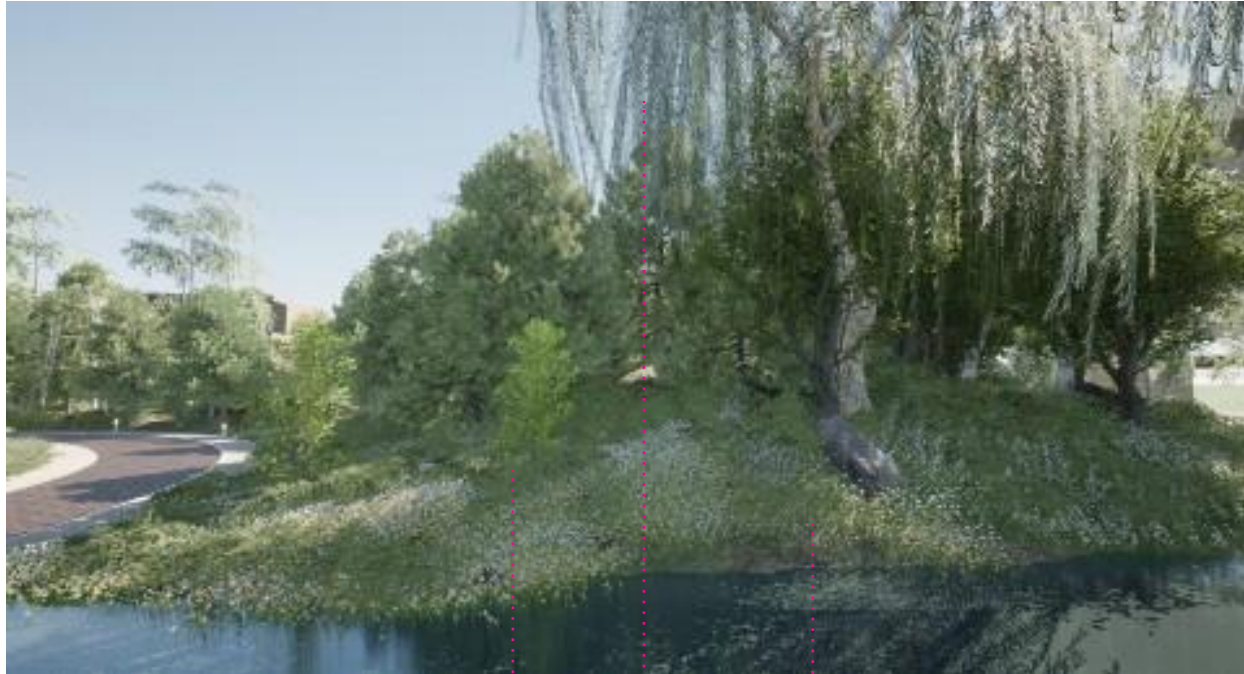
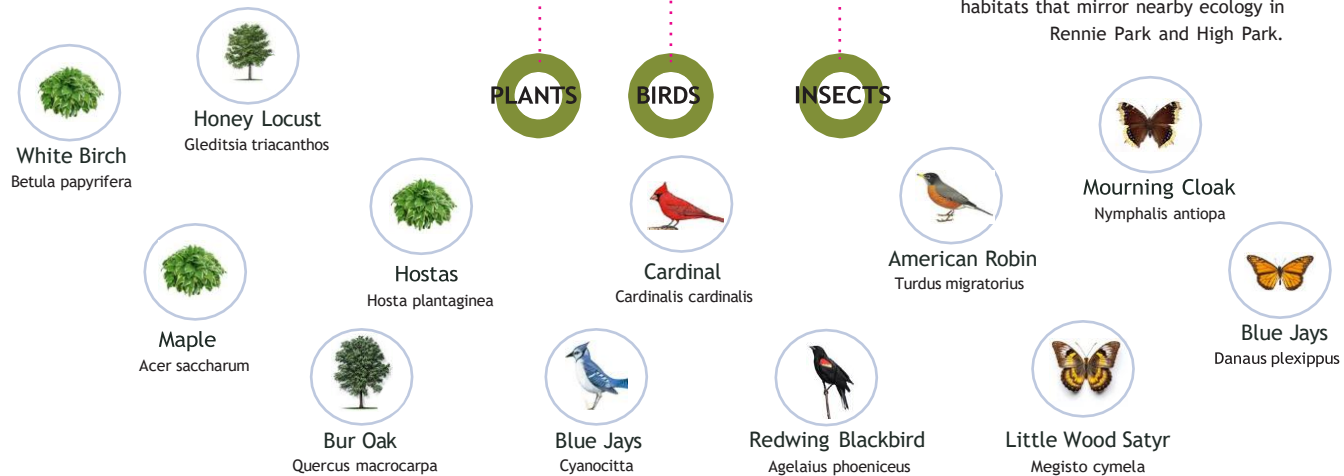


Fig. 12. Proposed landscape supports habitats that mirror nearby ecology in Rennie Park and High Park.



SPACES

- 3 Public Spaces**
- 3.1 Canopy**
- 3.2 Streetscape + Walkability**
- 3.3 Porches**

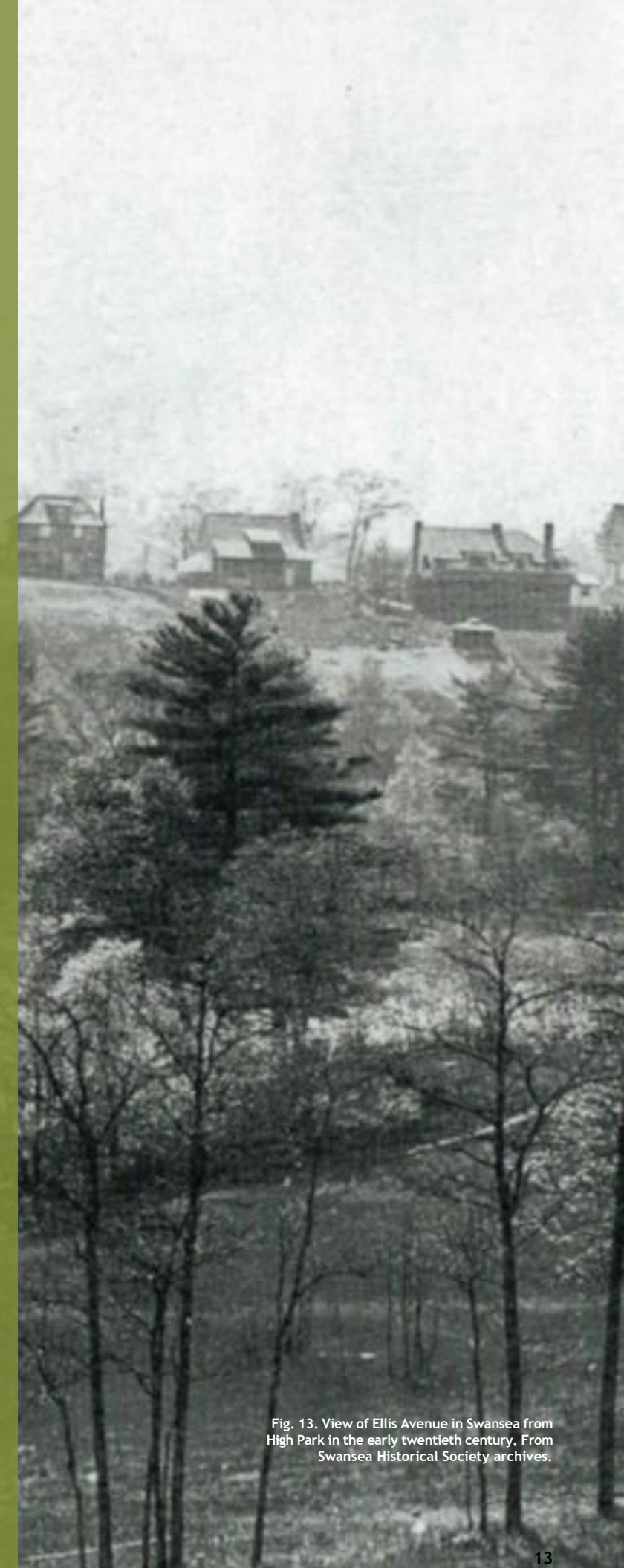


Fig. 13. View of Ellis Avenue in Swansea from High Park in the early twentieth century. From Swansea Historical Society archives.

PUBLIC SPACES

3.1 CANOPY

DESIGN

A new public amenity is created with a large wood canopy. The canopy is a public room that can host many activities. It will serve the new residents to the site and the westend neighbourhoods of Swansea, High Park, Roncessvalles, and Mimico Creek.

Lanterns hung from the canopy illuminate the large covered open space, creating an inviting street corner at Windermere Ave and Queensway. The use of lanterns originates from a number of cultures, including that of indigenous cultures. Further design detailing of the lanterns presents an opportunity to create forms, colours, and patterns that represent the demographics of the city and speak to diversity of neighbourhood.

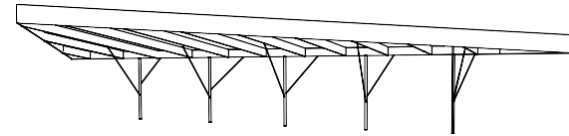


Fig. 13. Conceptual diagram of the public canopy.

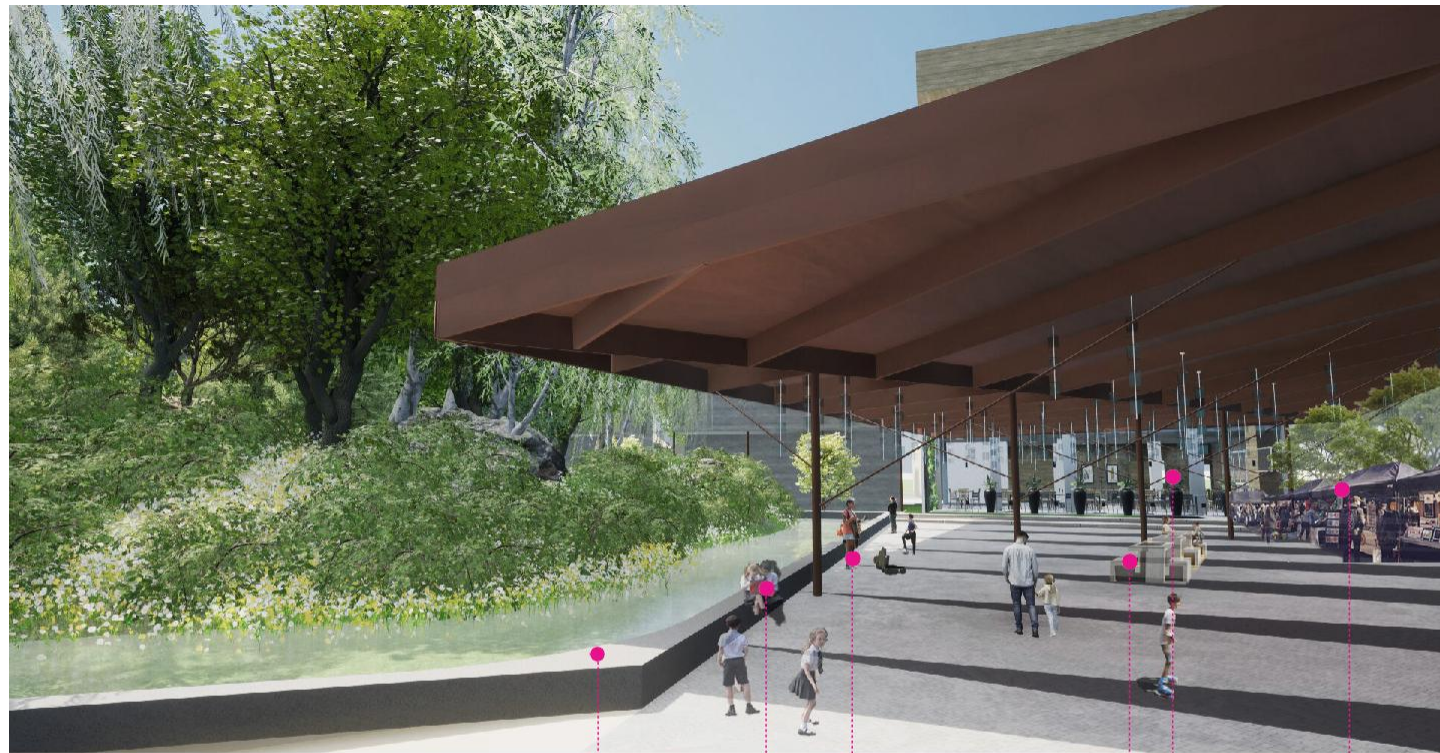
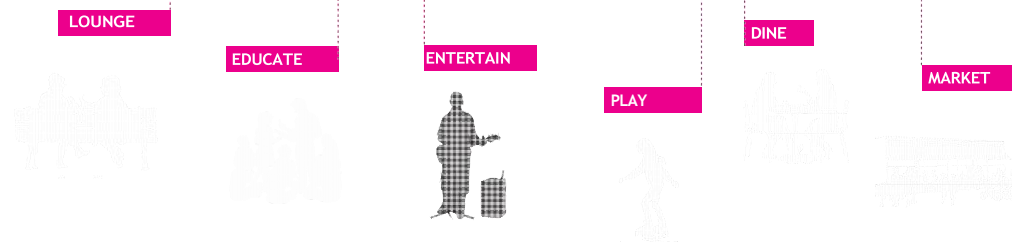


Fig. 14. Western Red Cedar canopy allows for plenty of programmable space.

PROGRAMMABLE SPACE



PUBLIC SPACES

3.1 CANOPY

The covered open space intensifies activity along the Queensway, creates a mix of uses and sustainable forms of development.

The canopy is a sloped roof, with the low point located over the water. Stormwater falling from the roof will providing a theatrically display of the hydrological cycle. This water management strategy makes sustainability a feature of the neighbourhood and creates educational opportunities for local schools.



Fig. 16. Evening use of the public space can include music events and night markets.



Fig. 17. North view of Swansea Park from the major intersection of Queensway and Windermere. The public space serves as a setback from major thoroughways, dampening the impact of noise and air pollution on the residential area.



Fig. 18. Northeast perspective of the public pavillion. The centre landscape creates an opportunity for access to water while acting as an ecological spatial separation between the private residences and the main public space under the canopy. The sloped roof allows for rainwater to be directed to the water feature.

PUBLIC SPACES

3.2 STREETScape + WALKABILITY



Fig. 19. Internal streetscape looking North. Paved roads encourages motorists to exercise caution while driving in the residential area.

3.1 STREETScape + WALKABILITY

The porches and streetscape design are created with reference to the City's Streetscape Manual. Paving, trees, medians, lighting and street furniture are carefully considered to improve the walkability and livability of Swansea Park and its wider community. A wider sidewalk and narrower one-way road mitigates the effects of vehicular traffic, while creating more direct access to nature and social spaces, improving air quality and the atmosphere of the neighbourhood.

PUBLIC SPACES

3.3 PORCHES



Fig.20. Internal streetscape looking South. Benches along the central landscape creates a safe space for rest and socialization.

3.2 PORCHES

Large public porches at the entrance of each residential building will provide space for residents to socialize and lounge while looking towards the site's central landscape.

Planting at every porch creates sufficient shade for residents and pedestrians, improving walkability and bike score throughout the seasons.

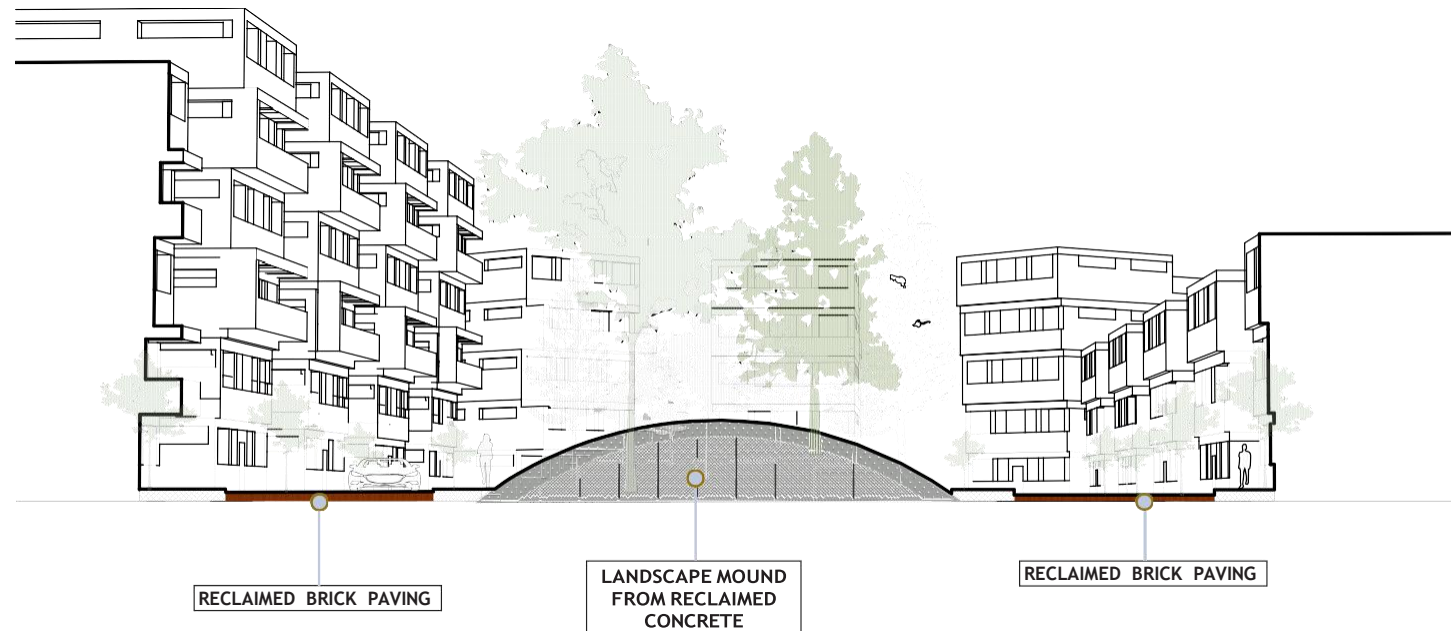


Fig. 21. Site cross section of the housing proposal.

BUILDINGS

4.1 Building Form

4.2 Building & Project Statistics



Fig. 22. The houses at the corner of Durie and Morningside to the north of the Swansea Mews site boundary in the early twentieth century. From Swansea Historical Society archives.

BUILDING

4.1 BUILDING FORM

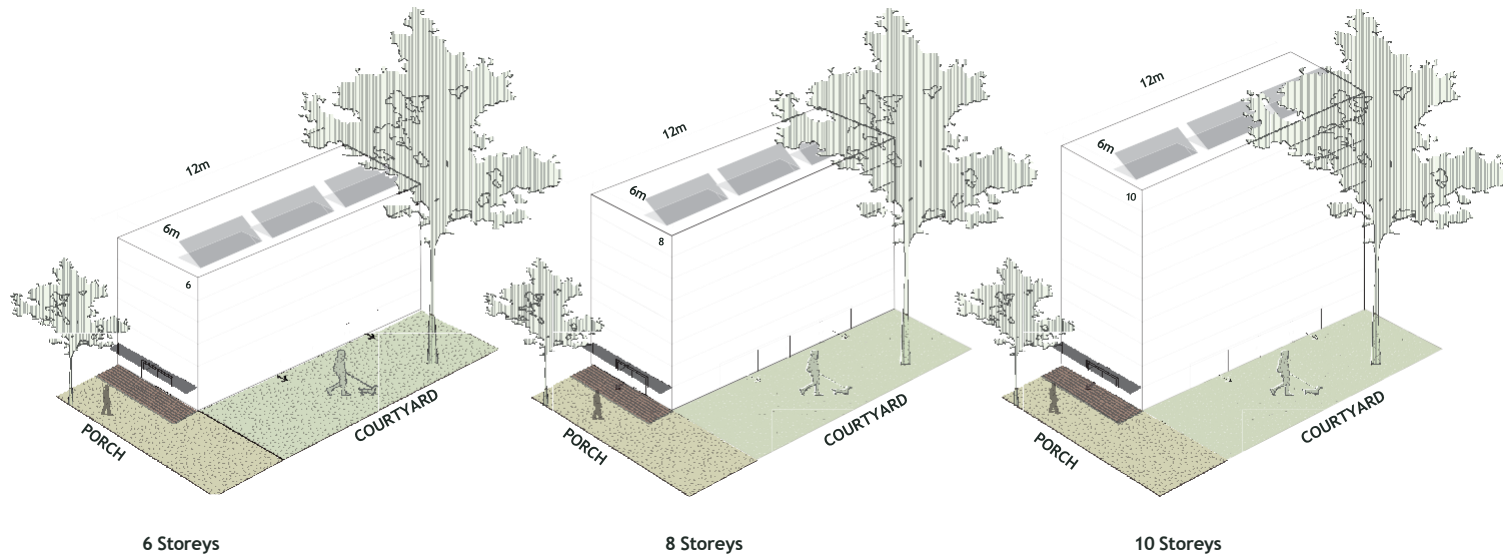


Fig. 23. Typical residential block with a side courtyard and front porch. The semi-private spaces invite interaction, fostering community and collaboration within the residential community.

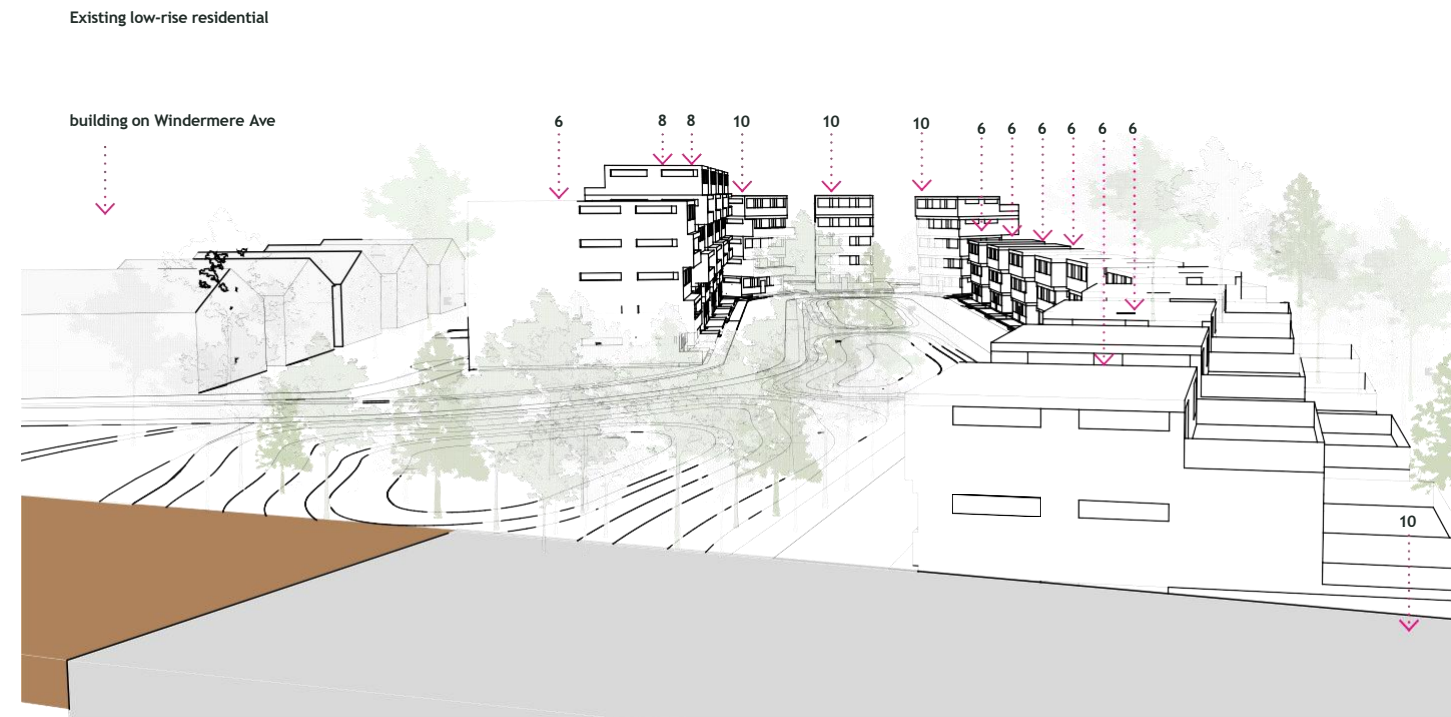


Fig. 24. View of the housing proposal from The Queensway. The six and eight storey residential buildings will be located along the east side and west side of the property respectively, and the ten storey buildings will be located towards the center back of the property.

BUILDING

4.2 BUILDING & PROJECT STATISTICS

Location 21 Windermere Ave, Toronto ON

Zone 6

Project Type Mixed Tenure

Site Area 22,750m²

Building Coverage 4491m² (20%)

Landscape Area 13,650m² (60%)

Gross Floor Area 32,300m²

Floor Space Index 1.42

Average Unit Size 70m²

Projected Number of Units 461 Units

Building Height 6, 8, and 10 Storeys

Residential Parking Underground in 10 Storey Building

Commercial Units 2 Commercial Units within Queensway Frontage

Number of Proposed Units 331

Number of Buildings 14

Bike Parking Spaces TBD

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DAVID PETERSON ARCHITECT is a Toronto-based architectural practice with nearly 20 years of experience, specializing in housing projects. Founded by the belief that increased urban biodiversity can simultaneously benefit people and the natural world, the firm approaches design with a strong connection to the land, creating buildings that respond thoughtfully to their environments. The firm's portfolio includes projects situated along creeks and ravines, as well as urban courtyard buildings. These built and proposed residences embrace an ecological approach to housing, prioritizing sustainability and environmental integration.

