

## Mayor's Tower Renewal: Expectations for Sustainable Communities

### Key Values for Sustainable Communities, City and Region

Cities should be sustainable: able to achieve the aspirations of quality of life of residents, in a manner in balance with resources and citizen expectations, and which can continue indefinitely. Achieving this requires these key considerations:

#### Environmental Sustainability

Eliminating our negative impact on the global environment, enabling the continued health of societies and the planet.

e.g., settlement and consumption patterns

#### Social Sustainability

Providing the hard and soft infrastructure required for a healthy, equitable and prosperous society.

e.g., education, employment, food security, physical and mental well-being

#### Cultural Sustainability

Enabling the aspirations of individuals and communities of people to be expressed and affect meaningful change, while also valuing collective and individual heritage.

e.g., the arts, design, commerce as well as built, natural and community heritage

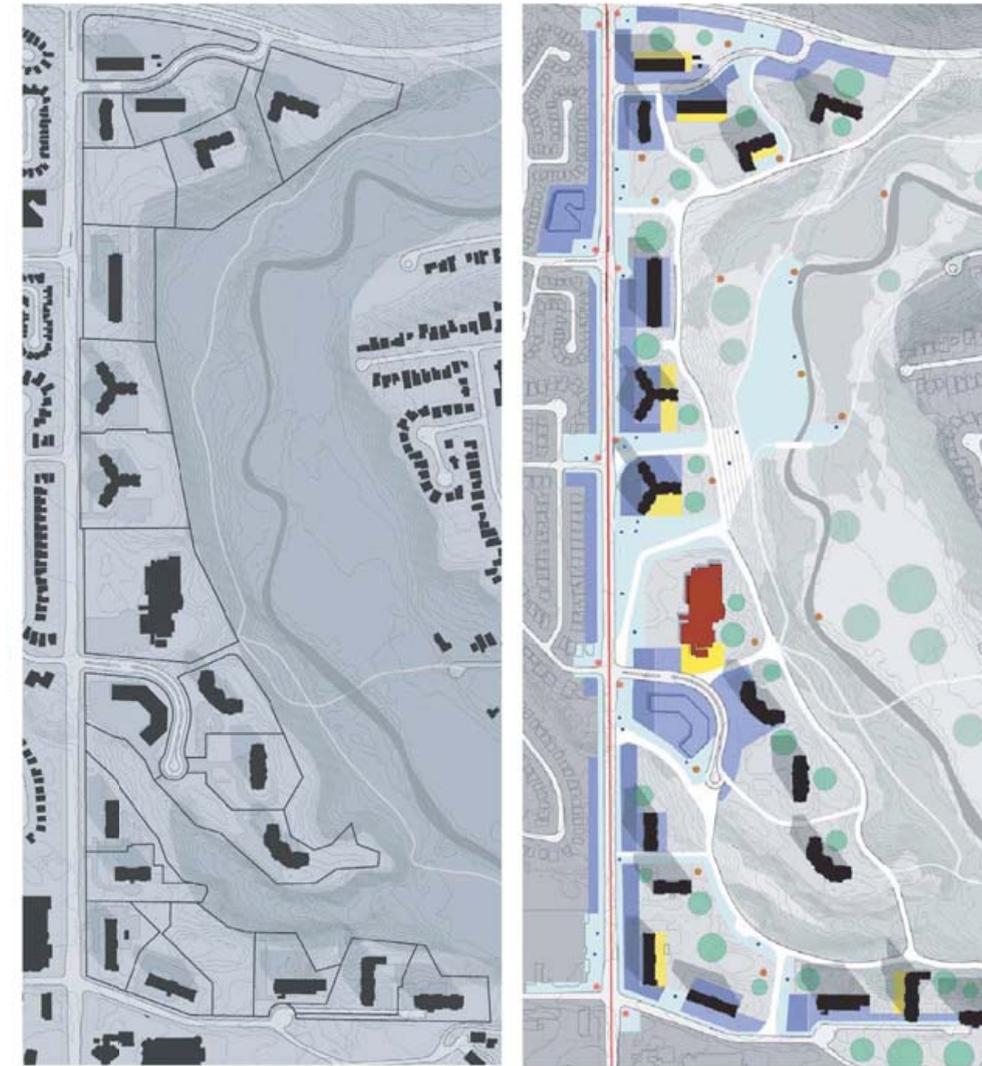
#### Economic Sustainability

Achieving environmental, cultural and socially sustainable communities in a manner that can be continually financed and contributes to the general wealth of society

e.g., investments, incentives, commercial diversity, and entrepreneurship

### The following is an initial list of what we should expect from Toronto's Apartment Neighbourhoods

- That they provide the full range of amenity, retail, and community services to foster self-sufficient and vibrant communities
- That they are inclusive and dynamic places, with communal gathering spaces and an active and accessible public realm
- That they provide an array of housing options for the entire life cycle, at a variety of types and tenures, maintaining the current level of affordable units on site
- That they provide options for employment and entrepreneurship
- That they provide access to local government representatives and services
- That they are attractive
- That they provide ready access to fresh food
- That they are able to support the creativity, ingenuity and cultural production of the resident community
- That they are connected to the city at large
- They are able to adapt and evolve to the changing needs and aspirations of the resident community over time
- That their built and natural environments are sustainable
- That they emerge as hubs, providing the infrastructures and resource networks (energy, food, waste management, transport), for truly sustainable communities, city and region



#### Complete Apartment Neighbourhood

Conceptual framework of gradual growth and evolution towards a 'complete community' within an existing Apartment Neighbourhood in Toronto.



## Mayor's Tower Renewal: The Opportunities List

Toronto's aging modern apartments offer a remarkable opportunity, offering three key resources for the future: durable concrete buildings, spacious, underutilized sites and even distribution throughout Toronto. This presents multiple opportunities for enabling vibrant neighbourhoods, healthy communities and a sustainable built environment throughout the region.

### Building:

**Resource:**

Built with durable concrete construction, these post-war residential buildings could provide high quality housing for generations to come. They provide an infrastructure which can be adapted to meet diverse housing needs, as well as a mix of uses.



**Opportunity:**

How might these buildings provide the best housing standard, be made more efficient, and respond to the needs of communities?

**Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions:**

- Clean energy production
- Thermal over-cladding
- Sun shading
- Operable 'second skin' on balconies
- Water management

**Improve Housing Standard:**

- New ownership models
- Improve building aesthetics
- New amenities including common areas, childcare, laundry on each floor, etc.
- A creation of multi-storey, family sized units
- Introduce mixed-use
- Integrating existing buildings into new structures

### Site

**Resource:**

Modern tower in the park buildings throughout Toronto contain enormous tracts of land, with up to 90 percent open space. Envisioned as recreation and amenity space, today much of this open space is underutilized, existing as surface parking or fenced-off lawn space. City-wide this represents an enormous land resource.



**Opportunity:**

How might the large spaces around these buildings be used to enable sustainable and vibrant neighbourhoods, for the benefit of the local community and city at large?

**Provide space for:**

- services
- the community
- housing
- commerce
- employment
- gardens
- clean energy production
- nature
- public space
- art
- play

### Neighbourhood

**Resource:**

Apartment Neighbourhoods, formed by groups of large tower properties, represent clusters of thousands of units, many hectares of underutilized land. Located throughout the city, these areas are ideal for thoughtful reinvestment at the district scale.



**Opportunity:**

How can the adjacent tower properties within Apartment Neighbourhoods work in coordination to better service residents and the community, as well as create vibrant environments at the neighbourhood scale?

New services and amenities within Apartment Neighbourhoods would not only be of benefit to apartment residents, but to the community at large.

- Community hub
- Publicly accessible space
- District energy
- Local commerce
- Community services and amenities
- Spaces for community groups and organizations
- Public gathering space
- Access to transport
- Entrepreneurial and employment opportunities

### City

**Resource:**

Apartment Neighbourhoods are located throughout the city and region, representing nearly 1,000 buildings, the homes of many hundreds of thousands, as well as enormous tracts of land. Multiplied across the region, tower and site renewal have the potential to dramatically improve conditions at the neighbourhood scale as well as significantly reduce the environmental impact of the city at large.



**Opportunity:**

How can Toronto's modern high-rise communities be integrated to improve Toronto's ecological, social, cultural and economic sustainability city-wide, and make for a more connected, more liveable Toronto?

- Self sustaining and unique community hubs
- Interconnected hubs (Transit city)
- Greater mobility, less commuting
- Amenities for the larger community
- Reduced carbon footprint
- Culturally unique 'nodes' throughout city
- Greater equity, housing options
- Political engagement

## Mayor's Tower Renewal: Green Objective

Make a significant reduction to the City's Greenhouse Gas Emissions

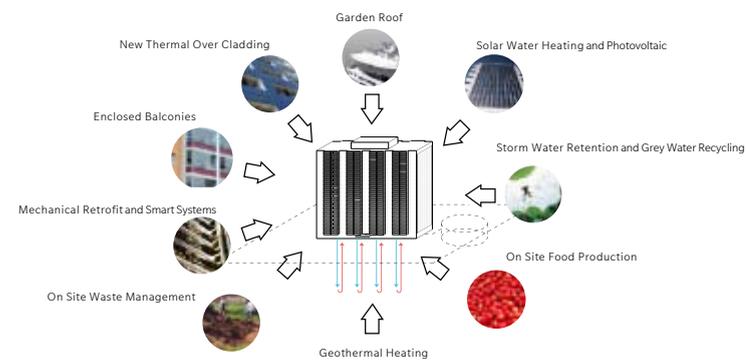
### Sample Strategies

- Over-cladding and sun shading
- District renewable energy, geo-thermal, co-generation, wind
- Permacultural activity such as on-site food production and waste management
- Introduction of mass transit and local servicing to reduce auto-dependency

### Complementary Strategies and Programs

- Live Green Toronto
- City of Toronto Green Building Standard
- Toronto Bike Plan
- Toronto Food Charter
- Change is in the Air
- Official Plan
- Ontario Growth Plan
- Transit City

#### Creating a Sustainable Built Environment

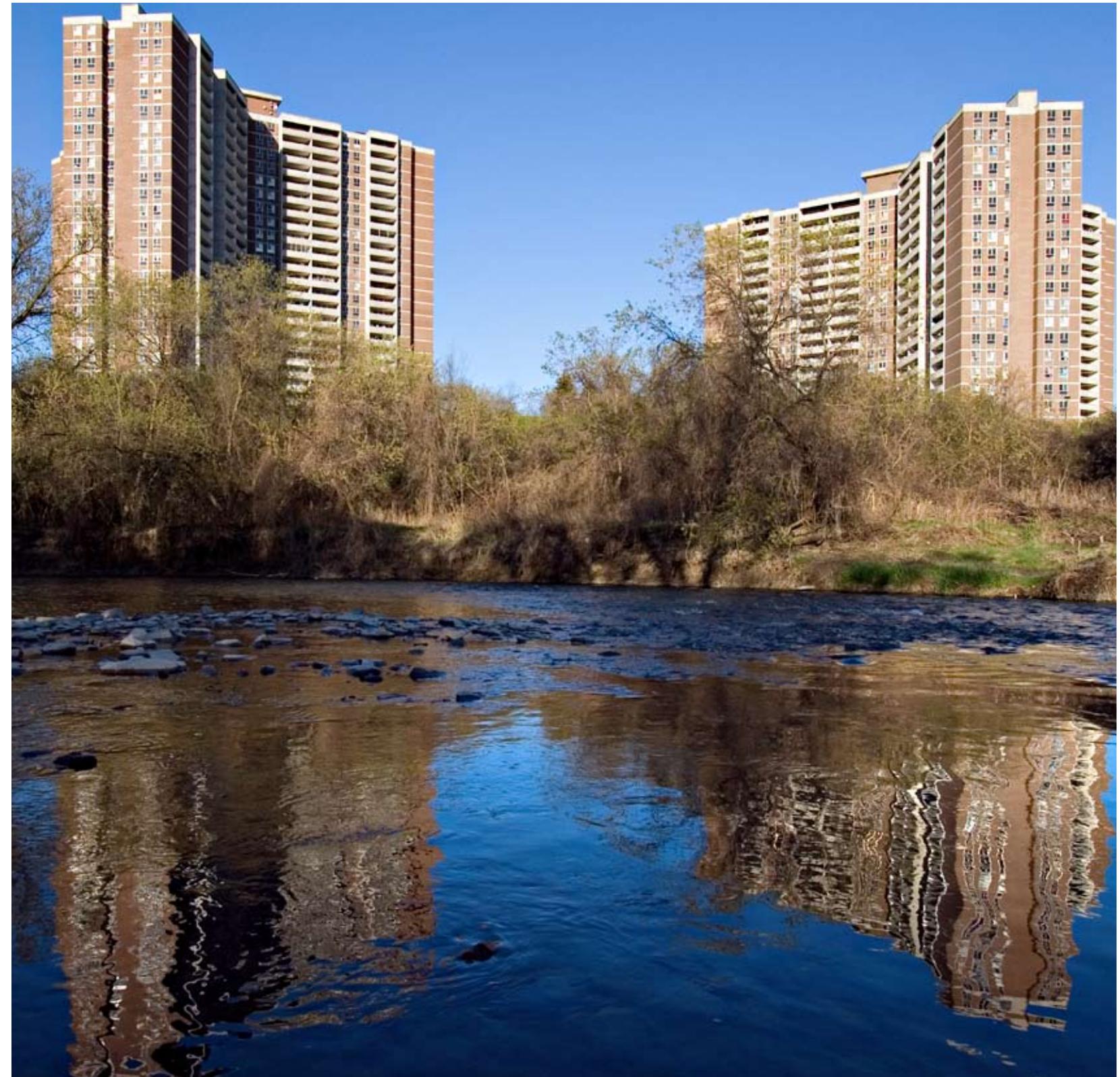


#### Images

Bottom Left: Sample strategies for green renewal. Bottom Right: Towers after green refurbishment, with solar panels on blank end walls, Marzhan, Berlin. Opposite: Towers as seen from the Humber River. Courtesy of Jesse Colin Jackson

### Green the City and Region

Toronto's extensive stock of hundreds of post-war apartment towers located throughout the region are ideal candidates for the application of strategies that reduce environmental impact at both the building and district scales. This provides the opportunity for significant carbon reductions. If applied comprehensively throughout the city, Toronto's environmental impact will be substantially reduced, and these communities could stand among the most environmentally sustainable in North America.



## Mayor's Tower Renewal: Community Objective

Allow Apartment Neighbourhoods to evolve to meet needs, expectations and aspirations

### Sample Strategies

- Turn Apartment Neighbourhoods into hubs for the community at large
- Encourage mixed-use
- Eliminate food and servicing deserts
- Integrate tower neighbourhoods with social services
- Improve quality of public space
- Food production and on-site waste management
- Maintain and expand affordable housing
- Introduce new housing, addressing the needs of residents at all stages of their life cycle
- Encourage the creation of co-op and other mixed housing models
- Job creation and support for local entrepreneurship
- Skills training and apprenticeship related to building renewal

### Complementary Strategies and Programs

- Agenda for Prosperity
- Priority Neighbourhoods
- Transit City
- Places to Grow
- Toronto Food Charter

### Creating Complete Communities

Toronto's modern towers stand at the centre of some of North America's most diverse and dynamic communities. Currently the services, amenities and housing standard in many Apartment Neighbourhoods do not match demand. With the goal of encouraging self-sustaining complete communities, Apartment Neighbourhoods could grow to include a wide variety of functions, reflective of the diversity of their resident and surrounding communities. Furthermore, appropriate modifications to apartment towers, both in physical form and tenure, will provide housing more responsive to the range of needs.



Images

Bottom: Retail infill at base of tower blocks at Maerkisches Viertel, Berlin. Opposite: Overlay of market from Moscow tower block into tower block in Toronto's North York



## Mayor's Tower Renewal: Heritage Objective

Recognize Apartment Neighbourhoods as an important resource and fundamental part of Toronto's identity

### Sample Strategies

- Improve general quality of housing to the level intended and beyond
- Educate and promote the value of Toronto's modern history
- Establish heritage guidelines
- Work with old buildings to meet future needs
- Reinvestment with minimum disruption to current tenants

### Complementary Strategies and Programs

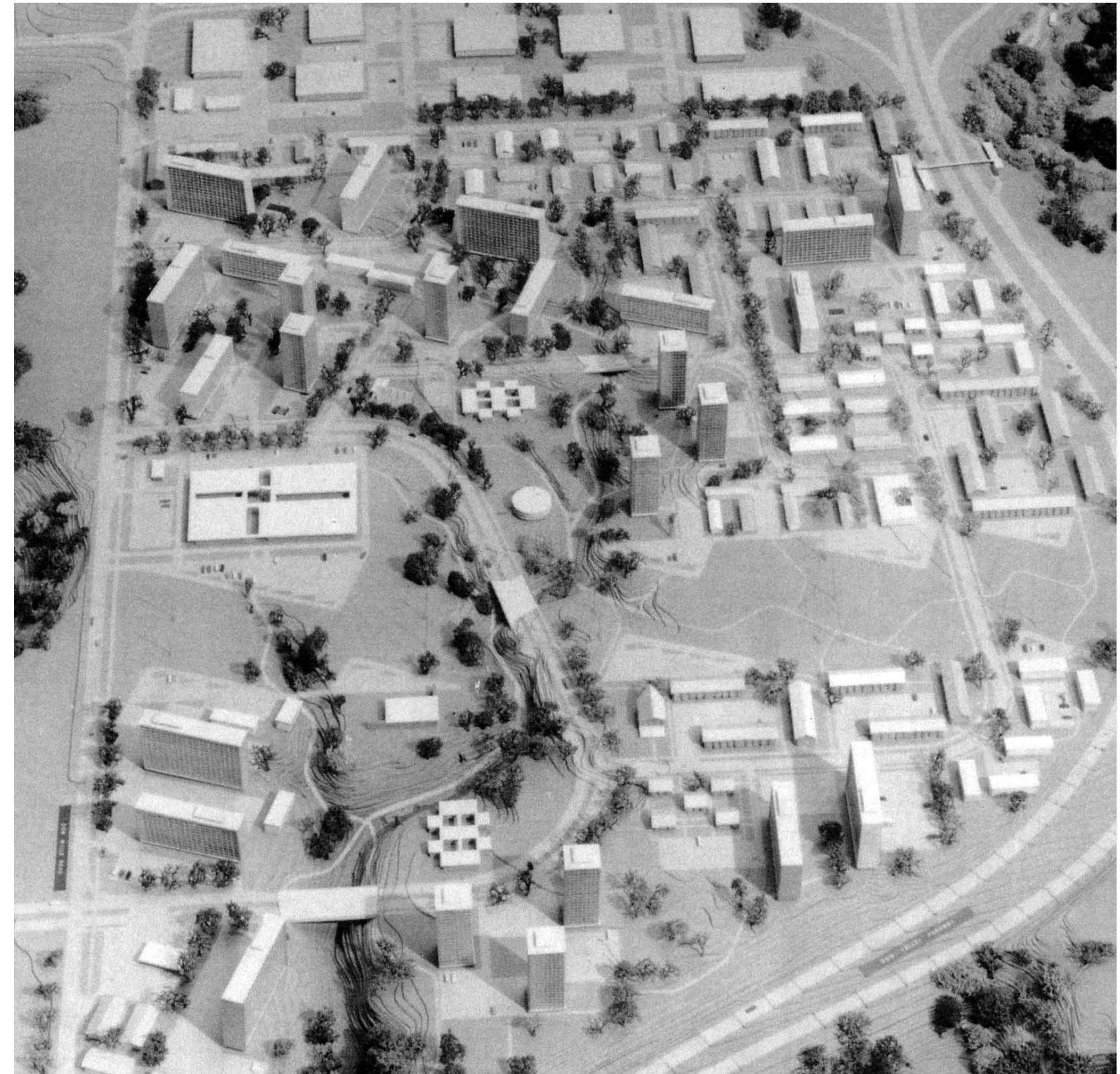
- Ontario Heritage Act
- City of Toronto Energy Efficiency Office

### Encourage reinvestment, not demolition

Toronto has more modern high-rise apartments than any other region in North America. Toronto's mid-century apartment towers house hundreds of thousands, and were built with aspirations of a well-planned modern region and well serviced communities. Environmentally, the structures of these buildings contain significant embedded energy which can continue to serve as a housing resource for future generations. Culturally, these buildings and their surrounding communities are a defining feature of the city's identity. Appropriate upgrades and reinvestment into this aging building stock will create a stable housing resource and result in significant social, cultural, environmental and economic rewards.

#### Images

Bottom: Jane Exbury Towers, Toronto, courtesy of the archives of Uno Prii.  
Opposite: Masterplan for Flemingdon Park, 1958, courtesy of the City of Toronto



## Mayor's Tower Renewal: Quality Objective

Achieve high standards and quality in the built and natural environment

### Sample Strategies

- Community and resident participation
- District plan rather than ad-hoc development
- Infill and renovation responsive to modern design
- Operates at a variety of scales, achieving a hierarchy of public and private spaces, as well as social, community, recreational and commercial amenities
- Create 'landmark' features which add to neighbourhood identity
- Encourage high minimum housing standards
- Promote additions which are human scaled and frame public spaces
- Integrate properties to public spaces and to one another
- Development of local products and skill sets related to high quality Tower Renewal

### Complementary Strategies and Programs

- Ontario Building Code
- Toronto Pedestrian Charter
- Toronto Public Realm Initiatives
- Design Review Panel
- Priority Neighbourhoods
- Clean and Beautiful City Secretariat

### Well Conceived Investment

Toronto's Apartment Neighbourhoods are landmarks visible throughout the city. The re-engagement of these structures and their surroundings provide the opportunity for the creation of high quality environments of which Torontonians can be proud. Future changes to these sites should encourage "place making," connecting communities to each other and the city at large, and contribute to a high quality public and private realm. Design outcomes should resonate with the uniqueness of individual communities, while responding to modern, natural and cultural heritage.



#### Images

Top: Idea Store, Whitechapel, London UK. Opposite: Jane Exbury Towers, Toronto, courtesy of the archives of Uno Prii.





## Mayor's Tower Renewal: Desired Outcomes

**1 – Environment:** Achieving significant reductions to greenhouse gas emissions in the Toronto region through the over-cladding of high-rise concrete residential buildings, adding energy savings and renewable features to their site such as district solar, wind and geothermal power, developing on-site waste management and urban agriculture, along with providing improved access to public transit and other alternatives to car use.

**2 – Community:** Creating complete communities within Apartment Neighbourhoods with the full range of community services and amenities, opportunities for employment, training, and entrepreneurship, as well as housing types and tenures. These should be specific to the needs of residents, responsive to built and cultural heritage, integrated into the community at large, and enable sustainable lifestyles.

**3 – Economy:** Developing leading green industries dedicated to high-quality building retrofits, sustainable development, and community design. This includes product design, local manufacturing, and green skills training, as well as job creation within Apartments Neighbourhoods and throughout Toronto.