



STRONG NEIGHBOURHOODS AND COMPLETE COMMUNITIES: A NEW APPROACH TO ZONING FOR APARTMENT NEIGHBOURHOODS

Prepared by
The Centre for Urban Growth and Renewal (CUG+R)

For
United Way Toronto

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PART 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The City's current policy framework of Strong Neighbourhoods and Complete Communities creates a progressive outline for a healthy city. However, in the case of Toronto's many hundred higher-density apartment neighbourhoods, the policy and process barriers related to legacy zoning by-laws create obstacles to these goals and are contributing to the neighbourhoods' gradual decline.

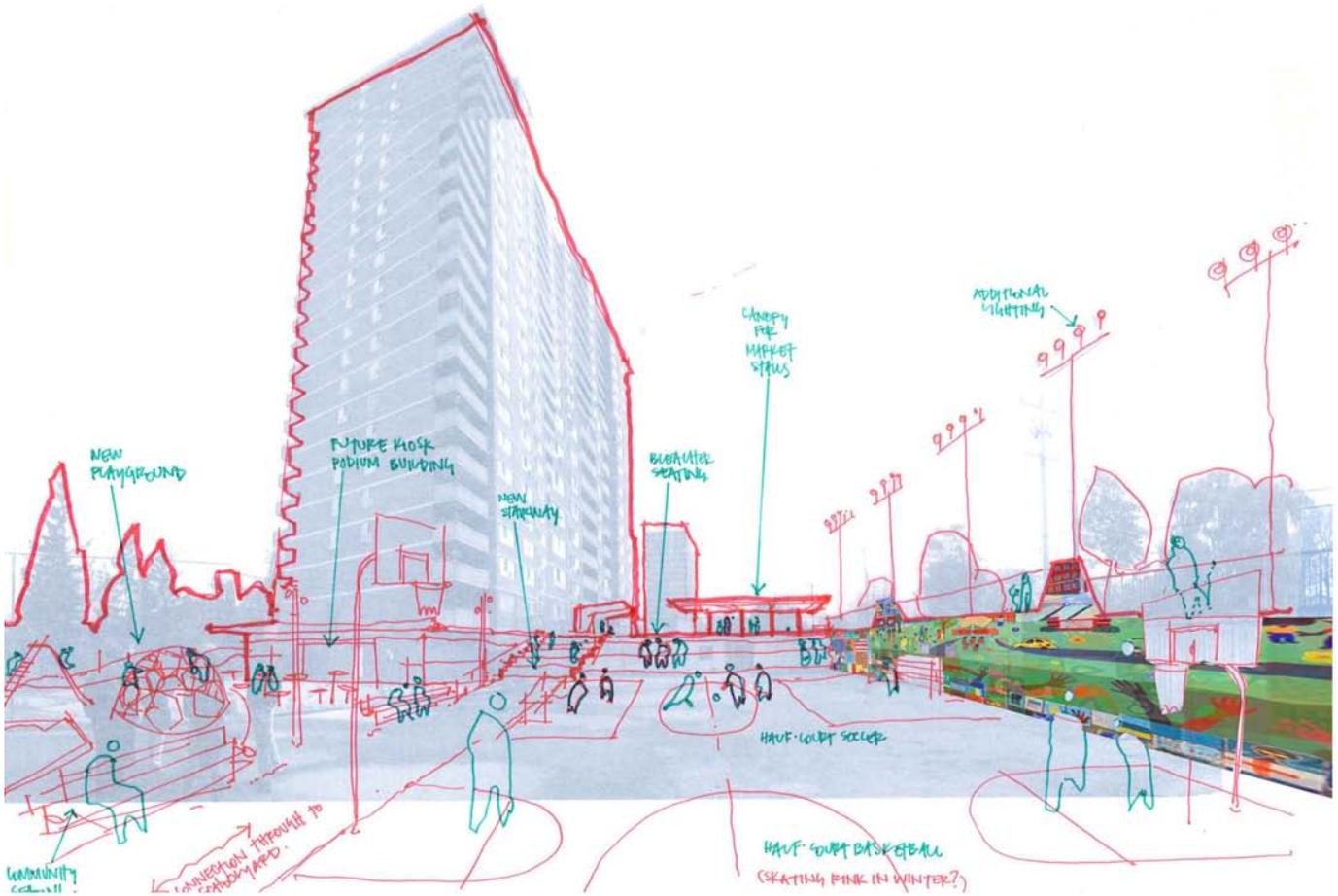
This report makes the case for a new zoning framework for apartment neighbourhoods to enable both grassroots economic development and larger scale investment. The purpose is to help apartment neighbourhoods reach their potential as healthy, vibrant, and complete communities.

This report also acknowledges that barriers to investment in apartment neighbourhoods are not solely limited to, nor the principal responsibility of, the existing zoning framework. A multitude of socio-economic, demographic, and real estate capital market forces, as well as various site constraints, shape and influence the viability of investment in all communities.

This study does not therefore seek to place unfair blame on the zoning framework for all of the issues being faced in apartment neighbourhoods. Nor does it suggest that a zoning solution alone is the panacea to help revitalize these communities. Rather, the study identifies a series of policy and planning barriers to investment that are within the jurisdiction of the City to address, and recommends a possible approach to eliminating or reducing this constraint on apartment neighbourhoods. Building on the City of Toronto's legacy of pro-active planning, this study proposes to close the gap between policy and potential.

Image:

Outdoor markets within apartment neighbourhood, Berlin, Germany, 2009. In most apartment neighbourhoods in Toronto, such a market would be against the current zoning by-law.



Recomendations and Next Steps

In moving this initiative forward, the following is recommended:

1. the current zoning and policy barriers be removed and the tiered approach to zoning in apartment neighbourhoods outlined in this report be implemented to enable economic and social development in these communities;
2. the City of Toronto's Official Plan be updated to further reinforce economic, social and community development in apartment neighbourhoods as a key to enabling strong neighbourhoods and healthy communities;
3. that partnerships and demonstration projects be conducted to promote and realize lower impact local projects described in this report as 'Tier 1 and 2';
4. that incentives, built form guidelines and other tools be developed to encourage and ensure high quality larger scale investment in apartment neighbourhoods, described in this report as 'Tier 3' projects;
5. strategies be developed for pairing social, commercial and community investment with building refurbishment through partnership with the Tower Renewal Office and other relevant stakeholders; and
6. that levers and other mechanisms be developed to encourage private, not-for profit and public sector investment in the priority investment areas that are the subject of this report.

Images:

Opposite, Top: Sketch of neighbourhood vision from community workshop, North Kipling, Toronto. (HIGHRISE.nfb.ca at The National Film Board of Canada, ERA Architects, 2010)
Opposite, Bottom: New outdoor fresh food market, St. Jamestown, Toronto. (Recipe for Community - St James Town, 2012)

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