

INTRODUCTION

At ARECA's request... I met with Glenmorris Cohen and Vivienne Ziner of UrbanQuest to discuss their development intentions for 117-129 Roselawn Ave. I had been asked by ARECA for my opinion from a neighbourhood perspective as to the prospects of a good or preferred outcome.



Their website urbanquestinc.com displays some of their projects – which you will recognise.

UrbanQuest's plans at this time are preliminary. They are contemplating building either a 5-storey 22-unit apartment or twelve units of 3-storey town homes, with parking situated below grade.

THE SITE



117-129 Roselawn is situated on the south side of the

street between Duplex and Edith. It is currently comprised a mixture of building types: two oddly-matched houses; a triplex box; and a duplex/semi with punch-parking. All in all... the collection of buildings lacks the familiar rhythm and rhyme associated with Roselawn and more generally North Toronto's residential streetscapes.

Adding to the complexity... the soils are fuel oil contaminated. Successful remediation will require demolition of the existing buildings. This condition adds to the site's present instability. In planning terms the site has been in a state of 'transition' for many years – a soft spot.

One wonders with trepidation what might get built here? And likewise there is the curiosity as to what development would be most appropriate?

PERIMETER CONDITIONS



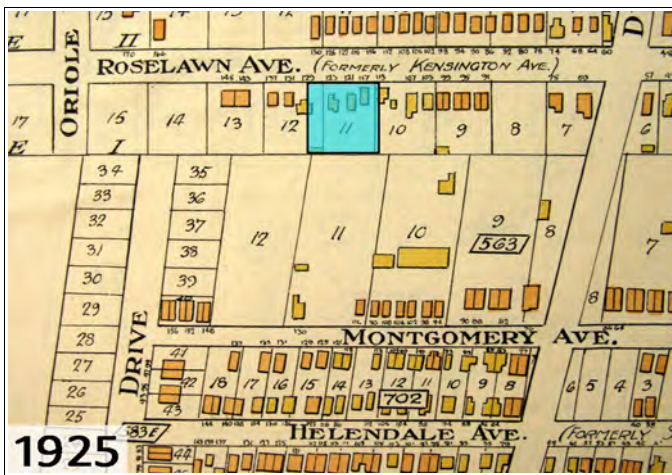
The site is a hinge-point, around which pivot apartment and house-form solutions. There is a no-frills low-rise apartment box to the east, which combined with the Montgomery Apartments behind accounts for half the perimeter condition. Meanwhile, the established residential character

of Roselawn adjoins the site on its west side. This along with the house-forms on the north side of Roselawn (extending right through to Duplex) accounts for the other half of the perimeter.

The question remains... as to whether the future development should adopt the apartment or the house-form building typology – and furthermore, whether sensitive design can interlace the adjoining structures?

THE BLOCK

Overall, the block accommodates an array of building forms... extending from 500 Duplex's high-rise tower, through low-rise apartments to town homes wrapping the Duplex corner. With the rest of the block-front consisting of traditional houses.



This mixture arises from the block's long history. Goad's Atlas in 1925 captures the block before Edith St. was completed to Roselawn. The block played a peripheral role in the Village of North Toronto. First as agricultural, then over time urban enterprises. The streets to the south were an earlier residential neighbourhood in the village.



Later, peripheral development in the form of subdivision tracts created what is now the familiar *'traditional'* North Toronto streetscape environs.

Later still... apartment buildings (intensification in its day) bore down on the block, which had languished until then wedged between North Toronto's old and new neighbourhoods. The block's large interior mass lent itself to building the Montgomery Apartments. Its breezeway axis is easily understood today as an attempt at the time to acquire more street access which this inner-block setting lacks. It's a good example in planning terms of *'not precluding'* future opportunities.



STREETScape

The north side of Roselawn provides a continuous residential streetscape of recognisable character and continuity, whereas the south side dissolves as it approaches Duplex – ending at this site.



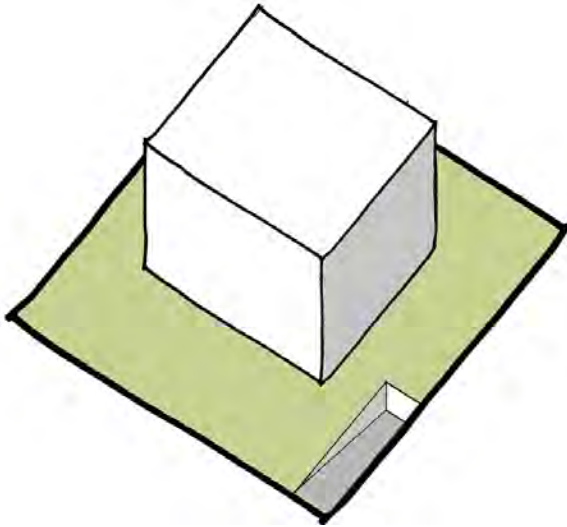
North Toronto's streetscapes are significant urban structures whose harmony can be easily and unduly interrupted by inadvertent designs.

Besides neglecting the challenges of change-ups in use and intensity... haphazard building designs create detrimental impacts as found along Castlefield Ave. to the north.



Architectural design is critical to maintaining a streetscape's character. Local nuances need to be seeded into the development strategy.

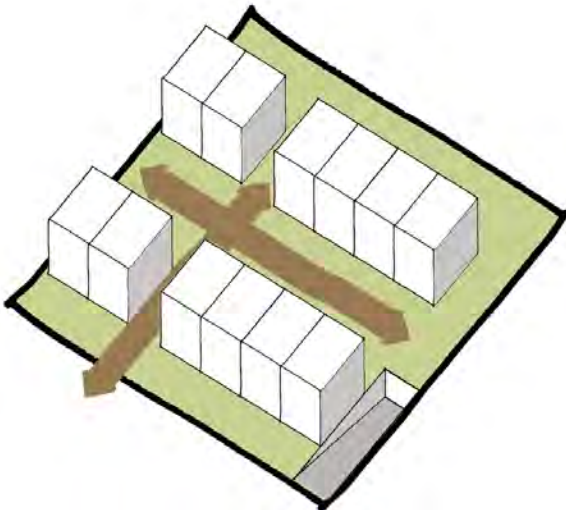
APARTMENT MASSING



Apartment solutions by their nature centre their mass towards the middle of the site, enabling the flank sides to have views and balconies. Besides creating overview contentions, it disengages the structure from the streetscape's rhythm.

Such a standalone structure, regardless of attempts to dress up the mass with house-form features, will fail especially from the perspective of neighbours along side and across Roselawn.

HOUSE-FORM MASSING



The house-form solution is better choice. It's more capable of reflecting the streetscape's residential characteristics including its facets, massing and separations. Creating two rows of houses utilises the traditional relationship of backyards facing

backyards, the side yard overview contentions are eliminated with the principal window walls being aligned north-south, and it leaves the boundary trees undisturbed.

CONCLUSION

Achieving a successful solution will requires a design-build practitioner, combining the design-build capabilities that UrbanQuest offers.

This is a factor that should be given weight.

Ultimately, I was left with the possibility, albeit a wish... that when the final production crystallizes it may contain a footpath that connects through to the Montgomery Apartments long held aspiration. It would make for a more walkable local neighbourhood breaking down the block size just as local planning calls for: *"where large blocks exist... mid-block pedestrian connections will be encouraged in new developments"*.



It's worth walking about.

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