

NOVAE RES URBIS TORONTO

FRIDAY,
JANUARY 28, 2022

Vol. 26
No. 4

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Fund, Smart Prosperity
Institute Report

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ANCHORS AWEIGH?

City to Consider
Proposed Ontario
Place Redevelopment
Agreement

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■ TORONTO TO SEE ITS FIRST 'VERTICAL SCHOOL'

ACCOMMODATING STUDENT NEEDS

Rob Jowett

An agreement has been signed that will see Toronto's first school being built into the podium of a larger mixed-use development, a practice that could become much more common as the city intensifies.

Menkes Developments is currently building the Sugar Wharf Condominiums at 95

Lake Shore Boulevard East. The project includes six towers—90, 87, 79, 70, 64 and 16-storeys in height—containing 4,520 residential units and office, commercial, institutional, and public space. The project is currently under construction.

On January 21, the **Ministry of Education** announced that it would be providing \$44-million

for the construction of a new school within the podium of one of the Sugar Wharf towers. The Lower Yonge Precinct Elementary School will accommodate 455 students and is expected to be open in 2025. The **Toronto District School Board** (TDSB) will own the approximately 4,700-square metre school.

"There's a pressure [on school capacity with] redevelopment [and] high-density [growth]. There's a need to look at other solutions," **Toronto Lands Corporation** (TLC) real estate and leasing director **Anita Cook** told *NRU*. TLC is the TDSB's real estate arm and is leading their work on the new school.

Cook says that TDSB needs new ways to provide school capacity in high-growth, high-density areas like the waterfront where land is scarce and expensive, and that integrating schools into larger developments may be a solution for many areas. She adds that TDSB will consider

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Rendering of the new elementary school that will be built in the podium of a Menkes condominium tower on Lake Shore Boulevard East. The school could become a prototype for a new model for how to provide school space in dense, urban communities with limited land availability.

SOURCE: MENKES

ACCOMMODATING STUDENT NEEDS

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this model for more projects in rapidly intensifying areas, and notes that there may be six to eight additional sites city-wide where a vertical school may be considered as a solution to inadequate school capacity to accommodate new students. However, she adds that a large residential development does not always bring as many new children to an area as might be expected and that some parts of the city have plenty of capacity despite seeing significant

intensification.

“The city encourages the provision of urban format school models, where appropriate, and has supported this approach, especially within mixed-use developments within dense urban environments like downtown and growth centres where the availability and cost of land is prohibitively expensive,” a **City of Toronto** planning department spokesperson told *NRU*. “The model may be explored in the

future for elementary schools within emerging communities like the Christie’s [secondary plan] lands, the Golden Mile or Midtown Toronto.”

The work that will go into designing the new Lower Yonge Precinct Elementary School within the podium of a tower is complex as working within the larger project presents unique challenges, both in terms of creating a good learning environment and in terms of keeping students safe. While a lot of the design details have yet to be determined, Cook says the school will have a dedicated entrance and will not be accessible from within the building. She says it will have a double gymnasium and

a playground like any other school, and that the gyms could be available for public use outside school hours if needed, something the TDSB still needs to determine.

“TDSB does have the final sign-off with Menkes on its design,” says Cook. “[We did a] test fit at the beginning [that] allowed us to explore what

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Rendering of Menkes’ Sugar Wharf Condominiums at 95 Lake Shore Boulevard East. The project will include six towers—90, 87, 79, 70, 64 and 16-storeys in height—containing 4,520 residential units and office, commercial, institutional, and public space. The project is currently under construction. A new elementary school will be built into the podium.

SOURCE: MENKES



ACCOMMODATING STUDENT NEEDS

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

could we do or what were our needs right off the top. But safety and security... are always critical."

Though this would be the first 'vertical school' in Toronto, there are other examples of such schools in Canada and around the world. **Crosstown Elementary School** in Vancouver is connected to a large residential development, and numerous schools like this have been built over the past several years in Australia. The

model could be used not only by the TDSB but also by other school boards like the **Toronto Catholic District School Board** (TCDSB), a TCDSB spokesperson told *NRU*.

"TCDSB is pursuing similar arrangements for future schools in areas of high-density residential growth across the City of Toronto. We are open to exploring all innovative options, including schools constructed in the podium of mixed-use developments, to

address growth-related student accommodation needs," a TCDSB spokesperson told *NRU*. "As traditional stand-alone schools are typically situated on larger sites, the main challenge is securing access to functional green space

to meet student curriculum needs for outdoor education. Potential school sites require adjacency to large open spaces, such as city-owned parks, and the ability to use these spaces as required for recreational purposes."

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OFFERS DUE WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 16, 2022 BY 12 PM (EST)

CBRE | **LAND SERVICES GROUP**

Approved High Density
Development Opportunity
at Islington Subway Station

**25 MABELLE AVENUE,
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CBRE's Land Services Group is pleased to offer for sale an approved 49-storey mixed-use development opportunity on the excess lands at 25 Mabelle Avenue just north of Islington TTC Station in Etobicoke. The site has been rezoned with LPAT (now OLT) approvals, to permit the development of a 49-storey tower with a maximum GFA of 430,556 sq. ft. (40,000 sq. m.), of which a maximum of 2153 sq. ft. (200 sq. m.) may be ground floor retail space and a maximum of 429,480 sq. ft. (39,900 sq. m.) may be residential density.

The offering presents a significant opportunity for an approved high density development that is surrounded by amenities and a 5-minute walk to Islington Station allowing future residents convenient transit options steps from their front door.

VIEW BROCHURE

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As the city and the province advance plans for transit-oriented communities, an undertaking that involves significantly intensifying

lands around major transit stations, vertical schools will become ever more necessary, **HousingNowTO** technical lead **Mark Richardson** told *NRU*.



Senior Reporter, NRU Publishing Inc.

NRU Publishing Inc. is a small, Toronto-based publishing company, established in 1997 and is privately owned. With a mandate to share news about the people, development activities, policy changes, and services of municipal government related to urban planning, it offers a limited circulation news service. Two newsletters are distributed electronically to subscribers by email on a weekly basis, ensuring the news is current, concise, relevant, and timely.

We are seeking to fill a full-time position for a Senior Reporter for our two publications, *Novae Res Urbis – City of Toronto* (published Fridays, 50 weeks per year) and *Novae Res Urbis – Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area* (published Wednesdays, 50 weeks per year).

This position requires a general understanding of and passion for urban planning, municipal issues, including politics and public affairs; the ability to research and write articles that are accurate, timely, concise, well written and that are undertaken and delivered within established weekly deadlines. You will assist in developing stories and covering items as set out by the Editor.

For more information about this opportunity, please visit our LinkedIn job page [here](#).

To apply, please send resume, cover letter detailing your experience and qualifications for the position, and relevant writing samples to irenak@nrupublishing.com. We thank you in advance, but only those individuals selected for an interview will be contacted.

Richardson says that both the city and school boards should embrace the model and try to find as many opportunities for putting schools into larger developments as possible to use land efficiently and to save costs by collaborating with developers. He says he does not believe the design challenges presented by working within the larger developments are significantly harder to overcome than the challenges of developing standalone schools and that a somewhat standardized design format could be created to help the process along.

“We really see these school and podium opportunities as integral to being able to deliver on all the affordable housing and complete communities and transit-oriented communities stuff that people talk about,” says Richardson. “[The main challenge is] cat wrangling. There are so many stakeholders, there are so many ministries and boards and committees and ministers and superintendents involved in the process. That’s why we need to standardize this or have a [dedicated] team at the provincial level that focuses on nothing but this.”

Richardson says he wants the city to push for a school in the podium of a building in the East Harbour community next. The city and the province are working with **Cadillac Fairview** on redeveloping the Unilever Precinct east of downtown with nine residential towers and nine office towers containing 4,300 residential

units and 926,000-square metres of employment space. The community would be built around the planned East Harbour Transit Hub, which would include SmartTrack LRT line and Ontario line subway connections. The provincial government is planning to issue a Minister’s Zoning Order for the project, likely in the spring of this year.

“There’s a requirement for affordable housing and a school [in East Harbour],” says Richardson. “Cadillac Fairview is owned by the... teacher’s pension fund, so I feel very strongly that they have an obligation, not just to the members of the **Ontario Teacher’s Pension Fund** who are pensioners, but also to the next generation of teachers and educators, that they should have a place to work in that community.” 🌸