

UPCOMING DATES

APRIL

29 General Government & Licensing Committee, 9:30 a.m., [video conference]

MAY

- 4 Executive Committee, 9:30 a.m., [video conference]
- 5 Design Review Panel, 1:10 p.m., [video conference]
- 10 Toronto Preservation Board, 9:30 a.m., [video conference]
- 11-12 City Council, 9:30 a.m., [video conference]
- 16 Board of Health, 9:30 a.m., [video conference]
- 17 CreateTO, 9:30 a.m. [video conference]
- 19 TTC Board, 10:00 a.m., [video conference]
- 20 Budget Committee, 9:30 a.m., [video conference]
- 24 North York Community Council, 9:30 a.m., [video conference]
- 25 Infrastructure & Environment Committee, 9:30 a.m., [video conference]
- 26 Toronto & East York Community Council, 9:30 a.m., [video conference]
- 27 Scarborough Community Council, 9:30 a.m., [video conference]
- 30 Economic & Community Development Committee, 9:30 a.m., [video conference]
- 31 Planning & Housing Committee, 9:30 a.m., [video conference]

JUNE

- 1 Etobicoke York Community Council, 9:30 a.m., [video conference]
- 7 General Government & Licensing Committee, 9:30 a.m., [video conference]



CITY TO PILOT EIGHT TO TEN-STOREY MASS TIMBER AFFORDABLE RENTAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

TALKING MASS TIMBER

Matt Durnan

A city-owned property in Toronto's west end has been selected as the site of a pilot program for an eight-to ten-storey mass timber affordable rental housing development, a first-of-its-kind project for the city that will take a climate action approach to transforming a piece of property that is currently operating as a **Toronto Parking Authority** parking lot.

On April 25, Toronto Mayor **John Tory** announced a new 100-unit mass timber affordable housing project being proposed for 1113 to 1117 Dundas Street West. If the pilot project is successful in providing sustainable and affordable housing units to the city more quickly than is typical, with added green energy benefits, the project could become a model for future eight to 12-storey mass timber housing developments across the city.

Collaborating on the proposal are **CreateTO**, a city-established organization that manages the city's real estate

portfolio and manages more than 8,000 properties, **City of Toronto**, **Brook McIlroy** and **R-Hauz**.

"Essentially how this project came to be is the property at 1113 to 1117 Dundas, which is a city-owned asset, was under previous discussion with a private land owner about disposing of the property for a fairly standard city mid-rise development, with limited to no affordable housing and below grade surface parking," CreateTO manager of development **Daniel Woolfson** told *NRU*.

"That deal didn't really go anywhere and it created an opportunity to pull away from that transaction as it

hadn't proceeded in any type of formal agreement, and then move towards a more interesting opportunity that we're talking about today."

Mass timber construction presents a host of opportunities and advantages, ranging from the potential to rapidly scale up the supply of affordable housing, while lowering carbon emissions through the use of low-carbon materials for construction.

With mass timber builds, there is also an element of pre-fabrication involved and these build forms are often built atop slab on grade and greatly reduces the time spent on site for construction.

CONTINUED PAGE 3

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- Danile Woolfson

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TALKING MASS TIMBER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

“This will probably be a slab on grade building, which reduces costs dramatically; it also speeds up the construction process and the approvals process,” Brook McIlroy architect and co-founder **Cal Brook** told *NRU*.

“I think it’s setting a precedent for reconsidering the avenues and mid-rise strategy across the city and trying to rationalize that in a way that makes these buildings less expensive, easier to get through the approvals process and perhaps opens up the opportunity for more density than has been achieved with mid-rise guidelines to date.”

The pilot program has the potential to change the course of mid-rise development in the city and be replicated in other neighbourhoods in order to address the city’s ‘missing middle’ which includes housing types such as duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, low-rises and laneway homes.

Most every step of the mass timber build process is expedient, due to the almost copy-and-paste formula associated with the build form.

“One of the main benefits of this project was right from the get-go the mandate was for mass timber and we could start the design process with a very elemental outlook on

the actual components being used,” Brook McIlroy associate architect **Justin Spec** told *NRU*.

“A lot of times, people develop their design and see how mass timber can work with that, but when we start from this mandate to use mass timber, we can come up with this very much ‘kit of parts’ building that can be repeatable across similar sites all over the city. It can expand or contract in both width and height because it’s a very regular grid and standard system that we’re using.”

The proposed site does need to go through rezoning to allow for the mid-rise development that is expected to be between eight to 10 storeys in height.

All parties involved in the

project are confident that the rezoning will be approved, as a report on the pilot program is expected to be brought to the city’s planning and housing committee in the fourth quarter of 2023, with full occupancy of the 100 affordable housing units conservatively planned for late 2024.

Timing for the pilot aligns well with the provincial government’s recently tabled *More Homes for Everyone Act*, which proposes changes to the Ontario Building Code (OBC) to allow for an increase in height allowance up to 12 storeys for mass timber builds.

“We’re anticipating that there will be changes to the Building Code to allow for 12 storeys of encapsulated mass timber construction and we’ve been consulting on those, as the city typically does when those changes are proposed,” said City of Toronto program manager for economic development, environment and

energy, **David MacMillan** told *NRU*.

“Our understanding is those changes can actually be brought in earlier than 2024... We have a plan underway to pursue an alternative solution, if necessary, but we’re hoping that they’ll be codified in the OBC and that the process will be that much more straightforward.”

R-Hauz was invited to collaborate on the project

CONTINUED PAGE 4

Photo showing the site at 1113 – 1117 Dundas St. West, where the city is collaborating with CreateT0, Brook McIlroy and R-Hauz to develop a pilot 100-unit mass timber affordable housing project with net-zero carbon emissions. If the project is successful in creating a sustainable, easy to construct, mass timber affordable housing development faster and more sustainably than is typical for conventional housing, it could become a model for other mass timber housing developments across the city. The coloured rectangles on the photo describe some of the features that the proposed development would have.

SOURCE: R-HAUZ SOLUTIONS INC.



TALKING MASS TIMBER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

by Brook McIlroy, as the company is well-versed in the realm of pre-fabrication and mass timber builds. This pilot project will be the tallest mass timber project that R-Hauz has ever worked on, and it expects that the 12-storey scale for mass timber and modular construction will be explored and implemented more frequently in the future.

“[This pilot project] is a big win for the housing sector, the advantages of faster infill construction and repeatable building types create the opportunity to apply the structure of the pilot on sites across the city,” R-Hauz entitlements director **Sarah Craig** told *NRU* in an email.

“It’s encouraging to see the city take a leading role in pursuing sustainable construction methods and [this] presents the opportunity to highlight both the construction and operational benefits of mass timber.”

R-Hauz is doing work on a wide variety of projects involving mass timber, including non-profit affordable housing and market purpose-built rentals and condos.

There is excitement among the stakeholders around the sustainability aspect of the project, as the pilot project is planned to be electric and to

eliminate the use of fossil fuels as much as possible.

“A big part of this story is the lower embodied carbon, and we’re aiming for the highest tier of the Toronto Green Standard to get to as low as operational emissions as possible,” said MacMillan.

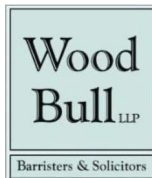
“We’re aiming to really not have any fossil fuel use on-site for heating... Essentially, we’re talking electrification, which is a big part of our TransformTO climate strategy, and even going beyond eliminating fossil fuel and doing some on-site generation with solar PV (photovoltaics). These elements combined mean this building is going to have a really low carbon footprint.” Photovoltaics are materials and devices that convert sunlight into electrical energy.

Toronto Mayor John Tory made a point of highlighting the city’s commitment to becoming greener during his announcement of the pilot project on April 25.

“Using innovative and modern ideas like mass timber construction will help us deliver high-quality designs and buildings that will contribute to our goal of net-zero emissions by 2040,” Tory said.

“Once the pilot project is up and running, the results could

lead to a new development model which would add a new way for us to address the affordable housing challenges in our city. This is good news for our city and a clear demonstration of the work we are doing to advance new ideas and implement solutions to pressing issues faced by our city.” 🌱



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