

811 Gladstone

Project Description

This large plot of land at the intersection of Rochester and Gladstone in the cultural heart of Little Italy will serve as the first step in the re-visioning of the multi parcel Rochester Heights as an affordable housing community for the 21st Century. Owned and operated by Ottawa Community Housing, these modest townhouse blocks that were built in the 1960's as part of a massive urban renewal project, have reached the end of their practical service life and now make this initiative necessary and possible.

The broader community surrounding the site is also in transition. While the low rise housing fabric to the north remains largely intact, development along Gladstone is gradually becoming multi storey mixed use within the framework of Traditional Main Street zoning objectives. Just a few blocks to the south large parcels of land currently occupied by federal government office buildings and labs, have been declared surplus. It is anticipated that this site will be the focus of intensive mixed use development. A similar parcel to the west of Preston Street has also emerged as a massive redevelopment site for housing and community use. Consequently this first step will be seen as a demonstration project that will carry the burden of the development hopes and dreams of many.

The proposed development has been designed to fit within the envelope and objectives of the existing zoning designations with a few minor variances. Along the Gladstone frontage a six storey apartment block is proposed providing 108 dwelling units. The formal mass has been broken down by providing projecting bays at both the east and west ends of the building. This gesture mimics the existing formal rhythm of the Gladstone streetscape to the east and west. As grade falls 1.2m along the Gladstone frontage, this form also allows for the creation of a recessed entry court that will facilitate the provision of barrier free sloped walkways to both the main and secondary building entrances.

While no retail uses are currently envisioned, the ground floor spaces fronting onto Gladstone will be dedicated to a variety of amenity uses including a resident fitness centre, a lounge, a homework/home business study lounge and a multi-purpose space with a demonstration kitchen. Extensive glazing will allow the activities within to animate the street as well as the entry court where residents can gather in an urban garden and soak up the afternoon sun. While most of the ground floor has been set at a single elevation, the floor of the amenity space in the west projecting bay has been allowed to follow the drop in grade at the street so that animation is provided at the critical Rochester Gladstone corner. With its high ceilings and corner location, this space has the potential to evolve into an amenity that can serve the broader Rochester Heights community or convert to prime retail space. All of the amenity spaces have been designed to provide both interior and exterior barrier free access to allow for the potential for rental to outside groups without compromising resident security.

The main entrance is set at the centre of the recessed entry court. It establishes a pedestrian axis that cuts through the building to an interior courtyard and on between two 16 unit blocks of stacked townhouses to the low rise precinct of Balsam Street to the north. With their low form and private entrances at grade, this housing typology blends well with the existing low rise streetscape of the context.

Flanked by grade related family units in all three buildings, the interior courtyard will feature a children's play area as well as a community garden and patio to the east of the main entry axis. To the west of this pathway a drive aisle provides access to a modest number of surface and underground parking spaces as well as bike/scooter parking. These facilities as well as the amenity rooms are intended to be shared with both low and mid rise residents. Central mail and garbage facilities are also provided along this axis within the Gladstone building. This array of amenities and services strung along both Gladstone and the entry axis create a strong context for building community.

A total of 140 dwelling units ranging from large 4 bedroom family units to bachelor units will be provided within the development. The site and the Gladstone building will be fully barrier free and visitable. 10% of the units have been designed as special needs units for people with disabilities.

While the 32 stacked townhouse units will be built of conventional wood frame construction, the Gladstone building will be Canada's first mid rise apartment building to achieve the exacting standards of Passive House certification. The design will also strive to meet Net Zero Carbon certification as well. Both of these sustainable design initiatives will result in a building that is durable with low operating costs for both the tenants and OCH.

When viewed as a whole the proposed development is intended to provide a platform for building a sustainable community for residents, neighbours and the City as a whole.