

NOVÆ RES URBIS TORONTO

FRIDAY,
JANUARY 20, 2023

Vol. 27
No. 3

R **ROBINS APPLEBY**
BARRISTERS + SOLICITORS

- 2 **DREAMING OF AFFORDABILITY**
Ana Bailao Joins Private Sector
- 4 **CREATIVE CITY**
Colleagues Reflect on Claire Hopkinson's Impact on the Arts

■ MASTER PLANNED COMMUNITY WOULD ADD HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT USES TO REDEVELOPED SITE

OFFICE IS ALIVE & WELL & LIVING IN NORTH YORK

Matt Durnan

While the commercial office space market in Toronto's downtown is softening, with fewer tenants and more vacancies, one developer is not giving up on the future of office. Instead it is setting up shop in North York with significant office space planned as part of a 15-acre master planned mixed-use development that will also accommodate new residential units, new streets and a public park.

Developer **Almadev** has submitted rezoning and official plan amendment applications to the City to permit the development of a master planned community at 2550 Victoria Park Avenue, 2, 4 and 6 Lansing Square in North York. The proposed development would entail demolishing a pair of existing office buildings at 4 and 6 Lansing Square and the

retention of existing office buildings at 2 Lansing Square and 2550 Victoria Park. The redevelopment would create new Class A office space to the 6.17-hectare site, while adding

a significant number of new residential units in an array of built forms, including high-rise towers and townhomes. Replacement office space would be offered within a 19-storey

office tower proposed to be built atop a new parking structure.

While this proposal pre-dates the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on how people think about the future of office, **Almadev** CEO **Rafael Lazer** believes this area is a prime location for both office and

CONTINUED PAGE 7 ■



Map showing 2, 4 and 6 Lansing Square as well as 2550 Victoria Park Avenue. Four office buildings currently occupy the site. Developer **Almadev** is proposing to demolish the two 'Y' shaped buildings at 4 and 6 Lansing Square, as well as the surface parking lots on the 6.17-hectare site to make way for a new master planned community accommodating office, residential and commercial uses. The office buildings at the top left and bottom right of the photo would be retained as part of the proposed redevelopment.

SOURCE: CITY OF TORONTO

OFFICE IS ALIVE & WELL & LIVING IN NORTH YORK

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

residential buildings.

“We’re in North York and this area is very well-connected to all the major transit routes, which is incredibly important for not only the residential component but also from the employment and office components,” Lazer told *NRU*.

“This is one of the largest employment nodes in Toronto... we acquired this site before any of us knew what COVID was and we understand the market has evolved and people are working from home more and that the demand for the office may not be as steep, but nevertheless we are getting back to our pre-pandemic levels of traffic and people are coming out of their homes. So, while demand may not be as steep, the city is still growing

exponentially and people need to work and companies are growing and the demand for the office is still there.”

City of Toronto senior

planner **Derrick Wong** made similar comments, noting that the overall scope of the application did not see any major changes due to the pandemic.

“The way this application was processed before and during the pandemic, I don’t think it shifted at all,” Wong told *NRU*.

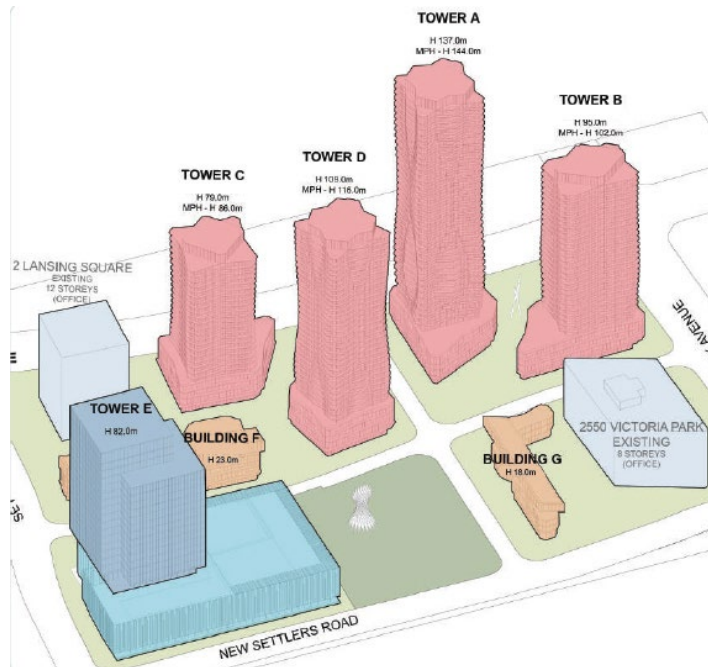
“They [Almadev] have provided the office space; one of the key reasons we recommended this for approval

was because we have a policy at the City where if you knock down existing office buildings you have to replace it and that’s exactly what they did.”

Bound to the north by Sheppard Avenue East, Settlers Road to the west and Victoria Park Avenue to the east, the site is currently occupied by four office buildings and a large portion of the site is covered by surface parking.

The site is within the ConsumersNext Secondary Plan area, which was approved by council in March of 2018 and seeks to enhance the business park areas around the Sheppard Avenue and Victoria

CONTINUED PAGE 8



Top: Height concept plan for Almadev’s proposed master planned community for 2, 4 and 6 Lansing Square and 2550 Victoria Park Avenue. Almadev is seeking to develop four new residential towers (red) and two townhouse blocks (orange), while replacing a pair of demolished office buildings with a new office tower (blue) atop a multi-level parking structure. The two grey buildings in the rendering are existing office buildings that would be retained on the site.

ARCHITECT: WZMH ARCHITECTS
SOURCE: CITY OF TORONTO

Bottom: Rendering of Almadev’s proposed master planned community in North York at the corner of Sheppard Avenue and Victoria Park Avenue looking south. Four new residential towers ranging from 24 to 40 storeys in height are shown. The taller building on the right of the rendering is a new office building atop a multi-level parking structure, while the shorter building is an existing 12-storey office tower at the corner of Sheppard and Settlers Road that would be retained.

ARCHITECT: WZMH ARCHITECTS
SOURCE: CITY OF TORONTO



OFFICE IS ALIVE & WELL & LIVING IN NORTH YORK

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Park intersection.

“A study was done on the ConsumersNext area a number of years ago, largely because this area was known as the second-largest concentration of office use outside of the downtown core, and recognizing that the City wanted to capitalize on and direct growth, as opposed to letting individual developments do whatever they want,” Wong said.

“ConsumersNext was the coordinating instrument that said ‘we’re going to have new

roads here, this is what it’s going to look like, we’re going to have new residential here that’s largely aligned along Sheppard and Victoria Park and the interior is going to remain as general employment.”

In developing the master planned community, the site has been broken down into quarters of varying sizes, with the northeast corner (corner of Sheppard and Victoria Park) accommodating a pair of high-rise towers standing 40 and 27 storeys in height. Moving west along Sheppard Avenue,

the northwest block is slated to accommodate two more residential towers standing 24 and 34 storeys, along with a block of townhouses and the existing 12-storey office building that will be retained.

An eight-storey office building at the southeast corner of the site will also be retained, and added to that block will be more townhouses. Pedestrian connections are proposed to connect from Sheppard Avenue to the parkland that is proposed on the southwest block, as well as a connection to and from the residential towers at the northeast of the site to the park.

Almadev’s proposal also includes a self-storage aspect woven into the office tower on the southeast block of the site, as well as the potential to include a daycare on the site.

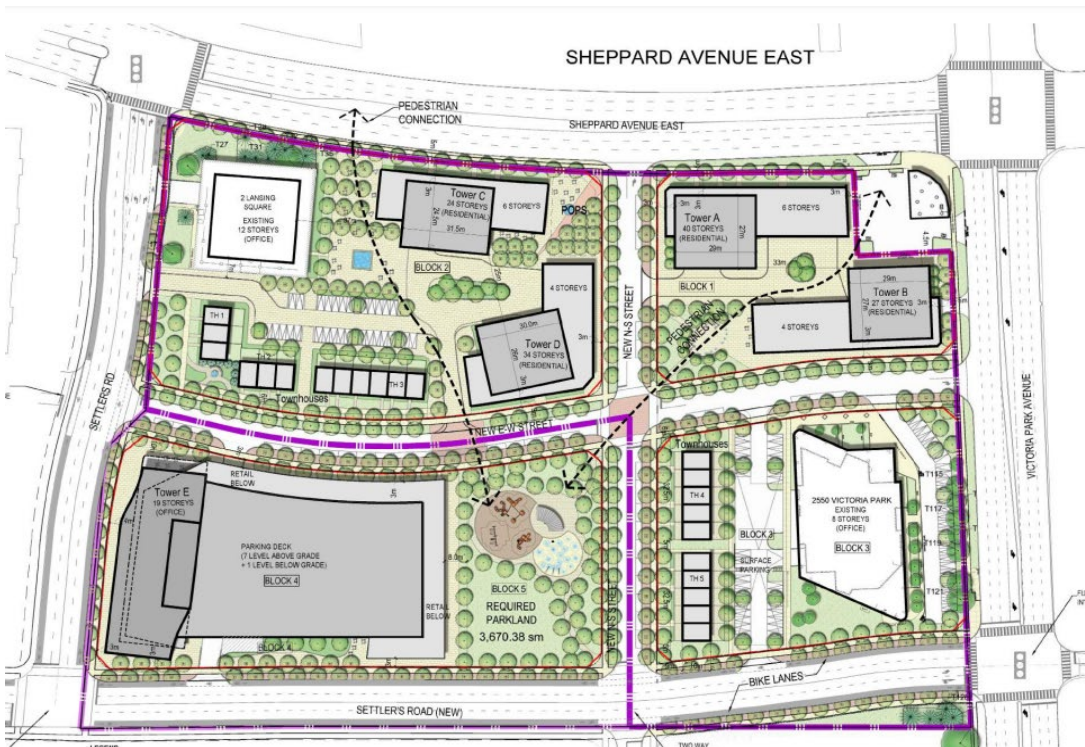
“Self-storage is an ever-growing industry as units

are not as big as people may want and they need a place to store things, so there’s another amenity. There will be uses related to service retail and recreation retail; we have a portion of our retail bordering on the park so that’s where you would want things like cafes. So, you’re going to have the whole package of live, work and play, which is not different than what we’re trying to do in our other master planned communities,” Lazer said.

Zoning for the site was approved in 2021 and the developers are currently working with City of Toronto planning staff on block-by-block site plan approvals and ironing out some of the finer details.

The planner on the project is **Bousfields**.

Lazer is hopeful that construction will begin for blocks one and four (southeast and northwest corners) which will happen concurrently, by the first quarter of 2024. 🌱



Site plan for Almadev’s proposed master planned community in North York for the corner of Sheppard Avenue East and Victoria Park Avenue. The site is divided into four blocks, with the lower left block designated as general employment and the remaining three blocks designated as mixed-use. Four new residential towers are proposed for the site, along with a new office tower to replace two existing office buildings that would be demolished. A 3,670 square meter park is proposed on the block of the new office building. The existing office buildings at 2 Lansing Square and 2550 Victoria Park would be retained.

SOURCE: CITY OF TORONTO