

# NOVÆ RES URBIS TORONTO

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New City Growth & Development Office
- 5 **THREE CORNERS**  
Proposal for Unique 'Urban Island'

■ PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT WOULD DEMOLISH STRIP PLAZA FOR HOUSING, BETTER SERVICES AND STREETSCAPE

## PLAZA PRINCIPLES

**Matt Durnan**

A mixed-use development proposed for a retail site in Scarborough would demolish an existing low-rise commercial strip plaza and surface parking lot to make way for a mid-rise mixed-use building containing more than 200 residential units while activating the streetscape by including retail at grade and serving as a connection point to a planned linear urban park.

Land use planning firm **Zelinka Priamo** has submitted a zoning by-law amendment application on behalf of construction management firm **ZGemi Inc.** for a site at 2683 Lawrence Avenue East in Scarborough. ZGemi is seeking to permit the development of an 11-storey mixed-use building that would accommodate 206 residential units and approximately 18,000 square feet of retail space at grade.

Currently, the site

accommodates a single-storey retail strip plaza and a surface parking lot fronting Lawrence Avenue. The neighbourhood context consists of retail commercial uses located to the east of the site and a mix of retail, office and high-density residential uses located to the north. To the south of the site is a hydro corridor that is planned for the future Meadoway linear park.

"I think a lot of 'mall

sites' [like this one] can be considered under-utilized, I don't think all mall sites are necessarily under-utilized but I think that the redevelopment potential is certainly there for this site," Zelinka Priamo senior associate **Robert MacFarlane** told *NRU*.

"For this site, we consider it very appropriate for redevelopment, and you can still achieve some of those neighbourhood commercial

uses at grade. We're bringing 206 new families to this neighbourhood and reducing the amount of permeable pavement and a lot of other good things that come with this type of development."

A core principle associated with the redevelopment of these types of commercial strip plazas is the need to activate the street and public realm to make them more pedestrian-friendly. Many commercial

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Rendering of a proposed 11-storey mixed-use building at 2683 Lawrence Avenue East in Scarborough. The proposed building would accommodate 206 new residential units and retail space at grade. ZGemi Inc. has submitted a zoning by-law amendment application to the City of Toronto to permit the development of the new mixed-use building on a site that currently accommodates a commercial strip plaza, which would be demolished.

SOURCE: CITY OF TORONTO  
ARCHITECT: CGL ARCHITECTS

# PLAZA PRINCIPLES

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received. We're not forgetting our historical base in terms of we're not eliminating the retail or suggesting that people find other ways to get the things that they need," Thompson told *NRU*.

"One of the first things I said was that we're not going to lose the retail that's on that site, and I told the applicant 'Whatever you do, ensure that we have comparable, or more space for retail'. And I can say that they've listened. And I talked with the owners yesterday about some medical services that could be there as well, whether it's dentist or doctors' offices, so that people there have all these services in close proximity."

The proposed development would certainly change how pedestrians interact with the site along Lawrence Avenue East, but even better,

the proposal also merges nicely with another planned transformation in the area, The Meadowway.

City staff are working on plans to transform the hydro corridor to the south of the site into a 16-kilometre stretch of greenspace and meadowland that connects downtown Toronto and Rouge National Urban Park, to be called The Meadowway. The site also sits in close proximity to nearby

Rendering of ZGemi Inc.'s proposal for an 11-storey mixed-use residential development at 2683 Lawrence Avenue East in Scarborough. ZGemi is proposing to redevelop the site by demolishing the existing commercial strip plaza and parking lot there and re-introducing retail uses closer Lawrence Avenue in an effort to activate that stretch along Lawrence Avenue East and make it more pedestrian-friendly.

SOURCE: CITY OF TORONTO  
ARCHITECT: CGL ARCHITECTS

Thomson Memorial Park at the corner of Lawrence Avenue East and Brimley Road, roughly one kilometre east of the site.

"The Meadowway process is ongoing, and that dovetails nicely into the opportunities that people will have to be able to bike and walk the natural trail. The stability that this presents is going to be profound in that you'll have access to greenery, to more amenities that are tranquil and social in nature in the sense that nature is right in your backyard," Thompson said.

"One thing that is also top of mind for me in areas where we have these strip malls, where we see situations that because less people are traversing the area, there have been challenges with break and entries. I would think that as we move forward and we build these new elements to the community, the overall safety of the area will improve because you're going to have more activity, more eyes on the street, and it just makes it feel safer and more comfortable for all of our residents."

Scarborough community council will discuss ZGemi's zoning by-law amendment application at its meeting January 19. 🌱



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