Urban Design Brief – 475 Terry Fox Drive

1. Project Description

Ironclad Developments is proposing a mid-rise residential development in Kanata, Ottawa, comprising three six-storey buildings. The proposal includes 182 residential units and 212 parking spaces (122 surface and 90 underground). Building A fronts Kanata Avenue, while Buildings B and C face Terry Fox Drive.

The unit mix includes 18 studios, 68 one-bedrooms, 65 two-bedrooms, and 31 three-bedrooms. Approximately 35% of units are designed to be accessible, supporting inclusive housing. Vehicular access is provided from Kanata Avenue, coordinated with City staff. Indoor and outdoor amenities, including a fitness centre and landscaped courtyard, enhance quality of life for residents.

The site design considers surrounding low-density residential uses through careful buffering and massing. The project results from collaboration with City staff and a multidisciplinary team and aligns with Ottawa's Official Plan policies for urban intensification and complete communities.

Figure 1 Proposed Site Plan (refer to landscaping package for proposed landscaping and planting schedule)

2. Design Directive

The proposed development aligns with the strategic objectives and policy directions outlined in the City of Ottawa Official Plan (2021), which serves as the guiding land use document under the authority of the Ontario Planning Act and the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS). The Plan sets out a long-term vision for managing growth and development across the city, including how land is used, infrastructure is built, and neighbourhoods evolve. It also informs zoning by-laws, infrastructure investments, and community design initiatives.

2.1 Growth Management and Intensification (OP Sections 2.2.1 & 3.2)

The proposal contributes to Ottawa's intensification targets by redeveloping an underutilized site within the built-up urban area. The compact mid-rise form supports density while maintaining compatibility with surrounding uses. This aligns with the Official Plan's goal of creating 15-minute neighbourhoods, where services and amenities are accessible by foot or bicycle.

2.2 Housing Diversity and Flexibility (OP Section 4.2.1)

A range of unit sizes and layouts—studios to three-bedrooms—accommodates diverse household types. The inclusion of accessible units (35%) exceeds standards and promotes inclusive living. Efficient layouts and varied unit types support flexibility and future adaptability.

2.3 Built Form and Mid-Rise Development (OP Section 5.3.3.4)

Located on a Minor Corridor, the site is suitable for mid-rise development. The buildings incorporate stepbacks on upper floors to reduce shadowing and perceived height. Transitions to adjacent homes are addressed through setbacks and landscape buffers. This approach aligns with the City's Mid-Rise Design Guidelines and Suburban Transect policies.

2.4 Suburban Evolution and 15-Minute Neighborhoods (OP Section 5.4.1)

The proposal supports suburban transformation by improving walkability, public realm quality, and access to transit. Proximity to parks and retail enhances connectivity and promotes reduced vehicle reliance. The design fosters a more complete and resilient community form.

Therefore, the proposal represents a contextually appropriate and policy-aligned response to the Official Plan’s vision for growth, intensification, and suburban evolution. It reflects a high standard of urban design while contributing to city-wide housing targets, accessibility goals, and the creation of vibrant, inclusive neighbourhoods.

3. Site Context and Response

The proposed development site is strategically located in Kanata ward, within the Suburban Transect as defined by the City of Ottawa Official Plan. The location, adjacency conditions, circulation network, and surrounding land uses play a significant role in informing the built form, transition strategies, and urban design response for this project.

3.1 Location and Setting

The site is bounded by two arterial roadways:

- Kanata Avenue (to the north) – a collector road that facilitates vehicular movement and provides the primary access point for the site.
- Terry Fox Drive (to the South) – a designated Minor Corridor in the Official Plan that supports mid-rise development and functions as a key arterial route in the area.

To the East of the site lies a stable, low-density residential neighbourhood composed of single-detached dwellings. These homes back directly onto the development site (Lots 107–133), requiring sensitive transition in height, massing, and landscape treatment.

3.2 Access and Circulation

The development is designed to integrate seamlessly with the surrounding circulation framework:

- Primary vehicular access is from Kanata Avenue, as per City requirements, minimizing impact on Terry Fox Drive and adjacent residential streets.
- Internal driveways and circulation loops connect all three buildings efficiently, with shared surface parking areas and underground garage access.
- A well-connected pedestrian network links building entrances with internal walkways and extends outward to the public sidewalk system, providing convenient access to parks, nearby commercial services, and transit.

This layout encourages active transportation, minimizes pedestrian-vehicle conflict points, and supports the City's 15-minute neighbourhood model.

3.3 Adjacencies and Transition

The interface with surrounding land uses is handled with care and precision:

- The southern edge of the site, which borders existing single-detached residential lots, is treated with a 7.5-metre landscaped buffer, exceeding the minimum 3.0-metre zoning requirement. This buffer includes a combination of fencing, trees, and softscape elements to maintain privacy and minimize overlook.
- Building massing is stepped back on the upper floors (particularly the sixth storey) to reduce the perceived height from the rear lot line and mitigate shadow impacts on neighbouring properties.

- To the North and South, buildings front public roads, where taller built forms are supported under the City's Official Plan and Urban Design Guidelines for Mid-Rise Buildings.

This transition strategy balances intensification with neighbourhood compatibility, offering a context-sensitive approach that respects adjacent land use patterns.

3.4 Connectivity and Integration

The proposal reinforces existing neighbourhood connections while enhancing accessibility to surrounding amenities:

- Insmill Park, John Gooch Park, and nearby open spaces are within a short walking distance.
- Retail amenities located along Terry Fox Drive and in nearby commercial nodes can be reached by foot or bike, reducing the need for vehicle trips.
- The site is also situated near existing and planned transit routes, aligning with Official Plan policies promoting compact, walkable, and transit-oriented development.

The pedestrian-oriented layout, landscape corridors, and proximity to services help ensure that the development supports a complete, integrated community that is well-connected to its urban context.

4. Built form and Architecture

4.1 Massing and scale

The proposed mid-rise development features three six-storey buildings, with stepped-back upper floors (levels 5 and 6) to reduce perceived height and shadow impact. This massing strategy aligns with the City's permissions for Minor Corridors and provides an appropriate scale transition within the surrounding context.

The buildings are pushed toward urban corridor interface away from Insmill crescent single family homes;

- Building A fronts Kanata Avenue,
- Buildings B and C front Terry Fox Drive.

This configuration defines a central courtyard and internal driveway loop, optimizing site circulation while reinforcing strong street edges.

Along the eastern property line, adjacent to single-detached homes, the proposal includes a 7.5-metre rear yard setback—more than doubling the minimum requirements—and stepped massing, offering a graduated height transition and preserving privacy.

Articulated façades, recessed balconies, and varied cladding materials serve to reduce building scale and foster visual interest. The massing strategy balances intensification objectives with sensitive integration into the existing suburban fabric.

4.2 Architectural Expression

The architectural expression emphasizes contemporary design offering visual interest, and material contrast through the following elements:

- Material differentiation using earth tones, contrasted with white panels, and accent colours (e.g., balcony framing elements) to break up massing and define character zones.
- Recessed balconies and projecting entrances add depth and articulation to the façades, creating visual rhythm and reducing bulk.
- Low pitched rooflines with subtle overhangs establish a modern profile while maintaining clean lines and clarity in massing.

4.3 Elevation Overview

Key Facade Characteristics

Building A

- East/West facades: deep blue and tan color palette with vertically stacked balconies
- North/South: stepped-back top floors, symmetrical massing

Key Facade Characteristics

Building B

- South Elevation: alternating materials and consistent balcony expression
- East/West: more solid with vertical window placement and softened corners

Key Facade Characteristics

Building C

- North: prominent entry focus, consistent balcony articulation
- South/Side: clean vertical rhythm with mixed-tone cladding

These design elements reinforce the development's visual coherence, provide identity for each building, and support a pedestrian-scaled streetscape experience.

Cross-Sectional Views A-A:

Section A–A: Through Building B, illustrating step-back transition and unit layout across levels.

Cross-Sectional Views B-B:

Section B–B: Through internal driveway and courtyard, showing site grading, landscape transition, and relationship to adjacent buildings.

**** Refer civil submission package for final grades***

4.4 Suite Sizes and Diversity

The proposed development includes a range of suite sizes to accommodate various household types and accessibility needs. The unit mix supports both compact living and family-friendly options while meeting accessibility standards.

Suite Size Summary

Unit Type	Size Range (Standard Units)	Accessible Suite Sizes
Studio (18 units)	416.42 sq. ft – 584.97 sq. ft	484.22 sq. ft
1 Bedroom (68 units)	436.59 sq. ft – 742.64 sq. ft + 5 units at 757.70 sq. ft	696.86 sq. ft
2 Bedroom (65 units)	842.67 sq. ft – 968.92 sq. ft	935.77 sq. ft and 968.92 sq. ft
3 Bedroom (31 units)	1067.43 sq. ft – 1170.73 sq. ft	1148.75 sq. ft

Accessible Units: ~ 35% of total unit count

This diverse offering ensures a balanced residential community with options for singles, couples, seniors, and families.

5 Site Design and Landscaping

5.1 Grading

(Please refer to grading plan for final details)

The site exhibits a natural slope which is generally from north to south, which has been carefully considered in the grading strategy to ensure compatibility with existing surrounding grades and adjacent residential properties.

Key grading elements include:

- A coordinated grading plan that balances cut and fill across the site and ensures smooth transitions at property lines, particularly along the southern edge adjacent to low-density residential uses.
- Retaining walls and stepped landscape treatments are incorporated as needed to manage grade differentials while maintaining barrier-free access to building entrances, amenity areas, and sidewalks.
- The grading design supports effective stormwater management and pedestrian comfort, while minimizing potential overlook or visual intrusion caused by elevation changes.

This approach ensures the development sits appropriately within its context and maintains accessibility and site cohesion across its varied topography.

5.2 Streetscape (Relationship to Public Realm)

The development enhances the public realm through a well-defined and human-scaled streetscape along both Terry Fox Drive and Kanata Avenue:

- Active frontages are established through individual ground-level unit entries, generous glazing, and soft landscaping, creating a welcoming pedestrian experience.
- A consistent landscape edge—including street trees, sidewalks, and foundation planting—enhances visual continuity and reinforces the role of both frontages as urban corridors.
- Outdoor seating areas and benches located near building entrances and walkways encourage passive use, informal interaction, and community building among neighbourhood residents.

This approach supports walkability, strengthens the development's relationship with its surroundings, and contributes to the City's vision for vibrant, complete neighbourhoods.

5.3 Landscaping

(Please refer to landscape plan for final details)

The landscape design has been professionally developed to complement the built form, enhance the pedestrian experience, and address transition to adjacent uses. The plan emphasizes visual quality, functionality, and integration with the broader neighbourhood and open space network.
Key landscape elements include:

- Green buffers along the eastern property line, providing screening and privacy for adjacent single-detached homes.
- Street tree planting along Terry Fox Drive and Kanata Avenue, contributing to a cohesive streetscape and improved microclimate.
- A landscaped internal courtyard featuring lawn areas and gathering spaces, offering passive recreation opportunities for residents.
- Pedestrian-scale lighting, decorative planters, and edge treatments to create a safe, inviting, and human-scaled public realm.
- Designated outdoor amenity areas, integrated with pathways connecting to Insmill Park, in response to feedback received during the City's pre-consultation process.

The landscaping strategy critically addresses defining transitions, enhancing curb appeal, and supporting the development's contribution to a complete and livable community.

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