

## RITCHIE COURTYARD RESIDENCES

TORONTO, ON

Client: Triumph Developments  
Architect: David Peterson Architect

This 6-storey, 5,040m<sup>2</sup> infill condominium building is located in the Roncesvalles Village neighbourhood of southwest Toronto. The Village is bisected by Roncesvalles Avenue which runs north-south between Queen and Dundas Streets. To the west is an established residential area dating back to the early 1900s, while to the east large tracts of former industrial land are now undergoing rehabilitation and renewal.

The Ritchie Courtyard Residences are located on a small triangular block east of Roncesvalles Avenue. The site is flanked on the north side by a commercial lane and a gas station, and on the south by a row of Victorian houses. This hybrid physical context informed both the massing of the building and the choice of exterior materials.

Clad in a combination of profiled metal and cementitious panels, the Ritchie Avenue elevation is carefully modelled to reduce its scale and fit more comfortably with its residential neighbours (F20.1 and F20.2).



F20.4

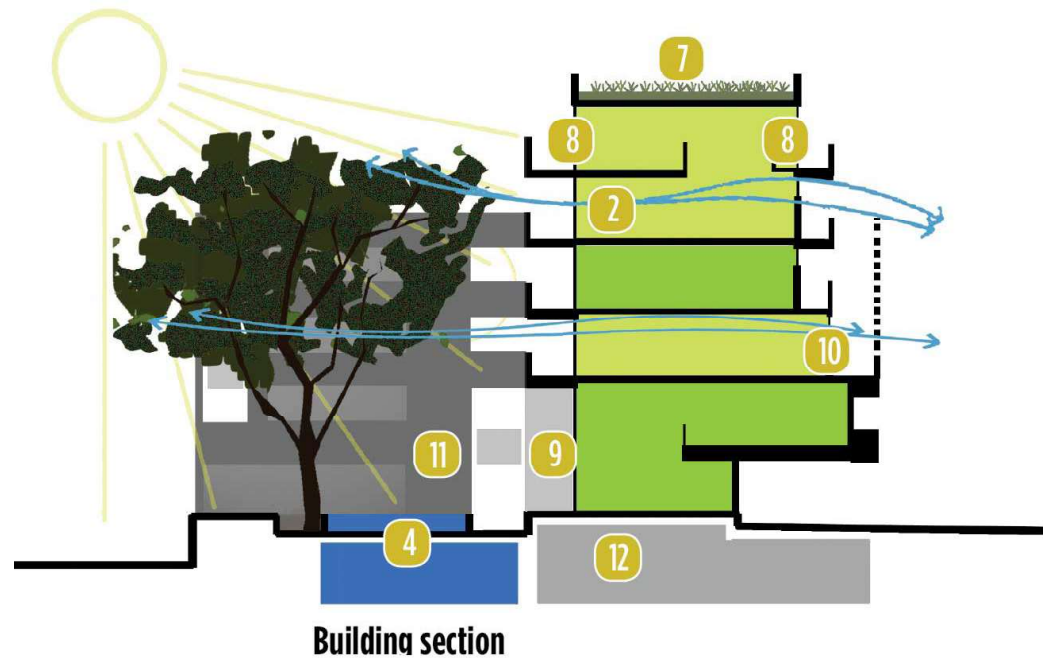


Ground floor plan

- 1 Underground ramp
- 2 Residential suite
- 3 Elevator lobby
- 4 Pond with cistern below
- 5 Glass lounge
- 6 Trellis and barbecue

F20.3

Programmatically however, the building responds to the more subtle forces of social sustainability by appealing to a diverse demographic mix that includes young singles and couples, families and the elderly. The building wraps around three sides of the site forming a 'C' in plan (F20.3) This creates a single open courtyard that is the physical and social focus of the development. Planted with shrubs and trees, and featuring two ponds fed by captured rainwater, the open courtyard has a southwesterly aspect, overlooking century old oak trees that grace the adjacent residential back yards (F20.4). This is a place that all residents can enjoy.



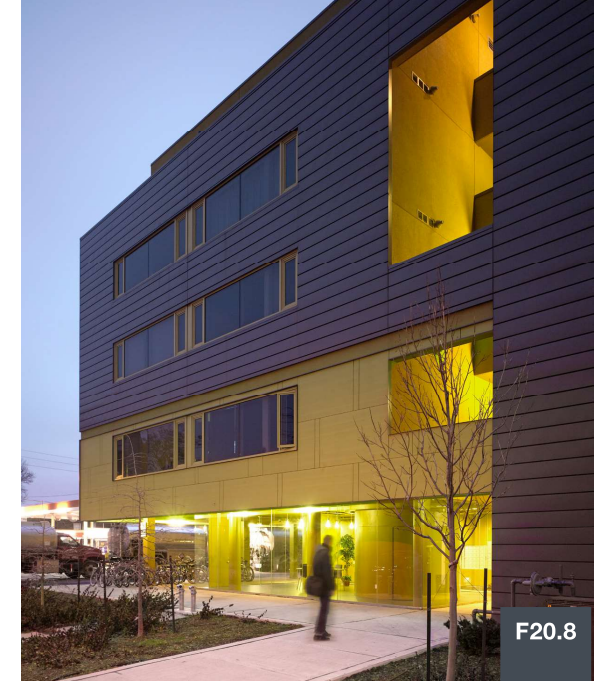
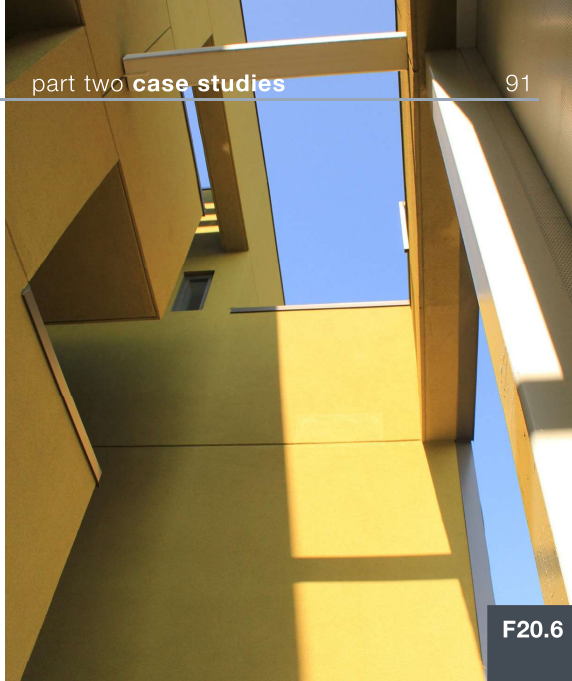
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|---|----------------------|----|--------------------|
| 7 | Planted roof terrace | 10 | Exterior corridor  |
| 8 | Suite balcony        | 11 | Common area garden |
| 9 | Suite patio          | 12 | Parking            |

F20.5

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There are 56 units in the building comprising 19 different types. The units range from a 53m<sup>2</sup> studio, up to a 180m<sup>2</sup> three-bedroom apartment with a 180m<sup>2</sup> terrace. Thirty percent of the units have two bedrooms or more. The apartments are organized along single loaded exterior corridors, a model common in European housing projects but rarely seen in Canada (F20.5).

“With our inclement weather, exterior corridors may seem like an unusual design choice at first glance.” explains architect David Peterson; “However, the residents at 25 Ritchie are representative of a new urban population who choose to walk, bike or take transit in all seasons. As such, they dress for the weather before leaving their suite, and the exterior corridors provide a transitional micro climate between indoor and outdoor conditions.”



At a practical level, the snow and ice common to Toronto winters are managed by thermostatically controlled heating cables embedded in the concrete, a much more energy efficient solution than having to condition internal lobbies and corridors in a typical condominium building. Similarly, artificial lighting requirements are reduced as the corridors have ample light during daytime hours. Equally important, the exterior corridors act as an informal meeting place and — with parts of the building skin cut away to frame views of the neighbourhood and sky — they reinforce the connection between the residents and the community in which they live (F20.6).

Peterson takes pride in the demographic mix that has been achieved here, through the range of unit types and a ground-oriented building form. He observes, “Toronto’s newly constructed glass towers may claim similar numbers, but few are attracting families or the elderly.” (W20.1 ART)

By contrast, the purchasers at 25 Ritchie include many families. With all the units overlooking the courtyard, a culture of co-parenting has developed. As they arrive home from school, children play together among the trees and cascading water, while parents and other residents socialize nearby.

Care has also been taken to connect residents visually and physically to their immediate neighbourhood. Activities in the courtyard can be glimpsed from Ritchie Avenue (F20.7), and, just steps from the sidewalk, a fully glazed common room provides an opportunity for residents to come together and socialize (F20.8). Equipped with chairs, a table and a mini kitchen, it is used for meetings, parties and informal gatherings.

As a final note, Peterson adds, “The extent to which our architectural design decisions influence the vitality and continuity of neighbourhoods is a question little studied. We have few measures of the relationship between architectural design and social sustainability. As designers, we should all begin to think more broadly about how buildings impact the way we live, and how our communities function. Rather than classifying buildings by age or style, we should classify them by social typology. Indeed, our aim should be to make social sustainability the fundamental criterion by which we judge our buildings.”