

Ottawa Retirement Residence by Signature



March, 2019

Cultural Heritage Impact Statement:
Addendum to the April 5, 2011 CHIS

Prepared for:

Cathedral Hills GP Inc.

Prepared by:

Bray Heritage

1. Introduction

This report is an addendum to a Cultural Heritage Impact Statement (CHIS), dated April 5, 2011 and prepared by Bray Heritage for Windmill Development Corporation as part of their complete planning application for a proposed commercial (office) building on the property located at 412 Sparks Street in the City of Ottawa. The subject lands are located in downtown Ottawa, on Sparks Street west of the Parliamentary Precinct in the Cathedral Hill Heritage Conservation District (HCD). The subject property is owned by Christ Church Cathedral and is currently occupied by a surface parking lot. In 2018, Cathedral Hills GP Inc. c/o Reichmann Seniors Housing Corporation reached a leasehold agreement with the Cathedral and is now applying for a Zoning By-law Amendment to include a retirement home as a permitted use and replace the site-specific zoning schedule with a schedule that reflects the development proposed.



View south across existing parking lot showing portions of north elevations of Queen Street houses



View north of parking lot between Cathedral and Queen Street houses



View north of Queen Street houses

In 2011, City Council approved a Zoning By-law Amendment to permit commercial development of this parcel, but that development was not pursued. At the time of the Amendment, a Heritage Permit application was also submitted and approved. That permit was valid for three (3) years and has since expired. A new heritage application is required as part of the planning application for the proposed residential development.

This addendum has been prepared in response to a request from the City of Ottawa Heritage Planning staff for a revision to the 2011 CHIS that addresses potential impacts on the cultural heritage resources of the property and vicinity that would result from the proposed development, to accompany a Heritage Permit application. The addendum addresses the proposed design of the building as shown in plans, elevations and renderings submitted with the Zoning By-law Amendment and as discussed in the Planning Rationale report prepared by FOTENN Planning and Urban Design Consultants (February, 2019). The addendum also responds to comments made by City staff in meetings held during the design development of this project (October 12, 2017 and December 11, 2018) as well as comments made by members of the Urban Design Review Panel (UDRP) at the presentation of preliminary designs for this project on December 7, 2017).

2. Proposed Development

The proposed development has many similarities to the commercial development approved as part of the earlier Zoning By-law Amendment. It has approximately the same footprint and relationship to Sparks and Queen Streets. Its massing is also similar and the current design retains the mid-block pedestrian connection from the commercial scheme. As described in the Planning Rationale report (Section 3.1, p. 12):

The applicant is proposing to replace the surface parking lot with an 18-storey retirement residence with underground parking on the subject site. The building features a two (2) storey podium fronting onto Sparks Street with a 16-storey tower above. The parking garage has two (2) levels of parking accessed from Queen Street and is framed with a low-rise architectural design that echoes the existing building heights of the Queen Anne Revival houses along Queen Street. The Site Plan maintains the mid-block pedestrian called “Philosopher’s Walk” proposed through the original Site Plan approval. This landscaped connection is located along the western façade of the proposed building, alongside the Cathedral, providing additional space between the building and this important heritage building.



Left: View to west of podium, curving tower, Cathedral and existing townhouses

Right: View of north elevation facing Queen Street

Source: Hobin Architecture

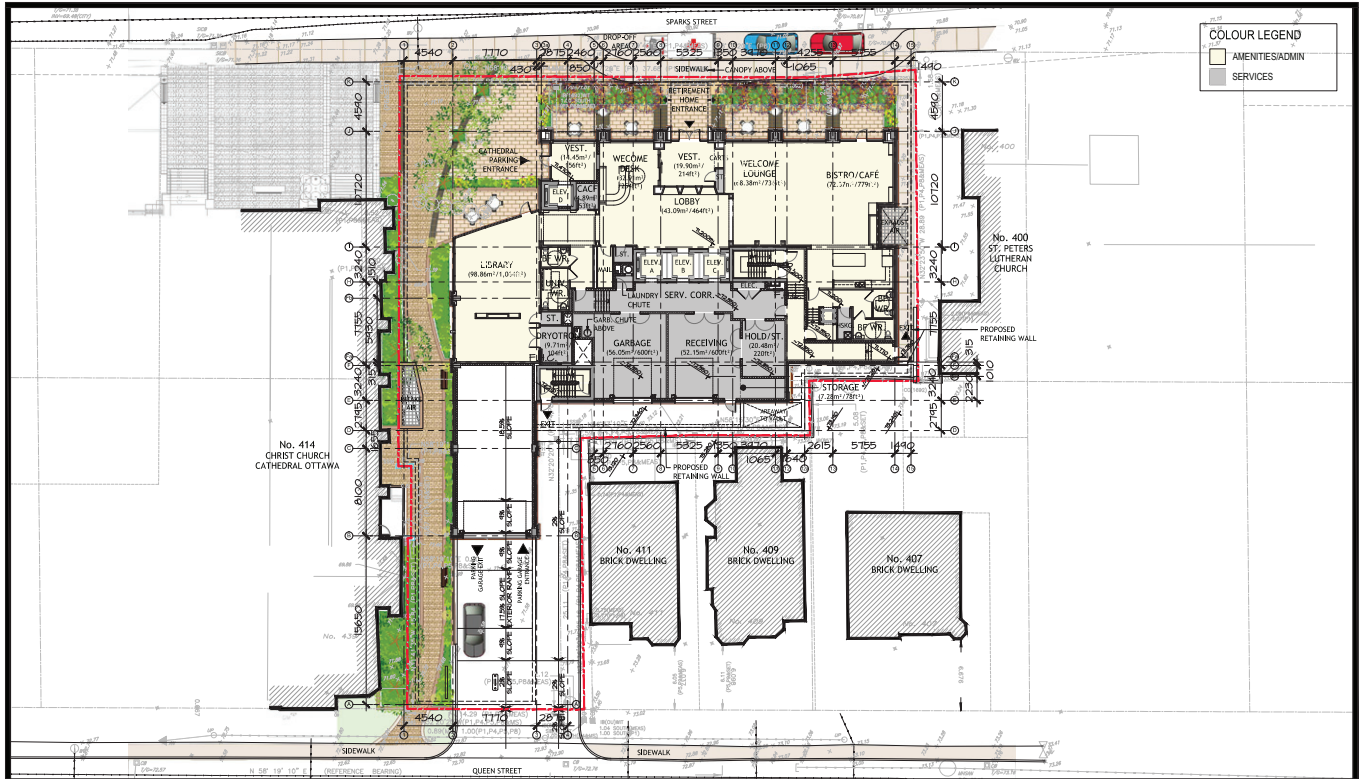


Queen Street View of Parking Garage Entrance & Philosopher's Walk

3. Summary of Comments on Preliminary Design

Comments made by City staff and members of the UDRP on preliminary designs for the proposed development included the following as issues to be addressed in subsequent design development:

- Animation of the Sparks Street streetscape, with a generous setback creating sidewalk space for pedestrians and for crowds generated by special events at the Cathedral;
- Integration of the pedestrian realm of the proposed development and that of the Cathedral;
- Improved safety and security on Philosopher's Walk;
- Improved views of the Cathedral spire and façade as it is approached going west along Sparks Street from the intersection of Bay and Sparks Streets;
- Reduction/elimination of “busy” elements of the proposed façade design;
- Provision of a solid base to the building, grounding it and integrating it with the adjacent buildings by continuing the datum line of the top of the second storey and by having compatible (stone) materials;
- Assurance that there will be no visual impact on view planes to the Parliamentary Precinct; and
- Avoidance of physical impact on the cultural heritage resources of adjacent buildings.



Site plan
Source: Hobin Architecture

4. Impact Assessment

Following these comments and as part of further iterations of the building and site design, the proposed development now addresses these issues.

Streetscape: along Sparks Street the building's podium (at the ground and second floors) has been positioned to complement the existing setbacks of the Lutheran Church to the east and the townhouses to the west of the Cathedral. Above the podium (floors 3 to 18), the tower component has a façade with a segmented curvature that enhances the view of the Cathedral spire to the west. The sidewalk curves around a small layby and is flanked by raised planters, along the front of which is bench seating for residents and members of the public. Floor-to-ceiling windows on the ground floor of the podium create a visual link with activities in the building and a sunken outdoor patio (on the west corner) and an outdoor seating area for the bistro (along Sparks Street) add further animation. In addition, a low-level tree canopy and planting along the Sparks Street elevation as well as a thin canopy extension over the main entrance walkway minimize interruption of the view of the Cathedral from the east.

Philosopher's Walk: plantings, paving and bollard-type pathway lighting flank the pedestrian walkway while providing a protective vegetative buffer along the east wall of the Cathedral. Large windows on the ground floor and second floors visually link indoor amenity spaces for residents with the outdoor walkway and provide extra light and visual surveillance. The pedestrian walkway, by its close proximity to the east wall of the Cathedral, also highlights the architectural features of the heritage building.

Architectural Design: above the two storey podium base, the building façade curves from east to west, with this segmented curvature providing a progressively larger view of the Cathedral spire and façade. Balconies are recessed along the Sparks Street façade and in the west elevation. The podium height and tower base continue the datum line of the Cathedral main block and of the new townhouses to the west. In terms of quality and colour, the exterior materials in the podium and tower are modelled on those found on the Cathedral, Lutheran Church and new townhouses. The materials wrap around the corner to include Philosophers' Walk and the Queen Street

elevation. Key materials include stone cladding on the podium and copper-like frames around the main entrance and windows on the tower. Exterior treatment of the tower is designed to provide a backdrop to the Cathedral, with thin spandrels on glazing around the north-west corner and punched windows on the wall facing the spire. The recessed 18th floor dining room has a rooftop terrace and cap that provide a restrained skyline that does not compete with the Cathedral spire.

Visual Impact: the massing of the new building is set back from Sparks Street and does not impact the Central Area Key Views, as identified in the Official Plan. Comments obtained from the National Capital Commission indicate that the proposed building will not have a negative visual impact on the Garden of the Provinces, located immediately to the north across Sparks Street, nor will views of the Cathedral from the Garden be impeded. The podium of the proposed building aligns with the height and setback main block of the adjacent St. Peter's Lutheran Church (note: this property is not on the City of Ottawa Heritage Register or within the HCD) and maintains that church's visual prominence at the Bay Street intersection. The podium base is also of a similar height and materiality to that of the three existing houses on Queen Street and is further set back in order to retain the visual prominence of those houses within that streetscape. Existing views north from the rear of these houses will, however, be blocked by the new building, but such views are not subject to policies in the Official Plan.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The primary goal of development within the HCD, and adjacent to the Cathedral, is to ensure that the heritage character of the HCD is conserved and that there are no negative impacts on the heritage attributes of the Cathedral. In similar fashion to the design of the proposed commercial building, the current residential development entails no direct impact on the Cathedral's heritage attributes and attempts to retain the Cathedral's visual primacy. In addition, development of the final component of the Cathedral lands contributes to the ongoing financial viability of this important institution and cultural centre, ensuring its role as a community asset and cultural heritage resource while removing an unsightly surface parking lot that detracts from the heritage character of the HCD.

The proposed development has undergone significant modifications to the preliminary design in order to address concerns raised by City staff and members of the UDRP. Many options were considered and consultations between the proponent and City staff continued throughout 2018. The project heritage consultant was involved throughout this process. The resultant design reflects the functional requirements of the retirement home while providing elements that make the building fit better within the HCD. While the proposed development is significantly larger and is higher than the existing housing on Queen Street and the adjacent institutional buildings, its tower and podium frame the Cathedral in a similar fashion to the existing townhouses and residential tower on the west, both of which are within the HCD. Compared to the previously-approved commercial tower, the proposed building massing is only slightly higher and thus has no additional impact on the surrounding properties. The proposed design carries forward the curved façade design and mid-block pedestrian link of the previously approved commercial building, both of which permit views of the Cathedral along the street and within the block.

In conclusion, the proposed development has been modified to ensure a good fit within the Cathedral Hill HCD. Design changes to the preliminary versions of the development address concerns raised by City staff and the UDRP. These modifications have been made to further emphasize the visual prominence of the Cathedral and to provide a complementary setting to the existing development along Sparks Street and Queen Street. This addendum complements the CHIS that accompanied the original development proposal and addresses the proposed change in use from commercial office to retirement residence. The addendum will be included with the documentation submitted as part of the applications for a Zoning By-law Amendment and Site Plan Approval and will accompany the future Heritage Application.