



Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

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REPORT #: CDS-23-150 **COMMITTEE DATE:** 2023-06-28
REPORT TO: Urban Design Committee **DUE IN COUNCIL:** N/A
SUBJECT: Urban Design Review – 325 King Street - OPA-01-2023 & ZBA-01-2023
Proposed 4-Storey, 129-Room Hotel Development

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is respectfully recommended that:

- 1.1 The Committee review the attached materials submitted as part of the applications for Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment for a proposed hotel at 325 King Street and provide comments on massing, scale and height, setbacks, landscaping, parking, circulation and other matters related to urban design.

2. PURPOSE

Applications have been received for an Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment to permit a 19-metre tall, 129-room hotel with a restaurant and patio, spa and personal services, banquet/conference facilities, and associated retail uses.

The Official Plan Amendment proposes to redesignate the subject lands from “Open Space & Community Facilities” to “General Commercial” with site-specific exemptions related to the orientation of the hotel, location of access driveways and loading areas, screening and landscaping, and the requirement for a cultural heritage impact assessment.

The Zoning By-law Amendment proposes to rezone the subject lands from “Institutional (I) Zone” to “General Commercial (GC) Zone” with site-specific provisions related to the permitted uses, maximum area of the proposed restaurant patio, lot frontage, lot area, lot coverage, landscaped open space, setbacks, building height, prohibition of amplified noise, parking and loading spaces, and encroachments.

The application submission included draft renderings, site plans, floor plans, and building elevations (attached as **Appendix I** to this report); Shadow Study (attached as **Appendix II**); Arborist Report and Tree Inventory (attached as **Appendix III**); Draft Official Plan Amendment (attached as **Appendix IV**); and Draft Zoning By-law Amendment (attached as **Appendix V**).

The required Public Meeting under the *Planning Act* for the Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment was held at Council on May 9, 2023. There have been no decisions made on the applications. The applicant is appearing before the Urban Design Committee (the "UDC") to receive comments on the proposal related to urban design matters.

An application for Site Plan Approval would be required in the future to permit the proposed hotel. Some design elements of the proposal may not directly relate to the current applications

for Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment. There may be opportunities for further refinement through the Site Plan Approval process.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Site Description and Surrounding Land Use

The subject lands are known as 325 King Street, comprising an entire block bound by Regent Street on the west, Gage Street on the north, Centre Street on the south and King Street on the east. The subject lands are within the Urban Area of Old Town. A location map of the subject lands is shown in **Figure 1**.



Figure 1: The subject lands are outlined in red

The subject lands have an area of 4.07 acres and contain the former Parliament Oak Public School. Surrounding lands contain residential and open space (park) uses. The Queen Street commercial area is located two blocks to the north. The Pillar and Post Spa and Hotel is located two blocks to the south.

4. DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

4.1 Applicable Official Plan Policies Related to Urban Design

The relevant policies related to urban design contained in the Town's Official Plan (OP) and the General Commercial (GC) Zoning By-law regulations are provided in **Appendix VI** to this report for reference.

The Growth Management Policies of the OP provide applicable urban design policies, land use compatibility criteria and development criteria for proposed redevelopment. The OP does not include criteria to guide the architectural style of development, but rather focuses on the built form, including massing and scale, height, setbacks, and other matters such as landscaping/screening, traffic and pedestrian circulation/connectivity, and parking. A diversity of building styles, materials and colours are supported.

The OP encourages the development of healthy neighbourhoods. The redevelopment of brownfield sites is encouraged, along with compact development, and a mix of uses where redevelopment is consistent with the heritage and character of the area. The OP includes a number of urban design and land use compatibility criteria to guide development to achieve a high quality of design and compatibility with surrounding uses.

The OP states that the Town consists of low-rise buildings in a small-town setting with numerous historic buildings. Further, traditionally, the building height has not generally exceeded 11 metres, and for the most part, the existing low-rise character should be maintained. The OP also recognizes that it is possible to consider a variety of built forms that will complement the existing character.

Commercial development should be distributed in an orderly fashion, and scattered commercial development is discouraged. Commercial development is to be directed to appropriate locations and should not intrude into residential areas. Impacts from commercial develop on surrounding land uses should be minimized.

4.2 Discussion

The applicant has indicated that the hotel has been designed in a Second Empire style and draws inspiration from two local examples in close proximity to the subject lands, including the Prince of Wales Hotel.

The applicant noted that the hotel also resembles the former residence of Josiah Plumb that once existed on the subject lands. The Plumb residence was a three-storey brick building with a mansard roof, arched dormers, and large porch.

The architect who designed the proposed hotel stated that the proposed hotel incorporates high quality materials and offers more formal façade details to reflect its prominence and use.

4.2.1 Massing, Scale, and Height

The proposed hotel exceeds the massing, scale and height of the surrounding single-detached dwellings. However, the subject lands contain a former school building which has a large massing and scale compared to the surrounding single-detached dwellings. The proposed hotel is four-storeys in height, whereas the former school building is 1-2 storeys in height. There are limited examples of four-storey buildings in Old Town.

The applicant has identified examples in Town where existing hotels are sited in close proximity to surrounding residential uses and have existed harmoniously for a long time, such as the Prince of Wales, Pillar and Post, Queen's Landing, and Oban Inn. Although these hotels vary in scale, height, and location, the buildings have narrow setbacks to lot lines and are within or adjacent to residential neighbourhoods. The applicant has noted that the subject

lands are able to accommodate additional massing and height because the subject lands are a four-acre block surrounded by streets on all sides, with significant setbacks provided between the proposed hotel and surrounding residential uses. Setbacks are discussed more in the following sections.

The application has noted several other strategies to reduce the overall massing of the proposed hotel. The applicant has indicated that the additional height is proposed so that the hotel could be developed with a more compact form to reduce façade exposure and maintain greater setbacks from surrounding residential uses. A mansard roof is proposed to avoid additional roof height and lower the roof profile. The hotel is designed with a U-shaped floor plan with a courtyard/terrace at the rear to break-up the rear façade. The side facades include one-storey components with terraces and the front facade includes a one-storey porte cochere.

The Shadow Study demonstrates that shadows would be contained to the subject lands.

Staff request the Committee's input on the massing, scale and height of the proposed hotel and the strategies outlined by the application.

4.2.2 Setbacks

The proposed hotel does not provide any transition between adjacent residential uses, however, the proposed setbacks are generous. The front yard setback (King Street) is 26.8 metres to the main four-storey façade of the proposed hotel and 13.5 metres to the one-storey porte cochere. The former school building has a front yard setback greater than 13 metres to the main entrance area and 8.9 metres to the gymnasium.

The proposed hotel has side yard setbacks to the one-storey terraces of 23.0 metres on the southerly side and 24.4 metres on the northerly side. The four-storey main façade of the hotel has side yard setbacks of 32.5 metres on the southerly side and 31.6 metres on the northerly side. The former school building has side yard setbacks of approximately 8.5 metres to the gymnasium on the southerly side and 48.5 metres to northerly side.

The rear yard setback (Regent Street) to the proposed hotel is 50.0 metres. The existing school has a rear yard setback of 57.0 metres.

Staff request input from the Committee regarding the proposed setbacks.

4.2.3 Landscaping

The Arborist Report and Tree Inventory identifies a number of mature trees on the subject lands. There is a large oak tree located at the southeast corner of the proposed hotel. The applicant has indicated that the large oak tree influenced the siting of the proposed hotel so the oak tree could be retained. Healthy mature trees located at the rear of the hotel and around the perimeter of the subject lands would also be retained.

The draft site plan also indicates that numerous gardens and flower beds would be planted around the hotel, in front of the loading/delivery and waste collection areas, on and around the terraces, in front of the porte cochere, and along the pedestrian pathway leading to the main

entrance. Numerous new trees would also be planted around the perimeter of the subject lands.

A large landscape feature is shown adjacent to the rear terrace with a pathway leading to a monument. The monument is proposed to contain the stone bas relief carvings located on the former school building. Staff understand that the bas relief carvings would be publicly accessible and visible along Regent Street. A low fence with stone piers is proposed around the perimeter of the subject lands to the rear of the proposed hotel. The two existing historic markers located along King Street would retain in their current locations.

A draft Landscape Plan has not been submitted with the applications for Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment, however, the draft site plan indicated numerous landscaped details. A detailed Landscape Plan would be required with the submission of an application for Site Plan Approval.

Staff request the Committee's input on the proposed landscaping.

4.2.4 Parking and Circulation

Two driveway entrances are proposed along King Street providing access to the front entrance of the hotel, two small surface parking areas (short term - check-in/drop-off) and an underground parking area. The proposal includes 197 parking spaces in total (8 above ground and 189 underground). The applicant provided a Parking Review Technical Memo to support a proposed reduction in the number of required parking spaces. Staff will review the memo to determine if sufficient parking is provided. There are separate driveways proposed on Centre Street and Gage Street providing access to service and delivery areas.

Sidewalks are required to be constructed around the perimeter of the subject lands. A walkway is proposed to connect the sidewalk to the front entrance along King Street.

The main access to the site is provided via a circular driveway along King Street which provides access to the underground parking area.

Staff request input from the Committee regarding parking and site circulation.

5. STRATEGIC PLAN

The content of this report supports the following Strategic Plan initiatives:

Pillar(s)

1. Protect Distinctive Community Assets
2. Deliver Smart Balanced Growth

Objective(s)

- 1.1 Preserve unique community elements
- 2.2 Develop smart, balanced growth

6. OPTIONS

The Committee may provide urban design related comments on the proposal, and/or request a subsequent review after potential revisions are made in consideration of Committee recommendations or at the Site Plan Approval stage.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no fee for UDC Review and Staff review and administrative costs are borne by the Town. The applicant is responsible for all costs related to any future development.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Any issues related to environmental matters are addressed throughout this report.

9. COMMUNICATIONS

The Urban Design Committee Minutes will be forwarded to Council as part of the Information Package where all recommendations will be publicly available. The Committee's comments will be considered as part of Staff's review of the applications for Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment.

10. CONCLUSION

Staff request comments from the UDC on matters related to:

- massing, scale and height;
- setbacks;
- landscaping; and
- parking and circulation.

The UDC may also provide additional comments on any other matters related to urban design.

11. PREVIOUS REPORTS

- CDS-23-086 – Public Meeting – 325 King Street – Official Plan & Zoning By-law Amendments (OPA-01-2023 & ZBA-01-2023)

12. APPENDICES

- Appendix I – Draft Renderings, Site Plan, Floor Plan, Building Elevations
- Appendix II – Shadow Study
- Appendix III – Arborist Report and Tree Inventory
- Appendix IV – Draft Official Plan Amendment (OPA)
- Appendix V – Draft Zoning By-law Amendment (ZBA)
- Appendix VI – Relevant Official Plan Policies and Zoning Requirements

Respectfully submitted:



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