

# MEMO | 2017.12.19

**Project:** Case # 20658 Bayers Road and Young Street  
**To:** Leah Perrin, HRM Planner II  
**Subject:** Design revisions in response to staff and public comments.  
**Attachments:**

- Architectural Drawing Set (PDF)
- 3D and Pedestrian Views (PDF)

---

Dear Leah,

Considering the feedback from PAC, the public and HRM staff, we have made modifications to our conceptual design for the proposal and offer the following design summary and rationale with reference to the planning principles as directed by Regional Council:

## Summary of Design Changes

1. Instated bike parking (class A and B)
2. Revised townhouse-style block at the South-West corner of the site.
3. Lowered building height at the South-West corner of the site abutting neighbouring residential use.
4. Modified townhouse-style block at the North-East Corner of the site.
5. Modified lobby entry design fronting Young Street.
6. Minor reduction in FAR.
7. Inclusion of elevator overruns and mechanical penthouses.
8. New windows on blank side walls where applicable.

## Urban Design Rationale

### TRANSITION

- Considering the vast size and extent of the subject lot into an established residential neighbourhood, the scale, transitioning and proportions of the development took a design priority when initially conceptualizing a built form. From the outset, we recognized that the open space in the middle of the civic block was to be maintained. Secondly, we recognized that the proposal would have to respond to two different building typologies that merit different massing, setbacks, height and transitioning in response to the surrounding context and proposed Centre Plan policies.
- Building A takes on a mixed-use typology that responds to the nature of an arterial commercial street where increased height and reduced side yard setbacks are appropriately merited. Here the building is set back approximately 8 feet from the east property line that abuts an existing mixed-use building. To the west, the building is setback approx. 31 feet to allow for a

driveway entry that also doubles as an increased spacial buffer towards the adjacent low-rise Church rectory. In addition to the large spatial buffer at this boundary, the building mass also transitions from 5 storeys down to 4 storeys, and then to 2 storeys to further minimize the impact towards adjacent low-rise use.

- Building A also transitions down towards the street edge to form an undulating 2- and 3-storey streetwall with stepbacks varying from 5 feet to 13 feet. A similar transition and street wall establishment is stipulated toward the central courtyard/greenspace.
- Building widths, heights, and distances between homes along Young Street were initially surveyed to establish pre-existing form and urban rhythm to inform the proposed residential building typology for Building B in the form of townhouse-style blocks.
- The overall height of building B is in general conformance with both the existing Land-use By-law and the proposed Centre Plan, set at 3-storeys.
- The topography across the site slopes down westward. As such, the ground floor (and overall mass for that matter) step down to meet the change in grade. This smoothens the transitional impact towards adjacent residential homes. At the southwest corner, the townhouse block was also lowered in height from the original submission to further enhance the transitional impact to adjacent homes.
- The side-yard setbacks for Building B varies from approx. 12 feet (at the southwest boundary) to 19 feet (at the northeast boundary). Both setbacks were guided from existing by-laws and existing spatial separation between residential buildings and arguably considered more than adequate in terms of appropriate transitioning to neighbouring buildings considering the 3-storey height.
- Building B is also set back from the street boundary to align with existing neighbouring homes. The front yard is landscaped with walkways, raised planter beds and trees to buffer and transition to the sidewalk.

#### PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED | BUILDING A

- Both building designs are centrally focused on the pedestrian experience and streetscape animation through various architectural measures including streetwall articulation and ground floor interventions as listed below:
- Building A fronting Bayers Road takes on a built streetwall form in staggered volumes with frequent commercial entries, large transparent display windows, and integrated weather canopies that collectively establish a comfortable and visually interesting public realm.
- Streetwall volumes are designed with vertical proportions that vary in height to accommodate for the change in grade across the site and to further animate the streetscape.
- The streetwall articulation is also characterized by a change in material that is coupled with each staggered volume. Here, varied brick veneers have been chosen as a primary material as it has been proven to be tactile, of human scale, and of high durability/quality.
- Building A is also set back from the street boundary to align with adjacent mixed-use buildings. The increased setback at this parameter allows for landscape intervention as well as adequate space for potential patio spill-out.

## PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED | BUILDING B

- Since building B is sited along an established residential street, its architectural language and built form interfaces differently from that of Building A fronting a commercial corridor. As such, Building B follows guiding principles for a building typology that is sensitive to residential contexts in the form of a low-rise townhouse style with the following implemented design strategies:
- Building widths, heights, and distances between homes along Young Street were initially surveyed to establish pre-existing form and urban rhythm to inform proposed massing addressing Young Street. Here, each townhouse form is separated by wide balconies similar in dimension to pre-existing separations between residences. In addition, each sandwiched balcony is significantly inset so that each townhouse form can be visually perceived as a fully projected three-dimensional mass that is disconnected from one to the next.
- The townhouse volume is further delineated into two volumes that relate to pre-existing housing proportions in an effort to maintain rhythmic consistency. Here, a simplified flat-roofed base-volume is defined by solid paneling and vertical windows. The secondary volume is defined by a two-storey 20-foot-wide projection similar to existing housing widths and proportions.
- When considering the 363-foot long residential frontage, attributing the above massing strategies on a repetitive grid will not suffice in terms of visual variety for the walking pedestrian. As such, a secondary layer of architectural design measures were put in place where the building is broken down into three townhouse blocks separated by wide, fully glassed recessed lobby entries that provide full transparency from the street to the internal courtyard. This measure virtually creates two 'built voids' as architectural gaps within the streetscape. In addition, each townhouse block retains a consistent base-volume articulation, but with subtle material colour changes from one block to the next. By contrast, the projected 20-foot wide volumes provide the greatest architectural variety by means of shifting materiality, window configuration, and roofline articulation that attribute to a sense of architectural (and we would argue user) identity and sense of place.
- Beyond building massing, the ground floor interface also plays a critical role in pedestrian experience. As such, the building design includes multiple ground-floor entries with integrated landscape features including raised planters, walkways and trees within the large front-yard setbacks to help articulate and animate the streetscape in a pre-existing landscaped residential context. In addition, each entry is buffered vertically in the form of stairs that lead up to a raised porch that is in keeping with the surrounding residential context and housing typology. Separate entries and raised porches also establish an architectural platform for social interaction and exchange between neighbours.
- Establishing the above strategies in both buildings collectively demarcates frequent edges and defined volumes which the human brain calculates to delineate space, depth and form. This neurologically translates to 'pleasure' as stimulated visual interest, rhythm and material contrast.

## HUMAN SCALE | BUILDING A

- Human-Scale and Pedestrian Orientated principals work hand-in-hand as both objectives and outcomes relate to the *human experience*. As such, we would argue that items listed in each section serve as interchangeable design strategies for both policy objectives including the following:
- The streetwall datum at 2 and 3 storeys for Building A (refer to above) is an appropriate height to define an intimate public realm at a human scale relative to the Bayers Road street context. In addition, the building is set back from the property line to align with adjacent buildings in order to maintain a consistent built fabric along Bayers Road.
- Above and beyond the streetwall, the building massing steps back between 5 and 13 feet as it transitions up to 4 and 5 storeys. In addition, the bulk of the 5-storey mass has been retained towards the westward portion of the site where the topography is higher. Where the grade is at its lowest, the massing steps down to 4 storeys at its highest. Both of these architectural measures relative to grade help reduce the overall scale of the building as perceived at the human scale.
- The ground floor height varies between 12 to 18 feet to maximize pedestrian spacial comfort in a public/commercial context. Increasing the ground floor height also increases display window sizes for optimal visual transparency onto the street and into commercial shops.
- Windows are broken up into vertical proportions vs horizontal proportions which most scholars deem as more appropriate for human scale and the human experience.
- Attributing a spatial gap and a green courtyard space between the two proposed buildings reduces the overall scale and impact on the site resulting in a 58% lot coverage. In addition, the greenspace has been designed to allow for a multitude of uses across several terraces including a children's playground, vegetable gardens, seating areas, and even private yards.

## HUMAN SCALE | BUILDING B

- As mentioned above, building B has been well sited, designed, landscaped and articulated to fully augment the residential streetscape and the pedestrian experience at the human scale.
- The overall building height is generally consistent with existing land-use bylaws (3 storeys), while the building's volumetric proportions are in keeping with pre-existing residences and therefore consistent with human scale.

## BUILDING DESIGN | BUILDING A

- As mentioned above, the streetwall has been delineated as staggered volumes with vertical window proportions to visually enhance the streetscape. Each form within the streetwall is characterized by a change in material that alternates between a lighter-toned brick veneer to a darker-toned brick veneer. In addition, each volume includes an inset balcony to create depth and social animation directed towards the public realm.
- In order not to detract from the highly articulated streetwall, the upper floors are intentionally designed to be uniform in materiality. Here, the material transitions into a simple light-toned panel with seam-patterning aligning with vertical window proportions.

- The residential entry along Bayers Road is identified by a big-impact architectural intervention vs simplified way-finding signs. Here the architectural mass takes on an obelisk-like volume that contrasts the rest of the architectural language by using wood banding and horizontal window proportions.
- The rear of the building is consistent with architectural language exhibited within the streetwall whereby the mass is broken into different characterized volumes delineated by material change, and includes vertical windows.

## BUILDING DESIGN | BUILDING B

- As outlined in previous sections, building B has been designed with the intent of capturing an enjoyable and visually interesting streetscape that relates to human scale and the pedestrian vantage point.
- The building has been broken up into three townhouse-style blocks separated by two large lobby entries materialized in glass for full transparency through the building and into the courtyard space. These glass 'voids' create a glimpse of greenery from the streetscape.
- Each townhouse block is designed with changing architectural elements (rooflines, materiality, window configuration) to enable differentiation between forms and to enhance visual interest. In addition, there are also consistent design elements (base-volume) that align the architectural language holistically across the streetscape.
- The rear of Building B facing the courtyard directly mimics the form and architectural language of the street façade.

## CONTEXT-SENSITIVE

- Although wood shingles can be observed as a common cladding material in the surrounding context, it is not the most functional or ideal material for multiunit buildings due to prolonged maintenance. In fact, most of the existing shingle clad homes have been covered in vinyl due to maintenance issues. Higher quality vinyl systems which mimic wood shingles were ruled out as their production and disposal are not environmentally friendly. As such, we have assigned brick, cement board paneling, and faux-wood aluminum as our primary building materials for its durability, quality, and modern aesthetic.
- Building A's mixed-use typology responds to the existing context through the design of an appropriately sized streetwall. It also responds to the Centre Plan objectives for increased density, commercial use, and complete neighbourhoods for corridor designations.
- The scale, form and rhythm of Building B takes cues from the neighbouring surveyed homes and therefore responds to the pre-existing built fabric and context. In addition, the building is set back from the street line to align with adjacent homes and maintain continuity of the built urban edge.
- We are also of the opinion that new buildings should respond to progressive technological innovation, building science, energy efficiency, and the needs of the modern household resident which may not necessarily align with the construction methodologies of older single-family homes evident in the surrounding context. As such, Building B relates to the existing residential context through massing and proportions, while materiality and overall aesthetic responds to modern sociocultural contexts and relative innovations in building science.

We hope you find our proposal and design rational satisfactory in meeting both Centre Plan objectives and the needs of the surrounding community. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone at \_\_\_\_\_ or by email at \_\_\_\_\_

Sincerely,

~

Jacob JeBailey  
Principal Architect  
RAIC, NSAA, OAA, M.Arch, BEDS