



**Kassner Goodspeed Architects Ltd.**

## **29 & State Street Developments Ltd.**

*The Promenade at Robie South*

### **Case 20761: Application for Development Agreement**

#### **Design Rationale**

The land assembly is a 1.3 Acre parcel located on the northeast corner of the intersection of Robie and College Streets in peninsula Halifax, immediately south Spring Garden Road. The assembly includes 7 contiguous residential properties with frontage on three streets. The properties are regulated under the Peninsula Centre Area Plan. The five properties fronting on Robie and College Streets are zoned R-3, and the two properties fronting on Carlton Street are zoned R-2. There is currently a fifty foot height precinct applied over the properties, The front portion of 5963 College Street is a municipally registered heritage property in recognition of Victorian character.

To the north, the lands abuts the west end of the Spring Garden Road district. Immediately south across College Street is the medical sub campus of Dalhousie University, with the hospital district to the southeast and the main campus to the south west. This location in Central Halifax is favorably positioned for high density development, with a wide range of employment, educational, shopping and recreational opportunities within a fifteen minute walk of the site. The site has immediate access to the major street and transit networks. It is located in close proximity to a number of existing high-rise structures of twelve or more storeys.

In recognition that the existing municipal controls do not reflect the current reality and overly limit the development potential of the lands, the owners are seeking a development agreement with the municipality to permit re-development of the properties. The proposal includes the demolition of the existing residential structures, relocation and restoration of the existing heritage building, relocation of an registered Victorian era house, renewal of two existing Carlton Street houses and construction of a new mixed-use structure fronting on College and Robie Streets. The proposal includes a low rise stepped streetwall structure incorporating ground floor commercial space with residential suites above. The roof of the streetwall mass is to be developed for resident amenities. Above this level, two independently accessed residential towers are set back from the streetwall. As currently envisioned, the Robie Tower rises 22 floors above the 4 storey streetwall and the College Tower rises 17 floors above the three storey streetwall. The towers are carefully positioned to maintain appropriate separation distance and allow light and air penetration to adjacent properties. Approximately 400 residential suites, up to 32,000 sf of ground level commercial space are proposed. The structure would be constructed on top of a four level underground parking structure which accommodates enclosed parking for approximately 384 cars.

## Alignment with Centre Plan Parameters

<i>Urban Structure</i>	<p>This site is included in one of the five Centres identified in the Centre Plan, and has been deemed appropriate for high density multi unit residential development. The land assembly is one of few large enough to accommodate two residential towers with appropriate siting, stepbacks and separation distances.</p> <p>The building form incorporates a streetwall mass with two slim residential towers stepped back from the streetwall line. The mixed use proposal incorporates active and pedestrian oriented ground floor uses combined with residential apartments of varying sizes on the upper floors.</p>
<i>Height</i>	<p>The draft Centre Plan identifies a building height of 16 to 20 floors. The design brief required a total of approximately 400 residential suites. In this proposal we have incorporated two towers. In studying various massing options for the two towers, it became obvious that a slim profile for the towers was the most desirable strategy to maintain appropriate separation distances between towers and maximize daylight penetration and sky view from the surrounding areas. As our response, we have proposed a 26 storey tower facing Robie Street and a 20 storey tower on the College Street frontage. Both towers are set back from the line of the streetwall</p>
<i>Floor Area Ratio</i>	<p>Although the Centre Plan draft anticipates the use of Floor Area Ratios (FAR) to control building size, it is silent on specific FAR numbers and the method of calculation. If the calculation is based on the total <b>gross</b> floor area above grade, this proposal has an FAR of 7.4</p>

## Response to Design Principles

<i>Transition</i>	<p>This site abuts the west end of Spring Garden to its north, the Robie Street corridor to the west, Dalhousie University Carlton Medical Campus to the south and the registered Carlton Victorian Streetscape to the east.</p> <p>The streetwall mass is the primary means of establishing appropriate transition in the neighborhood. The residential towers above are stepped back from the line of the streetwall.</p> <p>The Robie streetwall is set at 4 floors, an appropriate height to face this wide boulevard street. At the northern end of the Robie frontage the streetwall steps down to 3 floors and is set back, anticipating a future lower streetwall height appropriate for south side of Spring Garden Road</p> <p>The principal commercial entrance is expressed as an archway set in a chamfered corner element to mark both the intersection and the transition to the university campus.</p> <p>Along the College Street frontage, the streetwall height reduces to 3 storeys, reflecting height of the adjacent heritage structures. Carlton heritage streetscape. By introducing a small mezzanine level into the first storey facing College Street, townhouse style units, accessible from the sidewalk, are integrated into the College Street façade. The vertical</p>
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proportions expressed in the townhouse blocks recall the fine-grained scale and rhythm of the Carlton Victorian Streetscape. The Residential space is accessed from two separate residential lobbies, expressed as columned porticos on the Robie and College frontages. The vehicle entrance provides an interruption in the College streetscape, effectively highlighting the cluster of Victorian structures sited at the Carlton Street corner.

*Pedestrian Orientation* The project is located in an area with significant pedestrian traffic to and from the university and hospital district to the south west and the residential and commercial areas to the north and east. The Promenade design seeks to enliven the pedestrian experience with a variety of forms and setbacks and enhanced pedestrian infrastructure supporting spill out uses, bicycles and transit access.

The plan features an inter-active ground floor, with pedestrian oriented commercial space at street level. The commercial storefronts on both Robie and College Sts are set back 5 feet from the property line, providing space for increased sidewalk width. This creates the potential for spill out uses, especially attractive on the south facing College St frontage.

*Human Scale* The human scale of the project is established by its streetwall massing, with the residential towers stepped back from the street line to reduce the sense of presence. The step back varies with the College Street tower set back further. The streetwall is designed using vertically proportioned openings. The masonry construction reinforces the sense of human scale.

The streetwall mass is articulated with varying heights and setbacks, with different exterior treatments to express the residential entrances, commercial entrance and townhouse elements. The widened sidewalks promote spill out uses from the adjacent commercial spaces. This manipulation of human scaled elements provides for a variety of experiences as one moves along the frontages of the project.

*Building Design* The building form follows the principals established in Downtown Halifax Plan. It features streetwall massing with minimal setbacks, and significant setbacks for the relatively slim towers above.

The ground floor, covering most of the site, provides space for a major commercial use, serviced from the College Street entry. This same location is used for the entry to the 4 level underground parking garage.

The streetwall mass is located to address the street frontages, with commercial space on the ground level and residential uses above. The open roof area of the streetwall mass is used to provide outdoor amenity space for both the residential towers, accessible from common rooms located on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of each tower.



The streetwall mass is enclosed with an articulated stone masonry cladding with vertically proportioned punched window openings. The masonry detail contributes a sense of human scale at sidewalk level while responding to the adjacent university buildings.

The residential towers are clad in a combination two tones of modular ceramic tile with areas of glass curtain wall. These materials are manipulated to express the tower masses as an aggregation of smaller structures. This is intended to add visual interest, contribute a sense of scale and to create a level of surface 'roughness' to aid in wind control

### *Context Sensitivity*

This high density residential development is located in an established high rise residential area, focussed on the west end of Spring Garden Road. The area is one of four 'Centres' identified in the draft Center Plan as locations for high density residential use.

The project abuts Carlton Victorian Streetscape, recognized nationally as a rare example of the type. Two of the Victorian houses at the west end are included in the land assembly for the project. Our proposal to rehabilitate these two structures and to relocate two additional houses, including the municipally registered Gold Cure Institute aims to 'rejuvenate' reinforce and add to the Heritage assets of the area.

Our College Street frontage faces the Carlton Medical campus of Dalhousie University across the street. The university buildings opposite are reflected in the reduced height and the masonry construction used for the streetwall mass.

The main commercial entrance is established in an archway in a chamfered corner at the intersection of College and Robie Streets. This marks the intersection as a prominent node in the neighborhood and reflects the chamfered podium at the entrance to the Dalhousie Medical Campus.

Approval of this or a similar proposal will require amendments to the municipal plan to modify or remove the height precinct, to allow for mixed use and to permit the increase in residential density. A development agreement would be required to allow the streetwall configuration and to modify the current setback and open space requirements.

dbg/18 May 2018



## **Adjacencies to Future Development**

Simultaneous with this application, HRM is considering a development proposal for the abutting lands to north, incorporating new construction on all the remaining lands on the block, with the exception of the properties forming the west side of Carlton Victorian Streetscape.

The proposal currently includes an 8 storey mid-rise structure with two towers above. The main tower, sited midway along the Spring Garden frontage, rises to 30 storeys. The smaller tower is located at the Spring Garden/Robie intersection and rises to 16 storeys.

At 27 m and 35m, the separation distances between the main tower and the two Promenade towers exceed the requirements of the downtown bylaw and the proposed Centre plan. At 20m, the separation distance between the proposed corner tower and Promenade A is less than the 23m proposed in the center plan. This separation is further reduced to 12m below the 8 storey level.

The proposed 8 storey midrise block covers a large portion of the property. Although there appears to be a slight setback and material change at the 4 storey level, most parts of the mid-rise mass have minimal setbacks from the street lines, effectively creating an 8 storey streetwall. The minimal setbacks of the smaller tower also contributes to an inappropriate concentration of mass at the corner.

In our opinion, the streetwall on the south side of Spring Garden should be lower. The Promenade features a four storey streetwall along Robie Street, stepping down to three storeys as it approaches the Spring Garden/Robie intersection.

At the interior lot lines common to both developments, both projects have one story podium structures with small setbacks. These areas require further analysis and development to ensure that safe and maintainable rear yards are created.

dbg 5 July 2018

