URBAN DESIGN BRIEF

P.A.M. Gardens Housing

189-193 Commissioners Road West, London, ON
content

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introduction

On behalf of P.A.M. Gardens Non-Profit Housing Corporation, Nicholson Sheffield Architects Inc. has prepared this Urban Design Brief to provide design details of a proposed development on the subject lands consisting of a 7-storey apartment building intended for affordable housing.
PART ONE land use planning context

Figure 1: View South West to side entry
subject lands

The subject lands are located on the north side of Commissioners Road West, at the terminus of the north leg of Viscount Road, west of Wharncliffe Road. The subject lands have a frontage of approximately 40 metres (131 ft) along Commissioners Road West, and an approximate area of 0.401 hectares (0.99 acres) (Figure 2 close context aerial view with outline). The subject lands are currently occupied by a pair of one storey house form residential buildings. The subject lands are flanked by high density, mid to high rise residential development to the immediate west and north, and low-rise house form buildings to the east.

The subject lands have a remnant of what appears to be a natural water course running across the north west corner of the site, which has been terminated at both ends by development to the north and west leaving a stagnant pond on the west border of the northern part of the site. There are also a number of mature trees on the northern half of the subject property.

The subject lands currently have 2 curb cuts on Commissioners Road West, 1 curb cut for each address. See Figure 2 & 3, close aerial view and context plan.

Figure 2: The Subject Lands, 189-193 Commissioners Road West
1.2 the proposal

The proposed development of the subject lands would allow for a 7-storey apartment building for the purpose of providing affordable housing (Figures 3 & 4, close proposed aerial view and streetview from Viscount Road). The proposed apartment building would contain a total of 65 one and two bedroom residential units.

Figure 3: Subject Lands Context Plan, Existing

The building is proposed to front along Commissioners Road West, accessed by pedestrians and vehicles via the perpendicular internal drive and pathways running to the north along the eastern edge of the property. Parking will be provided at grade north of the proposed building, away from the public streetscape. A total of 51 at grade parking spaces, including 3 barrier free spaces are located at the rear of the proposed building, along with 49 indoor bicycle parking spaces. Site servicing also occurs at the rear of the building at the north, with pickup and drop off at the east side along the access drive (see Figure 5, Conceptual Site Plan).
Pedestrian entrances can be accessed directly from the Commissioners Road West frontage, from the east facing passenger pick up and drop off, and from the rear parking area.

Garbage disposal is provided via an internal room on the ground floor with access to the parking area for pick-up.
1.3 design goals and objectives

The goal of this development project is to redevelop an underutilized parcel of land for a desired public use (affordable housing) in a manner that is consistent with the dominant built form of the existing surrounding lands; that contributes to the planned function of the area; and provides a visually attractive building. As such the proposed development is intended to:

• Make efficient use of the subject lands, which will provide an opportunity for desirable intensification, by optimizing building coverage and height;
• Visually integrate the new building into the existing development;
• Provide a pedestrian-orientated street environment at the front of the building, including a direct relationship to the human-scale and building facades which are designed to animate the streetscape;
• Provide for a redevelopment of the subject lands that will be supportive of investments in public transit and provides convenient access for pedestrians; and,
• Enhance the existing streetscape by framing public space of the street with an appropriately located and scaled building.

Figure 5: Conceptual Site Plan
1.4 design response to city documents

Due to the current transition between Official Plans (the 1989 Official Plan and The London Plan), this Urban Design Brief addresses both documents. The 1989 Official Plan is discussed first, followed by a discussion on The London Plan policies.

1.4.1 1989 City of London Official Plan

The City of London Official Plan includes design principles that are to be applied to new developments. Section 11.1 lists the general design principles that are to be promoted in the preparation of development proposals. The individual principles listed do not always apply to each specific development, and are dependent upon the location and characteristics of the proposal.

The design principles relevant to this proposed development and how they are addressed are outlined as follows:

- **Natural Features** – There are some mature trees and a decommissioned water course on or near the subject lands and the proposed development is to match the existing grading, as best as possible (Section 11.1.1 i);

- **Trees** – There are existing trees on the northern half of the subject lands that are impacted by the proposed development. Any trees on adjacent lands will be preserved where economically available. (Section 11.1.1 ii);

- **Open Views** – The proposed development does not obstruct views to natural features or landmarks (Section 11.1.1 iii);

- **High Design Standards** – The proposed development provides a contemporary building design that makes use of modern design practices and materials. The design makes use of high quality materials. (Section 11.1.1 iv);

- **Architectural Continuity** – There is no single design style maintained throughout the surrounding buildings; however the orientation and setback of the proposed building is consistent with adjacent residential uses and the design style compliments that of some of the adjacent structures. (Section 11.1.1 v);

- **Redevelopment** – The subject lands are zoned for 160 units/ha, or 64 residential units. The subject lands currently contain 2 residential units. The property is currently under-developed where intensification would be desirable. (Section 11.1.1 vi);

- **Pedestrian Traffic Access** – Pedestrian traffic to and from the proposed development will be connected to the public sidewalk along Commissioners Road West by a proposed sidewalk running north south to the front entry, and following the drive around to the east side entry. Both entry points are sheltered by a canopy. (Section 11.1.1 viii);
• Access to Sunlight – The building is located at the south west corner of the site to minimize impact on access to sunlight for the adjacent properties. (Section 11.1.1 ix) (Appendix at end of document, Sun Studies);

• Landscaping - Landscaping will improve Commissioners Road streetscape, internal driveway connection, and screen the parking area. Detailed landscape design will be determined at the Site Plan Approval stage (Section 11.1.1 x);

• Building Positioning – The orientation and setback of the proposed building will be similar to the existing, more contemporary residential buildings along Commissioners Road, such as the Four Feathers apartments two doors to the west. Located closer to the west side of the property, the building will reduce the negative impact of the deeply recessed building with front yard parking to the west, and provide a buffer to the smaller scale buildings to the east, as well as provide relief for potential future development of these sites. (Section 11.1.1 xi);

• Enhances Accessibility Standards - The proposed buildings will be fully accessible and the design will be consistent with the City of London Facility Accessibility and Design Standards through barrier-free units, entrances, and barrier-free accessible parking stalls (Section 11.1.1 xii);

• Parking and Loading - All required parking spaces are conveniently located proximate to the building and out of view from the street. Loading areas are located at the rear of the building (Section 11.1.1 xiv);

• Privacy - Strategic landscape features will enhance visual screening to and from the site. The building is located out of alignment with apartment building of similar scale to the west, and with greatest possible setback from the property and house to the east. (Section 11.1.1 xiv); and

• Waste Management - The garbage and recycling will be accommodated within the proposed building (11.1.1 xix).

• Resource Conservation – The proposed building is seeking funding from the CMHC as part of the National Housing Strategy: National Housing Co-Investment Fund. As such the project intends, and is required to meet or exceed a 25% decrease in energy consumption and Greenhouse Gas emissions over the requirements of the 2015 National Building Code and National Energy Code for Buildings (11.1.1 xx).

• Gateways – The proposed building will create a visual terminus to the northern leg of Viscount Road. The building is massed, and the south elevation composed to address this condition, where form and materials break the building into two masses linked by a glazed and shaded reveal. The eastern mass floats above the lobby and directs attention to the welcome, public and open side of the building (11.1.1 xxi).
1.4.2 the London Plan policies

The London Plan has been adopted by Council, but is not yet in effect, pending the resolution of several appeals to the Ontario Municipal Board. The London Plan sets out urban design policies that are applicable to both the city as a whole, and to specific place types. The subject lands are within the “Neighbourhoods” place type, and fall under the policies of City Design under City Building Policies of The London Plan.

The City Design section of The London Plan sets out general urban design policies that apply to the entire city. The proposed development is consistent with these policies as follows:

- The proposed 7-storey building maintains the character and range of building types in the area by providing a well-designed, complimentary built form that enhances the visual aesthetics of this location and fills in a gap in the streetscape. (Sections 197, 199, 202);

- A Public Realm analysis demonstrating the compatibility of the proposed built form with the existing built context is provided in Section 2.2 of this Urban Design Brief. (Section 199);

- The existing streetscape along Commissioners Road West will be enhanced by the addition of the proposed 7-storey apartment building along the street frontage. (Sections 221, 235, 879);

- The proposed site layout responds to the context of the subject lands and the abutting lands through a compatible and aesthetically pleasing development that locates the apartment building towards the Commissioners Road West frontage, and screens garbage and service areas at the rear of the building. (Sections 252, 255, 256, 259, 266, 268);

- The parking area is located behind the building to minimize the visual exposure of parking from Commissioners Road West (Section 259, 272, 273);

- The building design, including scale, massing, and materials, is respectful of the site’s context along Commissioners Road West. The front elevation provides transparent windows, grade to active shared community space in the building and direct pedestrian access to the streetscape. Rooftop mechanical equipment is screened from view. (Sections 284, 285, 286, 287, 291, 295, 296) (Figure 6, ground floor plan; Figure 8, conceptual render streetview north from Commissioners Road); and,

- A range of building materials are proposed including various colours of brick, siding, and glass. (Sections 301, 302).
As the subject lands are within the 'Neighbourhoods' Place Type, as part of this analysis the Residential Intensification policies of The London Plan were examined as the proposed building is solely residential in nature and does abut an existing stable residential area. These policies set out additional urban design policies that apply to all intensification proposals. The proposed development is consistent with these policies as follows:

• Building parking is at the rear and building at the front lot line (953 2(a) (c)).

• The building, windows, and entrances are orientated to Commissioners Road West (953 2,b);

• The building line is consistent with the existing structures along Clarke Road (953 2, c);

• The proposed development has similar massing, and material consistent with the surrounding neighbourhood. (Sections 953 2, d, f); and

• The proposed development makes efficient use of an underutilized lot and will maximize building coverage that is appropriate to the neighbourhood (953, 3).
1.5 spatial analysis

Figure 7: Spatial Analysis - 400m & 800m Radii

The surrounding land uses consist of low density residential (south), high density residential (north, west and east), light industrial and commercial (further north east).

The intersections of Commissioners Road West and Wharncliffe Road, and Base Line Road West and Wharncliffe Road are a well-established commercial node within the City of London with a wide variety of commercial uses, and services for the immediate neighbourhood and the wider City. The Commissioners Road West streetscape is a mix of residential and commercial to east, and residential to the west. The subject lands are within convenient walking distance to restaurants, recreational uses, institutional uses, and a wide range of commercial business and services along Wharncliffe Road. There are work opportunities, schools and parks within walking distance.
Figure 7 shows the subject lands and notable features and land uses within 400m and 800m radii.

The two radii represent walking distances of approximately 5 and 10 minutes respectively. The subject lands are located along the civic boulevard, Commissioners Road West. The subject lands are well served by public transit, with bus routes operating on Commissioners Road West, Viscount Road and Wharncliffe Road, terminating downtown, Victoria Hospital, Westmount Mall & White Oaks Mall (#12, #24, #26, #60).

Pedestrian connections are provided in the form of a sidewalk along Commissioners Road West, as well as to and from the proposed building entrances and parking lot.

The 400m area surrounding the subject property is comprised of mid and high rise, high density residential uses as well as some single detached dwellings.

Lands within an 800m radius are well served by a variety of services and amenities including low and medium density residential areas in the form of single detached dwellings, townhouses and low & mid-rise apartment buildings; additional neighbourhood scale, and regional commercial uses; light industrial and service commercial uses; institutional uses (Primary & Secondary School, places of worship), and open space; local commercial uses consisting of retail outlets, regional commercial uses consisting of large format retail, and restaurants; and light industrial/commercial uses in the form of commercial-industrial properties.

Figure 8: Conceptual Arial View Northeast of Proposal
PART TWO  
design principles and conceptual design

Figure 9: View North-Northwest from Commissioners Road
2.1 conceptual design

The proposal is for a seven-storey apartment building intended for affordable housing. As per Figures 4 & 8, the proposed building will be located along the Commissioners Road West at the terminus of the north leg of Viscount Road, with parking to the rear of the building. The proposed building will be in keeping with the setback of the adjacent residential buildings along the streetscape, with the exception of the building immediately adjacent to the west (199 Commissioners Road West) which is set back behind surface parking. Bringing the building forward towards the streets creates a stronger street edge and better definition between private and public space while screening the private interior of the site, and the parking area. The proposed building setback and location of parking to the rear improves the pedestrian experience along Commissioners Road West and frames views of the streetscape.

A new driveway access is proposed perpendicular to Commissioners Road West, at the intersection with Viscount Road. The driveway runs along the east side of the property creating space for future development and a transition to the existing smaller scale of the property to the east. The parking area will be located behind the building towards the rear of the property.

The proposed apartment building will have an entrance on the south facing façade which is convenient for both the pedestrian and visitors to the site via transit, or alternate modes of transportation.

New private walks will connect the existing public sidewalk along Commissioners Road West to the covered front entrance, and to the entry and drop off at the east façade of the building.

There is a third entrance on the north façade connected directly to the parking area.

The proposed building is of a modern and contemporary style with a mix of brick siding and glazing materials on all facades.
2.2 public realm

The proposed development locates the proposed apartment building close to the street, providing a more defined public realm along the north side of Commissioners Road West and a stronger street edge than what currently exists (closing an existing gap). The pedestrian experience along the existing public sidewalk will be improved by streetscape enhancements, including landscaping and building location, and filling in a gap in the streetscape (Figure 10).

A pedestrian-orientated streetscape experience will be further reinforced through appropriate landscaping and architectural design principles that contribute to both the private and public experience. Overall, the public realm in front of the subject lands will be better defined and more pedestrian friendly.

Providing an appropriately scaled visual terminus of visual interest at the northern leg of Viscount Road creates a threshold moment of transition between the low-rise residential area to the south and the high density, mixed use area to the north (Figure 4, conceptual render of building from Viscount Road)

Figure 10: Streetview West along Commissioners Road
PART THREE conclusions

The proposed development consists of a new 7-storey apartment building on the subject lands along the Commissioners Road West frontage.

The scale and massing of the proposed buildings is compatible with the surrounding area, and will not create adverse impacts on the adjacent residential uses. The proposal introduces an attractive, aesthetically pleasing building with a positive contribution to an improved streetscape and an enhanced pedestrian experience.

As demonstrated through this Urban Design Brief, the proposal is consistent with the policies and intent of the Official Plan and the London Plan.

Figure 11: Streetview East along Commissioners Road, Existing and Proposed
APPENDIX shadow study

Spring Equinox - March 21

8:00 am

10:00 am

2:00 pm

4:00 pm

Summer Solstice - June 21

8:00 am

10:00 am

2:00 pm

4:00 pm
APPENDIX  shadow study

Fall Equinox - Sept 21

8:00 am  
10:00 am  
2:00 pm  
4:00 pm

Winter Solstice - Dec 21

8:00 am  
10:00 am  
2:00 pm  
4:00 pm
4. THE CONTRACTOR SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY SHORING REQUIRED. PROVIDE IN ACCORDANCE WITH STRUCTURAL DRAWINGS AND

1. CONTRACTOR SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE TO MAKE GOOD ALL ASPHALT TO NEW CONDITON AS PER SPECIFICATIONS WHERE DAMAGED AND

3. REMOVE AND DISPOSE OF ALL UNSUITABLE SOIL, DEBRIS AND DEMOLISHED MATERIAL OFF SITE. REFER TO SITE SERVICING DRAWINGS AND

5. PROVIDE NEW CHAIN LINK FENCE AS REQUIRED TO ACT AS CONSTRUCTION HOARDING. REFER TO DRAWING FOR LOCATIONS AND

8. THE CONSULTANT DOES NOT WARRANT THE ACCURACY OF THE EXISTING BUILDING CONDITIONS, DIMENSIONS OR MATERIALS REPRESENTED

7. MAINTAIN SAFE ACCESS TO AND EGRESS FROM EXISTING BUILDING AT ALL TIMES.

6. PROTECT EXISTING SERVICES TO REMAIN.

ASphalt

Pavement Marking

Barrier Free Path of Travel

Symbol

Entrance/Exit

Barrier Free Parking

Main Entrance

Secondary

BACK FILL / TOPSOIL

BARRIER FREE

NEW FENCE

TRAFFIC SIGNS

FIRE ROUTE

SITE DATA - RESIDENTIAL (R9-7)

4% of 51 SPACES = 3 SPACES

1.25 per UNIT = 82 SPACES / 51 (var.)

0.75 per UNIT 49 Spaces

8.4@21m

45.0m / 14.9m

8.4@21m

11m Min.

30% Min.

30% Max.

Building Area

- [RESIDENTIAL (R) Zone]

REq'd / Max. / Min. / VARIANCE

288m

100.4m

40m

- [RESIDENTIAL]