

DESIGN PANEL COMMENTS

The proposed building is out of character with the neighbourhood's predominant 19th and early 20th centuries residential building form; Comment that disagreed that the proposed development is "in keeping with" the West Woodfield Heritage District guidelines as indicated in supporting reports.

OUR RESPONSE

The property was included in lands that formed part of the military uses that also included the Garrison within Victoria Park. The evolution of the area and specifically the Wellington corridor is different than other areas within the Woodfield Community. The greater Neighbourhood and Planning District associated with the area is known as Central London and is characterized predominately with higher density housing and specifically in the Wellington corridor, the planned streetscape includes 22-30 storey buildings along the east frontage of Victoria Park. The characterization of this corridor which is represented by this property is planned to be increased from that of the internal Woodfield community and the evolution of this corridor and transition from military uses to residential to now offices office illustrates the non-residential influences has on the corridor.

The age of the current buildings on the site are circa 1970. These existing buildings replaced the original 19th century buildings that previously resided in this location. Therefore development of the site is not a damaging or removal of heritage buildings, but an enhancement of the neighborhood essence. The quality and feel of the neighborhood are the important heritage elements that need to be preserved.

From an architectural perspective, the proposed design does not seek to synthetically recreate architectural forms but instead considers this heritage by retaining the essence of the neighboring styles and reimagining them with a modern high-quality level of design. This reimagining is done in keeping with the West Woodfield Heritage Conservation District (WWHCD) Guidelines in the following manner: the podium will reflect cultural heritage in its materiality, human-scale podium height, projected bays and recessed facades, repetition of forms, and setbacks from Wellington and Wolfe in order to enhance the cultural heritage experience at street level and maintain "visual consistency". The tower will then emulate the material and formal choices of the podium in a simple elongated form. The landscaping that will be proposed also respects the heritage by choosing specific species and built elements that speak to the 19th and early 20th century.

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The height of the proposed building is excessive relative to the height of neighbourhood buildings generally and to the nearby City Hall at +/- 55 metres in 12 storeys.

OUR RESPONSE

The determination of appropriate height is derived from the review of the property in context of immediate area as well as locational and land use prominence. The streetscape that is planned for the Wellington corridor is characterized by High Rise development. Existing zoning of land immediately south, opposite of Wolfe Street, can raise to 30 storeys in height.

This streetscape continues to 22 stories closer to Dufferin in the location of the existing 12 storey City Hall building. The height of the 30 storey building is approximately mid block of the Victoria Park frontage. This height and the transition to the proposed 22 stories at Dufferin provided guidance to the height being proposed. The transition from this increase in height to the proposed 22 stories also relates to the locational prominence associated with this corridor and the terminus of the corridor at a 14 storey building at Pall Mall.

Adjustments have been made from the original proposal including the reduction in the heights of both the tower and the podium which responds to desires to diminish the overall impact of the building and better integrating into the surrounding neighbourhood. The tower has been reduced from 25 storeys to 22, with greater setbacks from the podium beginning at the 4th floor. The podium has been reduced from 4 storeys to 3, enhancing visual cohesion at the street level with the adjacent residential buildings; rather than doubling the adjacent property heights at the podium level, the new height offers a smoother transition with the context.

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It does not fit with the Heritage Conservation District policy that states this area should have no more than 3-4 storey buildings. The developer's report suggests the HDC policy supports redevelopment.

It does but not something this size. See section 4.3 "In cases where the new building is replacing a highrise, the height should be restricted to match the existing building, plus or minus one floor."

In this case, that would be 4 or 6 storeys (the higher of the two buildings there now is 5 storeys).

OUR RESPONSE

As mentioned above, the evolution of this corridor has differed from areas internal to Woodfield and the character of this corridor is anticipated to be something different as determined through existing zoning. The view that various components of the Heritage District should remain as guiding principles of the proposal has been maintained. In response to consultation, the proposed development has been extensively modified reducing the height of the proposed building, redesigning the podium and streetscape façades, and incorporating the principals of sustainable design, among other modifications. The height of the surrounding buildings was considered in the revised plan resulting in the reduction in size of the tower and podium.

The district policy speaks to anticipated changes to existing and new buildings in both commercial and residential contexts with an emphasis on setbacks and transitions. What this means is that while the overall height of the building may indeed exceed height of various heritage structures, the podium treatment and scale is consistent with the surrounding context and therefore the 'human scale' and the change to the district is minimized. This speaks to the experience and integrity of the streetscape; from the street level the podium height will be primarily the experience as opposed to a glass curtain. With the construction of the new building, the streetscape experience will be improved through the reduction of height from the current five storey commercial structure with a 3-4 storey podium.

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OUR RESPONSE

Much is made of the materials proposed for the four storey building base and their reference to the buildings in the area.

That is important and commendable but the scale and design of the base negates the positive benefits of such architectural referencing.

Both the podium and tower have been transformed to better suit the surrounding heritage architectural character. Most significantly, given its presence and impact on the streetscape, the podium utilizes a variety of materials similar to the adjacent heritage buildings including red and buff-yellow brick, creating a series of bay-like volumes that emulate both the existing historic building on site, and neighbouring properties. Formally similar to the nearby heritage, the undulating bays create an impression of separate residential facades along a streetscape.

In character with the WWHCD and historical neighbourhoods in London in general, the podium also provides a consistent setback from both Wellington and Wolfe Streets. This is in total conformity with the urban form of WWHCD and reinforces the consistent setback from the perspective of the streetscape experience between the existing and the proposed. It should also be noted the main streetscape perspective is from a moving vantage point, i.e. traveling by car, walking or cycling by and is not a static experience, except for those living in immediate proximity. Again, traveling by a consistent setback enhances the experience of WWHCD.

A balance between traditional and contemporary expression on the tower portion (UD Brief, 2015, p. 41) is not achieved and cannot be achieved with such a building form as it has no precedent in the Woodfield neighbourhood.

The building design is fully contemporary; that is not unsupportable necessarily just not supportable as proposed.

The revised proposal has not only adhered more closely to principles of referential heritage architecture at the podium level, but has transformed the entirety of the tower to better reflect the historic context. Rather than emphasizing a stylistic juxtaposition between the base and tower, the aesthetic discord between the two has been rectified. The colour pattern used at the podium will similarly continue onto the tower at the corner of Wellington Street and Wolfe Street, suggesting a gradual transition from traditional to contemporary with simplified fenestration, articulations and ornamentation at the tower level,

rather than introducing new architectural elements.

With this heritage-influenced contemporary façade at the tower level, the revised building acts as a formal intermediary between the increasingly dense downtown core to the west and the low density heritage residential buildings to the east.

DESIGN PANEL COMMENTS

Full site coverage means there is no ground space to provide the 20% minimum landscaped open space required under R10-5 zoning.

OUR RESPONSE

While the proposed design does not incorporate private open space at the ground level, a green roof and terrace will be implemented at all feasible locations, which will provide more landscaped space than the 20% minimum. This will also reinforce sustainable design initiatives, which are well in keeping with the nature of the WWHCD Plan, benefitting the community and environment. Where vegetated roofing is not possible, high SRI materials will be incorporated, the two helping to minimize the heat island effect.

The full site coverage also beneficially minimizes paving at the ground level, moving parking underground and indoors. The neighboring Victoria Park provides the open landscape space that can be utilized by pedestrians and residents. A row of timeline-consistent trees along the building edge at grade is proposed for landscaping to assist in enhancing views, pedestrian comfort, and mitigating the issue of building height.

The very nature of Heritage Conservation Districts is sustainable neighbourhoods, due in part to their walkability. This is primarily due to their location, which permits options for travel: public transit, walking and bicycling to work, shopping and walks promoted by a healthy canopied streetscape and shorter block distances. In return, there is less demand for parking spaces, which translates into less paved surfaces and reduced heat island effect. The design of the condominium referring specifically to ground level and roof level enhances and even magnifies the sustainable nature of HCDs.

The proposed enhancement of the boulevard plantings will also contribute to reduced heat island effect, and as evidence shows (source: International Society of Arboriculture) increases foot traffic which results in increased surveillance of the neighbourhood and therefore a safer living environment.

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The podium does not contribute to providing “eyes on the street” around the base; the 4-storey podium is for parking, which is against all planning guidelines for the area. Residential, not glass and metal walls hiding parking, is more conducive to a vibrant streetscape. Eyes on the street are paramount to the vitality of a community

The proposed base building block is characterized as a ‘podium’. It is a parking garage primarily with some secondary commercial and residential building lobby and amenity uses on the ground floor. Parking, servicing, loading, and wide curb cuts characterize the Wolfe Street frontage and amenity space is hidden from the street within the base building.

Such a building fails to animate the street as is intended by city urban design guidelines and evident with mixed-use podium style buildings in other cities.

OUR RESPONSE

The careful consideration and design of the podium will enhance the social character of the neighbourhood, creating a continuation of the existing residential neighbourhood and a pedestrian friendly connection to Victoria Park and the downtown core. This will encourage greater foot traffic, minimizing automobile use. As the downtown grows, this parking structure that is well designed and hidden by neighborhood-consistent architecture will encourage more pedestrian activities and provide vibrant streetscapes in the neighbourhood area.

The podium has been reduced from 4 to 3 storeys, and the parking structure will be masked by historically sympathetic materials and spandrel glazing. The first floor will be divided into a commercial space, residential lobby and amenities. The commercial area located at the intersection corner, will promote activity on Wellington Street and Wolfe Street and from Victoria Park, perhaps being occupied by a café. Trees along both Wellington and Wolfe streetscapes will create canopied vistas, emblematic of the nature of WWHCD, while buffering upward views of the tower above the podium.

These will create a visual connection with Victoria Park, directly west of the site. Bicycle racks will be provided at grade, creating a promenade in

keeping with the existing residential community that will encourage pedestrian activity.

In addition, working with the City of London, there may be opportunity to plant strategically placed evergreen material that will contribute to buffering views from Victoria Park to the proposed condominium. In certain locations this will either block out views of the condominium or buffer or soften the views.

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OUR RESPONSE

New developments should reflect high-design that is sensitive to the community. The proposed design is not very creative. The ground storey shows a glass overhang, which given 100% lot coverage, the glass would extend into public space. The overhang is to offset wind effects, but the impact on what little is left of public space is unacceptable.

For a great example of a new development, refer to the all residential building to be built at Waterloo and Development. This 6-storey residential building reflects strong design, with elements that both respect and enhance the architecture of the area.

It will be a contemporary design, but sensitively designed with a mix of red brick and glass; comment that the proposed development dwarves the surrounding neighbourhood and does not fit.

The tower has been revised to be more sensitive to the surrounding heritage context, implement creative materials, and appear less massive through reductions in size and in thoughtful articulations of the built form.

Similar to the suggested design of the tower at Waterloo Street and Dufferin Street, red and buff brick make up the historically sensitive revised podium. A bold podium cornice reinforces horizontality and weight over verticality, while using the historical vernacular. The tower is set back from podium, utilizing the brick & inset window motif from podium, diminishing appearance of verticality from street level. The tower mass is broken up through the articulation of the facades, implementing multiple envelope treatments to create a prominent corner, flanked by minimal grid-like fenestration patterns, minimizing repetition across elevations. The use of red colour at the middle portion of the tower with the white/lighter coloured materials at the upper and lower floors visually helps breaking the mass and makes the overall height of the tower diminished.

By removing the previously proposed horizontal banding elements at the top of the tower, the appearance of weight and heaviness is minimized.

In regards to the reference to limited public space, it must be noted that the proposed condominium is residential in nature, as are the residences in the proximal area. That is to say the exterior spaces (rear and front yards) are private property of all the residences. What is public is visual access to the exterior spaces from a public (municipal) property vantage point. In keeping with the historical nature of WWHCD, and HCD's in general in the City of London, the exterior 'private' property of the condominium will be landscaped with a high level of attention and detail to an individualized garden-like treatment which will add to the visual appeal of the property and the streetscape experience.

Comment from abutting property owner (298 Wolfe) that the development would create shadows blocking out the entirety of back deck for the entire day.

The proposal does not contribute to additional impacts as the current 5-6 storey structure creates shadows blocking out the back deck of the abutting property.

SUMMARY

An understanding of the character of historical neighbourhoods is not limited to its historical architectural composition. They are known to be neighbourhoods that exhibit strong social interaction, community pride and models of sustainable urban form.

The above demonstrates the positive contribution of the proposed development to these characteristics.