

April 15, 2023

The Corporation of the City of Windsor
 Planning Department
 250 City Hall Square
 Windsor, ON N9A 6S1

Attention: Planning Department

Re: Urban Design Brief - Proposed Development for 1920 Grove Avenue

Studio g+G inc., architect has been retained by Olivia Construction Homes Inc., the Applicant, as architect of record for the above noted project and to prepare this Urban Design Brief to support the required planning documents for the proposed low profile development for the Subject Site, located at 1920 Grove Avenue, for the application, deemed complete, on August 15, 2022, PS-070/22.

The following information references applicable sections of the Official Plan and the Intensification Guidelines, notably, the terms of reference in appendix A, of the City of Windsor.

CONTEXT

The Subject Site is located in the Riverwest planning district, west of Crawford Avenue and almost midway between College Avenue and Tecumseh Road. The site was the former St. John Catholic Elementary School, and is currently vacant and underutilized within an established neighborhood consisting of 1 to 1-1/2 storey, single family homes and converted dwellings. This former community school was built in 1957 and closed in 2016 with the property being sold in 2017. The school was demolished in August of 2018 leaving an open property from that time.

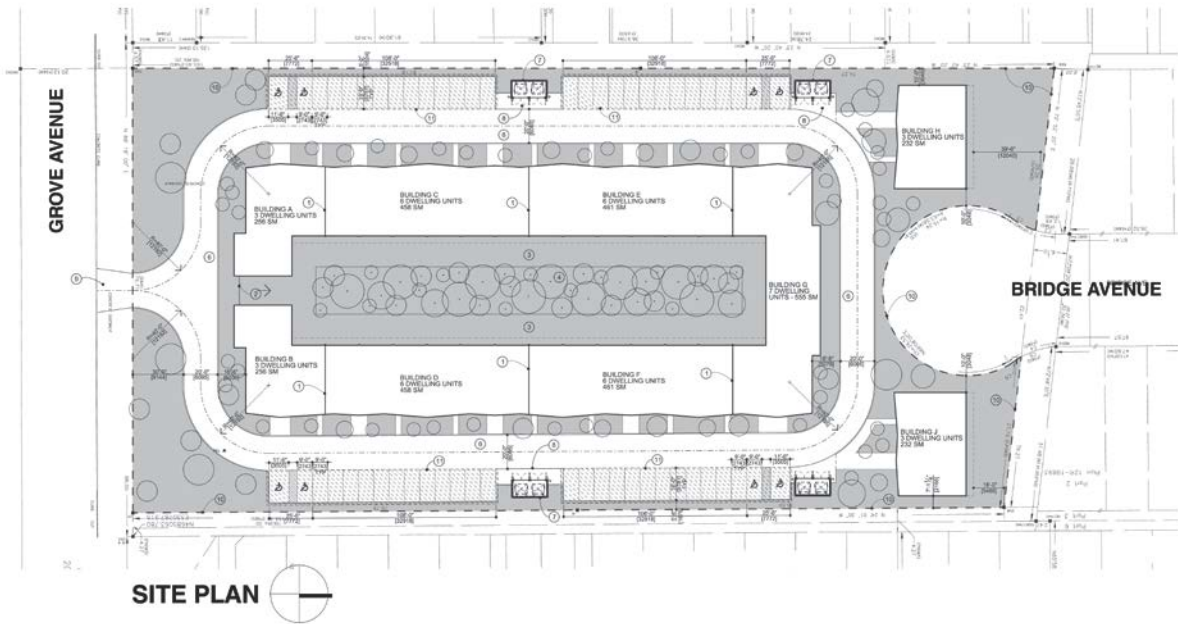


In addition to mostly single housing, the surrounding area includes a park (Bridgeview Park) to the south, followed by West Gate Public School. The subject site has therefore been an open and public space with a centrally placed low profile building for many decades. Public transportation is conveniently available at the east intersection of Campbell Avenue and Grove Avenue, less than 2 minutes walking time, located 132 meters from the subject site.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The development proposes nine, low profile 2-storey, multiple residential condominium buildings containing 43 units, with a mix of one, two, three and four-bedroom units. Seven of the buildings are connected together to form a singular expressed complex with two buildings placed separately on the site. The majority of these units are designed with grade level entrances for maximum accessibility and convenience.

Both indoor and outdoor amenities will be provided including a shared private exterior courtyard with a naturalized forested landscape buffer, front yard space, private terraces and parking with covered carports. All parking is located at grade adjacent to each condo entrance, providing a total of 56 vehicular spaces and 8 bicycle spaces.



Development Concept

The overall design concept is to maintain the low profile massing to remain consistent with the historical fabric of the neighbourhood retaining the character from the previous school. For this reason, the independent low profile building masses are linked together with firewalls, centralized on the property retaining a large setback to the bounding neighbourhood. The dominant features of the concept are the open central courtyard promoting ecological amenities, open views and vista for pedestrian access in a natural environment. The buildings are serviced by a loop access route ring road providing convenience for the residence and immediate proximity for any service vehicles.

The buildings develop a street façade in a similar manner as the old school but in this case, emphasizing an axial view corridor of the naturalized courtyard as one enters the development which is set back from Grove Avenue repeating the open condition similar to the existing park to the south. The overall goal is to develop the property but preserve the same characteristic the property has maintained with the community since the original school was built.

The proposed total building footprint is 3,369m² with a site area of 12,079m² and a total landscaped area of 4,732m². The majority of this building area is placed centrally on the property providing maximum side yard setbacks. Entrance to the development is off of Grove

Avenue.

The architectural development proposes a pedestrian scaled articulated public façade emphasising the horizontal character of the buildings with pronounced and rhythmically spaced entrances at ground level, large fenestration openings and an undulating second floor expression to emphasise movement and the linear perspective of the massing. At each end, the 2-storey masses are elevated off the ground to allow a covered entry to the private courtyard on either end which can accommodate various functions off the open courtyard space. At the main façade facing, Grove Avenue, the enclosed building forms are deliberately broken offering a view corridor of the courtyard forest.



View of the public façade with rhythmic articulated entrances with individual front lawns.

URBAN DESIGN SECTIONS

This document will consider the following overarching Official Plan Policies and Intensification Guidelines for evaluation which are applicable to this proposed development:

3.2.1.2 Neighbourhood Housing Variety

The proposed development provides a variety of low profile condominium sizes (less than 3-storeys) developed on vacant former institutional land within the established neighborhood for an opportunity for housing intensification for 43 condo units.

3.2.1.4 Community Design

The proposed development maintains the low profile massing of the former school capitalizing on open spaces, the existing neighborhood and the park south of Grove Avenue. This is enhanced by the amount of green space and the central courtyard forest which forms the visual anchor of the development and an amenity for the residence.

6.3.1.1 Range of Forms & Tenures

The development provides a complimentary form of housing to support the neighbourhood, providing an alternative type of housing ownership (condominiums)

than what generally exists in the area.

6.3.1.2 Neighbourhoods

The character of the housing development is inherently compact and conveniently located near existing public transit stops 2 blocks away and, depending on the location of a particular condominium unit, is on average 3 to 4 minutes walking distance.

6.3.1.3 Intensification, Infill & Redevelopment

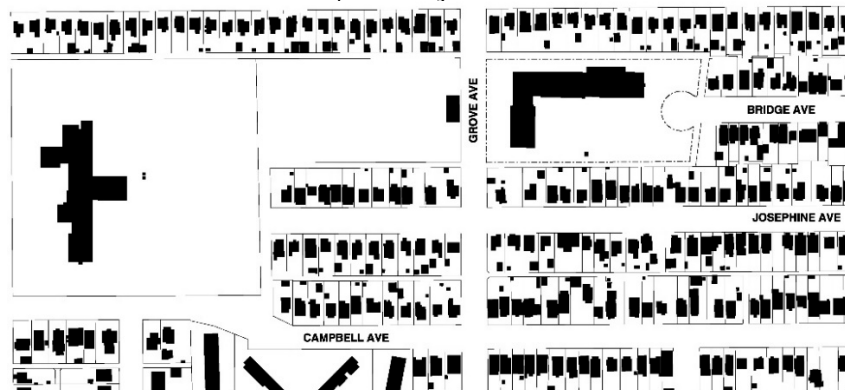
The compact nature of the design concept promotes the use of public transit and multimodal transportation already established in the area providing intensification on infill property. The proposed development utilizes vacant land from a former school site and provides an infill development consistent with the objectives of the Official Plan.

6.3.2.3 Types of Low Profile Housing

The proposed development meets the objectives of the official plan and is scaled to be developed as a low profile housing development (large development with more than 8 dwelling units).

6.3.2.5 Neighbourhood Development Pattern

The design proposes developing the infill property, reminiscent of the figure/ground profile of the former school building with similar setback and open space relationship with the existing neighbourhood. Parking is on site providing 56 parking spaces adequate to B/L 8600 and in close proximity to each condominium unit.



figure/ground during time of former school



figure/ground showing proposed development massing

The loop access route provides convenient vehicular access to municipal, emergency and environmental services as each condo unit faces a street that is 6m wide for a continuous fire route in front of each unit. The proposed development will connect to existing services within the neighbourhood and through the Site Plan Approval process, will address all building code and municipal services (SWM and sanitary services).

The unique design characteristic of the development provides an open space buffer to adjacent residential properties and the low profile building mass is amicable to human scale and the massing of the established neighbourhood.

8.1.2 *Human Scale*

The delineation of the architectural massing and urban sectional profile are conducive to human scale. This is evident with the clear articulation of entrances separated by open/close relationships of windows and the slightly emphasised vertical height of the first story above grade. The second level develops an undulating horizontal projection in opposition to the linear first story to bring the building mass down to human scale. Other elements that are sympathetic to human scale are the building masses that overhang at each end of the open courtyard encouraging interactivity and communal interaction.



Front corner illustrating second floor terraces at corners and elevated 2-storey units with an open space for a full view of the forest strip at the entrance.

8.1.3 *Pedestrian Access to all Developments*

All entrances are pedestrian orientated with the majority on grade for a barrier free path of travel extending to the exterior even for units not required to be accessible. Another design feature considering pedestrians is the separation of vehicular and pedestrian traffic with all exterior amenity spaces inside the development without having to cross a vehicular path.

8.1.4 *Balance between human activities and natural systems*

The design develops a strong balance between indoor and outdoor living spaces with opportunities for view of the natural landscape and natural light.

- 8.1.5 *Comfortable conditions along roads and in public spaces*
The design scheme connects human activities with natural systems providing comfortable conditions along the internal road public space with the park across the street to the south.
- 8.1.6 *A high standard of design throughout Windsor*
The proposed development has a distinct design typology unique to the character of the site as a place known to the neighborhood to maintain its meaning and sense of place, or *genius loci*.
- 8.1.7 *An attractive network of public spaces*
The integral balance between programmed indoor and outdoor space is unique to other condominium developments linking private (common forest courtyard) and public open space including a connection to the open park to the south.
- 8.1.12 *Excellence in exterior building design, site design and right-of-ways*
Provides an alternative design typology tailored to the unique characteristics of the site, its historical meaning, and is compatible to the neighbourhood in massing height and form. Provides large windows, as a link to the street and high quality building materials. All features combined demonstrates design excellence in exterior building and site design.
- 8.1.14 *Integrated design for the needs of persons of all ages and abilities*
With flush entranceways and interior spaces from front to back, the proposed development is accessible providing integrated design for the needs of persons of all ages and various degrees of mobility.
- 8.3 *Design for People*
This alternative design concept provides accessible and open entrances off the access route with large street level windows. The tree lined amenity area is accessible and pedestrian in scale presenting a sense of place for the residents, meeting the objectives of 8.3.
- 8.3.2.2 *Policies*
A deliberate design strategy of alternating and repetitious entrances from the internal street (access route) is juxtaposed with an undulating second floor mass which weaves in an out of plane emphasizing the horizontal interaction of entrances which is separated by various sizes of green front lawns with dotted ornamental deciduous trees. This is done to promote interpersonal interactions and connectivity of the condominium community and assist visitors new to the complex. This public façade is designed to present a friendly environment and yet provide a degree of privacy before being invited inside.
- Once permitted inside, the courtyard is characterized by a private façade open to a large glass exterior with ample views of the courtyard and forested green space. This notion of public versus private and placemaking are the main conceptual underpinning to this development.
- 8.4 *Pedestrian Access*
As addressed above, pedestrian interaction is an integral component of the architectural and wayfinding strategies in the design of this development separating pedestrian and vehicular traffic and offering close proximities for various modes of

public transportation. Accessible routes are common to the development linking all amenity spaces.

8.5 *Ecological Design*

The proposed exterior amenity area (private courtyard) intends to develop a slice of a naturalized forest region to benefit the residents and act as a visual anchor for the entrance of the development. This also addresses the objectives of 8.5.1 regarding establishing an urban forest in Windsor and energy sustainable practices by increases plantings and landscaping, reducing the urban heat island affect, and incorporating daylighting strategies. The remainder of the development utilizes green zones to break up the exterior zone between parking areas and the building façade.



View looking into the private courtyard which brings natural light into all units and creates an internal naturalized amenity space which adds privacy and interpersonal interactions.

8.6 *Micro-Climate*

In amenity areas and at entrances, overhangs are strategically placed to provide suitable protection from the elements and assist in passive systems utilizing shade for people and for the building envelope.

Given the low profile of the 2-storey development and the significant setback from adjacent properties, solar studies have indicated that there is no impact to bounding properties yet shade is benefited in the internal courtyard and animates this private space throughout the day.

The internal configuration of the courtyard provides external space shielded by winds and buffered by the internal tree plantings.

8.7 *Built Form*

The proposed design solution, as noted above, provides a varied experience between public and private space to enhance the urban experience for the residents and visitors. While the design is a contemporary, representing the architectural characteristics of the time, the massing and site placement is meant to

be reminiscent of the former use of the site and the relationship with the community. This sense of placemaking is deliberate and ideal. In this way, the architectural development is meant to be both novel, looking to the future, while being sympathetic to the memory of the site and the many people in the community that have indelible memories of their time in the former school during their formative years.



View at the front Grove Ave. façade showing the entrance drive and the public view of the private corridor

8.8 *Public Space*

A unique characteristic of this development is the balance of exterior public and private space. The site design makes a deliberate dialogue to the park space across the street with an openness as if the proposed development is a continuation of the park space. The courtyard, while being private for the residents, presents open views, especially at the entry which again, is a spill over view corridor to the park and the space around the new buildings conveys the sense of movement within the development.

8.9 *View and Vistas*

The proposed development provides many opportunities for views between buildings and open spaces with landscape elements. This can be experienced at the entry, on the private courtyard, on the second floor terraces, and also inside the condominiums looking outward. Much of this has already been explained above.

8.10 *Art in Public Spaces*

As the project progresses into a further level of refinement, opportunities to provide public art will be considered.

8.11 *Streetscape*

The design as currently developed, provides the beginnings of the development of the streetscape which proposes pedestrian walkways, unique front yard landscaping characteristics and other design elements that will enhance individuality and aid in wayfinding.

8.12 *Safety*

The proposed development has considered strategies inherent in Crime Prevention through Environmental Design – CPTED. View corridors within each condo unit have strategic sight lines at entrances to enhance resident's safety. The design of all exterior spaces have also considered defensible space strategies removing blind spot areas or possible hiding locations. In addition, barrier free pathways considering AODA compliance has been addressed throughout the design.

8.13 *Lighting*

Lighting comprehensive design will be integrated at the detained design stage of the project as part of the Site Plan Approval process including lighting for wayfinding and architectural lighting to comply with the directives of 8.13.2.

INTENSIFICATION GUIDELINES REVIEW

The proposed development takes into account that the desire to develop and intensify the vacant site must also integrate into the community, using an existing established framework which in many ways, re-establishes a pre-existing condition. This is in keeping with the intent of the Windsor Intensification Guidelines for what is defined as a "Compatible Development." The proposed development is not exactly the same as what was developed by the old school but it does have a similar low profile massing and site figure/ground relationship as the old school in its relationship to the neighboring community and the park.

The scale of the project is considered a "Major Development: Land Assembly, significant intensification." The proposed design reflects the consistency of the Mature Neighbourhood while promoting intensification maintaining the consistent character in the area while also demonstrating advanced architectural development regarding building typology, material, massing, and comprehensive design strategies, as promoted on pg. 5 of the Intensification Guidelines.

The proposed design provides a novel approach to new construction that also recognizes and enhances the unique character of the site and the neighbourhood which is site specific – the design is tailored to the specific aspects of the site which takes into account the historical use and the surrounding neighborhood. This proposed design therefore cannot have the same meaning if it was located somewhere else since it is developed conceptually based on its intended place utilizing a contextual design approach.

3.3.3 *Landscaping*

The development provides a clear strategy for landscaping where zones are clearly articulated and become meaningful and programmed elements of the development such as landscaping for the public spaces at the entrance, public space at the front of each condominium unit, and in the private courtyard. These areas will be further developed in the Site Plan Approval stage and clearly shown on the Landscape Plan developed by the Landscape Architect.

3.4.2 *Low Profile Buildings*

The proposed buildings develop a dynamic dialogue on the site, creating open space in the public zone between the internal street, reflecting an open/close relationship. The street façades are broken into upper and lower masses that vary in articulation and massing punctuated by large window openings which vary from

unit to unit while exhibiting an overall architectural vocabulary unique to the development.

Parking is located across the internal street (access route) adjacent to each unit which removes the difficulty of integrating large garage doors which tend to dominate the façade and diminish the relationship of human scale.

3.4.4 *Building design*

In keeping with the guidelines in this section, a distinct design approach is taken to animate the public areas of the development to encourage interactions at entrances through varied facades, overhangs and increased verticality of the first floor.

Strategic placement of fenestration elements at ground level, open terraces, balconies and corners are utilized to enhance the building configuration and aid in orientation. A board and batten cladding is utilized at the second level to provide texture and building rhythm, increasing shadow detail in contrast to the flat open/close expression of the ground floor with dotted entrances.

3.4.4.3 *Exterior Materials*

High quality integrally coloured cement board is proposed as the exterior cladding material as this is durable, weathers well, and can also be recycled and replaced at the end of the life cycle of the material.

Light coloured buff grey is utilized on the ground level to work with the colour of the glass and to contrast the charcoal grey board and batten upper second floor material articulation which is reminiscent of a historical wood texture above. All large glazing will feature bird safety glass detection utilizing a silk screen dot pattern of 5mm dots at 100mm on centre to minimize bird collisions.

Based on the above review, utilizing pertinent urban design policies, the proposed low profile condominium development supports the Official Plan and the Intensification Guidelines of the City of Windsor, demonstrating novel architectural design solutions and good urban design practices. The proposed development presents an opportunity to bring to life a large vacant area of the Riverwest planning district and provide a new type of housing option to the established residential neighborhood in close proximity to existing public transportation and other nearby functions and services of the city.