

Urban Design Brief

Watson Parkway North & Watson Road North
Guelph, Ontario



Prepared by Coletara Development

December, 2013

Introduction

This Urban Design Brief has been prepared in support of a Zoning By-law Amendment to lands owned by Starwood Watson Holdings Inc. The owner seeks approval of a new development comprised of up to 133 units on a site of 0.89 hectares or 2.1 acres. This application will amend the site's current 'Community Shopping Centre (CC-15 (H))' zoning to 'High Density Apartment (R.4B)' with specialized regulations.

This report details the design elements of the conceptual plan prepared by Coletara Development consisting of a four storey residential mid-rise of approximately 116 units and its associated amenity and parking space. This report examines the proposed development with regards to the existing and emerging architectural context of the area, relevant urban design policy and principles of good urban design.

While the concept plan has been provided to assist the City in their review of the application, it should be noted that the final built form may vary in building height and density distribution within the site in compliance with the approved permitted uses and specialized zoning regulations. Site Plan Approval of the final design will be required for the proposed development prior to construction.

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1.0 Contextual Analysis

1.1 Location and Site Attributes

The subject property is located at the southeast corner of Watson Road North and Watson Parkway North, in Guelph. The lands are legally described as Part of Lot 5, Concession 3, Division C, Township of Guelph, Designated as Part 2 on Reference Plan 61R-9256.

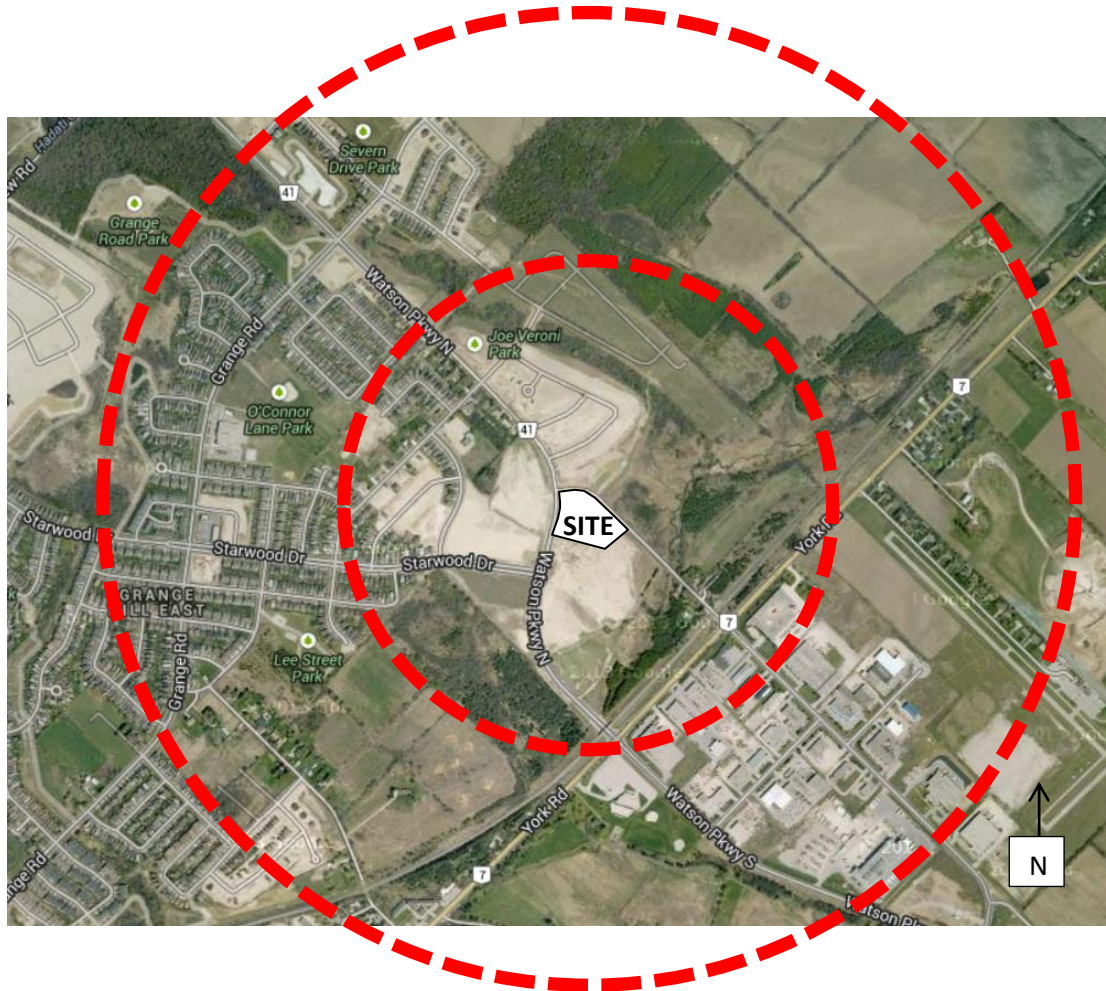


Figure 1: Aerial Photograph with 5 and 10 minute (400 m, 800m) walk radii around subject site (source; Google Earth)

The irregular shaped site is 0.89 hectares in area with a depth of 109m and frontage of approximately 77m along Watson Parkway North and 147.25m along Watson Road. The site slopes at an average grade of 3% from west to east. Ground cover is predominately comprised of disturbed, open lands, clear of vegetation as the site has historically experienced topsoil removal, and more recent fill deposits.



Figure 2: Subject Site (Source; Google Maps)

1.2 Site Edges and Neighbouring Conditions

North Edge

The area directly north of the subject site has been developed as single detached houses, constructed within the past ten years in an architectural style is consistent with the standards of modern residential subdivision design.



Figure 3: Single Detached Houses at corner of Watson Parkway North and Creekside Drive (Source; Google Maps)

East Edge

Across Watson Drive North, to the immediate east, lies a floodplain and stormwater management pond associated with Clythe Creek.



Figure 4: Street level view of floodplain and stormwater management pond (Source; Google Maps)

South Edge

South of the subject site lies a large vacant field, also stripped of topsoil and zoned 'CC-15 (H)'. The field is bound further south by Clythe Creek and railway.



Figure 5: Vacant field to the south (Source; Google Maps)

West Edge

Directly west of the subject site lies a large parcel of vacant land that has recently been approved for a mixture of residential and commercial development.



Figure 6: Vacant lands west of site. Low density residential development in background (Source; Google Maps)

1.3 Urban Pattern in the District

The road pattern in the district is the result of recent planning efforts to subdivide the formerly rural lands defined by orthogonal concession roads. The concession road grid is formed by Watson Parkway North to the east, Eastview Road to the north, Victoria Road to the west and York Road to the south. The new urban pattern focuses on Starwood Drive and Grange Road which wind through the middle of the sector and intersect near its centre. Beyond these arterial roads lie a hierarchy of collector and local roads in a modified grid pattern.

1.4 Transportation Systems

The site is served by the aforementioned concession road grid of 100 chains or 2.01 kilometers. These roads support regional vehicular traffic and bus transit. Starwood Drive and Watson Road North serve as local traffic collectors linking to the regional grid. These roads have transit routes and/or planned bicycle paths.

The subject site is directly adjacent to the number 3 East Loop and number 14 Grange transit routes, which run along Watson Parkway. The subject site is also within a five minute walk of the number 4 route which runs along York Road.



Figure 7: Guelph Transit Map (Source; City of Guelph)

2.0 Urban Design Goals and Objectives

2.1 Urban Design Principles

In reviewing the City's various Urban Design policies and in consideration of the existing and planned site context, several goals have been formulated as follows:

- With respect to the height of building: create a building height regimen that is a step above the predominant single detached character of the district north of site and blends with the height of buildings proposed at other developments within the neighbourhood.
- With respect to uses; provide housing options that accommodate the current and growing demand for affordable apartment units.
- To minimize the visual impact of the car on the streetscape by limiting the number of driveways and garage access points and to minimize the visual presence of truck movements and loading areas on the public streets.
- To ensure that a convenient and pleasant walkable environment is provided within the site and along its street edges with a high standard of urban design.
- To complete a district in transition from single detached lots to multi-unit mixed tenure development creating a more complete community with more housing choices.
- To create a development that respects the scale and character of this emerging district while carefully incorporating opportunities for appropriately scaled intensification.

2.2 Response to City Documents

Guelph's in-force Official Plan includes policies that support the urban design goals of the subject development. Those policies include;

Section 3.3 Urban Form Policies

3.3.1 The City will promote a compact urban form and gradual expansion of existing urban development by:

a) Encouraging intensification and redevelopment of existing urban areas in a manner that is compatible with existing built form;

b) Encouraging a gradual increase in the average residential density of the community;

c) Encouraging intensification of residential, commercial, industrial and institutional areas to maximize efficient use of municipal services;

d) Promoting mixed land uses in appropriate locations throughout the City to provide residents opportunities to live, learn, work, shop, recreate, gather and worship in close proximity.

f) Encouraging the identification of specific locations suitable for mixed use development (e.g. arterial road corridors, major intersections, designated mixed use nodes) linked to each other by the major transportation and transit networks and integrated through pedestrian access to nearby neighbourhoods and employment areas;

Section 3.6 Urban Design

3.6.1. 1. The implementing Zoning By-law outlines regulations that promote compatibility in built form.

3.6.1.3. Urban design policies and guidelines are not prescriptions for a specific design application. These policies and guidelines are recommendations that are to be applied in a flexible manner and in concert with site-specific considerations.

3.6.10 Buildings should be oriented towards the street and have front façades with entrances and windows that respect the rhythm and frequency of the prevailing neighbourhood/district pattern. Extensive blank façades facing a street, open space or park should be avoided.

3.6.17.1 The City shall ensure that new development located within existing, established neighbourhoods and districts is designed as an integral part of that area's existing larger pattern of built form and open spaces, and that it reinforces and complements the existing range of building mass, height, proportion and orientation of buildings relative to the street.

The urban design goals of the proposed development are consistent with the policies of the in-force Official Plan as it seeks to create an intensified development in a compact form that is compatible with the existing built form. The development also makes efficient use of municipal services and will encourage mixed land use in a well-served transit hub.

Through OPA 48 - which is currently under appeal and hence not in effect - Guelph has been developing policies for a series of Mixed-Use Centres. These centres are seen as preferred nodes for development intensification within the city. They are intended to provide a range of uses and development types that create Complete and Healthy Communities. Rather than continuing to provide single detached housing in these areas, the plan seeks to facilitate the creation of more housing options.

The subject site lies near the heart of the Starwood-Watson Parkway Node, designated as a Community Mixed Use Centre in OPA 48. The OPA 48 concept for the east node Community Mixed Use Centre prepared by the City of Guelph represents the subject lands developed as an exclusively residential midrise project shown adjacent to commercial development on neighbouring properties.

The subject development seeks to provide a range of apartment form housing complementing the existing stock of low and medium density housing in the context and provide a range of affordable housing options for all stages of life from young couples to families to seniors. In conjunction with existing developments, the concept design seeks to define a physical urban presence along Watson Parkway North and Watson Road North. In this way the proposed development meets the policies outlined above contained in the Official Plan and proposed OPA 48 for the district.

3.0 Conceptual Design Principles and Concept Plan

3.1 Site Design

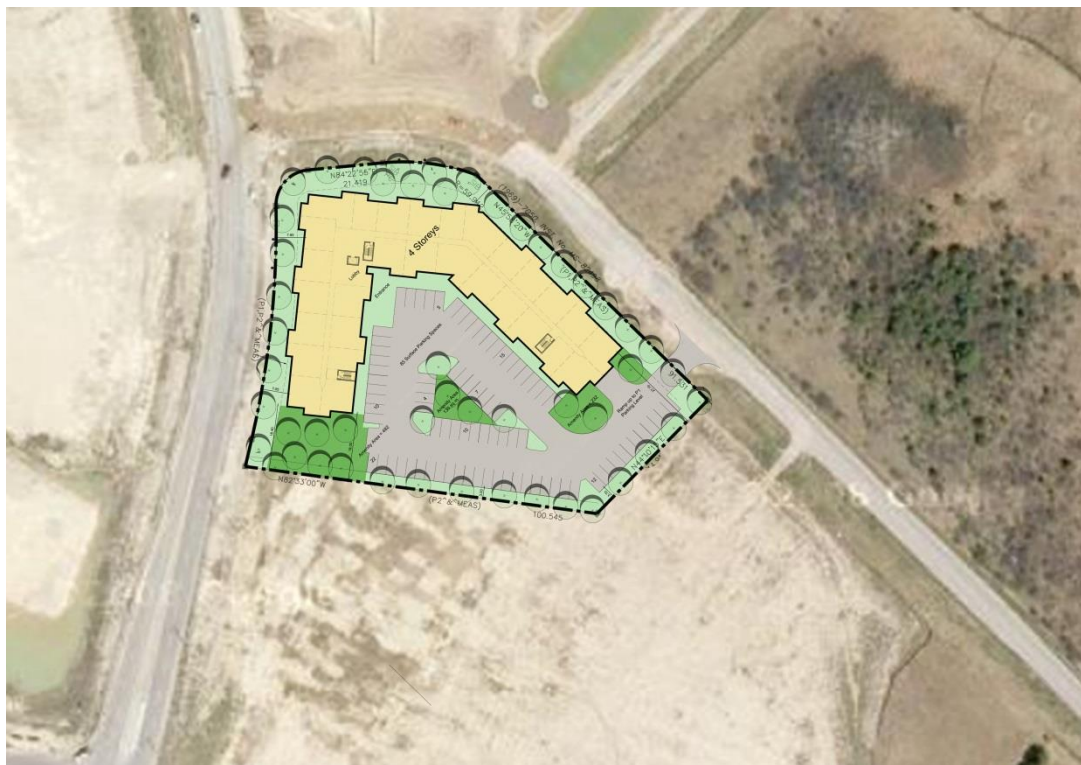


Figure 8: Site Plan

The site plan has been configured to achieve the following general outcomes;

- Strongly define Watson Parkway North and Watson Road North edge with a streetwall.
- Limit access to one vehicle entry/exit off Watson Road North.

- Provide vehicular drop off functions within the site, away from public roads.
- Building setbacks along the public streets have been set to create a vibrant public realm edge condition defining the node in a strong urban way.

Along Watson Parkway North and Watson Road North, a 6m front yard setback is established as per the R.4B designation of the zoning by-law. Due to the curvature of the property line, the building façade along Watson Parkway North approaches between 6.9m and 7.95m of the property line at various locations. Along Watson Road North, the building façade approaches between 6.3m and 12.25m at various locations.

The distance between the road curb to the property line is varied between 6m and 9.95m, creating a generous spatial separation from the building façade to the curb. This space will soften the transition between the site and existing lower density residential forms and allow for potential public realm improvements.

Balconies project 1.8m from the façade, within the limits of the zoning by-law.



Figure 9: Proposed Development Section as Conceptualised at four (4) Storeys

3.2 Built Form Elements and Massing

The built form in this concept is scaled to traditional buildings Coletara has developed. Coletara has a record in Guelph of building similar buildings that offer a high degree of affordability as well as a high standard of urban design in this city.

The massing is controlled to create several discrete built form elements that create a more traditional streetwall with the appearance of several buildings. The continuous façade conforms to the curvature in the street which aids in framing the street and supports pedestrian movement.



Figure 10: Proposed Development Elevation as Conceptualised at four (4) Storeys

Balconies are framed in warm brick tones and project forward to accentuate a multiple massing strategy. The top floor is given a unique contrasting character with a non-linear roofline that further breaks down the visual length of the building, creating an interesting silhouette against the sky.

The concept creates the image of smaller incremental buildings typical of evolved built form patterns in older urban areas. To that end the proposed streetwall is divided into several discrete units through the use of indentations and material changes as described above.

3.3 Lighting

Light standards will be used throughout the site that will match the scale and character of the design components of the site. All lighting should be sympathetic in colour tone using dark sky cut-offs. Lighting should not spill onto adjacent properties.

3.4 Waste Management

All waste will be stored internally and placed out for pick up at designated locations only when required at pick up times.

3.5 Parking

A combination of underground and surface parking located away from the streetscape will be utilized to minimize conflicts with pedestrian movement on the public streets around the site perimeter.

3.6 Energy Efficiency Standards

Green features such as low flush toilets and high efficiency HVAC systems will be incorporated at the detailed design stage.

3.7 Carbon Emissions

The inclusion of apartment form residential densities within a walkable mixed use district core and regional transit system will promote pedestrian and bicycle activity and minimize the use of the automobile resulting in fewer carbon emissions.

4.0 Public Realm Principles and Features

4.1 Public Spaces

The primary public realm space provided is on the boulevards along Watson Parkway North and Watson Drive North. These areas will be landscaped to the City's current urban design standards.

Resident common amenity areas are provided at various locations on the site. Landscape details of these areas will be provided through the complete Site Plan process.

4.2 Pedestrian Circulation

Pedestrian circulation interconnects the interior of the site with the adjacent public sidewalks and community amenities such as the library.

4.3 Design Concepts

Accessible walkways will be smooth to facilitate those with limited mobility. CPTED principals will be considered to enhance safety and security throughout the site.

4.4 Linkages to Off-site Amenities

The site is edged by public sidewalks along its perimeter facilitating convenient access to the transit corridors, the library and planned local shops and services.

4.5 Transit Integration

The subject site is located adjacent to bus lines along Watson Parkway North.

4.6 Landscape Design/ Boulevards

Planting details for the boulevards will be determined in consultation with the City during the Site Plan application process.

4.7 Public Art Opportunities

None are suggested at this time although Coletara Development is open to any City funded initiatives.

4.8 Streetscape Elements

These elements will be determined through the detailed design stage.

4.9 Transition Spaces

All transition edges are dealt with through physical building setbacks, and landscaped areas along each street. There are no sensitive built form adjacency issues.

4.10 Shadow Impacts on the Public Realm

No shadow impacts are expected from this development.

5.0 Conclusion

The proposed urban design strategies for the site will ensure a compatible and sensitive development for the subject site generally meeting the policy directions of the Official Plan and the Mixed Use Nodes where economically feasible. The project introduces a type of housing needed, allowing residents to enter the housing ownership market.

The project design realizes the policy goals and principles set out in the Envision Guelph Plan. It will further assist in creating a more complete and vibrant community experience within this neighbourhood as directed by the Strategic Goals of the Plan.

Respectfully Submitted by Coletara Development