

Four-storey, 129-room boutique hotel proposed for former Parliament Oak site

The proposal includes a restaurant, bar and event space, alongside on-site green space and underground parking



By **Nick Fearn** Niagara-on-the-Lake Advance

Tuesday, February 28, 2023



A new proposal for the former Parliament Oak Public School lands has nearby residents asking what the best use of the old school could be moving forward.

Franca Di Giovanni, senior engagement specialist at LURA, wrote in a letter to neighbours that the lands at the former Parliament Oak Public School site had been purchased by Two Sisters Resorts Corp.

David Riley, principal at SGL Planning & Design, said an application has been submitted to the town.

SGL Planning & Design are land use planning consultants working with Two Sisters Resorts Corp.

An application has been submitted to the town for an official plan amendment and zoning bylaw amendment.

Riley said the plans are for a “four-storey boutique hotel with 129 rooms.”

He said the process is in the “early days,” adding “we want to work with the town and the community to move this forward.”

“We’re really excited about this proposal. It’s an opportunity to introduce a new hotel to the community that really fits into its surrounding. It will be a beautiful addition to the neighbourhood and to the town more broadly as well,” said Riley. “It will provide additional jobs

and development of the Parliament Oak site that is sensitive to the historical past of the site and also recognizing the existing residential community around the site and making sure it fits in.”

Parliament Oak Public School was in operation for 75 years before closing in 2015.

The property’s historical significance includes being the site of one of the sessions of the first parliament of Upper Canada in 1793.

It is not the first attempt to develop the property. Liberty Sites purchased the land from the District School Board of Niagara in 2018 for \$4.925 million after the school board deemed it surplus, hoping to build a three-storey apartment building and other residential units.

A citizen group was formed by Alan Gordon, Marilyn Bartlett and Connie Tintinalli called Preserve Our Special Town, or POST.

POST raised awareness about the proposal and urged Niagara-on-the-Lake residents to voice their concerns ahead of a second public meeting on the development on Monday, Jan. 10, 2022.

Tintinalli said the group is “not totally opposed to development.”

“We feel that it would totally change the landscape and the feel of the town,” she said.

Tintinalli said she was totally opposed to commercial uses of the site.

“It’s in the middle and completely surrounded by an established residential neighbourhood,” she noted.

She said changing that into a commercial use for tourism is “totally wrong.”

“It is a piece of land that’s set aside to serve the community, the people that actually live here, the current residents and future residents,” said Tintinalli.

If Parliament Oak is no longer a school, Tintinalli notes, the land should be rezoned to low-density residential that matches the areas around it.

Gracia Janes, president of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Conservancy, said the proposal “is over the top.”

Janes said she would prefer a more modest development with 16 single-family dwellings.

“I think there is room for housing,” she said.

Another idea, she said, is to use it as a community centre, noting the land is currently zoned as institutional.

Janes said Niagara-on-the-Lake doesn’t need another hotel — it needs housing.

Marah Minor, community engagement and communications co-ordinator for the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, said “the Town has received applications for an Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment for a proposed hotel on the Parliament Oak site.”

“The Town is reviewing these applications for completeness,” said Minor. “The application materials will be made public and posted on the Town’s website if/when the applications are deemed complete.”

Once deemed complete, the town will circulate a notice of complete application and information for the open house and public meeting, she added.



Nick Fearn

Reporter/photographer for Niagara this Week covering communities in north Niagara.