

COMMENT

Local LETTERS Reasonable development produces good results

An amazing local event: actual thoughtful re-thinking and a more sympathetic approach by Blythwood Homes to the proposed project on Melville Street.

Although it may not please everyone, is a vast improvement and shows that there are actually some reasonable developers in our area who can understand just how im-

portant the look of a project is, and how it fits into the local, long-establish neighbourhood that they are directly affecting. What a reasonable, civilized and thoughtful way to present a new project, and then react to the local input in a reasonable way.

It's really surprising how this is being handled by all involved, pros and cons, from

both sides thoughtfully handled.

And now for something completely different: two projects, with no thought for what they look like, how they directly effect the immediate neighbours and close surrounding area which are virtually all single- and two-storey homes, some older and historic. These are quiet, close-knit neighbour-

hoods with a long-established, pleasant feel.

First, the Parliament Oak School site proposal is so inappropriate and offensive to that neighbourhood. Is this how a local developer shows concern and thoughtfulness for our unique town? Just the act of proposing to put that particular project with that look on that site seems to be almost an act

of vandalism to that area.

This type of approach from any developer really seems to show their actual attitude toward the immediate neighbourhood.

Also the complex on Mary Street (a four-storey apartment is proposed) across from Willow Cakes and Pastries, is just more of the same.

Developers take note: If we

had more developers with the reasonable and thoughtful approach shown by the Melville condos group, far more would be accomplished. Reasonable input and proposals from both sides really seem to get results. This seems to be an unknown process to some of our larger local development groups.

Christopher Allen
NOTL

Local LETTERS Mary Street too large in scale and too tall

We are writing to present our concerns regarding the submission to the Urban Design Committee on April 26 for a proposed apartment building

at 227 Mary Street.

Our concern is specific to the scale and height of the proposed building. The proposed four-storey building is located

mid-block, and is sited in the middle of and will overlook the rear yards of 13 existing one- and two-storey homes. These homes have been there for decades and each homeowner has a right to enjoy the privacy, sunlight and noise levels encountered as provided by the zoning bylaws.

The proposed development will destroy virtually all visual privacy in their rear yards and through their windows into their homes. Moreover, we can

anticipate a significant increase in noise levels.

We have attached a copy of the architect's section through the properties to which we have added the sight lines from the proposed third and fourth floors, clearly showing this direct line of sight invasion of the neighbours' back yards. The drawing also clearly shows the proposed building's fourth floor is significantly higher than the current zoning

building maximum permitted height (dashed line).

It should be without question that the 13 neighbours have the right to expect new adjacent developments to respect the existing zoning and honour their expectation of continued privacy in their back yards and into their homes.

This proposed building would set a dangerous precedent for the town, whereby potentially no one house or

households will be safe from similar proposals, all in the name of increased density and developers' profits.

This proposal disrespects the town's existing unique built character and quality of life. There can be no question that it would cause the town and its residents immense harm.

David Parker, Architect,
Gordon Stratford, Architect,
David Anthony, P. Eng.,
John Gartner, Retired Planner



This shows the light that will shine into neighbouring homes, and the height of the apartment compared to nearby houses.

Local LETTERS Scale of proposed Parliament Oak Hotel

I thought your readers might be interested in the attached illustration showing the difference in height and massing of the proposed hotel compared with the Prince of Wales.

If the numerous negative comments made about commercial enterprises being located in a residential area (including the delivery, trash and related support services), the 700 food and beverage seats (almost 5.5 times the number of hotel rooms), and the egre-

gious lack of parking isn't sufficient to demonstrate the inappropriateness of this project, then perhaps this illustration will drive home the point.

This illustration was prepared by Chapman Murray Associates Architects and is shown to scale.

A project like the one proposed for Parliament Oak is likely to create pressure to extend commercial activity another two blocks along King Street. That's not what is contemplated

in the Official Plan and is, in fact, contrary to even the broadest interpretation of a compatible use for this site base on that plan.

If council wants to make King Street a commercial corridor it should be honest about it . . . not allow it to happen project by project.

To be clear, I am not suggesting the commercialization of King Street (or any other residential street in NOTL), rather, that council should either follow its Official Plan or commence

a broader process to change it after appropriate public consultation and after giving consid-

eration to the implications for the wider Old Town area. Good planning does not happen site

by site or block by block.

Lyle Hall
NOTL



Chapman Murray Architects prepared this illustration to demonstrate the scale of the proposed hotel compared to the Prince of Wales Hotel. (Supplied)

Time to approve community hub at old hospital site

David Israelson
Special to The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake's town council has an unusually strong opportunity to do some long-lasting public good by supporting the Niagara Creative, Cultural & Community Hub that a group of non-profit organizations hope to establish at the town's old hospital site.

The hub would be a welcome addition and would be good for the long-term growth and well-being of the community. The organizations involved in it already include Indigenous-run Plenty Canada, Music Niagara, the Yellow

Door Theatre Project, Royal Oak Community School and the Shaw Festival.

With a roster like this, it's hard to see why the town could not move quickly to facilitate the needs of these community groups and make sure the hub happens. Some activities that would take place in the building, like Royal Oak School, are already running; others have well-thought-out plans for using the site to expand their already successful programs and work.

The track records of these arts, entertainment and educational organizations should speak for themselves as council looks at whether to extend

a multi-year lease. Allowing them to live together in the community hub would make their work even better, allowing them to share promotional and creative ideas and enabling Niagara-on-the-Lake residents to enjoy one-stop shopping for their own creative work and needs.

Self-Financing Plan

The hub plan would be self-financing. Its proponents want to lease the property from the town and pay all operating and capital costs, so there would be no burden on taxpayers. The hub coalition has already obtained \$2 million in

donation commitments and once the hub is leased to this organization, it could manage the sub-leases of its members, meaning no administrative work for the town.

It's true that there have been proposals for other uses for the hub site. Some have dreamed of bringing back medical facilities there, for example — but the doctors and labs have been going elsewhere for years.

Others suggest that the town could reap a tidy sum by selling the property to developers. But it is zoned for use as a community facility, and in fact is the last property of this type and size that can fit the needs of small and mid-

sized community organizations.

In any case, doesn't Niagara-on-the-Lake have enough controversy already with development proposals that some residents like but others detest? Bringing the hub to the heart of Old Town would have the opposite effect — a place for everyone.

Time to Approve is Now

Council is now waiting for staff to report on the operating costs of the hub building, and it's open to considering a lease. Waiting is fine in many cases, but if the hub partners are willing to shoulder the operating costs, it's not really necessary.

In this case, it would be

better for council to move quickly. These are challenging, uncertain times in the world, and Niagara-on-the-Lake would benefit from some quick, collaborative decisions that would instill confidence in our local leadership.

It's not that hard for council to decide now to support the Niagara Creative, Cultural & Community Hub by offering a lease now, especially a long-term lease. It would be good for council, good for the town and most of all, good for the members of our community.

David Israelson is a writer and non-practising lawyer who lives in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

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