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Design Brief | 280 O'Connor St., Ottawa

The Neighborhood

The site is at the north/ west corner of O'Connor street & Gilmour street within the Centretown Community Design Plan of 2013 area. The site is 1 block east of Bank street in the center of Centretown.

The Site

The site is zoned R4T [479] and is within a Mature Neighborhood overlay. The existing zoning permits four stories to a height of 14.5 meters. There are three existing houses on the site, which are being used as office & apartments. There have been additions to the original three houses over the years.

Other than landscaping in front and at the side of the two houses on O'Connor street, the site is covered with garages & asphalt parking areas.

Centretown Community Design Plan (CDP)

The current land use designation is 'residential mixed use' and 'residential', with a maximum height limit of four storeys or 14.5m. Amendments to the Secondary Plan and Zoning By-law are proposed to permit a maximum building height of six storeys or 22m. The site is surrounded by proposed 9 storey, 30 meter heights on three sides. There is a row of 3 storey heritage buildings on the south side of Gilmour, opposite the site.

Heritage

Refer to Cultural Heritage Impact Statement prepared by Robertson Martin Architects.

Existing Gilmour Street

North Side- Over the last 60 years the streetscape has developed into a mixture of housing forms and height, ranging from seven & ten storey apartment buildings to two & three storey older houses and renovated triplexes. The site at the north/ east corner of Gilmour and O'Conner, across O'Conner from our site will be at least a nine storey mixed-use building. The proposal will be a natural fit in established streetscape and a perfect transition to the Gilmour/ O'Connor intersection.

South Side- Directly opposite the site is a row of seven, three storey brick single and semi-detached houses or apartment buildings. The front yards, measured to the main building, are approximately four meters. Porches and verandas extend into the front yard. The front yard and street boulevard are a combination of lawn and hard surfaces used for parking. A low wrought iron fence encloses a well landscaped front yard at 344 Gilmour.

The design of the proposed building at 280 O'Connor will consider and respect this preserved row of houses in setback, form, detail, materiality, pedestrian level use, and landscape treatment.

Proposed Development

A six storey apartment building which incorporates the most architecturally significant portions of the two existing houses at 280 and 278 O'Connor street is being proposed for the site. The retained portions of the two houses are not only the most important with respect to heritage value, but the floor area and dimensions of the retained houses allow for a meaningful re-use. Five apartments have been designed within the two retained and rejuvenated portions of the existing houses.

The proposed building, as viewed from the public realm, is a four-storey 14.3m high base, with two additional floor levels each stepped back from the street frontages and corners of the base below. There are 65 compact rental apartments and one level of underground parking for 29 cars. Bicycle parking for 57 bikes is provided.

The Site Plan

The site plan is highlighted by the retained portions of the existing houses on O'Connor street and the original part of the corner house which returns along Gilmour street to an existing outside corner. The new building is set back from the existing houses.

There are two entrances to the building lobby, one on O'Connor between the houses and the other on Gilmour at the sites mid-point.

The Gilmour street ground floor wall is well articulated and setback from the sidewalk in order to provide a well landscaped, semi-active, and interesting street-level space which is opposite the heritage house on the south side of Gilmour street.

Waste management is located within the building at grade, with its exterior overhead door well back from the front wall beneath a substantial overhang.

The entrance to the underground parking is as far as possible from the O'Connor street intersection.

The main outdoor amenity area is located at the north/ west corner of the site providing sunlight exposure and privacy.

Building Elevations

O'Connor street- The building base is designed as a backdrop to the two existing houses and is comprised of clear glazing and silver metallic panels. The base is a light, contrasting frame to the two brick houses with green shingled roofs.

A lobby entrance is set back between the two houses with a dark brick vertical element that both identifies the entrance and breaks the base into two parts above the houses, each part unique due to differences in the two house roofs.

The fifth and sixth floors are each stepped back from the base. Terraces at the fifth and sixth floors with strong roof overhangs help reduce the scale of these floors. The glass guards at the fifth and sixth floors visually reduce the height of the base and fifth level.

The street level façade is compromised of the two existing houses and entrance to the new building between the houses. The verandah of the 278 house is being retained. The verandah of the 282 house is being rebuilt to accommodate an additional door to the second-floor unit, for structural reasons, and at the same time solving building envelope problems. The boxed windows will now have proper separation from the new porch and canopy. Glass canopies on steel framing provides protection, brings the entrances to the street, and introduces a unifying contemporization to the façade.

Contemporary pedestrian level lighting, sitting areas, wrought iron fencing, and landscaping will complete the development to the sidewalk. At night the exterior lighting panels at the fifth and sixth floors will provide a starlight effect above the two house roofs. Linear LED downlighting will provide a subtle glow to the two green roofs.

Gilmour street- The four storey, light-coloured panel base, wraps the corner and highlights the side wall of the existing corner house.

Two, three-storey brick projections provide elements which are similar in height and width to the existing adjacent houses and row of building across the street.

The building base is set back above the entrance with brick rising to the fourth floor, providing an elevational rhythm compatible to the established block streetscape.

The primary base material is brick, similar in colour and texture to the existing adjacent houses and three storey houses across the street.

The fifth and sixth floors are stepped back from the four storey base, with semi-covered roof terraces and strong horizontal slab overhangs.

The street level façade includes an entrance to the lobby and terrace doors from two ground floor suites to private patios which are elevated from the sidewalk slightly.

The private and communal patios are separated from the street by a low wrought iron fence and landscaping, a reflection of a similar treatment across the street.

Large lobby windows look out onto a patio and the street.

Boxed windows , brick detailing, and contemporized ironwork pick-up on details found in the existing corner house and the surrounding neighborhood.

The main entrance location is reinforced by the same canopy and lighting details used on the O'Connor elevation.

The elevation is compatible with, yet distinguishable from, the heritage elements.

The west end of the Gilmour elevation starts to step back from a three storey brick base and steps back again at the fifth and sixth floors with corner terraces which provide the proper massing transition to the houses to the west.

The west elevation is rendered in respect to the adjacent use and view from Gilmour street.

Sustainability Strategy

- The building will be designed to exceed Ontario Building Code SB-10 applicable requirements of 2020.
- 57 bicycle parking spaces will be provided.
- Operable windows or doors will be provided in each room of the residential units.
- The south elevation windows will have an increased shading co-efficient.
- Roof terraces are being provided at the 5th and 6th floors and roofs that will allow for patio uses and planting.
- Rooftop storm water to be retained in a separate cistern and used to irrigate on site planting areas.

The proposed development, while respecting the character of the existing houses and surroundings, integrates harmoniously into the local landscape and enriches the neighborhood. The proposed development is compatible with the adjacent heritage element and revitalizes two existing houses while providing a contemporary design that is in line with the CDP vision.

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