

Cultural Heritage Impact Statement

246 Gilmour Street, Ottawa



Submitted to:

Epcon Enterprises Ltd.

T: 613-325-3416

E: idonedom@gmail.com

Submitted By:

Louise Lalande
LaLande+DoyleArchitectsInc.
159 Holland Ave
Ottawa, ON K1Y 0Y2



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A. Introduction

This Cultural Heritage Impact Statement (CHIS) for 246 Gilmour Street is prepared by Lalande + Doyle Architects Inc. (L+D). The current owner Epcon Enterprises Ltd. has applied to the City of Ottawa for the construction of a new six storey building on an existing empty lot. The new building is being designed by Robertson Martin Architects. L+D has been provided with copies of the development proposal and planning rationale as it pertains to heritage value of the property.

Section 4.6.1 of the City of Ottawa Official Plan has policies that outline when a Cultural Heritage Impact Statement (CHIS) is required, which will evaluate the impact of a proposed development on cultural heritage resources when development is proposed that has the potential to:

- Adversely impact the cultural heritage value of properties designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA).
- Adversely impact the cultural heritage value of districts designated under Part V of the OHA.

The City of Ottawa's Heritage Planning Staff have requested that a heritage impact statement assessment be conducted to comply with the requirements of the City's Official Plan by examining the proposed development within the context of the Study Report of the Centertown Heritage Conservation District as well as the Centertown Community Design Plan. These Reports will be the principal documents describing the heritage value of the Heritage District.

B. General Information

The site of the proposed development is located at 246 Gilmour Street, between Metcalfe and Elgin Streets; the property registration is PIN: 0411860283; R4T[479] – Residential Fourth Density Zone

The property is located in within the Centertown Heritage Conservation District Plan.

The Centertown Community Design Plan (CDP) presents the following guidelines for new developments:

- When higher than 6 storeys, a front (1.5 to 3 m) and sideyard (minimum 3 m) building stepback should be introduced to maintain access to light and support a pedestrian scale.
- The determination of the stepback location should be based on context, adjacent building relationships, and building proportion. Generally, the building stepback should be introduced above the sixth storey, but can also occur below. To promote well-defined street edges and enclosures, building stepbacks directly above the ground floor will not be permitted.
- Avoid blank walls. If necessary, a blank wall must be well articulated. Blank walls fronting a street are not permitted. Ground levels units should be well articulated to reduce the scale of the building and introduce a more fine grained rhythm to the street frontage.
- Provide ground level access to individual units, where applicable, to animate the street. Raised residential ground floors should be 0.9-1.2m from the ground to provide privacy for residents, while promoting safe streets by providing 'eyes on the street'. Sunken units, situated below an 'over elevated' ground floor are discouraged. Inset balconies behind the street wall to reinforce the street edge and public realm. Above the stepback, projected balconies are permitted but are not to exceed the stepback width.



(Figure 1) Bird's eye view of site

C. Current Conditions / Introduction to Development Site

The City of Ottawa Zoning By-Law designates the subject property as R4T(479) Residential Fourth Density Zone / subzone T. The property is also within the Centretown Heritage Overlay and subject to the provisions of Section 60 of the By-law: when a building in the overlay is removed, it must be rebuilt at the same volume, scale, massing and floor area as what was previously existing. The property is also located in the Mature Neighbourhoods Overlay and therefore subject to the provisions of Sections 139 (Low-Rise Residential Infill Development in the Mature Neighbourhoods Overlay) and 140 (Front Yard Patterns, Parking Patterns and Entranceway Patterns).

To be noted: A rezoning is proposed for the Subject Site to re-designate the property from R4T(479) to R5G(XXXX) HXX. Properties in R5 zones are not subject to the Mature Neighbourhoods Overlay provisions of Section 139 of the Zoning By-law.

The property area is 381.83m², the frontage is 13.338m and the depth is 29.86m. The lot fronts onto Gilmour and Lewis streets, the City side walk and the road curb. there is a line of small deciduous trees lining the neighbour's side yard. At present, the entire lot is grassed.

The majority of buildings on this block of Gilmour Street are made up of three and four-storey structures, one single multi-residential building which faces onto Metcalfe Street, the other a school, which faces onto Elgin Street. The front yard set back is common for the adjacent buildings along Gilmour Street. The 12-storey Public Service Alliance building is located directly across the street.

The lot has been vacant since 2003 when the existing building was demolished. The original building was a Tudor style, 2-storey house.

This address is notable: in 2002, squatters set up camp at 246 Gilmour St. as part of a protest timed to coincide with the G8 summit in Kananaskis, Alta. The occupation, shut down by police a week later, was designed to highlight what the group argued was a lack of affordable housing in Ottawa, and it targeted a building that had sat vacant for seven years—hence the group's name: the Seven-Year Squatters. Over the course of that week, 20 or so protesters unfurled banners from the Tudor home's roof, planted a garden and reinforced the building's sagging floors.

D. Background Research and Analysis

The following documents were used in the preparation of this impact statement:

- Centretown - Heritage Conservation District Plan,
- Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada
- Ontario Heritage Act Part V
- Proposed Development prepared by Robertson Martin Architects
- On-site review of the property and surrounding area

Centretown's authentic urban character, unbeatable location, unrivalled quality of life and impressive mix of uses has attracted a growing number of residents year on year. Halting population decline, this growth has brought renewed life to the community – politically, socially and culturally. Today the voice for Centretown is diverse, yet strong, at City Hall.

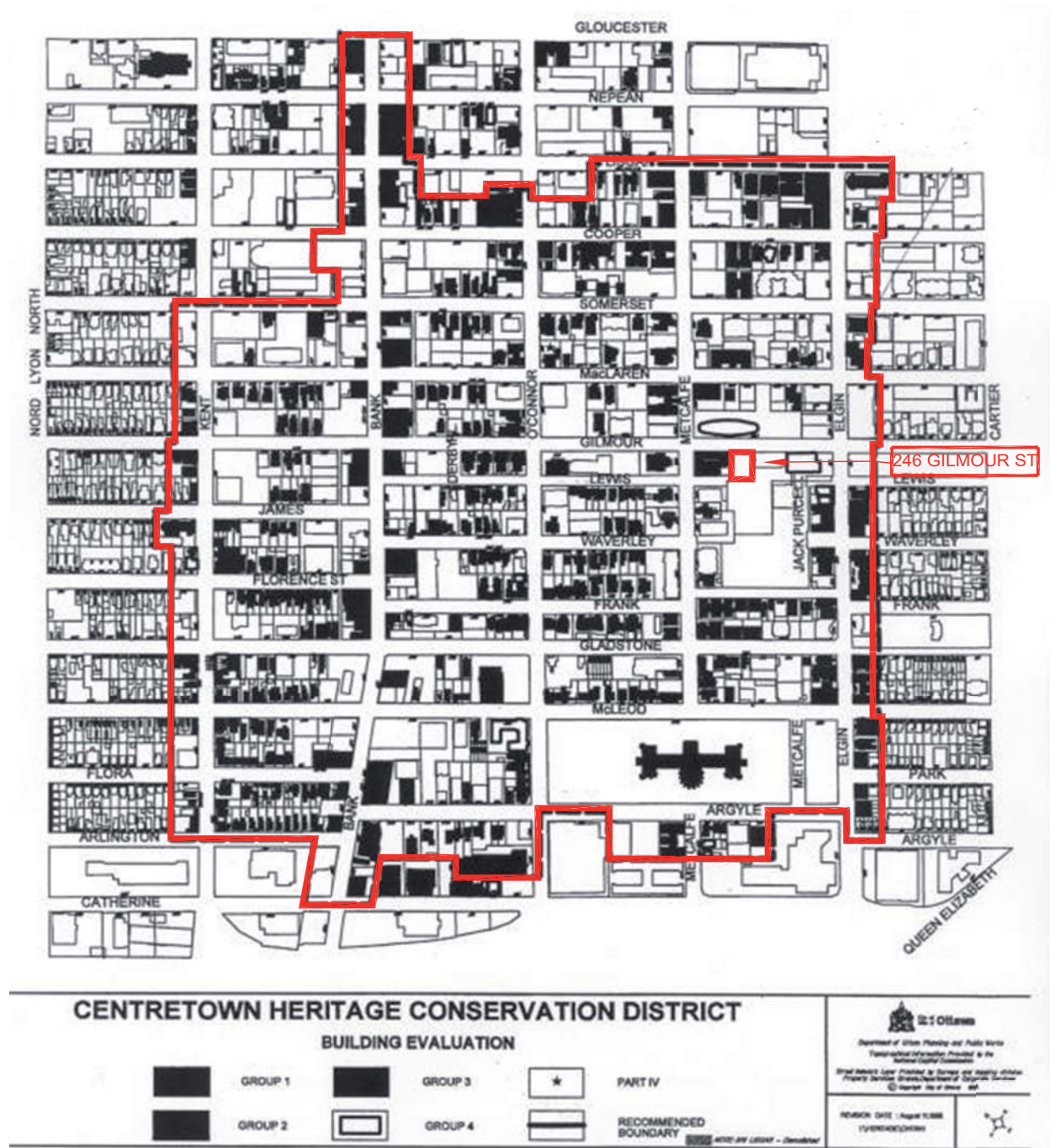
Centretown continues to be Ottawa's best mixed use downtown neighbourhood. As diverse as its land uses, the residents of Centretown are an inclusive mix of ages, income levels, cultural backgrounds and lifestyles.

No longer home to architectural blandness, innovative and beautiful design are championed in Centretown. New buildings are responsive to their community context and have set the standard for creative design in Ottawa.

As advocates for 'shop local, eat local, act local' the growing number of residents choosing to make Centretown their home have reinvigorated many of the shops and businesses on Bank and Elgin and have extended the charming Somerset Village. Fueled by the conversion of garage spaces into studios, gallery space and commercial uses, Gladstone Avenue has begun a gradual transformation into a destination for creativity and innovation.

Respectful of the past, many of Centretown's best heritage assets have been carefully preserved and are now celebrated features of the community. A new appreciation has been given to maintaining the community's heritage streetscape as a whole, as opposed to simply its individual components.

Centretown Heritage Conservation District Map



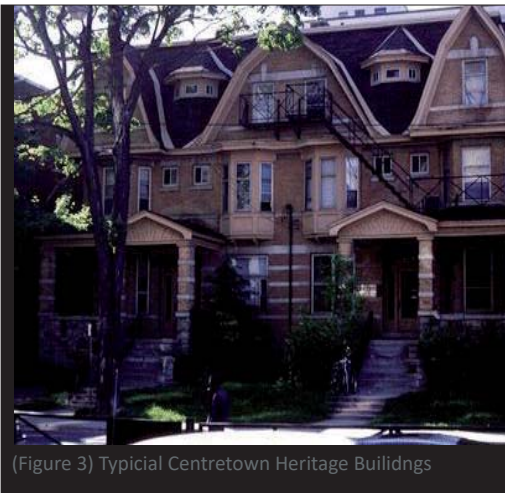
(Figure 2) Centretown Heritage Conservation District Map

E. Statement of Significance

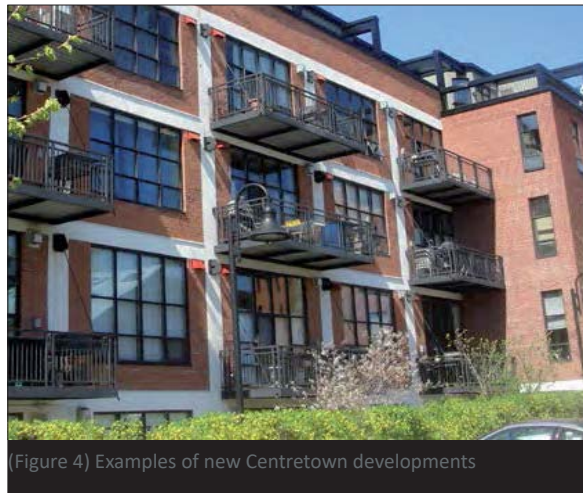
Over the past century, the area now identified as the Centretown Heritage Conservation District, has functioned as soft support for the administrative and commercial activity linked to Parliament Hill. In addition to residences, it has accommodated club facilities, organizational headquarters, institutions, professional offices and transportation services, all associated with Ottawa's role as national capital. As the federal government's residential quarter, planning initiatives in Centretown have been influenced by both federal and municipal authorities. Federal intervention in this area has established some of its unusual qualities such as the formal emphasis on the Metcalfe Street axis, early enhancement of its residential quality, and a number of its parks and services. The streetscapes have traditionally been enhanced by extensive public tree planting and other hard and soft landscape features, many of which have been in decline since the period of extensive tree removal in the 1930s and 40s. However, the scale and texture of the heritage streetscape are still discernible.

Character defining elements that contribute to the heritage value of the Centretown Heritage Conservation District include:

- the heritage residential character of the district, featuring low to medium scale development
- the original grid block layout and plan
- relatively intact residential streetscapes
- predominant use of Rideau red clay decorative brick veneer with trim details in stone, wood and pressed metal
- its varied building types and styles due to the diverse populations of the area
- its single family homes executed in a vernacular Queen Anne style, with substantial wood verandas and elaborate trim, varying in size
- its low rise apartment buildings with similar detailing to single family dwellings but featuring horizontal layering and flat roofs.
- its commercial corridor on Bank Street, consisting of low-rise commercial and mixed use buildings set close to the street.
- its development during a significant period in the growth of Ottawa as the government centre of Canada.
- its connection with Uppertown and the governmental activities which occur there.
- its associations with many people and institutions of national prominence who have played an important role in shaping Canada.
- its historical role as a meeting place for governmental and community groups, clubs and organizations.



(Figure 3) Typical Centretown Heritage Buildings



(Figure 4) Examples of new Centretown developments

F. Description of the Proposed Development

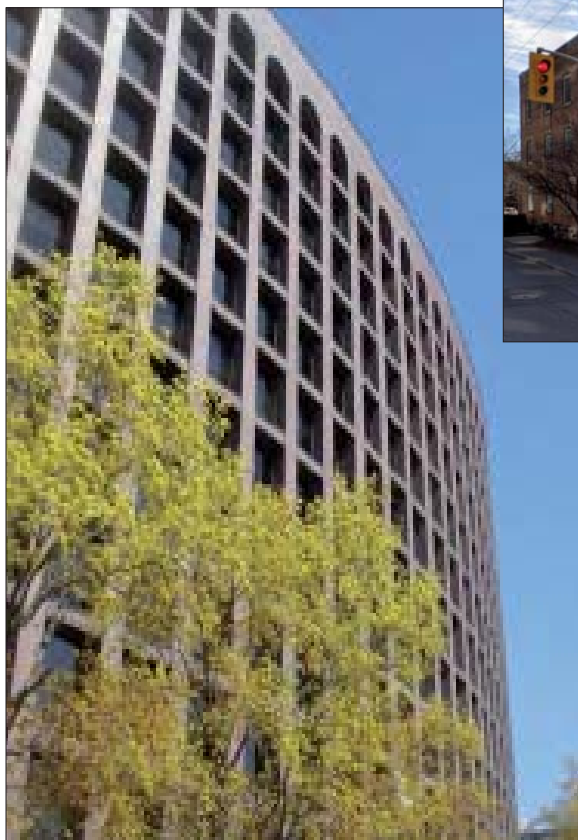
The Client proposes a 5 1/2-storey, 22-unit, residential construction. The form of the proposed building is rectilinear with a front facade that progressively steps back after the third storey. The geometry and the front glazing on the first three floors is in keeping with the typology of the existing adjacent buildings. The proposed building spans through, from Gilmour to Lewis street, with loading access from Lewis street.

The proposed development establishes a significant increase in both lot coverage and height of the previous building, although consideration must be given to the height of the new development as it will meld well with the two adjacent buildings to each side:

- The existing buildings to the East and West of the proposed development are both square. The building located at the corner of Metcalfe and Gilmour, the Gainsborough Apartment Building, was constructed in 1945 and is three storeys high.
- The building to the East is the Elgin Street Public School and is a two-storey high large rectangular building which was constructed in the 1960's.

In addition, directly across the street, there is a large significant building: The Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) Building, is a 12-storey building situated at the corner of Gilmour and Metcalfe. As the name of the building suggest the PSAC building was constructed as the new headquarters for the union in 1968 and they remain to this day. An elongated oval in plan, the building is one of the most identifiable buildings in Ottawa significantly due to the oval shape of the building.

The new development's facades are to be clad mainly in red brick, with prefinished metal panels as accents and to cover the upper penthouse.



(Figure 7) Public Service Alliance Building



(Figure 5) Gainsborough Apartement Building



(Figure 6) Elgin Street Public School

G. Impact of Proposed Development

The following assessment will attempt to identify both the positive and adverse impacts the proposed development may have on the heritage value of the Centretown Heritage District.

Positive impacts:

As stated in the Centretown Heritage District Plan, “the purpose of the design and development guidelines and reviews is to ensure that new work is compatible with the character of the area. The intent is not imitation of historic precedent, but good contemporary design which blends well with the existing quality of design and detailing”. This recommendation is echoed with Standard 11 of the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, which indicates that “additions or new construction must not obscure, radically change or have a negative impact on character-defining materials, forms, uses or spatial configurations”. In addition, Standard 11 also recommends that “additions or new construction be visually compatible with, yet distinguishable from the historic place. To accomplish this, an appropriate balance must be struck between mere imitation of the existing form and pointed contrast, thus complementing the historic place in a manner that respects its heritage value”.

The proposed new construction exemplifies these guidelines by creating a clean and subtle, non-intrusive, frontage which marries well with the character of the adjacent buildings. ***The existing conditions present a vacant lot; the proposed design will house a total of twenty-two (22) units within 1096.3m².***

As stated in the District Plan, “the building form should respect the massing of adjacent heritage properties”. The proposed addition actually improves the properties massing with respect to the adjacent properties by bridging the form of the existing high-two-storey school to the east and the multi-tenant original heritage 3 storey residential structures to the west.



(Figure 8) 246 Gilmour Street - Proposed Development

It is suggested that because flat and side gable roofs have traditionally been used, that new structures should use these forms. The proposed addition proposes a flat roof on the 4-storey portion which then aligns with the flat roof of the original historic building to the West.

The Centretown Heritage District Plan also states that brick veneer should be the primary finish material in most areas, to maintain continuity with existing buildings. Trim materials would commonly be wood or metal; the details at cornices, eaves, and entrances should be substantial and well detailed. Colours should be rich and sympathetic to existing patterns. Lighting should be discreet and can be used to highlight architectural features.

H. Alternates and Mitigation Strategies

As the both the CHDP and the CCDP state, details at cornices, eaves, and entrances should be substantial and well detailed. The addition of window sills and added detailing at the roof cornices, including the entrance canopy, also help balance with the adjacent structures. The colours of these elements should be rich and sensitive to the existing patterns.

The proposed development is providing stone at the foundation, brick veneer for the first four storeys and prefinished metal panels for the upper two. This is in complete synchronicity with the CDDP.

The design of the Entrance Canopy support column and the railings should take cues from the wood bacony supports and railings of the buildings from the Centertown area.



(Figure 11) Perspective view: front facade of proposed development



(Figure 12) Perspective view: side facade of proposed development



(Figure 13) Gainsborough Apartments



(Figure 14) 246 Gilmour Development - Streetscape View

I. Conclusion

While not in strict conformity with the Centretown Heritage District Plan and the Centertown Community Design Plan, the proposal follows the fundamental notion that new construction shall not imitate historic precedent, but to uphold good contemporary design which blends well with the original structure. The Centretown Community Design Plan states that the built form guidelines for Centretown need to recognize the wide mix of building types and substantial differences in density and height already present in the neighbourhood. The proposed building, while different in character from its surrounding heritage fabric, can subtly fit in within its environment in a suitable manner.

Please contact the undersigned should you have any questions,

Louise C. Lalande, OAA, MRAIC, CAHP, LEED AP

Lalande + Doyle Architects Inc.

Bibliography

- Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, Parks Canada, 2nd Edition.
- Centretown Heritage District Plan, City of Ottawa prepared by The Heritage Resources Centre University of Waterloo.
- Centretown Community Design Plan, City of Ottawa, BY ERA Architects, Delcan & Urban Strategies Inc.
- Centretown Heritage Conservation District Study, by Julian Smith & Associates 1996-97
- Ontario Heritage Act Part V
- Proposed Development prepared by Robertson Martin Architects
- Review of the property and surrounding area by Lalande + Doyle Architects Inc.

Appendix

Proposed Design Documents by Robertson Martin Architects

Google Earth Model Views, developed by Robertson Martin Architects

246 Gilmour Street - Streetscape graphic, by Robertson Martin Architects