

April 6, 2018

Development Review  
Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Department  
City of Ottawa  
110 Laurier Avenue West, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Ottawa, ON  
K1P 1J1

**Attention: Douglas James, Manager, Development Review Central**

Dear Mr. James:

**Reference: 316 Somerset Street East  
Site Plan Control Application  
Planning Rationale Letter & Design Brief  
Our File No. 117206**

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Novatech has been retained to prepare a Planning Rationale Letter in relation to an application for site plan control for the property known municipally as 316 Somerset Street East. The purpose of this application is to allow the development of a low-rise apartment building with a ground-floor commercial unit. In addition to planning justification, this letter provides explanation of the design intent and justification, including content and graphics as provided by Project1 Studio.

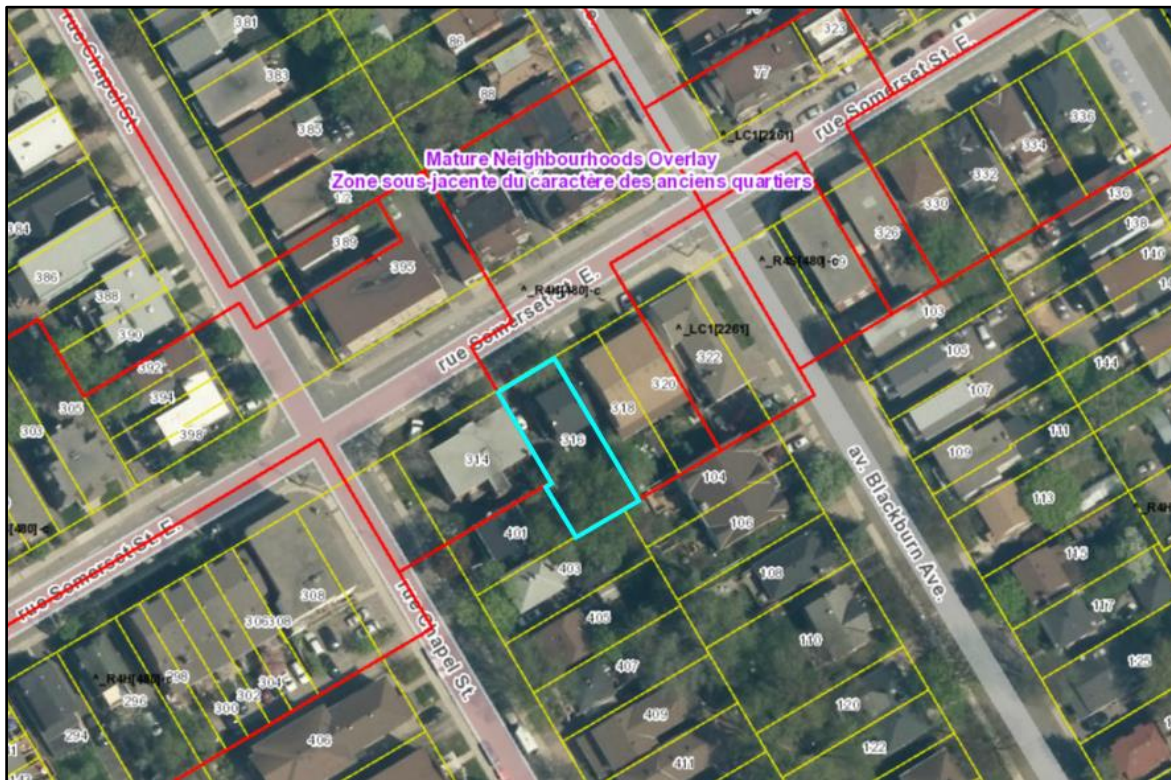


Figure 1: Site Context and Location Map

The subject property is located on the south side of Somerset Street East, between Chapel Street and Blackburn Avenue, within the Sandy Hill community. The property is legally described as Part of Lot 52 and 53, Registered Plan 147991, City of Ottawa, and has a total lot area of approximately 364.5m<sup>2</sup> and frontage of approximately 11.9m along Somerset Street. For the purpose of this letter, Somerset Street East is assumed to run in an east-west orientation.

The neighbourhood surrounding the subject property is characterized primarily by residential development ranging from single-detached to low-rise apartment dwellings, with a number of locally-oriented commercial uses fronting onto Somerset Street. The established built form comprises predominantly two to four-storey buildings, with higher density development concentrated along Somerset Street which is recognized as a main collector road serving the surrounding community. Given its proximity to the University of Ottawa campus (within approximately 500m), it is anticipated that a significant portion of housing in this area accommodates the large student population.

The subject property is currently occupied by a one-and-a-half-storey duplex dwelling with a driveway from Somerset Street leading to a detached garage to the rear of the dwelling. The abutting property to the east is occupied by a two-storey semi-detached dwelling, and that to the west is occupied by a two-storey apartment building with a raised basement. Opposite to the subject property, along the north side of Somerset Street, are two-and-a-half and four-storey apartment buildings.



*Figure 2: Streetview of Subject Property*





*Figure 3: Adjacent Property to the West*



*Figure 4: Adjacent Properties to the East*



*Figure 5: Properties along Somerset Street, Opposite to the Subject Property*

The proposal involves the development of a three-storey apartment building containing four apartment dwelling units and one ground-floor commercial unit. It is anticipated that the tenant of the commercial unit will utilize the space for an instructional facility. The four dwelling units will contain four-bedrooms and it is the intent of the owner to manage the units as rental housing.

The residential units will be accessed by means of an internal staircase with entrances from the eastern side yard. The principal entrance oriented towards the street provides separate access to the commercial space which occupies approximately 95m<sup>2</sup> of the ground floor. The rear portion of the ground floor will comprise both garbage/recycling storage and parking for six bicycles, with direct access to an concrete pathway extending from the associated building entry to the public right-of-

way. The rear yard will consist entirely of communal amenity area for use by residents and provides approximately 87.7m<sup>2</sup> of soft landscaped area. For privacy purposes, it is proposed to enclose this area with a 1.8m privacy fence and to retain existing trees in the rear yard, where possible.

Although there is no requirement for vehicular parking, the development will include one surface parking space under a cantilevered portion of the building to provide convenient visitor parking. The existing access from Somerset Street, located to the east of the existing building, will be retained to serve the new development.

The following provides a review of various City of Ottawa policy documents, design guidelines and regulating By-laws, as they relate to the subject property and proposed development.

### **City of Ottawa Official Plan, 2003 (as amended by OPAs 140, 141, 150, 179 & 180, 2018)**

The subject site is designated as General Urban Area on Schedule B of the City of Ottawa Official Plan, which permits many types and densities of dwellings, including low-rise apartment dwellings, and encourages the provision of a variety of small, locally-oriented convenience and service uses that complement adjacent residential land uses throughout the City.

Policy 5 of Section 3.6.1 supports opportunities for intensification within the General Urban Area where it will complement the existing pattern and scale of development and planned function of the area. New development must be compatible with the existing community character so that it enhances and builds upon desirable patterns of built form and open space, and contributes to a balance and range of housing types and tenures for a variety of demographic profiles.

Policy 8 of Section 3.6.1 speaks to the provision of locally-oriented commercial uses where these uses are compatible and complement surrounding land uses, conveniently located with direct pedestrian/cyclist access, and are of a size and scale that will not result in the attraction of large volumes of vehicular traffic from outside the immediate area.

The proposal conforms to the overall policy direction of the Official Plan which contemplates low-rise residential development as a generally permitted use, and supports small-scale non-residential uses within residential areas to meet the needs of nearby residents and contribute to a complete community. The development represents an opportunity for intensification through redevelopment in a manner which is compatible with the existing scale of development along Somerset Street, particularly in terms of density, building height and overall massing. Further, the proposed development builds upon the small-scale commercial nature of this portion of Somerset Street which has evolved to take advantage of pedestrian and cyclist volumes and patterns.

The proposal complements the function of Somerset Street as a collector roadway which extends from the university campus to the residential neighbourhoods to the east, and which offers pedestrian and cycling infrastructure which connect to the City's network of multi-use pathways. It is anticipated that the proposed commercial use will attract individuals from the surrounding residential areas who can safely and conveniently travel by foot, bicycle or local transit using existing transportation networks. The nature of the commercial use as an instructional facility with a relatively small floor area is compatible with neighbouring residential uses as it would attract limited visitors and would not be disruptive in terms of noise, traffic or privacy.



Figure 6: Rendering of Proposed Development

It is the policy of the Official Plan that new development be in accordance with the design and compatibility objectives set out in Sections 2.5.1 (Designing Ottawa) and 4.11 (Urban Design and Compatibility) of the Plan. Section 2.5.1 provides that consideration should be given to components of built form, open space and infrastructure when designing buildings and spaces as these elements contribute to a community's identity. The design objectives detailed under Section 2.5.1 include policies relating to enhancing sense of community, defining public and private spaces, creating safe and accessible places, respecting character of existing areas, considering adaptability, understanding natural features, and promoting sustainable design.

Section 4.11 establishes that development applications will be evaluated on the basis of various design objectives to ensure high quality urban design and compatibility in terms of scale and use among proximate development. The design and compatibility objectives under Section 4.11, as they relate to the proposed development, include policies regarding good building and façade design, massing and scale, and outdoor amenity areas.

The development responds to design and compatibility objectives of the Official Plan by proposing a three-storey apartment dwelling which is compatible and of a consistent scale with neighbouring low-



rise development. The design of the building appropriately introduces a more contemporary architectural style into the diverse character of the neighbourhood. The development contributes to desirable patterns of built form by providing for building setbacks, orientation and massing which complement the character of the street. The provided separation distance between neighbouring buildings is appropriate, and the generous rear yard setback contributes to a continuous island of green space within the city block.

The proposed building footprint of approximately 155m<sup>2</sup> is in keeping with the footprints of neighbouring buildings along either side of Somerset Street, and the proposed three-storey height is both consistent with the existing built form along Somerset Street and respectful of the two-storey residential development along Chapel Street and Blackburn Avenue which abut the subject property to the rear.

The streetscape pattern along Somerset Street includes buildings typically set relatively close to the street with front yards comprising a mix of soft and hard landscaping, with intermittent driveways and walkways. The proposed infill development balances the front yard setbacks of abutting buildings and contributes to an appealing streetscape through the use of soft landscaping extending to the sidewalk, the addition of a street tree, and incorporation of a planting bed to the front of the building.

The proposed flat roof design complements the existing flat roof designs which are intermixed within the neighbourhood with mansard and gambrel roofs with gradual slopes. The building height is within the limits of the Zoning By-law and is compatible with the abutting development to the east, south and west, as well as opposite to the site.

*Design Statement (prepared by Ryan Koolwine, Project1 Studio)*

*The project was designed to be responsive to the varying range of adjacent building typologies. The mass and size of the building respond to the low-rise apartment buildings, while this project also features intricate articulation that speaks to the scale of the smaller residential developments on the street. Pronounced vertical banding serves to break-down the front elevation and highlights the commercial entrance to the east, while the cantilever to the west creates a dramatic architectural statement for the residential entrance. The center mass of the building is a masonry element that creates an sense of strength and permanence, from which the more expressive elements are anchored on either side.*

*The cladding for the building is comprised of bush hammered masonry, fibre cement panels and pre-finished wood siding. The rough finish of the masonry is a key component of the design, as it's heavy texture allows it to have a more relatable and human scale. The smooth fibre cement panels create a strong contrast of both colour and texture, and are employed to create architectural articulations and massing features. The commercial entrance is highlighted by a fibre cement frame that extends up to the top of the building. The wood siding is used sparingly, and is used as a method of signifying the residential programming for the building. On the front elevation, the siding is used only on the residential floors, and its location in the cantilevered portion of the building also assists the demarking the residential entrance point for the project.*

*Ultimately, this is an architecturally engaging project that responds to the varying scales of the neighborhood and is expressed using a respectful and contemporary palette of materials.*

It is concluded that the proposed building massing is an appropriate fit within the existing neighbourhood context and the use of articulation and selection of materiality create interest along the façade and responsive to adjacent buildings. The proposal supports the design objectives of the Official Plan.

### **Sandy Hill Secondary Plan**

Volume 2A of the Official Plan includes the Sandy Hill Secondary Plan which establishes policies to guide future growth and change in Sandy Hill. The subject property is shown within the Residential Area – Low Profile designation on Schedule J of the Secondary Plan.

The proposal conforms to the policies of the Secondary Plan which support the preservation of Sandy Hill as a primarily residential neighbourhood, while also providing for a complementary small-scale commercial use to serve the immediate residential area. The development contributes a variety of housing options within Sandy Hill to accommodate a broad range of socio-economic groups.

Further, the proposal is in keeping with the policies of the Secondary Plan regarding site development which aim to ensure new development is compatible with existing adjacent development in terms of scale, form, proportion and spatial arrangement in order minimize intrusion on sunlight, air and other aspects enjoyed by neighbouring development. Moreover, the provision of considerable outdoor on-site amenity area and front yard landscaping serve to enhance the development and the public streetscape. The proposed development will preserve the identity of Sandy Hill as an attractive residential neighbourhood.

### **Urban Design Guidelines for Low-rise Infill Housing**

The Urban Design Guidelines for Low-rise Infill Housing are intended as a framework for ensuring new development is well-designed in terms of physical layout, massing, functioning and relationships to neighbouring properties. These guidelines provide direction in relation to streetscape, landscape, built form, building design, and parking.

The building has been designed such that there will strong architectural interest with considerable glazing along the front façade to interact with the street. Accessible walkways extend from the sidewalk to separate building entrances for the commercial and residential units. Apart from these walkways and the area occupied by the existing driveway which is to remain, soft landscaping is provided in the front yard to contribute to an attractive street edge.

The siting of the building is consistent with the established pattern along the street, maintains the neighbourhood pattern of rear yard amenity areas, and is respectful of abutting properties in terms of separation distance between buildings to ensure there are no undesirable impacts relating views, sunlight or privacy. The massing of the building fits within the existing built form and the proposed three-storey heights is similar to and compatible with abutting buildings.

A parking space is proposed beneath a cantilevered portion of the building to provide convenient off-street parking for visitors of the building. The dimension of this covered space are such that a parked vehicle would not encroach into the front yard. The width of the single lane driveway has also been

minimized to ensure emphasis of the presence of soft landscaping and pedestrian walkways along the street frontage.

The proposed development is in keeping with these guidelines as it incorporates design elements to achieve compatibility with neighbouring buildings, enhance the streetscape, and respect the character of the existing built form.



Figure 7: Rendering of Proposed Development

### **City of Ottawa Consolidated Zoning By-law 2008-250 & Interim Control By-law 2017-245**

The subject property is zoned R4H[480]-c (Residential Fourth Density Zone, Subzone H, Exception 480, subject to the Residential Neighbourhood Commercial Suffix) in the City of Ottawa Zoning By-law and is within the Mature Neighbourhoods Overlay. The purpose of the R4H zone is to allow a wide mix of residential building forms ranging from detached to low rise apartment dwellings limited



to four units, and to regulate development in a manner that is compatible with existing land use patterns so that the mixed building form, residential character of a neighbourhood is maintained or enhanced. The provisions relating to the Mature Neighbourhood Overlay aim to regulate the character of low-rise residential development in order to recognize and reflect the established character of the streetscapes within the overlay area.

The purpose of the Residential Neighbourhood Commercial suffix is to allow a variety of small, locally-oriented non-residential uses that complement adjacent residential land uses, are of a size and scale consistent with the needs of nearby residential areas, and are predominantly accessible to pedestrians, cyclists and transit users from the surrounding residential neighbourhood. It is the intent of this suffix to permit certain non-residential uses, including an instructional facility use such as that proposed for the subject property, where they are compatible with existing land use patterns so that the residential character of a neighbourhood is maintained or enhanced. The nature of the proposed instructional facility use is such that it will provide a service complementary to the regular needs of nearby residents, and the location is such that convenient access by existing transit, cycling and pedestrian networks is provided. The development provides opportunity to integrate a small-scale commercial business in to the community in a manner which maintains the overall residential character along Somerset Street.

In accordance with the Zoning By-law, the proposed non-residential use is located on the ground floor of the residential use building, and does not exceed 100m<sup>2</sup> in total floor area. No parking is permitted in association with this accessory use, however, visiting vehicles may be parked in the driveway leading to the parking space associated with the residential units.

The proposed development complies with the provisions of the Zoning By-law relating to permitted uses, including both the maximum allowable number of residential units and floor area occupied by the non-residential use. It is anticipated that relief from certain provisions and performance standards of the By-law will be required as follows:

1. To permit a reduced lot width of approximately 11.9m, whereas Section 162 (Table 162A, Subzone H, Column IV) of the By-law requires a minimum lot width of 12m;
2. To permit a reduced easterly and westerly interior side yard setback of 1.5m for portions of the building extending up to approximately 0.61m beyond 21m of the front lot line, respectively, whereas Section 162 (Table 162B, Endnote 3) of the By-law requires a minimum interior side yard setback of 6m beyond 21m of the front lot line;
3. To permit a walkway with a width of 1.1m abutting a driveway, whereas Section 139 (16) of the By-law permits a walkway located in a front yard where it extends from the right-of-way back to the dwelling and it is not abutting a driveway; and
4. To permit a single driveway with a width of 2.6m, whereas Section 140 (Tables 140A & 140B) of the By-law requires a fully landscaped front yard and no driveway along lot lines abutting a street for Character Groups A.

The proposed lot width of 11.9m represents a one percent reduction to the zoning requirement, and the proposed interior side yard setback reductions relating to the narrow approximately 0.61m rear portions of the building do not appreciably extend the exterior side walls of the building such that there is potential for undesirable impacts on adjacent development. The westerly walkway is required to provide safe egress from the residential units to the public street, in accordance with the Ontario Building Code. As it is proposed to retain the existing driveway which abuts the westerly side lot line and utilize a portion for vehicular access and a portion for pedestrian egress, relief is required to permit these two means of access to abut one another.

A Streetscape Character Analysis was completed for the subject property and, subject to formal review and confirmation by the City, concluded the Character Groups relating to front and corner side yard character, access and parking character, and main door character all as Group A. As these character groups require that the front yard across the full frontage of the property consist of soft or a mix of soft and hard landscaping, and does not permit a driveway along a lot line abutting a street, relief is required in order to retain the existing single driveway from Somerset Street which will provide access to the surface parking space within the interior side yard, below a cantilevered portion of the building. It is noted there are five existing driveway accesses from Somerset Street, including that serving the subject property, between Chapel Street and Blackburn Avenue alone. Accordingly, the proposed retention of the existing driveway on this property would not be out of keeping with the character of the area.

Upon completion of the circulation of the site plan application, an application will be filed with the Committee of Adjustment to seek the above-noted relief from the Zoning By-law.

The provisions of Interim Control By-law 2017-245 have also been reviewed in the context of the proposed development and there are no conflicts with the prohibitions set out in this By-law. The individual dwelling units do not contain more than four bedrooms and do not exceed 120m<sup>2</sup> in floor area. Further, the total floor area of the building, including the area occupied by both residential and non-residential uses, as well as common spaces and stairways, does not exceed 500m<sup>2</sup>. The development is also accordant with the direction and proposals of the R4 Zoning Review Discussion Paper #2.

Based on the foregoing, it is concluded that the proposed development conforms to the policies of both the City of Ottawa Official Plan and the Sandy Hill Secondary Plan, and generally complies with requirements of the City of Ottawa Zoning By-law 2008-250, with the exception of certain provisions for which relief will be sought from the Committee of Adjustment. Furthermore, this letter demonstrates how the proposal is in keeping with the design objectives set out in the Official Plan, Secondary Plan and Urban Design Guidelines for Low-rise Infill Housing. The proposed three-storey apartment dwelling with ground-floor commercial space is appropriate for the subject property and is compatible within the surrounding context in terms of both land use and built form.

Yours truly,

**NOVATECH**



Kayla Blakely, B.E.S. (PI)  
Planner

cc: Daniel Boulanger, TC United Group