

## **G. M. Diemert Architect Inc.**

Suite 201, 957 Fourth Avenue East, Owen Sound, Ontario N4K 2N9



### **Urban Design Study: St. Clare Place**

**1043 and 1057 Third Avenue East, City of Owen Sound, Ontario**

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Part of Lot 4, East of Bay Street, City of Owen Sound, County of Grey, PIN 37055-0172 (LT) and PIN 37055-071 (LT)

**Owner:**

**Lutheran Social Services**

374 Tenth Street East, Owen Sound, Ontario N4K 1S6

March 9, 2023

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## **.A Background – River District Commercial Area:**

### **A.1 Context and Background:**

- .1 The City of Owen Sound Official Plan approved by the County of Grey on February 15, 2022 is referenced as “OP” within this Urban Design Study. The project is located within the River District marked on Schedule B, which is the Map of Planning Areas. The area is designated within the Official Plan Schedule ‘A’, Land Use Plan as River District Commercial Area.
- .2 The St. Clare Place project is located as follows:
  - .1 At properties known as 1043 and 1057 Third Avenue East, City of Owen Sound and
  - .2 St. Clare Place is adjacent to a pre-existing sister building known as St. Francis Place which has provided housing for persons with low income for decades. St. Francis Place is owned and operated by Lutheran Social Services who are the Owner and contains 78 apartment suites and some commercial space at the ground level. St. Francis Place is 8-storeys in height. St. Clare Place will have a height similar to St. Francis Place.
- .3 St. Clare Place will contain 40-residential apartment suites and of these, 5 are 2-bedroom suites and 35 are 1-bedroom suites. In addition to this, a resident common room is positioned to face Third Avenue East and this suite will be offered, in exchange for a rental fee, the room for use by community groups and similar organizations. The proposed building will be 6-storeys in height and it’s residents will be served by two elevators, entrance security systems, and ground level storage for mobility aids such as “scooters”.
- .4 St. Clare Place is well situated for residents without cars: the bus terminal, downtown shopping, groceries, restaurants and food services and banking are within a few minutes walk from this location. This this way, the residents of St. Clare Place will be permitted to contribute to a lively downtown.

### **A.2 Heritage Compatibility, Architectural and Urban Design Goals for St. Clare Place:**

- .1 OP Section 3.3.7 Heritage:
  - .1 OP 3.3.7.1 *“All development on lands designated River District Commercial shall support and be compatible with the heritage character of the area.”*
  - .2 OP 3.3.7.2 *“The City shall promote and encourage the retention and remediation of heritage features of buildings in the River District Commercial area”.*
  - .3 OP 3.3.7.3 *“The heritage street-front retail area shall be maintained, strengthened and supported”.*
  - .4 OP 3.3.7.4 *“New development shall consider the heritage character of the area and be sympathetic in design. Modern design is encouraged where appropriate”.*

#### **.1 Comments:**

- .1 The St. Clare Place project respects the general character of the heritage buildings and downtown commercial and mixed-use buildings within the River District Commercial Area in the following ways:
  - .1 A Commercial Rentable Suite which also serves as a Common Room for the building’s residents is positioned near the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue East lot line and the space fills the façade of the ground floor which emulates the traditional store fronts of the River District Commercial Area.

- .2 Features of St. Clare Place that Emulate Traditional, Heritage Buildings:
  - .1 The building is designed with a masonry veneer base, exterior insulation and finishing system cladding through the middle region and a top which features extended stairwells and a cornice detail that add visual interest.
  - .2 The building uses symmetry to present a dignified and organized architecture to the City and this is particularly true of the front façade.
  - .3 The building's cladding is applied with various thicknesses which create pilasters that provide visual interest.
  - .4 The window pattern is regular and the size of windows is established to emulate the approximate proportion window to solid wall commonly found on heritage and downtown façades.
- .3 St. Clare Place Front Façade Bay Pattern:
  - .1 The building's main entrance façade is designed with 3 centre bays containing windows providing daylight into the Common Room/Rental Space. These create an A, B, A pattern which is the primary pattern. This bay pattern is also derived from the front façade of the apartment suites which are above the ground level. The central bays are flanked by sub-bays: two entry bays on the northern and southern sides of the central area. A complexity in the rhythm of the bays is introduced by the entrance canopy that marks the primary building entrance. The complexity is derived by an overlapping of the smaller and larger bays and this draws attention to the entry and creates visual interest. In addition, the entry canopy is placed closer to the Third Avenue East lot line. This pattern of bays and the complexity discussed is similar to the pattern of downtown street facades which feature both the commercial windows and doors and the ground level residential entrances as separate bays usually devoted to a staircase that provides access to upper-level residences. The nearby Chicago Building is an example of a similar pattern of bays and visual complexity.

### **A.3 The River District Commercial and Urban Design Goals Achieved by St. Clare Place:**

- .1 OP 3.3.8 Urban Design:
  - .1 OP 3.3.8.1 *"The City will encourage and provide the highest quality of urban design in the River District Commercial area, consistent with the Harbour and Downtown Urban Design/Master Plan Strategy and other applicable design guidelines. Decorative paving, signage, light standards, banners and landscaping all contribute to making this an area of specialized design and visual significance.*
  - .1 **Comment:** St. Clare Place will be the subject of site plan applications together with detailed review of site finishes and furnishings. Current plans provide the following features:
    - .1 Cast-in place concrete walks that link outdoor areas to the building and the adjacent St. Francis Place.
    - .2 The Owner has developed community gardens accessible to the residents of St. Francis Place and St. Clare Place. These are located in the rear yards of the Owner's homes that front onto Fourth Avenue East.
    - .3 Outdoor seating areas are proposed along the Third Avenue East frontage.
    - .4 In addition, the development incorporates a landscaping buffer strip between the development's parking area and the neighbouring lot to the north of the site.

- .5 Discrete EarthBin waste containers will be used to store waste. Additional interior space at the ground level maintains the resident's scooters indoors and also provides interior waste and recycling management space.
  
- .2 OP 3.3.8.2 *"New development shall be consistent with the scale and height of existing street-front development."*
  - .1 **Comment:** St. Clare Place is consistent in height with the adjacent St. Francis Place. It is well-spaced on the site which provides air and light between this building and neighbouring buildings. The building design also provides vertical breaks in material that vary in height while maintaining good order. A ground level treatment of openings and architectural details reflects the similar treatments used elsewhere for the downtown buildings.
  
- .3 OP 3.3.8.3 *"Buildings in the River District Commercial area should not exceed eight stories in height. The City shall require that all buildings over four stories in height be subject to rezoning to ensure that issues such as the scale of surrounding buildings and maintaining view corridors are addressed through appropriate study".*
  - .1 **Comment:** St. Francis Place is the subject of a zoning by-law amendment to address this item.
  
- .4 OP 3.3.8.4 *"The City may strengthen the image of the River District Commercial area by creating a node or symbolic point of arrival on 10th Street East, as described in the Harbour and Downtown Urban Design/Master Plan Strategy and in Section 8.3.2.1, which clearly identifies the retail area and leads visitors to parking and destinations such as the Farmers' Market, Roxy Theatre and City Hall."*
  - .1 **Comment:** this feature is beyond the control of the Owner.
  
- .5 OP 3.3.8.5 *"Pedestrian connections and view corridors should be maintained between 2nd Avenue East and the harbour. Street front retail uses should provide a comfortable pedestrian area and definition to the street. On the harbour side, cafés, restaurants and shops related to the harbour location shall be encouraged free standing or as a second façade".*
  - .1 **Comment:** This building is on Third Avenue East and cannot influence pedestrian movement on Avenues located west of Third Avenue East.
  
- .6 OP 3.3.8.6 *"Development or redevelopment of the lands adjacent to the east side of the river, along 1st Avenue East is encouraged to be open and provide public spaces, patios, restaurants and entertainment uses which create an attractive, lively area and allow public views of the river.*
  - .1 **Comment:** this feature is beyond the control of the Owner.
  
- .7 OP 3.3.8.7 *"The pedestrian environment of the area shall be strengthened and supported".*
  - .1 **Comment:** The existing sidewalk along Third Avenue East is maintained. In addition, landscaping is added between the parking internal to the Owner's property and the sidewalk. The front yard also contains a private outdoor space separated from the sidewalk

by a low landscaping wall. Landscaping south of the new building's main entry will also contain benches. These measures strengthen and support the existing pedestrian environment.

- .8 OP 3.3.8.8 *"Public spaces suitable for large events should be developed on both sides of the river, with visual linkages between Queen's Park and the Farmers' Market and 2nd Avenue East"*.
  - .1 **Comment:** this feature is beyond the control of the Owner.
  
- .9 OP 3.3.8.9 *"The river open space system should be developed to provide and strengthen connections between the River District Commercial area and the Harbour"*.
  - .1 **Comment:** this feature is beyond the control of the Owner.
  
- .10 OP 3.3.8.10 *"Public access to the river edge should be developed and protected throughout this area and linked to other precincts within the River District Commercial area"*.
  - .1 **Comment:** this feature is beyond the control of the Owner.
  
- .11 OP 3.3.8.11 *"All development shall be consistent with the Urban Design policies of Section 8 and all relevant design guidelines"*.
  - .1 **Comment:** The St. Clare Place Development adheres to the general Urban Design policies of Section 8 through the means detailed above.

**A.4 OP Section 8, Urban Design Elements for St. Clare Place:**

- .1 References below are derived from OP Section 8 Urban Design.
- .2 OP 8.1.1 General Policies:
  - .1 OP 8.1.1.1 through OP 8.1.1.5:
    - .1 **Comment:** The Owner believes that the design of the project as proposed, responds well to the goals and objectives set out with the OP. Refer to OP section comments above for details.
- .3 OP 8.6.2 Street Front Retail:
  - .1 OP 8.6.2.1 *"In areas of high pedestrian traffic, particularly in the River District Commercial area, the existing form of continuous retail frontage is to be retained and continued through infilling"*.
    - .1 **Comment:** The Owner owns two small buildings fronting Third Avenue East and one of these is replaced by St. Clare Place. This removed building bears evidence of a former commercial arrangement of the ground level; however, it had been converted to vacant space or residential rental apartments many years ago. The new, proposed St. Clare Space proposes within a large stretch of the Third Avenue East lot line a ground-level Common Room/Rental Space and uses commercial scaled glazing units to emulate the traditional retail front design.
  - .2 OP 8.6.2.2 *"Buildings shall be located without setback at the street edge with few gaps between buildings except to provide access to parking."*
    - .1 **Comment:** The building fills the available lot fabric except for the access to parking located north of the building.

- .2 **Comment:** The St. Clare Place building is situated with the front entrance canopy to the residential entry within 1m of the Third Avenue East lot line. This entrance canopy could be made to lie upon this lot line as found desirable to the City and this would permit the building to have a 0.0m front yard. As this canopy is one storey in height, it is probable that it will not impair maintenance of the Third Avenue East electrical power transmission lines.
- .3 **Comment:** The St. Clare Place front façade is held back from the Third Avenue East lot line a distance of 3.0m to provide distance between residential windows above the ground level and the electrical transmission lines located at the lot line. This places the façade closer to the transmission lines than would normally be desirable; however, the Utility should be agreeable with the distance used provided that the windows on the Third Avenue East building elevation do not operate. Electrical Safety Authority and Utility commentary is necessary. If the main façade is closer than 3.0m to the line of utility poles, it is the Owner's opinion that the electrical power lines will be difficult for the utility to maintain.
- .3 OP 8.6.2.3 *"Street Front Retail development requires some on-street parking and separate parking areas generally located within the development block. Vehicular access shall generally be limited to a few locations within a block. Pedestrian access to the street front may be through gaps between buildings or through rear entrances to the businesses."*
  - .1 **Comment:** Street parking is not available at this location. Parking associated with the development is provided within the block and some of the spaces are covered by the building. Pedestrian access to the street front is placed on the southern side of the building and is located within a gap that exists between St. Clare Place and a remaining building along the Avenue.
- .4 OP 8.6.6.4 *"Pedestrians should have a safe, well-lit, clear route from vehicle to building at all times of the year. Safe, comfortable, accessible and barrier-free pedestrian points of access should be frequent and easily identified with clear directional signage. Larger developments should provide sitting areas for pedestrians awaiting pick-up"*.
  - .1 **Comment:** The proposed site plan for St. Clare Place incorporates soffit lighting for covered, unheated parking below the second level of the structure, wall mounted lighting near or above all entrances along the eastern and southern sides of the building and lamp pole fixtures illuminating cars parked along the northern lot line. Soffit light is incorporated around the main residential entrance fronting 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue East. All lighting will be dark-sky friendly.
- .5 OP 8.6.7.3 *"Where the height or mass of a proposed building may significantly shadow or cause increased wind conditions on an adjacent open space or solar collector, the City may require a study be undertaken to assess the impact and may develop and enforce setback requirements, site plan requirements and design guidelines to ameliorate the problem"*.
  - .1 **Comment:** A shadow study created for St. Clare Place is provided.
    - .1 The architect affirms the following:
      - .1 As a principle, as least 50% of more of any property is not shaded for more than two (2) interval times (a four-hour equivalency); or,
      - .2 As a principle, as least 50% of any property should be in full sun for at least two interval times (a four-hour equivalency).
- .4 OP 8.6.10 Landscape Design:

- .1 OP 8.6.10.1 *“Landscaping shall be designed to enhance the presence of each building and used as a major visual element to unify the proposed building, streetscape and surrounding environment”*.
  - .1 **Comment:** Landscaping is used to support and enhance the Third Avenue East façade of the development. It provides some semi-private outdoor space associated with the Common Room/Rental space and an outdoor open seating area along the street front. When possible, landscaping in traffic islands will divide parking areas and direct traffic clear of the building and parked cars. The proposed pedestrian walk surfaces are concrete in order to avoid heaving and maintenance associated with paving units. Concrete curbing is used to direct storm water and contain the parking. Parking areas area surfaced with asphalt.
- .2 OP 8.6.10.2 *“Landscaping design shall utilize a diversity of plant material that are appropriate for the site conditions in all seasons, including a focus on native plant material where appropriate, and avoid the use of invasive species in accordance with City policies and guidelines”*.
  - .1 **Comment:** The St. Clare Place development will feature plant materials appropriate to location and local environment and invasive species will be avoided.

End of Urban Design Study.



Grant M. Diemert, OAA