

Development Brief

Par-La-Ville car park site

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Development Brief

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1.0 About this Brief

1.1 This brief is intended to set the framework for a new development at the Par-La-Ville car park site. It contains guidance and advice that builds on the provisions set out in the City of Hamilton Development Plan 1984 (see appendix 1). This brief also supports the goals that have been established for the new City of Hamilton Plan currently in preparation. The goals of this new plan are set out in appendix 2. The scheme that comes forward for the development of the Par-La-Ville car park site will be expected to support these goals.

2.0 Background

2.1 The site is owned by the Corporation of Hamilton which has sought expressions of interest from developers who may wish to invest in the site. The Corporation's notice and requirements are set out in appendix 3.

3.0 The Site Today

3.1 The site is approximately 80,000 ft² (c. 7,500 m²) in area and is located in the south-western quarter of the city. It is bounded by Church Street to the north, Par-La-Ville Road to the west, Par-La-Ville Park to the south, and, to the east, a service road at the rear of properties on Queen Street. The site is centrally located adjacent to the principal shopping area to the east, the principal office area to the north and west, while Par-La-Ville Park and Library lie to the south.

3.2 The land is owned by the Corporation and operated by them as a surface level car and bike park for public use. There are 279 car parking bays and 70 bike parking within the site. In addition to the bike parking on the site there are 57 on-street bike spaces at the northern end of Par-La-Ville Road. The parking lot is accessed from the north east corner of the site with a separate exit further to the west along Church Street.

3.3 One of the most significant features of the site is the large rock outcrop that the present car park sits on. While the surface of this outcrop is relatively level it is approximately 7 feet above the level of the sidewalk adjacent to the exit from the car park on Church Street. This rises to approximately 13 feet at the junction of Church Street and Par-La-Ville Road. At its south western corner the surface level of the site is 25 feet or more above Par-La-Ville Road. This change in levels around the site clearly presents a significant challenge for any proposed development.

3.4 To the south the land slopes towards Front Street. This affords very attractive views from the site of Par-La-Ville Park and, beyond that, the harbour and the Paget coast. There is an attractive landscaped belt where the site abuts the park along with a number of mature trees on the site itself.

3.5 There are two electricity sub-stations on the site. One is located at street level on Par-La-Ville Road and the other, larger structure is in the south east corner of the site. It is understood that the main Par-La-Ville sub-station needs upgrading and the developer is recommended to enter into early discussions with BELCO with a view to determining the required capacity for the sub-station and its most appropriate location within the site.

4.0 Site Development Objectives

4.1 This is a key city centre site that has substantial potential for bringing to Hamilton exciting new development to revitalise the city. In promoting the development of the site the Corporation of Hamilton and the Department of Planning have the following objectives:-

1. To realise a top quality development which brings new vitality to the city and is designed to the highest standards not just in its built form but also in its treatment of open spaces in and around the site.
2. To provide a public vehicle parking facility at below grade level which can accommodate **at least** as many car and bike parking spaces as are available in the existing public parking facility.
3. To extend public open space into the site from Par-La -Ville Park ideally through to Church Street.
4. To allow pedestrian access through the site.
5. To achieve physical improvements to Church Street and Par-La-Ville Road particularly in terms of the pedestrian environment along these two site frontages.
6. To secure improvements to Par-La-Ville Park.
7. To improve the environmental quality of the service road in the north-east of the site and its immediate vicinity.

4.2 The proposed development scheme will be expected to fulfil, to the satisfaction of the Corporation and the Department, each of these objectives. As a further aid to the developer the following development guidelines are provided. These incorporate development standards which should be viewed as

recommendations rather than hard and fast rules. The Department of Planning recognises that, in order to encourage a design of the highest quality, the development standards will necessarily need to be capable of flexible interpretation. The Department will be prepared to discuss and agree changes to these standards where appropriate and justified by the quality of the scheme.

5.0 Development Guidelines

Uses and activities

5.1 A mix of uses that brings not only investment but also life and activity to the area is to be encouraged. One of the goals of the new City Plan is to inject new vitality into the centre. The introduction of residential accommodation will support this, and will be particularly welcomed.

5.2 An acceptable mix of uses could include;

Residential;
Hotel;
Theatre;
Restaurants and bars;
Retail;
Public Open space;
Public Parking;

A high quality development

5.3 It is crucial that the architectural style of the development is of a high quality. There will be scope for creating a contemporary development on the site but there will also be some pressure for it to reflect aspects of Bermuda architecture. Because this development will be highly visible, the principal facades should be attractive, dynamic and well proportioned, and the treatment of the massing, scale, layout and elevations will need to be very sensitively developed.

5.4 The development will be visible as an important new feature on the city skyline. Therefore the treatment of the roofs and towers must acknowledge this significance. The enclosure of lift motor rooms, air conditioning equipment etc. must be considered early in the design. It is also important that the treatment of features for dealing with solar gain and low energy use are integrated into the design and not retro-fitted.

5.5 The opportunity to introduce the work of artists into the development, and particularly its public spaces, should be explored.

Massing, height and scale

Massing

5.6 Although this is a large site, the prospect of a single, massive building dominating the site is unwelcome. The grain of the city streets suggests that the character of the city would be enhanced if the layout of the development responds to the scale of the surrounding streets and allows pedestrian movement and access. This could be achieved by breaking any development down into two or more structures connected by high quality public open spaces or arcades. It is also essential that the development is not monolithic but is dynamic and thoughtfully articulated in plan, elevation and roofscape.

Height

5.7 Any development on this site will be very visible from many locations in and around the city and particularly from across the harbour. Although the 1984 City of Hamilton Plan gives no maximum for this site, it is clear that it has the potential for a landmark statement. However, it also needs to harmonise with the scale and massing of its neighbours and respect the setting of the Park. The current maximum heights allowed in neighbouring districts by the Plan are 64 ft (to the east), 75 ft (to the north and west), and 85 ft (in the north east corner). At present the buildings adjacent to the site do not reach these maximum heights. The topography of the site also creates both problems and opportunities for the way in which the development will tie into existing street and Park levels. This will have an impact on the relative heights above street level of different parts of the development.

5.8 The majority of the development will not be expected to exceed 75 feet above the highest point at grade level on the Church Street frontage. For a proposal of outstanding architectural quality there will be the potential for some parts of the development to exceed this limit. To trigger this extra height the Corporation and the Department of Planning must be convinced that the additions will make an exceptional contribution to the city skyline and that the development as a whole will bring significant benefits to the existing park and pedestrian environment around the site. This will apply to an area not greater than 25% of the footprint area of the building, and will be no more than 2 additional storeys.

5.9 Views of the development will need to be thoroughly evaluated. Therefore, prior to developing any details for the scheme, a massing model will be required for the development. This can be a physical model or a computer generated image. It will show the overall height of the development in the context of the existing surrounding buildings and will relate accurately to the topography. It will also indicate parts of the development that deserve special treatment such as towers, corner or entrance features, and housings for plant and equipment. Agreement will need to be reached at this stage before further progress is made.

Scale

5.10 In addition to the above, it is important that the building respects the scale of its neighbours. It is particularly important that any development is sensitive to the pedestrian scale at ground floor level. The introduction of shade and shelter for pedestrians will need to be carefully considered and features built in accordingly.

Setbacks and the relationship to streets and the Park

5.11 On Church Street and Par-La-Ville Road the setbacks should be not less than 20 feet in order to provide broad, tree lined sidewalks. Church Street and Par-La-Ville Road both have a very urban character, and this should be reflected in the new development. Both are in need of enhancement, but Par-La-Ville Road in particular will benefit from a more sensitive treatment at the pedestrian level to create a more pedestrian friendly environment.

5.12 On the eastern boundary is a setback 65 feet from the west side of the service road is recommended. This will allow the development to be distanced from the rear of the Queen Street properties. This will ensure that the development doesn't overpower the Queen Street elevation and it will also enable a significant extension to the Park to be created linking up to Church Street. The service road to the east must have a sidewalk on one side of at least 6 feet.

5.13 The link to the park is crucial to the success of any development. In order to ensure that there is adequate space for the transition between Park and development, and that any grade changes can be accommodated smoothly, the set back should be 75 feet.

Accessibility and movement

Pedestrian

5.14 This is a very large site in the centre of the city. It has the potential to extend a high quality pedestrian experience from within the existing park into and through the site. This experience can be a continuation of the character of the Park, a more urban and hard surfaced series of spaces or, preferably, a mixture of both. The publicly accessible areas must be of the highest quality and access for all, including those with restricted mobility, to all parts of the site will be expected.

5.15 The desire lines through the site suggest that the primary movement is currently north/ south. However, there will also be a considerable benefit in facilitating an east/ west movement between the arcade of the Bank to the west,

and the Bermudiana Arcade to the east. It will not be acceptable for such a large site to prevent pedestrian movement through it.

Vehicles

5.16 It is a condition of the development that the existing public parking spaces for cars and bikes are replaced within the development at below grade level. Consideration should also be given to accommodating the bike parking spaces at the north end of Par-La-Ville Road within the underground parking facility.

5.17 The requirement in the Brief for an underground public car park demands that careful thought is given to the location of its access and egress. The most suitable location for this would seem to be Par-La-Ville Road. Any in/ out arrangement will need to avoid being too close to the junction with Church Street. Similarly, if the potential pedestrian link from the site to the Bank arcade is to be successful, then the in/ out will need to be south of this crossing.

5.18 The access for servicing the site and providing parking for the site may share the same access and egress as the public parking. If this is not the case, then particular care should be taken to ensure that the site and its boundaries do not become overly dominated by facilities catering for vehicles at the expense of a pleasant and safe pedestrian environment.

5.19 The existing road that serves the rear of the Queen Street properties is likely to remain and to be widened to accommodate two way traffic. An arrangement that accommodates this servicing as part of the underground facility will be welcome but is not a requirement.

5.20 In the case of an Hotel, Theatre or condominium development, there may be a benefit in allowing vehicle access into the development from Church Street to a passenger drop-off area.

Public open space

5.21 The integration of public space and walkways through the scheme is key to its success. There will be opportunities within the site to create high quality hard surfaced spaces that provide attractive and comfortable pedestrian places. These routes will link to the established network of pedestrian routes around the site.

5.22 One of the most charming characteristics of the park is its enclosed and 'secret' quality. It is important that any new development respects and enhances this character. A requirement of any new development is that the present soil storage area in the park will be landscaped and brought into use as part of the park. It will also be a requirement that the existing entrance to the park from Queen Street be enhanced by the relocation of the restrooms to a site nearby,

and a new, high quality entrance created including gates. This entrance could retain the enclosed character of the park and could, for example, result in the creation of a small urban square on the site of the present restrooms, with an entrance into the park beyond a small opening in a wall or hedge. In addition to these enhancements the developer will be expected to come forward with enhancement ideas for each of the other entrances.

5.23 The developer will also be required to reinstate to a top quality standard any parts of the park affected by the development.

5.24 The transition from park through the site to the urban character of Church Street will need to be handled with great sensitivity. A broad, high quality planted route between the two will form an essential component of any development.

5.25 It will be helpful for the development of the scheme if a concept plan for the hard and soft landscaping is developed at an early stage that integrates the buildings, spaces and uses. The quality of the public spaces is of great significance on this site. Therefore a plan that describes the character and qualities being proposed for each of the public and private spaces created as part of the development will be valuable. A comprehensive landscape plan will be required in due course which should identify and make provision for the protection, retention or relocation of any mature trees within the site.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 This site presents a superb opportunity for a development to add to the life, vitality, interest and enjoyment of the city. The site demands a high quality, imaginative and sympathetic design response. The Corporation of Hamilton and the Department of Planning look forward to participating in the creation of a first rate development for the city.

6.2 The brief is intended as the start of a dialogue with the developers and their designers, the Corporation of Hamilton and the Department of Planning. The smoothest route to a top quality development will be to continue this dialogue throughout the design process. This will be particularly important in the early, concept stages of the design.

Summary of Development Standards

Mix of Uses includes;

Residential, Hotel, Theatre, retail, bars and restaurants, public parking, public open space.

Maximum height

Maximum height at north west corner of the site
(six stories on Church Street) 75 feet

Additional height may be allowed for areas of floorspace that, in the opinion of the Corporation of Hamilton and Department of Planning, create an interesting and attractive contribution to the skyline.

Minimum setbacks

Minimum setback from Church Street 20 feet

Minimum setback from Par-La-Ville Road 20 feet

Minimum setback from Par-La-Ville Park 75 feet

Minimum setback from service road 65 feet

Site coverage

Building footprint(s) no more than 35% of site
(28,000 ft²)

This may be increased if the proposed development consists of two or more principal buildings.