

Heritage Vaughan Committee Report

DATE: Wednesday, March 19, 2025

WARD: 2

TITLE: PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ON 239, 245, 251 WOODBRIDGE AVENUE

FROM:

Vince Musacchio, Interim Deputy City Manager, Planning, Growth Management and Housing Delivery

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To seek a recommendation from the Heritage Vaughan Committee regarding the proposed seven (7) storey building located at 239, 245, 251 Woodbridge Avenue (Attachment 1), a property located in the Woodbridge Heritage Conservation District (WHCD) and designated under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act* (OHA).

Report Highlights

- The Owner is proposing a seven-storey building at 239, 245, 251 Woodbridge Avenue.
- The existing lot is vacant and is identified as 'old building - demolished' in the WHCD Plan.
- The development is being recommended for approval by Cultural Heritage staff.
- Heritage Vaughan review and recommendation and Council review and decision are required under the OHA.

Recommendations

1. THAT Heritage Vaughan recommend that Council approve the development as proposed at 239, 245, 251 Woodbridge Avenue under Section 42 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, subject to the following conditions:

- a) That any significant changes to the proposal by the Owner may require reconsideration by the Heritage Vaughan Committee, which shall be determined at the discretion of the Director of Policy Planning and Special Programs or delegate; and
- b) That the applicant submit architectural drawings and building material specifications at the building permit stage to the satisfaction of the City of Vaughan Policy Planning and Special Programs, Cultural Heritage Program.

Background

A PAC meeting (PAC.18.057) was held in August 2018 regarding the subject proposal. Initial comments from Cultural Heritage staff were that the proposed height and orientation toward Woodbridge Avenue were not in compliance with the WHCD. A Development Application was submitted in August 2023, followed by an Official Plan Amendment in September 2023.

The applicant has submitted a Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (CHIA) (Attachment 2) in support of their development proposal. The following is an excerpt from the submitted CHIA:

The proposed development is for a single, multi-unit residential building with a lobby entry at the street level on Woodbridge Avenue, which is a change from the original design which had included a commercial unit at the street level. Through public community consultation, concerns were raised regarding the location of a commercial unit in this location without associated parking as it could potentially cause congestion on Woodbridge Avenue. A grand lobby was determined to be the preferred option to provide a welcoming residential presence at the street level that encourages pedestrians to linger with benches, shade trees and green space. The proposed building maintains similar setbacks at the street to the other buildings along this section of Woodbridge Avenue.

The original location of the underground garage door was to the far east of the street level to allow for the pedestrian activity area to be contained in one area and not to be interrupted by vehicular activity as the public sidewalk ends before the rail overpass. However, discussions with City staff have resulted in a requirement to move the garage entry further west along the street façade which bisects the pedestrian activity area into two distinct areas: one accessed from the street to the staircase and one from the street to the grand lobby, both will include walkways that lead to the public sidewalk to direct pedestrian traffic.

A solid base with a simulated limestone foundation and brick columns and glazing topped with opaque panels transition to the residential upper building 1.5 m step back capped with a cast limestone-like parapet. Oversized vertically oriented punched window openings with limestone lintels and sills in a red brick façade reflect a modern take on historic commercial/industrial factory buildings leaning into a higher ratio of transparency to solid as discussed in 6.3.3 of the WHCD Plan so that it is understood as a building of its time.

The lower level at the street level further emphasizes the large vertically oriented openings of the upper level with the enlarged openings that include panels of the doors and glazing. The Seven (7) storey building from this vantage point provides a transition from the larger massed buildings to the west down to the rail overpass, parkette and residential to the east.

Landscaping is made up of a combination of concrete and paver pathways that edge a garden and several trees. It is recommended that a variety of trees, shrubs and perennials that provide year-round interest at both the upper grade level and street level. Strategic plantings should prevent crossing over the driveway. Seating options should be provided and located where shade from the trees will be cast and that are consistent with the WHCD Plan. A concrete curved bench provides seating in the residential amenity space.

The proposed development utilizes primary materials of red brick with a cast stone-like foundation, cast stone windowsills and parapet accents at the second floor and again at the flat roof.

Previous Reports/Authority

[Extract from Council Meeting Minutes of November 14, 2023, \(Item 3, Report No. 45\) of the Committee of the Whole \(Public Meeting\)](#)

Analysis and Options

All new development must conform to the policies within the WHCD Plan. The following is an analysis of the proposed development according to the WHCD Plan, in combination with the City of Vaughan Official Plan 2010 (VOP 2010).

The following analysis is based on the policies of the WHCD Plan:

Height, Scale and Massing

The ground level of the building along Woodbridge Avenue is at grade level and is flush with the sidewalk and its access from the street. This complies with the WHCD Plan.

The height of the proposed development does not fully align with the WHCD Plan. According to the WHCD Plan, the height of the building is permitted up to six (6) storeys (20 m), provided there is a podium of a minimum of two (2) storeys. This proposal is for seven (7) storeys, and as seen in the architectural set (Attachment 4), is set at a height of 24.8 metres, with the podium only appearing as one (1) storey. The applicant submitted CHIA states that “it is recommended that the proposed building not be taller than the existing building to the west in order to provide a better transition to the railway, landscape and buildings to the east”.

While the proposed development does not meet the requirements of height according to the WHCD, City Cultural Heritage and Planning staff and the property owner(s) agreed that the original height of 25.8m be brought down to 24.8m to match the building directly across the street in order to match the massing on the streetscape.

Cultural Heritage staff recommend that the proposed seven storey building at 239, 245, 251 Woodbridge Avenue be approved as it conforms to the current scale and massing of the area west of the railway on Woodbridge Avenue and general intent of the WHCD.

6.1.1 Woodbridge Avenue

Heritage Attributes:

- 1. Main Street character, with pedestrian oriented retail at grade level and a variety of other uses above grade, mostly residential.*
- 2. A street wall of buildings averaging between 3 and 4 floors, with some buildings rising to 6 floors.*
- 3. Storefronts open directly onto the sidewalk and provide pedestrians with a variety of storefronts, which change every few steps.*
- 4. Buildings are often built with zero (or minimum) setback.*

Guidelines

- 1. The ground level of buildings along Woodbridge Avenue must be flush with the sidewalk, with direct access from the street.*
- 2. Generally, new buildings along Woodbridge Avenue should be no taller than 4 floors (13m) and must be sympathetic to, and transition from, the height of adjacent contributing buildings with a minimum 45-degree angular plane, starting from the existing height of the contributing building, measured at the building's edge, (see section 6.4 – Built Form Framework).*
- 3. New buildings may be allowed an increase in building height to 6 storeys provided that they meet official plan policy. In such cases, a podium of a minimum 2 floors and a maximum of 4 floors is required, with the additional two floors stepping back on a 45-degree angular plane.*
- 4. Storefronts must be oriented towards the street and should be experienced as a collection of small-scaled retail, with operable doors.*
- 5. New buildings should be built directly to the front property or street line to establish a continuous street wall. When located adjacent to existing contributing buildings that are*

set back from the property or street line, new buildings should transition back to the setback line of existing contributing buildings in order to maintain open views and vantage points from the street to the contributing buildings.

6.4.2 Street Wall Height and Scale

6.4.2.1 Woodbridge HCD (General) Heritage Attributes

- 1. Except for Woodbridge Avenue, buildings are generally 2 to 3 storeys tall.*
- 2. Contributing structures present within limits, a variety of heights and scales. Most often, the heritage attributes of individual buildings include the designed height and its relationship and views within its context.*

Guidelines

- 1. Except where noted, new buildings should be a minimum of 2 floors (8.5 m) and a maximum of 3 floors (11 m).*
- 2. The height of existing contributing buildings should be maintained. New buildings must be sympathetic to, and transition from, the height of adjacent contributing buildings, with a minimum 45-degree angular plane. (See section 6.5, Diagram A)*
- 3. The height of a building is measured from the average elevation of the finished grade at the front of the building to the highest point of the roof surface for a flat roof and a mansard roof; and to the mean height between the eaves and the highest point of a gable, hip, or a gambrel roof. (See Section 6.5, Diagram B)*

Architectural Guidelines and Materials

The chosen materials from the proposed development consist of red brick, cast limestone-like foundation and cast stone windowsills. As the Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment suggests, it is recommended that the colour of the louvres on the exterior of the mechanical penthouse be light in colour like the simulated limestone cladding. The proposed materials are in line with the policies of the WHCD Plan.

The design takes in to account the proportion of parts, pertaining to windows. The oversized window openings (except for the garage door) retain the vertical orientation, which is often seen on historic buildings, and works well with the neighbouring building.

The flat iron inspired building footprint is simple in design and clearly of its time leaning into a higher ratio of transparency to solid. The regular rhythm of window openings is a design feature that is consistent with historic flat iron building designs while the dark window frames and coordinating railings work to emphasize this rhythm.

As this building is within the Woodbridge Avenue Character Area, detailing can be more contemporary yet with a deference to scale, repetition, lines and levels, beam and column, solid and transparent that relates to the immediate context.

Aside from the scale, the design of this building is respectful to its neighbours and meets the policies of the WHCD Plan.

6.3.3 Architectural Guidelines

Material Palette

There is a very broad range of materials in today's design palette, but materials proposed for new buildings in the district should include those drawn from ones historically in use in Woodbridge.

This includes brick, stone, traditional stucco; wood siding and trim, glass windows and storefronts, and various metals. The use and placement of these materials in a contemporary composition and their incorporation with other modern materials is critical to the success of the fit of the proposed building in its context. The proportional use of materials, use of extrapolated construction lines (window head, or cornices for example) projected from the surrounding context, careful consideration of colour and texture all add to the success of a composition.

Proportions of Parts

Architectural composition has always had at its root the study of proportion. In various styles, rules of proportion have varied from the complex formulas of the classical orders to a more liberal study of key proportions in buildings of the modern movement. For new buildings in this heritage district, the design should take into account the proportions of buildings in the immediate context and consider a design with proportional relationships that will make a good fit.

An example of this might be windows. Nineteenth century buildings were arranged without fail using a vertical proportioning system, organizing windows singly or in groups. This proportioning system extends to the arrangement of panes within individual windows. In buildings of the Art Deco and Art Moderne period windows are often of a horizontal proportion. Although this horizontality is not universally the case, it is a character defining feature of these styles.

Solidity verses Transparency

It is a characteristic of historic buildings of the 19th century to have solid walls with punched windows. This relationship of solid to void makes these buildings less transparent in appearance. It was a characteristic that was based upon technology (the ability to make large windows and to heat space came later, and changed building

forms), societal standards for privacy, and architectural tradition. Buildings of many 20th century styles in contrast use large areas of glass and transparency as part of their design philosophy. In this historic district the relationship of solidity to transparency is a characteristic of new buildings that should be carefully considered. The nature of the immediate context for the new building in each of the defined character areas should be studied. The level of transparency in the new work should be set at a level that provides a good fit on the street frontages. In the Woodbridge Avenue Character Area, a Main Street approach can be taken and a more transparent building permitted between the ratios of 20% solid to 70% solid. In the other character areas this proportion should reflect a more traditional residential proportion of 40% solid to 80% solid.

Detailing

In past styles structure was often hidden behind a veneer of other surfaces. "Detailing" was largely provided by the use of coloured, shaped, patterned or carved masonry and /or added traditional ornament, moldings, finials, cresting and so on. In contemporary buildings every element of a building can potentially add to the artistic composition. Architectural, structural, mechanical and even electrical systems can contribute to the final design. For new buildings in the Woodbridge Heritage District, the detailing of the work should again refer to the nature of the immediate context and the attributes of the Character Area in which it is to be placed.

In the Woodbridge Avenue Character Area, detailing can be more contemporary yet with a deference to scale, repetition, lines and levels, beam and column, solid and transparent that relates to the immediate context.

In the other character areas, the detailing of new buildings should tend toward a more traditional approach. Whereas a contemporary approach is permitted, the use of moldings, brackets, architraves, entablatures, cornices and other traditional detailing is encouraged, to help ensure a good fit with the immediate context.

It is also noted that the following plans were submitted in support of the application:

- Grading Plan (Attachment 5)
- Arborist Report (Attachment 6)
- Landscape Plans (Attachment 7)
- Tree Protection Plan (Attachment 8)

Financial Impact

N/A

Operational Impact

N/A

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

N/A

Conclusion

While the proposed development does not meet the requirements of height according to the WHCD, City Cultural Heritage and Planning staff and the property owner(s) agreed that the original height of 25.8m be brought down to 24.8m to match the building directly across the street in order to match the massing on the streetscape.

Cultural Heritage staff recommend that the proposed seven storey building at 239, 245, 251 Woodbridge Avenue be approved as it conforms to the current scale and massing of the area west of the railway on Woodbridge Avenue and general intent of the WHCD.

Heritage Vaughan Committee recommendations to Council do not constitute any specific support for any Development Application under the *Planning Act* or permits currently under review or to be submitted in the future by the Owner as it relates to the subject application.

For more information, please contact Vanessa Lio, Heritage Specialist, 8152

Attachments

1. Location Map
2. Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment
3. Heritage District Conformity Report
4. Architectural Set and Materials
5. Grading Plan
6. Arborist Report
7. Landscape Plans
8. Tree Protection Plan

Prepared by

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