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Charlottetown UDRP

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### **Concept Plans for 55-59 Richmond St**

#### **Proposed Development**

The proposal is a 4 storey, 23 unit apartment building at 55-59 Richmond St. There is no parking on site associated with the development.

The proposed project is within the "Downtown Neighbourhood" of the 500 Lot Area, and specifically facing Connaught Square. Connaught Square has an interesting history, but today it is generally an open green space with a few mature trees and play areas for children. The Northeast side [Pownal St.] of the square is essentially a parking lot with a large commercial building in the background. The North West side [Richmond St.] currently has three two storey houses on the East end and a large 5 storey multi-unit residential building to the west end. Rochford Street has a two storey mid century commercial building. Finally, Sydney Street has a 3+ storey multi-unit residential on the corner, followed by 6 charming 2 storey heritage residential units

This proposal demolishes one of the units on Richmond to create a site large enough to support the building design.

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#### **500 Lot Design Guidelines**

Contextual References are made to:

- Siting of adjacent residences - relationships to property lines
- Front yards - ground cover or low planting
- Primary entrances
- Multi-unit structures should be street oriented
- Parking should not be in the front setback
- Minimize the visual impact of a garage
- New construction should maintain the scale of the neighbourhood
- New construction should not be so large as to compromise the visual impact of the neighbourhood
- Maintain scale of the typical residential structures
- new Multi-storey structures should not overwhelm existing single-family homes
- Facade widths should not exceed the maximum facade width of a typical residence

- Form should respect traditional simple rectangular forms
- Roofs should feature the style and elements characteristic of the neighbourhood
- Windows reflect placement and scale of nearby homes
- Materials recommended for new construction include brick, stone, wood and glass
- Materials should be true to their nature.

## Design Review Comments

### Overview

What is particularly interesting in this neighbourhood is that despite it being classified as a Downtown Neighbourhood and that it falls within the Lot 500 Area, there isn't much left of the residential feel around this square with the exception of the half dozen heritage structures on Sydney Street. These are precious buildings and should be preserved. The other three streets have nothing remaining of significant merit as references.

### Form

The City has previously approved the consolidation of the lots, and the height and density of the development subject to The Zoning & Development Bylaw approval and Design Review approval.

## 500 Lot Area Development Standards & Design Guidelines

### Section 2.0 Guiding Principles

#### 1. Siting

Connaught Square, in and of itself is an important place with considerable history to celebrate. In addition, it contributes to and reinforces the history of Charlottetown. Unfortunately, the two narrow ends of the square have been eroded with commercial development. The long sides still retain residential units which add to the livability of the square and the neighbourhood.

From this perspective, I think the proposed building is well sited and complimentary in its relationship to the street and its neighbours. From the plans and elevations, I get the sense that the traditional set backs are reflected in this project and are better than the building at 53 Richmond with its one-way vehicular drop off lane.

The side yards are tight and don't reflect those of its residential neighbours to the East, but they have been approved and meet zoning requirements.

#### 2. Urban Structure

As mentioned previously, there isn't much left of the historic urban character of the neighbourhood. With the approval of the building at 53 Richmond and the commercial units on the adjacent streets, little remains to support a more residential low scale development. In the current context one would hope that the overall height cap to the neighbourhood would be 5 stories. Adjacent to the busy and bulky neighbour this project has a nice delicate scale.

### **3. Historic Street And Block Pattern**

The proposed development, being mid-block respects the historic street and block pattern. It's relationship to the street reinforces the residential character and the experience that pedestrians feel as they walk in the neighbourhood.

### **4. Protect, Restore, & Leverage All Historic Resources**

The beauty of this proposal, is that it contributes additional livelihood to the neighbourhood by adding more affordable residential units. Having the luxury of an open and historic green space will encourage interaction amongst the community in the park like setting. Hopefully, people move here they will become more aware of the significance of the square.

### **5. Protect & Strengthen the Residential Neighbourhoods**

There is a trend in the growth of cities, generally through the increase in suburban development as the land in the urban core becomes more expensive. By adding this proposed type of development to the core, one is improving and contributing to the goals and aspirations of a "livable city".

### **6. Provide Transitions Between Areas of Differing Densities and Scales.**

A precedent has been established with the development of 53 Richmond [5 stories] and the development at the corner of Haviland and Sydney [feels in bulk and scale as a 4 - 4<sup>1/2</sup> storey structure]. The proposed building certainly falls into this scale category. The one redeeming fact is that the larger scale projects are now centering on Richmond Street and are establishing a ceiling in the 4 to 5 storey height.

### **7. First three Stories Fronting on the Street Matter the Most**

53 Richmond's facade was broken into elements or masses of 1, 2 and 4 stories. The 4 storey portion being in the centre. This project has made no attempt to respond to its neighbours on either side. To the east are the three remaining residential units with somewhat modest and delicate residential facades. The proponent has added for privacy horizontal screening to the two units at grade. Each of these has its principal entrance behind the screen and makes for a nice pedestrian scale entrance feature. . The project would be better if the building's main entrance had a more residential feeling, both in scale and materiality. He has made reference to projects at 94-98 King Street and at 60-66 Dorchester Street [both for approved lot lines]. However, both projects have principle facades that have a better residential treatment than what is proposed here. The use of "Alpolic" metal panels feel commercial as proposed and should be given addition consideration to scale and texture. In addition, right elevation is highly visible and presents an opportunity to address scale and detail, as well. If one looks at the building at Haviland and Sydney, one can see the results of not looking at the neighbouring residential for context and scale.

## 8. Strength Visual & Physical Orientation & Connectivity

The use of "Alpolic" metal panels feel commercial, as proposed and should be given addition consideration to both scale and texture. In addition, the right elevation is highly visible from the North East and presents an opportunity to address scale and detail, as well. If one looks at the building at Haviland and Sydney, one can see the results of not considering the neighbouring residential buildings for context or scale.

## 9. Larger and Taller Buildings Have the Greatest Civic Responsibilities

N/A

## 10. Design and Construct so that they Become Future Heritage

N/A

## Section 7. Development and Design Standards

This section of the City of Charlottetown Zoning & Development Bylaw address style, compatibility, scale, detailing, etc. in a broad manner.

The proposed development is in an area that is in transition and has been for quite a long time. The square has a fascinating history and deserves to be celebrated in its own right. With respect to the edges, the historic structures are for the most part gone. There are a few heritage buildings remaining and those on the Sydney Street side are charming and hopefully will be restored over time. The residential buildings on the Richmond St could also be restored as time passes. In the context of the remaining structures, there isn't much to respond to. The applicant's design generally has a scale that is acceptable in the greater neighbourhood context. It is not too high, and has nice contemporary detailing at the ground level entrances [two end units] that feels both right and of a pedestrian scale. The central feature needs to be resolved in a contemporary manner that captures the context better. The right elevation [and to some degree the left], should be studied as well. The fact that this is an affordable apartment project adds to the livability of the neighbourhood and the urban core in general. I feel it contributes to the evolving and revitalization much need in an urban core.

It's relationship to the street is good and its set back respects that of the neighbouring residential buildings. While the roof is flat, at four stories, I don't feel that this is negative; a pitched roof might only increase its mass and in fact be detrimental. I have previously made reference to the Haviland and Sydney project, and one might argue that it would have been more sympathetic if it didn't have such a large and powerful roof.

Parking is not an issue, as it is off site. There isn't really a landscape plan, although the Schematic Design drawings allude to modest landscaping in front of the two residential unit entrances. These are nice contemporary entrance features which are well appreciated. As mentioned above the central portion of the building; its materiality and detailing needs to be further studied in the context of building upon and strengthening the residential scale of the neighbourhood.

The proponent has made reference to several large projects in Halifax. I have missed the point that he is trying to make to this site and Connaught Square.

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## Conclusion

Generally, I find this design works well in the context of the Square as a whole. The scale is generally good and the relationship of two of the ground level units have a nice scale and gesture to the context of Richmond Street.

I generally approve the proposal in principle but, recommend that the applicant review his entrance feature; it's materiality and detailing and resubmit prior to final approval.

Prepared by:-  
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