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Urban Design & Planning

**Acronym Urban Design and Planning/Mark Sterling Consulting Inc.**  
**111 Clendenan Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M6P 2W7**

**URBAN DESIGN BRIEF**  
**PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**  
**4880 VALERA ROAD, CITY OF BURLINGTON**

**PREPARED FOR: ADI DEVELOPMENT GROUP INC.**

**DATE: 13 DECEMBER 2017**



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Date: 13 December 2017

Adi Development Group Inc.  
1100 Burloak Drive, Suite 700 (PH)  
Burlington, ON  
L7L 6B2

Attention: Mr. Mark Sim, Project Planner

**Re: Urban Design Brief:  
4880 Valera Road, Burlington, ON**

Dear Mark,

Please find below my Urban Design Brief for the proposed development at 4880 Valera Road in Burlington.

It is my opinion that the proposed development comprised of: two mid-rise buildings, one at 10 storeys and one at 8 storeys linked at the base by a 3-storey element; standard, street and stacked townhouses; and mid-block private open space represents good planning and urban design.

This Urban Design Brief focusses on City of Burlington Official Plan policies and Zoning By-law standards related to:

- Compatibility with the neighbourhood context;
- Shadow impacts on adjacent properties;
- Buffering to mitigate any identified impacts; and
- Built form integration and transition between existing and proposed development.

The development concept includes a total of 414 units with the following unit and building type breakdown:

- 14 street townhouses which face directly onto Valera Road;
- 30 standard townhouse units along the south and west edges of the subject property (including 14 whose rear yards back onto the rear yards of the existing townhouses along the north side of Capri Crescent);
- 26 back-to-back stacked townhouse units internal to the subject property; and
- 344 condominium apartment units within the 10 and 8 storey mid-rise buildings that front onto Thomas Alton Boulevard and Appleby Line.

Additional details of the revised development concept can be found in the December 2017 Planning Justification Report prepared by A. J. Clarke & Associates Ltd.

The proposed development consists primarily of a mix of residential building types that range from apartment buildings, stacked townhouses, and standard townhouses on a 2.24-hectare site. A retail space is proposed in

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the north east of the development facing Thomas Alton Boulevard. The building elements are organized on the subject property to both frame the adjacent public streets at an appropriate scale and to address the adjacent existing low scale residential development to the south and west with a matching built form in terms of type, scale and setbacks.

The internal driveways - as shown in the proposed Site Plan – set up a grid system of local scale “street frontages” and open spaces that provide residential addresses for both the low and high rise buildings on the site. Access to the site is by means of street connections to both Valera Road and Appleby Line. The overall circulation system on the site is permeable and legible. The standard townhouses and stacked townhouses, have integral garages facing the driveway grid and Valera Road, the majority of the parking on site is provided in below grade parking structures.

The proposed apartment buildings are 8 and 10 storeys in height – including a 3-storey podium element, while the other proposed residential buildings are three to four storeys in height.

The proposed development conforms to the City of Burlington Official Plan – specifically OPA 102 which designated the subject property as Residential – High Density. The residential policies for the Alton community state that in Residential-High Density designations housing forms may include townhouses, stacked townhouses, attached housing and apartments, to a maximum of 10 storeys. The Official Plan states that in Residential High Density areas, densities shall range between 51-185 units per net hectare. On this site, a maximum of 414 units could be accommodated.

The primary open space is located in a mid-block position roughly in the centre of the subject property. This proposed open space provides a clear landscape focus for the apartment building and the lower scale townhouses and stacked townhouses on the south side of the subject property. A second open space is located at the Valera Road entrance to the proposed development. This space is adjacent to the proposed 8 storey building. Although the final landscape design is not yet complete, proposed open spaces are appropriately positioned and, along with the design approach to the internal driveway grid and landscaped building setbacks, provides opportunities to develop a landscape identity and setting for the proposed development.

The proposed development requires a Site-Specific Zoning By-law Amendment to address:

- Permitted Uses (proposed mix of residential building types);
- Height;
- Density (UPH);
- FAR;
- Setbacks from certain streets;
- Built Form (balconies and proposed access); and
- Landscaped Setbacks.

### **Neighbourhood Context:**

The context of the proposed development consists of a heterogeneous mix of building forms and land uses. The subject property is located at the periphery of an existing residential neighbourhood area to the west, opposite an existing commercial building complex that fronts onto Appleby Line and adjacent to a hydro transmission corridor to the south east, beyond which is a development with a variety of retail uses. East of Appleby Line are Regional Commercial zoned lands which are developed with a variety of retail uses including a large home improvement and garden centre.

The existing residential neighbourhood to the west and southwest consists of a mix of single detached residential and townhouse dwellings. The dwellings immediately to the south of the subject property are the location of standard townhouses. The dwellings on the west side of Valera Road are, opposite the subject property are a mixture of townhouses and semi-detached houses.

The existing townhouses to the south have approximately 6.0 metre deep rear yards facing the property line to the north, which is shared with the subject property.

The existing commercial development to the north west of the proposed development is located to frame the street frontage of Appleby Line with surface parking located generally behind the street facing buildings in the mid block. A private driveway between Thomas Alton Boulevard and Palladium Way is located along the west property line. Future commercial building sites are located along the east side of this private driveway.

To the north west at 4853 Thomas Alton Blvd. there are Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendment applications seeking to permit two 19 storey apartment buildings and a mix of standard and stacked townhouse units on the property. These applications have been appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board.

The employment lands north of Palladium Way will be developed for a mixture of office and light industrial uses. It is assumed that the built form of development on these lands will be generally mid-rise in form with a locational focus on the intersection of Appleby Line and Palladium Way and toward the Highway 407 interchange to the northwest.

### **Urban Design Opinion:**

The design for the proposed development has adopted an approach that is focussed on: specific responses to the varied land use and built form conditions that surround it; and the creation of an appropriately urban ensemble of buildings, “streets” and open spaces on the site itself.

Adjacent to the existing townhouses to the south, the proposed development locates a series of 3 storey standard townhouses that face onto an internal “street” and have 6.0-metre-deep rear yards. The proposed built form and rear yard depth of these townhouses mirror the townhouses immediately adjacent to the south.

Standard townhouses are also located around the perimeter of the property on the east and west. The eastern group of townhouses faces into the middle of the property, with 6.0-metre-deep rear yards adjacent to the hydro transmission corridor. The western group of townhouses faces onto Valera Road with front yard setbacks that range between 6.8 metres and 8.2 metres, similar to those found in the townhouse and duplex units on the opposite side of the street. These townhouses have 6.0-metre-deep rear yards adjacent to the westernmost of the internal roads.

Two parallel ranks of 3-storey stacked townhouses are proposed facing the east-west internal road grid.

The proposed apartment buildings (10 and 8-storeys in height which include an L-shaped 3-storey connecting podium) frame the Thomas Alton Boulevard and Appleby Line frontages with a continuous street wall. A flanking relationship is established between the western 8 storey mid-rise building and the townhouses opposite at the corner of Valera Road and Thomas Alton Boulevard. The set back of the west face of the 8-storey building in this location varies between 7.9 metres and 10.6 metres.

The proposed development is set back from: Thomas Alton Boulevard by 10.65 metres or more; and Appleby Line by 10.75 metres (with the exception of the northern corner of the building opposite the daylight triangle at the intersection of Thomas Alton Boulevard and Appleby Line, where the setback is 3.08 metres.

The mid-rise buildings are proposed to be clad in a balanced composition of masonry and glazing, with the primary expression of the built form found in the framing of the projecting residential balconies into legible blocks on the façade, on the podium as well as in the upper levels of the buildings. In addition, the upper and lower parts of the buildings are separated by an “urban scale reveal” which is created at the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor where the more glazed area is proposed.

A 134 square metre commercial space is located in the northern corner of the Appleby Line facing portion of the podium. The majority of the ground floor of the apartment buildings consists of street facing dwelling units with private terraces.

A street facing entrance to the lobby that serves the apartment buildings is also proposed at this location. The shared lobby connects through the ground floor to the middle of the block, where drop off and short term associated parking spaces are located – opposite the north side of the proposed mid-block open space. Two moving/loading/garbage rooms are located on the ground floor facing toward the middle of the block.

Indoor amenity space is proposed at the corner of the L-shaped podium at the third-floor level. An outdoor swimming pool and associated terrace space is also located at this level on the inside corner of the L-shaped podium, overlooking the proposed mid-block open space. Outdoor amenity space is located: at the fourth-floor level in a landscaped terrace in the gap created at this level by the separation of the upper parts of the two midrise buildings; and on accessible roof top spaces on both of the mid-rise buildings.

The mid-block building floor plates above the 3-storey podium are both appropriately sized at approximately 1,270 square metres with an appropriate minimum corner-to-corner separation distance between them of approximately 23.0 metres at the narrowest point and 30.4 metres at the widest point. These upper level mid-rise building elements are located on the parts of the subject property that are farthest away from the existing lower scale neighbourhoods, immediately opposite the existing commercial development to the north. There is a substantial step back of the western end of the 8-storey building element above the third floor, facing Valera Road aiding in the transition in scale between the mid-rise building and the existing townhouses on the opposite side of the street.

Parking for all of the standard and stacked townhouses is provided in garages that are integral to the units. Two ranks of visitor parking spaces that serve the entire development are located to the north of the townhouses adjacent to the proposed mid-block open space. The required parking for the apartment buildings is provided underground in a garage, access to which is by means of a single ramp, also located adjacent to the proposed mid-block open space.

In my opinion, the proposed development will be compatible with its neighbourhood context. The varied building types that have been proposed allow the proposed development to respond to each of the very different adjacent or nearby built form conditions.

Where appropriate, the proposed development mirrors the configuration that is found adjacent or opposite to it. Where a residential building type that is different from the nearby conditions, such as the flank of the 8-storey mid rise building that faces Thomas Alton Boulevard, the relationship between the difference in building height and scale is mitigated by the short width of the flanking face of the proposed building, its substantial step back from the street above the third floor and the width of the street itself.

In my opinion, the proposition of high density residential development including apartment buildings at 10 and 8 storeys at the periphery of the larger residential neighbourhood as a whole, along with the creation of a lower scale building fabric for the portions of the subject property that are adjacent or opposite to the existing residential neighbourhood, creates an appropriate transition in scale. This approach also results in the mid-rise buildings and the associated podium acting as buffer between the proposed townhouses and the employment and commercial lands to the north and northeast.

As generally recommended by City staff, scale relationships between the proposed development and the existing residential neighbourhood have been analysed using a 45-degree angular planes projected inward from the relevant property lines – those facing residential neighbourhoods.

While there is no specific City of Burlington Official Plan or Zoning By-law requirement, or Design Guideline recommendation for the application of such angular planes, it has been my experience that they can sometimes be used as a general indicator of appropriate scale relationships between adjacent and or near by built forms. They can also be used as a “rule of thumb”, or a non-exact means of estimation of potential for shadow, wind or overlook/privacy impacts. However they are not, in my opinion, an absolute measure of potential undue impact in any of the senses described above.

With that being understood, the proposed development falls well under 45-degree angular planes projected inward from the property lines of residential buildings facing the opposite side of Valera Road.

In my opinion the resulting street proportions on Valera Road, considering the width of the street to the height of the buildings that frame it will be appropriate and in keeping with the overall low-rise form of the other nearby portions of the street. At this scale, the asymmetry of the framing elements at the corner with Thomas Alton Boulevard is acceptable.

The resulting built form relationship between the mid-rise buildings at 10 and 8 storeys and the existing retail development to the north will be appropriate in terms of street scale and framing considerations. Although the proposed buildings will be taller than these retail buildings, and the street cross section on Thomas Alton Boulevard will be asymmetrical, the expression of the 3-storey podium, with the glazed “urban scale reveal” described elsewhere in this report. and the gap between the two mid-rise elements will create an appropriate and legible scale relationship with the two-storey high existing commercial buildings across the street.

The street proportion of Appleby line in this area is generally framed by one-storey retail buildings, some set back from the street by substantial distances. The street right-of-way of way is approximately 50.0 metres in width in the segment opposite the subject property. In my opinion, a 10-storey building will provide some much-needed variety in scale and building form to the generally low-rise commercial strip environment that currently exists in the area.

Based on the foregoing, in my opinion, the proposed development will be compatible in both form and character with the existing Thomas Alton neighbourhood, in terms of scale, massing, height, siting, setbacks, coverage, and the proposed approach to parking. The proposed development will achieve appropriate transitions between the varied context of existing and future buildings.

### **Shadow Impacts On Adjacent Properties:**

I have reviewed the shadow analysis prepared by Core Architects. These have been prepared according to the terms of reference of the City of Burlington for such studies.

Based on my review, in my opinion the sun-shadow conditions on adjacent properties that will result from the proposed development will be at an acceptable level in all periods of the year. Because of the position and orientation of the tallest of the buildings (the 10 and 8-storey mid-rise buildings) the majority of all shadows throughout the year will fall onto the paved areas of Thomas Alton Boulevard and Appleby Line and the commercial property to the north of the subject property. At no time during the year will there be any shadow impacts on adjacent residential areas or amenity areas, including those that are part of the proposed development.

### **Buffering to Mitigate Any Identified Impacts:**

In my opinion, from an urban design perspective, there are no specific impacts resulting from the proposed development that require mitigation.

As noted above in the discussion on compatibility, the overall approach to the siting of the mid-rise buildings in relation to the low-rise fabric of the of the proposed development provides a buffer that mitigates any potential visual impact that could be created by the presence of the mid-rise buildings when seen from the existing residential neighbourhood. In my opinion, there will be no undue visual impact or privacy concerns for the surrounding neighbourhood resulting from the proposed tall buildings.

### **Built Form Integration and Transition Between Existing and Proposed Development:**

As noted above in the discussion on compatibility, in my opinion the proposed development achieves appropriate built form integration with its quite varied built form context.

In particular the position of the mid-rise building elements at the outermost periphery of the existing residential neighbourhood abutting, and having direct vehicular access to a major arterial road, satisfies the most fundamental aspect of the Official Plan evaluation criteria for the assessment of housing intensification in established neighbourhoods.

The proposed development will be well integrated with the existing neighbourhood and an appropriate transition between existing and proposed residential buildings will be provided, in both form and character and in terms of scale, massing, height, siting, setbacks, coverage, and the proposed approach to parking.

### **Conclusion:**

From an Urban Design perspective, in my opinion the revised proposed development conforms to the City of Burlington Official Plan, specifically OPA 102 and the proposed site-specific amendments are consistent with the intent of City of Burlington Zoning By-law 2020. The proposed open space and the mix and deployment of the proposed mid and low-rise building types will result in an excellent addition to the existing Thomas Alton Neighbourhood. I support the form, scale and configuration of the proposed development as illustrated in the documents that I have reviewed

Thank You.

Best Regards,



Acronym Urban Design and Planning  
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Mark Sterling BES, B.Arch, OAA, MCIP, RPP  
Principal

cc. A. J. Clarke & Associates Ltd.