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359 KENT STREET DESIGN BRIEF

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Centertown neighbourhood, abutting Ottawa's downtown is one of the City's oldest residential suburbs. Following the construction of the Parliament buildings from 1859 to 1866 a large, mostly undeveloped swat of land, primarily used for military purposes and canal construction was developed into housing for public servants and the City's up and coming commercial class. Stately homes ranging from Victorian to early Georgian periods were built and organized in a block pattern which lined the consistent street grid still present today. Heavily influenced by its proximity to Ottawa's downtown, this neighbourhood became more urban in the early 20th century. This period saw many of the red brick traditional homes converted into multi-unit residential dwellings as well the construction of purpose-built apartment buildings to house the rising population of civil servants.



Figure 1.0 – 1928 Aerial image of Centertown, Ottawa.

The 1960's brought a new wave of development with many blocks being demolished and replaced by new retail commercial uses, as well as offices and high density residential. Over the years, Centertown has become a melting pot of architectural styles of many eras. Today, it is a rich vibrant neighbourhood that accommodates a wide range of populations, interesting landscapes, and building types.

Located in the area designated 'West of Bank Street' by The Centertown Heritage Inventory, our site, at 359 Kent Street is a great example of the diversity of buildings in the neighbourhood (Figure 1.0). Two single family pre-1915 houses sit at the corner of Kent and Maclaren abutting a six storey late-modernist office building to the south on the corner of Kent Street and Gilmour Street. By redeveloping this site, classified as a landmark, the intent is to preserve some of these important historical elements and incorporate them into the ever-evolving fabric of this neighbourhood.

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PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT



Built Form & Urban Fabric

Because of the landmark nature of this site – the vision is to create a development that is truly iconic in the neighbourhood and the city while maintaining a sense of place. We would accomplish this on multiple fronts. The intent is to retain the South and West facades of the current Legion Building, located at 359 Kent Street. The limestone veneer, aluminum punctuations, and ribbon fenestration create a simple and elegant building, reflective of the International Style in which it was first constructed in 1955 (Figure 2.0). This six storey component would be conserved through documentation of each element of cladding. The building would then be dismantled, and 1200 limestone units would be salvaged, repaired, and stored to be reconstructed on a new back-up wall.

In addition to conserving the Legion building, this proposal intends to retain the two historic houses along Maclaren Street. The homes, one clad in red brick, and the other with grey stucco, would be restored to a high standard and sensitively integrated as a vital part of the development. The intent is for the inner-block house to be dedicated as office space, while the corner block house will be transformed into a community based service, an established need in the Centretown district.



Figure 2.0 – Existing Legion Building at 359 Kent Street.

Sustainability

As a landmark site, this proposed development aims to become a leader in sustainable design and energy efficiency through a series of objectives. It is intended that the proposed design could become an educational tool for the public by providing building analytics and a real-time energy performance display. Additionally, these shared metrics and data would contribute to the industry's greater knowledge of the systems and strategies put into practice. It is intended that the proposed development's sustainable measures may be monitored by a partnered institution as an alternative means of sharing data on energy performance and building operations. The proposed development also aims to



exceed the City of Ottawa’s High Performance Development Standards (HPDS) Tier 1 metrics. Advanced systems such as geothermal and photovoltaics are being explored.

The Base

The retention of the Legion house requires a reshaping of the site strategy (Figure 3.0). Currently, the Legion building’s ground level is located approximately 5 feet below grade, resulting in an awkward ground level to streetscape relationship for pedestrians and users. Therefore, the intention is to raise the ground level to meet existing grade and open up the façade along Kent Street and Gilmour Street. The primary entrance, recessed and located on the South façade along Gilmour Street, allows for a wider sidewalk, improving the pedestrian experience (Figure 5.0). A secondary entrance along the North facade will provide an internal circulation path through the building and provide access to a POPS (Figure 4.0). At grade, a civic use will be located fronting Kent Street and the POPS. The intent of this development is to reinvigorate an important part of Kent Street by bringing together existing members of the community and new residents.



Figure 3.0 – Proposed Site Plan.



Figure 4.0 – Proposed entrance plaza along Kent Street.



Figure 5.0 – Proposed retention of heritage façade at the corner of Gilmour Street and Kent Street.

The Podium

The new podium component's four storey height provides a transitional element to the neighbourhood. Additionally, this red brick component aims to reflect the urban fabric through materiality, scale, and texture, breaking up the façade into smaller bays and using granular brick details. This portion of the podium is intentionally set back along Gilmour Street to allow for additional landscaping (Figure 6.0).



Figure 6.0 – Proposed podium design along Gilmour Street.

Level six, deemed the resident's amenity park, is intended to create a visual and formal separation between the podium and tower portion of the proposed building. This level, inset from the podium and primarily glazed, will house additional amenity space, and opens up and steps down to an expansive rooftop patio on level five (Figure 7.0).



Figure 7.0 – View looking West from proposed level six amenity space.

Building Transition

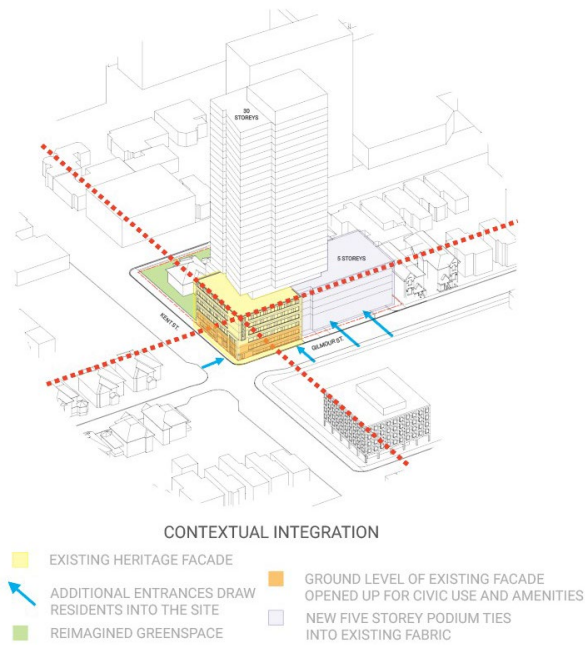


Figure 8.0 – Axonometric diagram indicating referential datums from existing context.

The podium's datum, derived from the existing context along Kent Street (Figure 10.0), is gradually stepped towards the residential homes along Gilmour Street (Figure 9.0). Additionally, the tower portion of the proposed design, is set 32 metres back from the East property boundary and abutting neighbourhood. To the West, the tower is recessed from 3.3-6.4 metres from the property boundary due to the angular form. These significant tower setbacks provide greater relief to the neighbouring homes, while the podium's height, set back form, materiality, and granular texture reflects the existing context.



Figure 9.0 – Proposed podium design along Gilmour Street.



The Tower and the Top

Above the podium, a 27-storey tower, acts as the beacon for this site. The triple grid and unique angular projections not only act as a guide to the downtown core and the Parliament Buildings from the highway but deem this tower as a new iconic piece in the Ottawa skyline (Figure 10.0). The desire to being a leader in sustainability has informed the form and materiality of the tower. Additionally, the proposed tower has reduced the number of balconies to minimize the inefficiencies of the building (Figure 12.0).



Figure 10.0 – Proposed design from Maclaren Street and Kent Street.



Figure 11.0 – Proposed design from Kent Street and Gilmour Street.



The proposed development would bring additional density to the area with +/- 289 new residential units of various typologies. This would likely promote new commercial activity to the area with new residents and attract locals and tourists alike. This development will provide four storeys of underground vehicular parking at a ratio of 0.62 spaces per unit and 0.1 spaces for visitors for a total of +/- 207 parking spaces.



Figure 12.0 – View of proposed tower looking South-West.

A prominent crown at the top of the building continues the architectural language through the entirety of the building, drawing the eye upwards and elongating the tower (Figure 13.0). Additionally, this continual element encapsulates the mechanical space. This crown also provides access to a rooftop patio amenity space for residents.



Figure 13.0 – West elevation view of proposed tower and crown.



Public Realm and Landscape Proposal

This development aims to incorporate landscape elements around the perimeter of the site as a means of reinventing Kent Street. The image below, from 1951, is indicative of how the streetscape once was (Figure 14.0). Large setbacks and grand tree canopies create an environment enjoyable for pedestrians and urban wildlife alike.

This development has reduced the below grade parking garage footprint to allow mature growth of trees between the proposed entrance and the rear facades of the existing heritage homes. This space is intended to become a POPS for residents and community members to sit, visit and potentially enjoy a beverage or meal. The landscaping wraps around the heritage homes on Maclaren street, replacing the existing asphalt parking, and creating a linear greenspace. This reimagined greenspace will provide new mature trees as a means of recreating the 1950's Kent streetscape. Additionally, this greenspace will increase pedestrian traffic in the area, will be in view of Kent Street vehicles, and well lit for safety purposes (Figures 15.0-25.0). The south side of the site will see more landscaping implemented along Gilmour street to improve the sidewalk experience and provide a green buffer (Figure 32.0).



Figure 14.0 – 1951 image of Kent streetscape.

Streetscape Cross Sections

The following site sections reflect the manner in which the proposed development aims to reinvent Kent Street and maintain the streetscape of Gilmour and Maclaren. Due to Maclaren's streetscape remaining similar to the existing condition as the two heritage homes are to remain in place, this section is not included.



Figure 15.0 – Proposed Kent Street cross section.

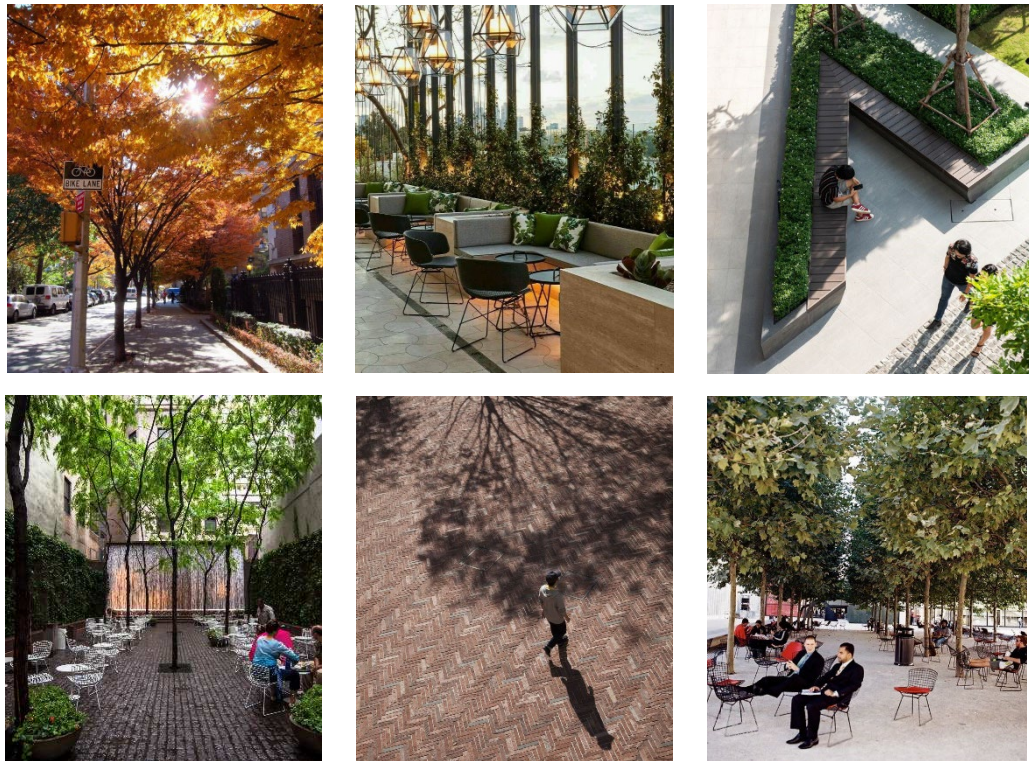


Figure 16.0 – Proposed Gilmour Street cross section.

Landscape Proposal



Figure 17.0 – Proposed Landscape Plan



Figures 18.0-23.0 – Landscape Mood Images



Figure 24.0 – Proposed level five rooftop amenity space.



Figure 25.0 – Proposed level five rooftop amenity space.

Landscape elements will also be present on the level five rooftop and level 27 rooftop. Lush planting beds intend to provide a visual and auditory buffer. Additionally, the planting intended to provide urban wildlife such as bees, squirrels, and birds with safe habitats (Figures 24.0 and 25.0).

Alternative Building Massing Studies



Figure 26.0 – As-of-Right Massing



Figure 27.0 – Previous Study - Option 2



Figure 28.0 – Previous Study - Option 3



Figure 29.0 – Previous Study - Option 4



Figure 30.0 – Previous Study - Option 5



Figure 31.0 – Previous Study - Option 6



The as-of-right form, a nine-storey mass, reduces the ability for site permeability, contextual transition strategies, or exterior green space at grade to be incorporated (Figure 26.0). The nine storey mass would require the demolition of two heritage homes on Maclaren Street, removing aspects of the current streetscape along both Kent Street and Maclaren Street. The L-shaped form creates a visual and physical barrier along the sidewalks of Kent Street and Gilmour Street, disallowing the site to gain sidewalk width to improve pedestrian experience, nor add landscaping features such as mature trees. This form also reduces site access, porosity, and pedestrian circulation. Further, the permitted form's continual, and linear massing is not reminiscent of the current neighbourhood's scale. To the East, narrow sites containing residential homes set back from the street create a fine grain urban fabric. These homes, many clad in red-brick, result in a scale and textural quality which requires a similar scale and granular experiential quality, present in the proposed design.

These alternative massing strategies were not further considered for a variety of factors. Primarily, heritage retention and integration, transition, and street character were three driving elements in shaping the selected and proposed design. Maintaining the two heritage homes along Maclaren Street, and the South and West facades along Kent Street and Gilmour Street were integral to the selected strategy. These elements aid in retaining a sense of place for the Centretown Community, a quality otherwise lost in the previously studied massing options. The proposed version also provides greater relief from the abutting neighbourhood in terms of height and podium scale. The low-rise residential street character along Gilmour Street and Maclaren Street also played an important role in the elimination of these alternative options. The proposed five storey podium maintains the Legion building's existing datum and provides transition from this element down to the red brick-clad homes to the East. While previous iterations' podiums did offer some step backs, they did not provide as great of a setback from Gilmour street. This additional relief at grade allows for plantings to be reminiscent of the existing Gilmour streetscape. Further reflecting the street character is the ability for the selected proposal to be segmented into bays. The heritage façade of the Legion building provides an opportunity to divide the podium into two key components, the old, and the new. This allows the rhythm, scale, and texture of the urban fabric to be replicated through variations in materiality and planes. These alternate options therefore exhibit the methods and processes in which site strategies and contextual clues informed the proposed design.



Figure 32.0 – View of proposed design looking South along Kent street.



In conclusion, our team is presented with a great opportunity with this designated landmark site to create iconic architecture that will celebrate the importance of Centretown and its community, as well as its role as a wayfinding building to the Parliament district. While enjoyed locally, this tower will become a beacon for visitors entering the Parliament Building district and downtown core via Kent Street.

Elevations

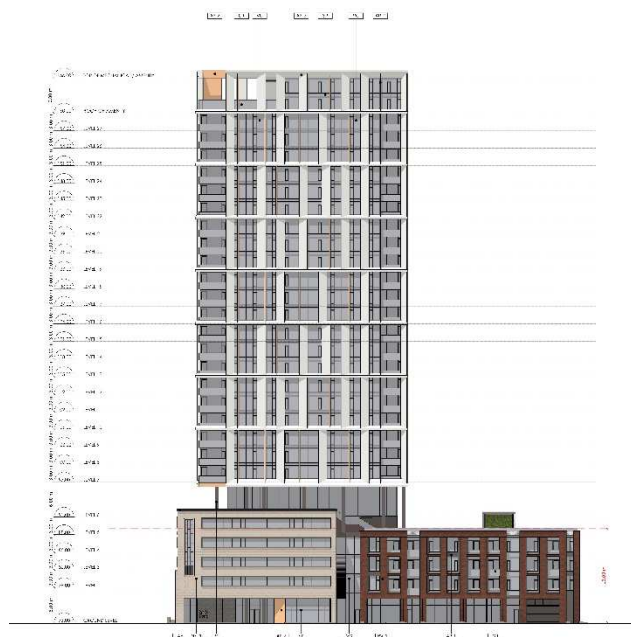


Figure 33.0 – South Elevation



Figure 34.0 – North Elevation



Figure 35.0 – East Elevation and West Elevation