



## **Urban Design Study: Sydenham Square** **2275 Sixteenth Street East, City of Owen Sound, Ontario**

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Parts 1 and 2 of Park Lots 9 and 10, Range 5, East of the Garafraxa Road, Geographic Township of Sydenham,  
City of Owen Sound, County of Grey, Plan 16R10096

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## **.A Background – Sydenham Square and the Sydenham Heights Planning Area:**

### **A.1 Context:**

- .1 The City of Owen Sound Official Plan approved by the County of Grey on February 15, 2022 is referenced as “OP” within this Urban Design Study. The project is located within the Sydenham Heights Planning Area, Phase 1 (shown on Schedule B), south of Highway 26 (Sixteenth Street East) and designated as East City Commercial on the map Schedule A2. The area is designated within the Official Plan as an area of mixed uses with residential as follows:
  - .1 OP Section 4.2 Sydenham Heights Planning Area:
    - .1 4.2.1 Secondary Plan Vision: *“The Sydenham Heights Planning Area is proposed to be largely a residential mixed-use community. The Planning Area is to be distinguished by its natural environmental features,...”*
      - .1 The Sydenham Square project respects the natural features associated with the adjacent creek and the areas designated as Hazard Land and treats the Hazard Lands as open space that contributes to the development. The project and takes advantage of this condition by arranging the residential apartment buildings along the perimeter of the flood line buffer providing views for the residents to the landscape of the Hazard Lands. In addition, visitors to the site are provided with views between the residential buildings: via attendance at the restaurant or via an open, amenity terrace between the two southern apartment buildings.
      - .2 OP 4.2.2.1 refers to the implementation of residential uses together with a mix of compatible institutional and commercial uses and open space.
        - .1 The project features 3 residential apartment buildings together with commercial buildings and restaurants.
      - .3 OP 4.2.2.2 refers to the establishment commercial development, a trail network within the Planning Area and respect for Hazard Lands.
        - .1 As described above, in addition to the planned commercial uses, the project’s studies and servicing studies consider the Hazard Lands and its features, establish the eastern boundary for the development and preserve these lands as natural, open spaces.
        - .2 A walking path is also provided along the apartment buildings which permits pedestrians and cyclists to connect from the southern area of the site to the Highway 21 frontage and the existing trail.
    - .2 The Sydenham Square site acts as a Gateway development due to its position near the eastern entrance to the City along Highway 21 (OP 2.2.7.f, 8.1.1.2 and 8.3.2 *Gateways and Nodes*).



Fig. 1 - Aerial View Looking south from Highway 26

**A.2 Architectural and Urban Design Goals for Sydenham Square – A Gateway Development:**

- .1 References below are derived from OP Section 8 Urban Design.
- .2 General Layout:
  - .1 The project creates two territories on the portion of the parcel that can be developed:
    - .1 The western portion of the parcel abutting the adjacent commercial lands west of the site are the new commercial buildings, entrance driveways and the parking. This permits commercial components to connect directly with the parking and driving aisle associated with the commercial buildings immediately to the west.
    - .2 Arranged along the eastern flood level buffer line associated with the Hazard Lands are 3 proposed residential building each with parking below the building. The parking is at grade level on the eastern side of each building while the Main Entrance floors of the residential buildings are located at a grade level near to the level of the commercial buildings. This is achieved through importation of fill to the western side of the apartment buildings. The east-facing residential apartments have views overlooking the Hazard Lands and the suites are a full storey above the grade level of the Hazard Lands.



Fig. 2 - Aerial View looking South – Residential Buildings line the eastern edge of the developable site on the left side of the image.

**A.3 Urban Design – General Policies:**

- .1 OP 8.1.1.2 refers to the importance of gateways to the City.
  - .1 As described above, this site is a gateway site due to its position along Highway 26 and the relatively high position of the project relative to the CPR rail trail located east of the project along Highway 26.

- .2 OP 8.1.1.5 refers to, among other matters, building siting, massing, heights, and architectural features.
  - .1 Considering the project from the point of view of persons traveling in vehicles westbound along Highway 26 and the visual characteristics of the proposal, the following are the key features:
    - .1 The arrangement of the taller residential buildings (5 storeys exposed to view on their eastern flanks) acts to conceal parking and to partly conceal the commercial buildings. Travellers viewing these buildings from the highway east of the project site will see buildings rising over natural landscape. This evokes the image of Owen Sound as a City within the landscape.
    - .2 The arrangement of apartment buildings is a serpentine form in plan following the high contour line of the flood line buffer. This provides visual interest and it follows an organic line.
    - .3 The line of the 3 apartment buildings facing east establishes a large-scale visual signifier of the beginning of urban development in the City. Although the residential buildings are not particularly large, they will present the site as an urban area rising out of the green area within the Hazard Lands. This effect will be enhanced by the rising grade level of the highway as travellers drive west bound over the landform traversed by the highway.
    - .4 The prominence of the eastern elevation of these building with their balconies, windows and other features will evoke in the viewer travelling along the highway the sense of the prospect offered from the buildings overlooking the landscape.
    - .5 The stair towers at one end of each residential building provide access to rooftop equipment and these are therefore, prominent elements evoking “towers” and creating interest in the profile or skyline of the buildings. In the case of the two southern buildings, these are symmetrically placed around a shared outdoor terrace that covers parking and overlooks the landscape of the Hazard Lands to the east of the site. Since this terrace is one storey above the Hazard Land grade elevation, it provides a prospect for those using it and it would be at least partly visible from the highway. The stair tower of the northern apartment building is nearest the highway and prominent in the view of travellers arriving from the east.
    - .6 Trees are placed between the northern-most apartment building and Highway 26 in order to establish a visual screen occluding the entrance ramp to the garage from the view available from the highway and the trees also establish a middle ground between Highway and building and they soften the view of commercial buildings until the traveller is closer to the commercial buildings.
    - .7 Commercial buildings make use of tall parapets to partly conceal roof-top equipment.
    - .8 Commercial buildings are arranged to permit from Highway 26 views into the site between the buildings. These views reveal the activity within the site and display the use of trees within the parking areas as a prominent feature.
    - .9 The commercial building loading and refuse bin areas are concealed behind masonry walls symmetrically placed on the site.
    - .10 The drive-through lane is partly concealed from view through the use of a retaining wall which has a trellis fence mounted on top in order to support vines.

- .11 The commercial building located at the intersection of the highway and the new street which acts as the entrance to the development has a tower-like feature to accentuate the entrance location.
- .12 The commercial buildings abutting the new road allowance and entry to the site have landscaped planting beds and windows which improve the appearance of the “back” of these two buildings. The connecting driving aisle from the new street into the Sydenham Square is marked by a tower at the corner of the southern building. When turning into the heart of Sydenham Square, the view is of a driving aisle with boulevards and trees lining each side, terminating in the restaurant which is placed between two apartment buildings.
- .13 Signage can be mounted to the high parapets of the commercial buildings and on the tower feature within City guidelines. Lit signs can provide visual interest and colour to the project.
- .14 The apartment buildings at the eastern edge of the site serve to establish the Sydenham Square as a legible, contained space. The trees and boulevards serve to divide the parking areas into smaller sections.



Fig. 3 Residential building with stair tower near the highway - looking west



Fig. 4 Commercial Building Tower feature near new City street access.



Fig. 5 - Northern Residential Building Near Highway with stair tower.



Fig. 6 – Landscape Treatment along Highway 26 Frontage at Commercial Buildings – Looking South-East

**A.4 OP Section 8.2 – 8.2.1 Natural Features:**

- .1 OP 8.2.1.1, OP 8.2.1.3 and OP 8.2.1.4 refer to the protection and enhancement of natural features, the provision of opportunities to enjoy them and a balance between human-made and natural landscape.
  - .1 The Hazard Lands east of the project are protected from further development and retained in their natural state.
  - .2 The establishment of the residential buildings along the eastern flood line buffer permits the residents to enjoy a prospect toward the east overlooking the Hazard Lands.
  - .3 The insertion of common areas and a restaurant between the apartment buildings creates visual interest when viewed from the east or the west and these features allow visitors to Sydenham Square to enjoy the prospect overlooking the Hazard Lands. This addresses the viewing of natural features referenced in OP 8.2.1.3.
  - .4 The residential buildings follow the line of the flood level buffer and therefore, they are not linear, but rather, they create a more organic form following the contour line. This also creates visual interest.
  - .5 The residential buildings also separate those who would use the trail proposed along the eastern side of the residential buildings from the commercial buildings and their parking areas. This separation is also a vertical separation: residential suites are 1-storey higher than the trail.
  - .6 Pedestrians will be permitted to access the trail proposed at the eastern base of the residential building via stair cases constructed between the residential buildings. These will be placed adjacent to the proposed restaurant and the proposed common area terrace.
  - .7 The balance between human made and natural landscape is established by the physical separation of parking and commercial spaces from the Hazard Lands landscape and by the vertical separation established by the fill placed to elevate the entrance levels to the residential buildings above the parking garages below the buildings. This establishes a prospect for those using the terrace and the restaurant.



Fig. 7 – Looking east toward southern-most residential buildings with stair towers flanking outdoor common area.



Fig. 8 – Aerial View at vehicle entrance from new street looking east.

- .2 OP 8.2.1.5 refers to the protection and replacement of existing mature trees.
  - .1 The existing tree cover on the site is relatively new growth which will be removed.
  - .2 New trees will be planted on new boulevards placed between parking areas and the perimeter of the site are planted with many new trees to separate the parking areas and to establish buffers to the commercial lands west of the project site. The trees line the primary driving aisles to enhance the appearance of these aisles and to mimic street design.
  - .3 Trees are also used to create partial screening of commercial activities from the highway and to establish a middle ground when the site is viewed from the north-east.
  - .4 Trees are placed between the residential parking area associated with the southern residential building and this buffers the site from the open parking areas associated with the development abutting the western side of the project site.
  - .5 Refer to Figures 1, 2 and 3 for placement of new trees.

**A.5 OP Section 8.3 Experiencing the City, 8.3.1 Objectives:**

- .1 OP 8.3.1 and the related sub-sections 8.3.1.1 through 8.3.1.4 refers to the sense of the City as well-organized and easily understood.
  - .1 The project establishes a response to the long view (OP 8.3.1.4) from the highway for visitors entering the City from the east through the placement of the residential buildings in contrast with the natural landscape of the Hazard Lands. As described above, this sets out the theme of City in the landscape and provides a positive association between the City and the landscape while signalling the “beginning” of the City.
  - .2 As travellers reach the development itself, the commercial area is revealed through a slight reduction in tree cover to permit views between the buildings. This reveals, in part, the treed parking areas. This visual connection together with the signage mounted on the buildings will provide visitors entering the City with an understanding of the development. The landscaping walls that conceal refuse bins and the trellis plantings and retaining wall discussed will maintain a clean, orderly appearance.
  - .3 The “tower” feature added to the commercial building nearest the entrance from Highway 26 into the site provides a visual indicator for the entrance to the new proposed street. This adds to the understanding of the interaction of the site to the highway.



Fig. 9 – Commercial Building Tower at intersection of Highway and the new entrance street.

**A.6 OP 8.3.2 Gateways and Nodes:**

- .1 OP 8.3.2.1 refers to the establishment of gateways that create a sense of welcome and arrival for the visitor to the City. Gateways are also intended to create a memorable image of the City. Highway 26 adjacent to this site has been identified as a gateway location. The use of special structures is also referenced.
  - .1 The image of the City is established through the relatively continuous building form of the residential buildings in contrast with the Hazard Land landscape immediately east of them. The special structures proposed are the projecting stairwell “towers” which create interest in the skyline of the buildings and the residential building nearest to the highway has a stair tower form that is located near the highway. The relatively small size of the stairwells enhances their vertical aspect and enhances their ability to evoke the tower form. The residential balconies evoke in the viewer the prospect that these residential suites will have.

- .2 The design of the buildings on the site results in a transition in building forms and their heights and the associated landscaping across the highway frontage. The transition is from the taller residential buildings which terminate the eastern end of the highway frontage and set a boundary for the Hazard Lands to the lower commercial buildings located nearer the new entrance street.
- .3 The commercial buildings are relatively small and separated from one another to permit views into the site from the highway when travellers reach the stretch of road immediately opposite the development. Separating the commercial buildings allows a clear understanding of the nature of the commercial aspect of the project. The viewer can develop a complete image of the urban ensemble of residential and commercial uses in close proximity. The reading of the site is partly enabled by reducing tree planting between the highway and the commercial buildings.
- .4 To present the site to the travellers on the highway with appropriate emphasis on the commercial uses and in order to present an urban image, the number of trees is reduced and masonry walls are used to screen refuse containers together with trellising that will support climbing plants. These features screen the lower level of the commercial buildings and the drive-through using means that reflect an urban condition while also buffering the drive-through and loading areas from the highway.
- .5 Special structures utilized in the design of the commercial buildings include the use of tower forms on the two commercial buildings near the entrance to the new street connecting the project to the highway. These tower forms signal the presence of driveway entries and provide visual interest.
- .6 Refer to Figures 3 through 7 for images of the special structures and relationships to Highway 26 and the new street.

**A.7 OP Section 8.4 Pedestrian Environment, 8.4.1 Objectives:**

- .1 OP 8.4.1.1 Refers to safe and accessible pedestrian environments featuring clear visibility, appropriate lighting, barrier-free sidewalks and access to building entries.
  - .1 The project features interior sidewalks that link parking areas to other parts of the site and that lead to building entrances. Walks that cross over driving aisles will be marked and TWSI plates will be incorporated at appropriate locations. Pole-mounted lighting fixtures will be provided according to a photometric design to ensure adequate lighting of the parking and pedestrian areas.
  - .2 Barrier-free parking stalls will be provided in locations that allow access to sidewalks without crossing parking areas or driving aisles.
- .2 OP 8.4.2.3 refers to conformance to AODA.
  - .1 The design of the project will conform to AODA.
- .3 OP 8.4.2.6 refers to retail areas that feature the provision wide sidewalks and outdoor seating areas.
  - .1 The project contains an outdoor seating area within the centre of the development adjacent to one of the retail buildings. In addition, the restaurant situated between two of the residential buildings will have a deck or terrace overlooking the Hazard Lands to the east. Sidewalks are a minimum of 1.5m wide and they will not be used to store snow.



Fig. 10 – Outdoor Seating

- .4 OP 8.4.2.7 Refers to sun, shade and wind conditions throughout the seasons in pedestrian environments and the attainment of this goal through siting of buildings and other means.
  - .1 The project locates the tallest buildings along the eastern edge of the developable portion of the site which results in minimal shading on the open outdoor seating area proposed in the commercial area and for walks and pedestrian areas related to the commercial area. Refer to the Solar Study.
  - .2 The commercial buildings are arranged to form a cohesive outdoor space and they also act to block some of the prevailing winds from the north and the west.
  - .3 The common outdoor space associated with the two southern-most residential buildings will have an eastern exposure and the plan is to establish shade through the use of gazebo structures.

**A.8 OP 8.6.3 Side or Rear Yard Parking:**

- .1 OP 8.6.3.1 refers to the uniform distance established for commercial buildings fronting streets and that parking should be located behind the buildings.
  - .1 The parking for Sydenham Square is proposed at the interior of the development. The buildings are established using a consistent alignment along the highway frontage and along the proposed new street which will form the western boundary of the site. Parking is generally concealed in whole or in part from the new street and the highway.
- .2 OP 8.6.3.2 refers to landscaping between buildings and streets.
  - .1 Landscaped planting beds are proposed along the base of the new buildings fronting the new street and the landscape is varied, as described above, along the highway frontage.

**A.9 OP 8.6.5 Large Lots:**

- .1 OP 8.6.5.1 regarding commercial and industrial large lots, this clause refers to the preferred position for buildings close to streets with parking located further from the street. As described

above, the buildings are placed as near to the highway and the new proposed street as feasible. Parking is situated within the internal area of the site and surrounded by the buildings.

- .2 OP 8.6.5.2 refers to the arrangement of buildings in a way that is similar to the description provided in 8.6.3.
  - .1 The configuration of the project is discussed under the reference to OP 8.6.3, above.
- .3 OP 8.6.5.3 refers to sidewalk connections along street frontages.
  - .1 Although not shown on drawings, a sidewalk along the new street will be considered, if the City considers this appropriate.
- .4 OP 8.6.5.4 refers to connecting walks between walks along streets and main entrances of buildings.
  - .1 The project features sidewalks on either side of the primary driving aisles that connect with the new street frontage located along the western side of the development and these walks connect with the walks placed in front of the commercial building entrances.
- .5 OP 8.6.5.5 refers to landscape buffers used to separate sidewalks from parking areas.
  - .1 Landscape buffers are located to separate driving aisles from parking areas. Sidewalks within the parking areas and fronting buildings are not separated from the ends of parking stalls with buffers in order to permit continuous access to the sidewalks when persons leave the car.



Fig. 11 – Aerial View of Parking Areas Looking North-West from Residential Building

#### **A.10 OP 8.6.6 Parking and Access:**

- .1 OP 8.6.6.3 refers to visible access points that are distinguishable and limited in number and designed to permit safe movement of pedestrians.
  - .1 There are two access points for vehicles and each is flanked by sidewalks and boulevards. These access points are highly visible and lined with trees.
  - .2 Pedestrian crossing points near these access points are marked on pavements and TWSI plates will be positioned as necessary.
- .2 OP 8.6.6.4 refers to safe, well-lit, and clear routes between vehicles and buildings.
  - .1 The proposed parking configuration provides sidewalks and boulevards to maintain clear routes for driving aisles that are separate from the routes for pedestrians. The walks lead to crossing points that are marked and to the walks immediately adjacent to the commercial buildings.

- .3 OP 8.6.6.5 refers to landscaping within parking areas.
  - .1 The design utilizes boulevards for planting of trees and to maintain an orderly flow of traffic on the site. Trees are used to line primary vehicle routes within the site and to provide shade and visual interest to parking areas.

**A.11 OP 8.6.7 Adjacent Uses:**

- .1 OP 8.6.7.2 refers to the effect of abrupt changes in building height and scale and compatible building forms as they relate to adjacent developments.
  - .1 The existing buildings adjacent to the western boundary of this site are single-storey, large format retail buildings and the related large parking areas. The single-storey Sydenham Square commercial buildings are situated nearest these existing commercial structures and this presents similar building types in relatively close proximity. The nature of the development adjacent to the western edge of Sydenham Square nearest the highway is not known, but it is understood that it may be a grocery store.
  - .2 The larger residential buildings within Sydenham Square are placed as distant from the existing adjacent commercial development as is feasible.
- .2 8.6.7.3 Refers to Shadow Studies.
  - .1 A shadow study (Solar Study) for Sydenham Square is provided.

End of Urban Design Study.



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01 - AERIAL - Looking South from Hwy



02 - AERIAL - Looking South from Hwy

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03 - AERIAL SITE PLAN



04 - AERIAL - from South-East

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05 - AERIAL - from South-West



06 - AERIAL - Centre Entrance looking East

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07 - AERIAL - Looking North from Apartment



08 - Northern Apt Stair Tower Near Hwy

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09 - Commercial Bldg. at New Entry Street



10 - Centre Entrance Driving Aisle from New Street

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11 - Southern Apts. with Terrace and Flanking Stair Towers



12 - Hwy 26 looking West - Gateway

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13 - Hwy looking West near commercial bldgs



14 - Hwy looking West near New Street Intersection

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15 - Hwy travelling West along commercial



16 - Hwy adjacent to Commercial travelling West

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17 - Hwy Looking South



18 - Hwy Travelling East approaching new street

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19 - Hwy Travelling East near new street entry 2



20 - Hwy travelling East near new street entry

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21 - Hwy Travelling East along Commercial bldgs.



22 - Hwy Travelling East; Looking South

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23 - Hwy Travelling East looking South-East



24 - Inside - Centre Aisle looking West at Centre Entry

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25 - Inside - Commercial near centre entry



26 - Inside - Drive-Through Restaurant from South-East

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27 - Inside - Outdoor Seating



28 - Southern Apartment Building

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29 - View Looking West from Bl