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# The Town of Niagara-On-The-Lake

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March 14, 2011  
Urban Design Committee Report UDC-11-011

**Report To:** Niagara-on-the-Lake Urban Design Committee

**Subject:** 144 & 176 John Street (Randwood) – Proposed Romance Inn & Arts & Culture Learning Centre – Official Plan & Zoning By-law Amendment

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## 1. RECOMMENDATION

### Planning staff recommends that:

- 1.1 The Urban Design Committee provides assistance and advice to the applicant with respect to the master plan, landscape, and building design.
- 1.2 The master plan generally protects the significant designed and natural cultural landscape features and conserves the significant green space of the Estate Lot.
- 1.3 The proposed addition to the Coach House is large and complex and dominates the Coach House. The design should be simplified and should reference the architectural features of the existing building.
- 1.4 The design of the addition to Randwood is complex and intricate, particularly with respect to the piazza elevations. Consideration should be given to simplifying the design.
- 1.5 The proposed Large Event Pavilion is a highly decorative building that will impact and alter the existing cultural landscape.
- 1.6 Opening the entrance and providing a carriageway/walkway to the Large Events Pavilion will impact the streetscape and provide a second focal point or vista into the estate which may detract from the existing Dunnington-Grubb designed vista at the entrance to Randwood. Care should be given to designing a landscape along the carriageway to enhance rather than detract from the existing Randwood vista.
- 1.7 Any impact on the neighbouring properties, such as the location of the entrance to the underground parking lot and the position of the addition to the Coach House must be mitigated by the introduction of significant screening and other landscape features.

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## 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide a preliminary urban design review with respect to the attached site plan concept/master plan and elevations for the Romance Inn & Arts & Culture Learning Centre to be constructed on the property known as Randwood at 144 & 176 John Street.

## 3. BACKGROUND

The developer is proposing to construct a hotel with 106 suites, a restaurant, a space and conference facility, an artists' centre, an events pavilion and a seed house. The development will have 81 above grade and 119 sub-grade parking spaces.

Currently the lands are designated Established Residential and Conservation in the Town's Official Plan and are zoned Established Residential ER-15 which permits a single detached dwelling and a private school. The property is the subject of both a zoning and official plan amendment to permit the proposed development.

The applicant has provided a preliminary concept plan or master plan of the property, elevations for buildings 4 and 5 (the main house), building 6 (the events pavilion), buildings 7 and 3 (the coach house) and floor plans for the main house, additions to the main house and the spa.

A planning report including a needs assessment and market study, heritage impact assessment, environmental impact assessment, servicing report, preliminary archaeological study and a landscape preservation report have also been provided as well as a traffic impact and parking study.

#### **4. DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

The Municipal Heritage Committee reviewed preliminary designs for the proposed development on at least 2 occasions before the Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment applications were submitted.

In February 2010 a "workshop" was held with a number of members of the MHC. Comments made by members of the committee at the workshop included:

- Use of underground parking is a good design concept.
- How will the buildings fit into the landscape.
- The design of the addition to the coach house needs to be toned down.
- Generally the design of the new buildings and building additions is too complex.

The MHC also reviewed the proposal at the meeting of March 9, 2010 and made the following comments.

- The original Neo-classical building has already been significantly altered.
- The design is too detailed and overpowering.
- To do it right will be expensive and it will need close attention to the details during design and construction.
- The high level of detail and complex design of the buildings does not suit the more simple character of buildings in the Old Town.
- Very busy and complicated and may be difficult to execute successfully.
- The committee recognizes that the sketches are just impressions of what the applicant hopes to achieve.
- Keep it simple and take cues from the existing buildings to tie things together.
- Try to build upon the architectural style of the existing buildings.
- Maintain the cultural heritage landscape.
- The Artists' Center seems to be going in the right direction. It does not need to mimic the house. It reflects the architectural simplicity and style of the Coach House.
- Very ambitious project.

## Site Plan

The applicant has provided a preliminary site plan concept or master plan indicating the existing buildings on the site, the proposed additions, the underground and surface parking and the relationship to neighbouring properties, particularly those on Christopher Street and Weatherstone Court and the property at 200 John Street. New development on the site is generally confined to the rear of the property adjacent to Christopher Street and the properties at 588 Charlotte Street and 200 John Street. Most new development, with the exception of the Large Events Pavilion and Seed House, is located behind or is attached to existing structures.

The development consists of 4 existing structures, Randwood, Devonian House, the brick gazebo and the Coach House. A large addition to the Coach House will house a 2 storey artist centre. The addition to Randwood will house an outdoor dining deck, a central piazza, a 3 storey inn and conference centre and a spa facility. New buildings include a large events pavilion and a seed house for smaller events.

Underground parking for 119 cars will be located behind the events pavilion between the spa and the Coach House addition. The entrance to the parking facility is located to the west of the Coach House adjacent to properties on Christopher Street. Additional above grade parking for 81 cars, some of which already exists, is located to the left and right of the main entrance and to the west of the existing Randwood building.

The existing stucco and brick wall and entrance gates will remain. The applicant intends to re-open the entrance gate at the west end of the property and reinstall the existing gate which is currently stored on the property. The roadway within the grounds will be slightly realigned to better accommodate internal traffic. Existing roadways at the eastern and central entrance gates will not be altered.

There will not be any development on the western portion of the property adjacent to One Mile Creek which runs through the property in a north/south direction and branches off to run diagonally through the grounds in a generally east/west direction adjacent to the rear yards of properties on Christopher Street.

## Elevations

The applicant has provided elevations for the addition to the main house and the Coach House and the front elevation for the proposed Large Events Pavilion.

### **Main House/Inn & Spa**

The main house, known as Randwood, has been extensively altered over time. It was originally a Neo-classical house of relatively simple design. Over the years a mansard roof, a Tuscan tower and deep covered porches were added. More recently an extensive two storey institutional addition was constructed at the rear of the building. Despite these additions, the appearance of the house is still relatively subdued and simple. The porches with massive brick piers, simple entablatures and the simple cornice trim ensure that the building, though massive, is dignified and quiet in appearance.

The addition to the main house extends from the rear of the building via a long narrow structure containing a corridor on one side and suites on the other which look out into the central piazza. The main portion of the addition is located at the opposite end of the piazza facing the original building. It houses a number of suites on the upper levels and conference and meeting rooms on the basement level. It is attached to spa facility via a breezeway. The upper portion of the spa facility houses additional hotel suites.

The elevations of the addition show a large building with mansard roofs of varying heights which are intended to mirror the existing mansard roof on the main house. Round arched dormers mirror those on the house. Tall chimneys rise above the roof lines. There are numerous windows openings, arches, covered porticos and balconies on the interior or piazza elevations. Curving staircases descend to the piazza. Both the north and west elevations are complex and highly decorated and reflect the Second Empire and even the Chateau style of architecture. The rear and east elevations are much simpler in design. Balconies and windows are simplified. There are no dormer windows. Instead arched windows break the roof line. Finishes on these elevations include stucco and brick veneer.

The proposed addition to Randwood is complex and highly decorative, particularly the elevations facing the piazza. The existing building, despite the Second Empire alterations, is a relatively subdued design with strong, simple entablatures and cornice mouldings and extensive covered porches. The addition does have certain architectural details that reflect the style of the existing building. However, a certain amount of restraint should be exercised to ensure that the original house is not overwhelmed by the proposed addition.

### **Coach House/Artists' Centre**

The Coach House has also been altered over the years and has been repurposed as an art studio in recent years. Currently it is a simple stuccoed building with a gable roof and bargeboard trim. A shed dormer illuminates the second floor studio space. Arched windows and doors are located on the lower level. The roof is of standing seam metal construction.

The proposed addition is attached to the Coach House in the location of the existing garage doors by a long open arcade with a walkway above. The addition is of eclectic design and exhibits no particular architectural style. Rooflines are predominantly gabled and culminate in a large domed structure which extends out at right angles to the existing Coach House. Parts of this structure are designed to reflect the Coach House in style. Walls will be stuccoed to match the Coach House. Large shed dormer windows reflect the style of the existing dormer window. The metal roof will also match the existing standing seam roof. The tall stone chimneys are battered but do not reflect any particular style or architectural feature on the existing building.

This is a massive addition to the Coach House which tends to dwarf the original structure. Care should be taken to keep the design simple and sympathetic so that the existing building is not subsumed by the design of the new construction.

### **Large Events Pavilion**

The Large Events Pavilion has been designed to resemble a glass greenhouse/conservatory or pavilion much like the Crystal Palace or elaborate English glass houses of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see attached). It is a fanciful design with a raised covered porch, second storey balcony,

dome, bellcote, and walls of windows. Brick and stucco are the proposed finishes. These tie in with the brick walls of Randwood and the stucco walls of the Coach House.

This is a new free standing building. It will be located centrally and prominently on the site in front of the Coach House and the proposed spa and at the end of the re-opened gate and carriageway/walkway. As such, it will significantly impact streetscape as well as the appearance of the cultural heritage landscape. It will provide a second vista or focal point that may compete with the existing vista from the street to Randwood. This vista, with the Dunnington-Grubb designed landscape features, has always dominated the streetscape.

In order to ensure that the character of the landscape is conserved, the building should be compatible with existing buildings on the site and should reflect the landscape character. While it is derived from English Victorian Romanticism and the English Picturesque landscape tradition, its complex design will tend to dominate the more simply designed structures such as the Coach House, Devonian House and even Randwood, which has strong simple lines and details. Comfort, convenience, taste and propriety of design are important for the successful introduction of new features into the landscape in order to conserve its significant characteristics. The landscaping along the new carriageway/walkway must be carefully designed in order to be compatible with the existing Dunnington-Grubb design. It should work with this design, not compete with it.

#### **Seed House**

No elevations of the Seed House have been provided.

#### **Devonian House**

Devonian House is Colonial Revival in design. It is a 2 storey structure with a simple clapboard exterior and a gable roof. The exterior of Devonian House will not be altered. Its prominent location in the cultural landscape should be maintained and enhanced.

#### Landscape Plan

In phases, from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century until the 1940's, the firm of Dunnington-Grubb Landscape Architects provided a number of landscape designs for the Rand Estate. These included designs for the wall pillars, gates, stairs, fountain, bridges and walkways surrounding the main house (copies of some of the designs, located in the University of Guelph Archives are attached). Although some of the landscape designs were not executed, some are still extant, particularly the walkway from the main gate with the fountain and steps and the small stone bridges over the creek. The original pool pavilion and pool, which were also designed by Dunnington-Grubb, are still located on the property now owned by Mr. Rand.

The applicants' landscape architect produced a historic preservation report in June 2010 which provides a preliminary inventory of the plant material and trees on the property. The report speaks to the number and assortment of unusual and rare tree species, the significance of the cultural and natural heritage landscape and the need to design a development that conserves and maintains as much of the landscape as possible. A detailed landscape plan will be provided when the site plan application is submitted for review.

## Points for Discussion

- Does the master plan make the best use of the property? Does it protect and enhance the cultural and natural heritage resources on the site? Does it make the best use of the property? Does it protect and enhance the designed and natural landscapes that are significant components of the property?
- How does the master plan impact adjacent property owners? How can this impact be mitigated?
- Is the underground parking component suitably located? Is the entrance to the underground parking component suitable located? Should the entrance be relocated to another part of the property?
- Is the realignment of the driveway compatible with the overall plan of the property?
- Are the proposed additions to Randwood and the Coach House compatible with the existing buildings? Do they overwhelm the existing buildings? Are they too large, too tall or too complex?
- What alterations to the designs can be made to mitigate the impact of the proposed additions on the existing buildings?
- Is the large event pavilion compatible with other buildings on the site? Does it enhance the site and the cultural heritage landscape? Will its position at the end of the new carriageway detract from the dominance of the vistas to the Randwood and the Dunnington-Grubb landscape design? What type of designed landscaping should be provided along the carriageway to integrate the new building into the Randwood Estate landscape?

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no added costs to the Town. The applicant will pay planning application and building permit application fees.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The property at 144 & 176 John Street is a significant estate lot. The existing buildings are located within an important designed and natural cultural heritage landscape. Any alterations to the site should enhance the property and the buildings and landscape features on the site.

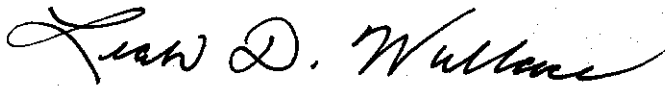
The proposed master plan locates the additions and new buildings at the rear of the property conserving the significant designed and natural landscape, which is a positive design decision. The impressive vista from the entrance gates to the main house, which includes the most significant aspects of the Dunnington-Grubb landscape design will be conserved.

Additions to both the Coach House and Randwood are located to the rear of the existing buildings in an effort to mitigate their impact. However, these additions are large and of complex and intricate design. In the case of the addition to the Coach House, which is a relatively small and modest building, the addition bears minimal resemblance to the existing one with the exception of the shed dormers. It tends to overwhelm the building. In the case of Randwood, the addition, particularly facing the piazza, is also a complex and intricate design. There are a number of architectural references to the original building which help to tie in the new addition, however. Randwood is a larger and more imposing building which makes the proposed addition, if simplified, more successful than the one proposed for the Coach House.

The proposed Large Events Pavilion is designed to resemble an English Victorian greenhouse or conservatory. It will be prominently located at the end of a re-introduced walkway and carriageway, creating a new focal point and vista along John Street, impacting both the property and the streetscape and creating 2 focal points in the streetscape. It may diminish the impact of the vista of Randwood and the Dunnington-Grubb design, which has always been the predominant view from the street. If the Large Events Pavilion is built as planned and designed, it will provide a picturesque feature in the landscape. However the landscape along the new carriageway/walkway will have to be carefully designed to enhance the existing Dunnington-Grubb designed landscape in front of the main house

If there are major changes to the proposed concept plan and elevations, the Urban Design Committee should have an opportunity to review the revisions. The master plan, landscape plan and elevations will be reviewed again when the site plan application is submitted to the Town.

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leah D. Wallace". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Leah Wallace, MCIP, RPP  
Planner, Heritage & Urban Design



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# The Town of Niagara-On-The-Lake

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April 14, 2011

Mr. G. Hynde  
Quartek Group Inc.  
23 Hannover Drive, Unit #6  
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Dear Mr. Hynde:

**RE: Urban Design Review – 144 & 176 John Street – Randwood –  
Romance Inn & Artist Centre**

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The Urban Design Committee (UDC) met with you on March 22 2011 and made the following comments and recommendations regarding the design of the proposed inn and artist centre.

### Comments

- The master plan potentially makes the best use of the property if a well executed landscape plan is implemented. However, there need to be assurances that the natural and cultural landscape will be protected if the project does not go ahead or the design and master plan is altered.
- The pedestrian walkway to the events pavilion is a beautiful feature and the design of the events pavilion does not overwhelm the existing buildings. Views of the pavilion from John Street would be minimal.
- The walkway should not be used by cars. It should only be used by pedestrians and horse drawn carriages.
- The back and side of the Randwood addition should not be institutional looking to minimize the impact of adjacent property owners.
- The committee wants to see that the landscape design provided for buffering of the underground parking component.
- There is concern with respect to the location of servicing such as deliveries and garbage storage and pickup and its impact on neighbouring properties.
- The proposed additions to Randwood and the Coach House are compatible with the existing buildings. However, because the addition to Randwood is a complex stylistic design statement, it has to be well and accurately executed using quality materials in order to be a successful design.
- The committee is pleased with the overall proposal and feels that if the plan is executed as proposed, it could be a beautiful enhancement to the Randwood Estate.

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### Recommendations

1. The master plan generally protects the significant designed and natural cultural landscape features and conserves the significant green space of the Estate Lot.
2. The committee is generally pleased with the proposed additions to the Randwood Estate. The additions should reference the architectural features of the existing building.
3. Plans for each building be submitted to the UDC as well as any changes that occur to the design.
4. The design of the addition to Randwood is complex and intricate, particularly with respect to the piazza elevations. The design is interesting but must be well executed using appropriate quality materials.
5. The proposed Large Event Pavilion is a highly decorative building that will impact and alter the existing cultural landscape. The impact is potentially positive.
6. Opening the entrance and providing a carriageway/walkway to the Large Events Pavilion will impact the streetscape and provide a second important focal point or vista into the estate.
7. Any impact on the neighbouring properties, such as the location of the entrance to the underground parking lot and the position of the addition to the Coach House must be mitigated by the introduction of significant screening and other landscape features.

If you have any questions or require any additional information, please contact planning staff.

Sincerely yours



Leah D. Wallace, MCIP, RPP  
Planner Heritage & Urban Design

c.c. Michael Allen, Allen Chui Architects