



PLANNING
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May 25, 2023

Trista Di Lullo, Secretary-Treasurer
Committee of Adjustment
City of Guelph
1 Carden Street
Guelph, ON N1H 3A1

Dear Ms. Di Lullo:

**RE: Application for Minor Variance
785 Gordon Street (Days Inn), Guelph
OUR FILE 23132A**

We are pleased to submit an application for a minor variance on behalf of the University of Guelph with respect to the property municipally known as 785 Gordon Street in the City of Guelph, hereinafter referred to as the "subject property". The purpose of the variance is to add a University of Guelph residence as a permitted use, facilitating the use of the existing hotel as a residence operated by the University of Guelph, similar to other residences operated on the University's main campus.

The subject property is located on the southwest corner of Harvard Road and Gordon Street. Across Harvard Road to the north is a commercial plaza containing a grocery store and several restaurants and services that serve the surrounding residential neighbourhood. Just north of the lands, at the north-east corner of the Gordon Street and Stone Road intersection, is the University of Guelph main campus. To the south and west is an existing low-rise residential neighbourhood. Gordon Street abuts the lands to the east.

The subject property is developed with an existing two-storey hotel (the "Days Inn") containing 86 rooms and 98 surface parking spaces. Access to the parking lot is provided in one location directly from Gordon Street, east of Harvard Road. Sidewalks exist along both sides of both Harvard Road and Gordon Street, with bike lanes present in both directions along Gordon Street. The site is well connected to the adjacent commercial plaza, the nearby university campus, and the other commercial uses along Stone Road through existing active transportation infrastructure. Based on the University's experience with first year students, it is anticipated that only 1 in 8 students will have a car given the

proximity of the property to the University, access to transit with their transit pass and availability of pedestrian/cyclist connections.

No alterations to the exterior of the building are contemplated at this time. The existing hotel rooms will be used as student bedrooms within a 'suite' in the same manner as other residences operated by the University. The existing breakfast bar will offer grab and go food options, while the students will be required to participate in the University's meal plan and will obtain the majority of their meals from the main campus.

The lands are owned by 2371633 Ontario Inc. (the 'owner') and currently operate as a hotel. The University is intending to lease the property pending the approval of the requested variance, effective August 1, 2023. The lease in favour of the University is for a period of three (3) years, with an option for a further 3 years. In this regard, the use is temporary in nature and is intended as an interim use of the existing building.

In order to permit the conversion of the hotel to a residence operated by the University of Guelph, a minor variance is required under Section 45(2) of the Planning Act.

Planning Analysis

Planning Act

Section 45(2) of the Planning Act allows the Committee of Adjustment to permit the use of any land, building, or structure for uses that are similar to existing uses or similar to permitted uses:

Section 45(2)(b) of the Planning Act states: *that in addition to its powers under subsection 45(1), the committee, upon any such application where the uses of land, buildings or structures permitted in the by-law are defined in general terms, may permit the use of any land, building or structure for any purpose that, in the opinion of the committee, conforms with the uses permitted in the by-law.*

Adding a residence operated by the University of Guelph as a permitted use on the subject lands is appropriate under Section 45(2) as the use is similar to the existing hotel use and similar to the residential uses that are permitted under the City's new Zoning By-law (2023).

Official Plan

The subject property is designated *Neighbourhood Commercial Centre* in the City of Guelph Official Plan. Permitted uses in the *Neighbourhood Commercial Centre* include:

- Commercial, retail and service uses;
- Small-scale offices;

- Community services and facilities;
- Live/work;
- Multiple unit residential within mixed-use buildings; and,
- Urban squares.

The proposed use is a residence operated by the University of Guelph, with University services incorporated into the building, including a grab and go food counter, and as such is consistent with the permitted use within the *Neighbourhood Commercial Centre* designation.

Furthermore, an objective of the Official Plan is “*To recognize and support large scale institutional land uses as an important component of the community and its economic base.*” As staff and the Committee are aware, there is a significant shortage of housing geared to students within Guelph. This shortage has created cascading impacts on the overall supply of rental housing in the community, by pushing up the rent for units that would otherwise be available to families and non-student households. It has also had an impact on neighbourhoods near the University, by increasing the demand for housing in those neighbourhoods, resulting in more students within established residential neighbourhoods and less housing available to the broader community. This is all occurring within the broader context of a general housing crisis, as identified by the province and acknowledged by the City. The result is long line-ups for any available housing, increasing rents and students struggling to find accommodation so they can attend university in the community.

The conversion of the existing hotel to a residence operated by the University of Guelph assists in meeting this demand, with minimal impact – no changes to the exterior of the site or building. The development will have excess parking and the building will be managed by the University.

In our opinion, the use is contemplated in the Official Plan and the Plan specifically supports and recognizes the importance of University uses within the broader planning and economic context.

Zoning By-law

The City of Guelph has approved a new Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw (Zoning By-law 2023-20790). While the transition to the new Zoning By-law occurs, applicants are required to apply for variances under both the current Zoning By-law (1995) and the new Zoning By-law (2023).

Zoning By-law (1995)

The subject property is zoned Specialized Commercial Zone (SC.1-11), with a site-specific exception in the City’s 1995 Zoning By-law. The SC.1-11 zone limits the permitted uses to the following:

- Hotel
- Accessory Uses in accordance with Section 4.23

- Occasional Uses in accordance with Section 4.21

The University of Guelph is proposing to use the hotel as a University residence. The use of the building as a residence is functionally similar to its use as a hotel; the existing building will continue to provide temporary accommodations, but specifically to University of Guelph students, providing much needed housing for students in close proximity to the University. A University residence is not a defined use in the Zoning By-law, however such uses already exist in the City and are permitted on the University of Guelph campus without definition.

The inclusion of additional University managed housing for students will reduce pressure on existing residential neighbourhoods near the University to provide housing for students, making more housing available for residents and families and easing the pressure on rents.

Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw (2023)

The subject property is zoned as Neighbourhood Commercial Centre with site specific exceptions [NCC-2(PA)(H12)] in the City of Guelph Comprehensive Zoning By-law (2023)-20790. The NCC zone permits a range of commercial, institutional and residential uses, including:

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| • Group home; | • Food vehicle; |
| • Home occupation; | • Funeral home; |
| • Live-work unit | • Micro-brewery; |
| • Long term care facility; | • Micro-distillery; |
| • Mixed-use building; | • Restaurant; |
| • Retirement residential facility; | • School, commercial; |
| • Supportive housing; | • Service establishment; |
| • Convenience store; | • Vehicle rental establishment; |
| • Propane retail outlet; | • vehicle service station |
| • Retail establishment; | • veterinary service |
| • Medical clinic; | • community centre; |
| • Office; | • place of worship |
| • Animal care establishment; | • public hall |
| • Artisan studio; | • recreation facility; |
| • Day care centre; | • accessory use; |
| • Financial establishment; | • occasional use; |
| • Fitness centre; | • outdoor display and sales area; |

Section 18.10.2 of the Comprehensive Zoning By-law (2023), being the site-specific exception for the subject lands (NCC-2), permits a hotel and a maximum of 1 drive-through facility as additional permitted uses. As discussed earlier, a residence operated by the University of Guelph is not a defined term, but the operation of the residence will be similar to that of a hotel. The students will be

transient, the rooms are not dwelling units and the building will be professionally managed by the University – this type of land use is already permitted in the City without definition on the University's campus in the I.2 zone. From the exterior, the operation and use of the building will be similar to that of the existing hotel.

In this regard, a variance under subsection 45(2)(b) of the Planning Act is appropriate.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, it is our opinion that the requested variance satisfies Subsection 45(2)(b) of the *Planning Act* and should be approved. In support of this application for minor variance, please find enclosed the following:

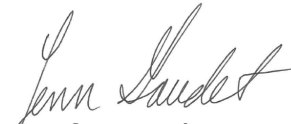
- A cheque for \$1,354.00 made payable to the City of Guelph representing the application fee;
- One copy of the existing Site Plan.

We trust the enclosed is sufficient for acceptance of the minor variance application and request that the application be considered at the next available June 2023 meeting of the Committee of Adjustment. Please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned should you require additional information.

Yours truly,
MHBC



Trevor Hawkins, M.PL, MCIP, RPP
Partner



Jennifer Gaudet, MCIP, RPP
Senior Planner

cc. *Ed Townsley, University of Guelph*