September 2023

Urban Design Peer Review

716 Gordon Street
Guelph, ON

Prepared by:
Fotenn Planning + Design for the City of Guelph, Planning and Building Services department

Applicant:
2319426 Ontario Inc.

Project:
716 Gordon Street, Guelph - Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-Law Amendment


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1. Introduction

This Urban Design Review has been prepared by Fotenn Planning + Design for the City of Guelph, Planning and Building Services department. The subject property is located at 716 Gordon Street, in the City of Guelph. The owner/applicant has requested an Official Plan Amendment (OPA) and Zoning By-law Amendment (ZBA) to allow for a 532-unit (1149 bedrooms) post-secondary school residence building that ranges in height from 6 to 11 storeys. The proposed building has a 3-4 storey podium and includes a 90 m2 café at the ground level, a gymnasium, and a basketball court among other amenities.

The proposed development has been reviewed according to urban design best practices and the City of Guelph's:

- 1994 Official Plan (2022 consolidation), Section 3: Planning a Complete and Healthy Community, and Section 8: Urban Design
- 2018 Urban Design Manual: Gordon Street Intensification Corridor Concept Plan

Comments are based on a review of the following submissions from consultants prepared on behalf of the property owner/applicant (2319426 Ontario Inc.):

- Planning Justification Report, prepared by GSP Group
- Urban Design Report, prepared by GSP Group
- Site Plan, prepared by SRM Architects
- Elevations and Angular Planes, prepared by SRM Architects
- Overall Plans, prepared by SRM Architects
- Common Amenity Area Plans, prepared by SRM Architects
- Landscape Plan, prepared by GSP Group

The review generally concludes that the proposed building represents an appropriate form of development along a designated Intensification Corridor, but that there are a number of urban design issues that should be resolved to maximize the potential of the site as a high-quality, walkable and active urban environment, including:

1. Reduce the overall length of the building, ideally by breaking the building into two or more separate structures.
2. Reorganize the internal programming of the building to optimize its urban design functionality, provide legibility, and respond to its context.
3. Ensure all facades reflect internal uses through their scale, design, and materiality.
4. Reconsider the location of ground-level units which are partly underground and have limited access to sunlight and are located adjacent to internal parking areas.
5. Address the corner at Stone Road and Gordon Street to provide an active street interface and respond to its gateway and landmark character.

2. Policy Overview

2.1 Official Plan (February 2022 Consolidation)

The city's Official Plan is focused on planning for a complete and healthy community and the achievement of a well-designed, compact, and vibrant city that provides an appropriate mix of employment opportunities, housing options, local services, and community infrastructure. The subject site is identified in the Official Plan as part of the Built-Up Area, High-Density Area, and is designated an Intensification Corridor (Schedule 1) which promotes intensification while achieving an appropriate transition of built form to adjacent areas.

The city's Official Plan provides high-level objectives (Section 3.0) related to urban design to create compact neighbourhoods that provide diverse and inviting opportunities for living, working, and gathering. The objectives intend to direct all land uses and public infrastructure toward accessibility, interconnectedness, efficiency, safety, compatibility, diversity, comfort, and beauty.

The Official Plan's urban design policies (Section 8.0) include specific directions related to sustainable design, the public realm, and built form. These policies indicate that new development shall be designed to ensure most residents live within a 5 to 10-minute walk of amenities and transit stops; are integrated and connected to the existing built environment; and contribute to a pedestrian-oriented streetscape. Key design strategies in the urban design policies include addressing the street edge, placing principal building entrances towards the street and corner intersections, maintaining a streetwall, and providing for active uses that create an interface with the public realm and enhance the liveliness and vibrancy of the street.

Landmark and Gateway policies indicate that signature buildings will be required at corner locations to serve as new neighbourhood landmarks and that minor gateways are to be located at prominent intersections and shall define a sense of entrance and contribute to community image and identity. Some of the elements mentioned that could contribute to the gateway design are trees, landscaping, lighting, paving, and public art.

Built-form policies for high-rise buildings direct that tall buildings should incorporate a distinctive podium, middle, and top, and should act as landmarks by featuring interesting architecture and roof treatments. Parking should be provided primarily below grade with limited visitor surface parking hidden from view. These policies also indicate that the tower portion of the building shall be carefully placed to ensure adequate spacing between towers to allow for solar access and privacy. Surface parking areas shall be designed in a manner that contributes to an attractive public realm by providing screening and landscaping. In addition, walkways should be provided directly from parking areas and municipal sidewalks to the main entrances of the buildings and should be well articulated, safe, accessible, and integrated with the overall pedestrian linkages.

2.2 Urban Design Manual

The City's 2018 Urban Design Manual establishes a framework for urban design excellence throughout Guelph. Its main goal is to demonstrate and provide guidance on the use of urban design in the creation of a complete and distinctive community that enhances the sense of place in the city.

The document defines basic urban design principles that reflect the future vision for Guelph and respond to the characteristics, history, and culture of the city. These principles include creating compact neighbourhoods with diverse opportunities, developing infrastructure that engages in placemaking, designing for multiple modes of transportation including walking and cycling, designing interconnected pedestrian networks in which buildings frame and respond to the public spaces, encouraging diversity in urban form and architectural design that responds appropriately to the context, designing spaces accessible to all, among others.

The Built Form Standards for Mid-Rise Buildings and Townhouses were developed as part of the Urban Design Manual to provide orientation for new Mid-Rise Buildings and Townhouses to appropriately integrate into the city and develop according to contemporary urban design practices. These standards are informed by policy direction from the City's Official Plan and include specific recommendations for site organization and design, massing, height, articulation, street edge, and façade design. While not entirely applicable for the proposed built form and height, these standards were referenced in considering best practices related to site design and massing where appropriate.

The Urban Design Manual also establishes general urban design objectives and principles for specific areas of Guelph, and it also identifies specific corridors for intensification. The subject property is located within the manual's Gordon Street Intensification Corridor, which extends from Harvard Road to Harts Lane. The stated vision for this corridor is as follows:

Gordon Street is envisioned to become a vibrant pedestrian-friendly street framed by mid-rise buildings, continuous rows of healthy trees, and active at-grade uses that engage the street and the sidewalk. Future development will carefully protect, maintain, restore, and enhance the Natural Heritage System and sensitively transition to the adjacent low-rise neighbourhoods.

3. Urban Design Review

3.1 Overview

Generally, the proposed building represents an appropriate form of development along a designated Intensification Corridor making efficient use of existing services and amenities, enhancing the public realm, and providing additional housing options in close proximity to the University. The height of the podium reinforces a human scale on both Gordon Street and Stone Road East. Anchored by an 11-storey tower at Gordon Street and Stone Road East, the height, massing, and location of the building's taller elements transition well to the adjacent neighbourhoods.

Notwithstanding the above, this Urban Design Peer Review finds that there are a number of fundamental concerns with the proposed development that significantly undermine the building's public realm contribution, both internally and externally, including:

Figure 1. Render showing the development along Gordon Street

Podium Length

The proposed massing is excessively long with an ~170 m podium along Gordon Street and an ~95m podium along Stone Road. Such a built form creates an overwhelming streetwall that is inconsistent with adjacent built form, undermines the human scale of the building and the pedestrian experience, and limits visual and physical permeability through the site. Perhaps more importantly, this podium suggests an overbuild of the site which results in a number of trickle-down impacts related to amenity space, parking, and access. As a best practice, buildings should generally be no longer than 60-75 m long to allow for sunlight to pass between buildings and to provide for pedestrian circulation to and through the property. The applicant should consider breaking up the development into at least two separate buildings. This should help to address a number of the other design issues identified throughout this Peer Review, including the flow and directness of pedestrian circulation and access and the legibility of the building articulation.

Internal Programming

The internal programming of the building is not organized in a way that optimizes urban design functionality. While not a direct urban design matter, the internal configuration of uses often impacts the 'performance' of the building as it relates to the public realm and the pedestrian experience. Specifically in this case, the internal uses result in a building facade that is not articulated to reflect its internal use and a building mass and layout that does not respond to its urban context. As a best practice, buildings should have a configuration of uses and spaces that provide legibility, organization, spatial hierarchy, permeability, and safe and direct circulation. In concert with the recommendation above, the applicant should consider redefining the building programme to respond to adjacent and internal open spaces, (including the park surrounding the iconic Gryphon Statue) and nearby retail areas, to provide a better transition between public and private uses, to consolidate and improve vertical and horizontal circulation and to provide clear legibility of forms and uses.

The above recommendations are discussed further throughout this review. While additional comments and recommendations are provided, it is strongly encouraged that the City pursue these key design changes in discussions with the applicant. Should these changes not be feasible, the recommendations elsewhere in this Peer Review should help to enhance the urban design merits of the project as best as possible.

3.2 Land Use and Density

The proposed development responds appropriately to the need for student housing in proximity to the university and adequately incorporates other uses and amenities that complement its intensification. The building reflects a positive mix of uses by including a café and amenities such as a gymnasium, a basketball court, lounge areas, and coworking spaces while introducing more student housing in the area. The proposed development also includes open space and rooftop amenities which could provide a variety of options for using the outdoor space.

In terms of density, the building reflects a positive form of intensification along a key designated Intensification Corridor. The introduction of 532 student housing units (1149 bedrooms) in the area responds to the city's Official Plan focus on developing compact, mixed, and vibrant communities. The subject site's location and size generally allow this residential density growth and support the introduction of open spaces and other amenities and uses.

3.3 Building Siting

The proposed development is sited appropriately at the southwestern corner of the subject site to address the intersection of Gordon Street and Stone Road East. The building is close to the public property line abutting the streets allowing parking and loading to be generally located at the rear of the site but is set back far enough to reflect its residential character as well as to provide a 'campus' feel.

The building siting accentuates the corner by setting back the podium and integrating a corner element that stands out, however, the building could be shifted closer to the property line at the corner to further differentiate the corner from the rest of the building, frame an outdoor streetscape, and reflect a more urban character.
The building frames the streetscape on both Gordon Street and Stone Road East creating a consistent streetwall on both sides. However, at ~170 m on Gordon Street, and ~95 m on Stone Road the podium is excessively long creating an overwhelming streetwall and undermining the human scale, legibility, and permeability of the development. It is strongly recommended that the building be broken into two separate forms and sited to enhance physical and visual permeability and provide a safe and comfortable pedestrian experience. If for any reason it is not feasible to break the building up, the façade articulation recommendations below and other recommendations throughout this review will help mitigate the impacts of the podium length.

The building is appropriately set back from the rear property lines providing a buffer to the adjacent residences and businesses and providing opportunities for trees and vegetation to be planted.

3.4 Height and Massing

The overall building height is appropriate to the site's location allowing for intensification while responding to its surrounding context. The height is dispersed appropriately on the site by locating the taller elements closer to the corner and then stepping down to the residential area. The height transition from 12 to 8 storeys, and from 12 to 6 storeys, responds appropriately to the context, particularly due to the substantial setbacks from the eastern and southern property lines, adjacent to lower-scale buildings.

The massing consists of a 3-storey podium surrounding the site and four towers of different heights. The 3-storey podium height generally promotes a human scale, mitigates impacts of height and density, and reflects the adjacent lower-scale residential uses. However, the length of the proposed podium (~95m along Stone Road East and ~170m along Gordon Street), undermines its positive contributions and negatively impacts the human scale and pedestrian experience, creates an overwhelming massing that suggests an overbuild of the site, and does not reflect the established scale or rhythm of adjacent uses (see Figure 2). Breaking the massing into at least two different buildings would help mitigate density impacts, provide better site legibility, and improve permeability and the overall pedestrian experience.

Above the podium, multiple towers offer varying forms within the skyline and are generally well-massed and located to reflect an appropriate tower separation. Towers A and B are well-stepped back, clearly delineating between the podium and tower. However, Towers C and D are generally aligned to the main podium along Gordon Street resulting in an unclear delineation of building forms. This is further exacerbated by a podium design and articulation that does not quite align with the towers above. Towers C and D should be further stepped back to clearly distinguish between the building's podium and towers and improve the site's legibility and human scale.

At the corner of Stone Road East and Gordon Street, the massing is well articulated at the podium levels by introducing elements such as the extended canopy that surrounds and frames that entire section of the podium emphasizing the corner. However, the design of the tower itself would benefit from a similar siting, massing, and architectural treatment that frames, addresses, and visually connects both streets at the intersection.

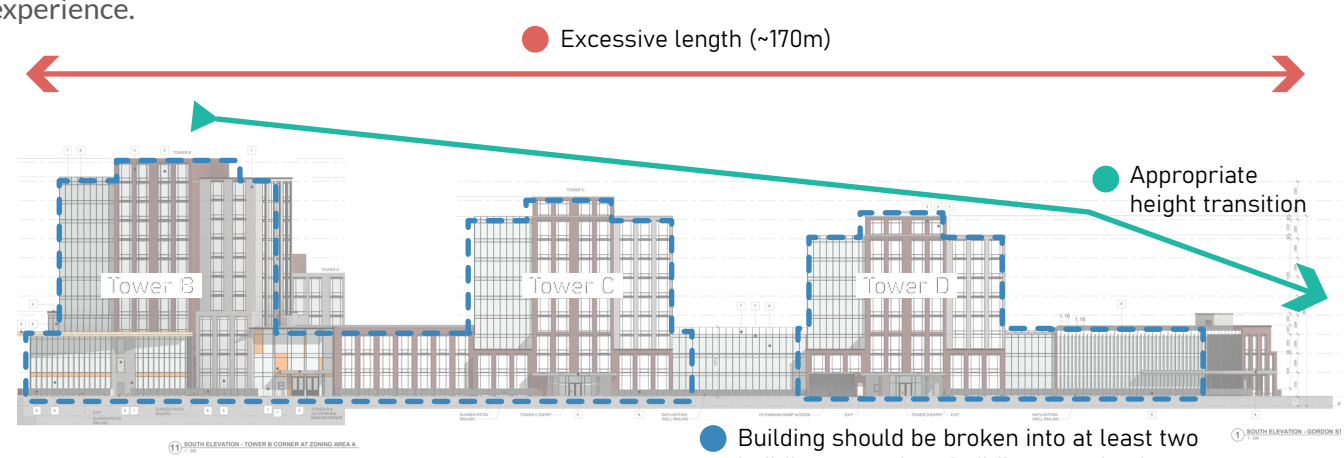

Figure 2. Height and massing analysis

3.5 Internal Programming

The programming of the proposed development includes multiple spaces for a range of amenities and services that appropriately complement its residential uses. However, the internal configuration of the building is not organized effectively and does not respond appropriately to the surrounding context.

The configuration of uses and spaces should optimize the urban design functionality of the building, provide comfort and safety, support wayfinding, and integrate into its context.

On Level P1 there are a number of residential and amenities uses that are located adjacent to parking facilities underground and have minimal or no access to sunlight, which is not an optimal configuration for safe and healthy environments. The applicant should consider relocating these uses to the ground-floor level.

On the ground level, some of the amenity uses do not respond to the adjacent open space and land use context (see Figure 3). The development locates its more active and public use (i.e. a café) closer to the adjacent residential uses to the northeast, while the more private sports amenities are located at the corner of Gordon Street and Stone Road East, which should be the primary 'public face' of the building. This 'private' character is further exacerbated by the patio wells that are proposed to address the grade challenges on site.

The corner at Gordon Street and Stone Road East should reflect the more public and active use of the intersection and should relate to the park surrounding the iconic Gryphon Statue across the street. For this, the applicant should consider relocating other uses such as the café space to this area, as this could create a more vibrant and integrated corner (while the proposed basketball court would better serve as a transition to the 'back-of-house' uses and adjacent residential neighbourhood).

The south end of the development is mostly residential with one small entrance from the outdoor amenity space to the south on the ground level, one entrance from the central outdoor amenity space, and one amenity study area per floor from P1 to Level 3. The south end wing of the building has however greater potential to become an internal point of attraction and to better respond to the surrounding context. This side of the building would be of great importance as it is the closest to the shopping plaza across the street, and its design should respond to this functionality and reflect a sense of arrival. The applicant could consider reconfiguring this side of the building to include a greater vestibule, and some other amenity uses such as the gym and basketball court, which are of private use but can anchor that side of the building and provide better legibility, spatial hierarchy, and activity. Some of the residential units on this side of the building could be relocated to the northeast corner, adjacent to the established residential area, where the café space is currently located to provide for a better and more buffered transition to the active uses that are part of this development (see Figure 3).

In addition, the development features five lobbies, which allow users to access the building from different areas. However, none of these lobbies create a connection between the public realm and the internal open spaces, undermining the building's pedestrian permeability and legibility.

The internal circulation between the multiple spaces of the building should respond to the external circulation and the context.

The applicant should consider configuring these lobbies to create a direct connection between the street and the central open spaces. This will not only improve pedestrian circulation and legibility but will provide some transparency to the building on the ground level, which would help to visually break the building into different volumes and reduce its heaviness.

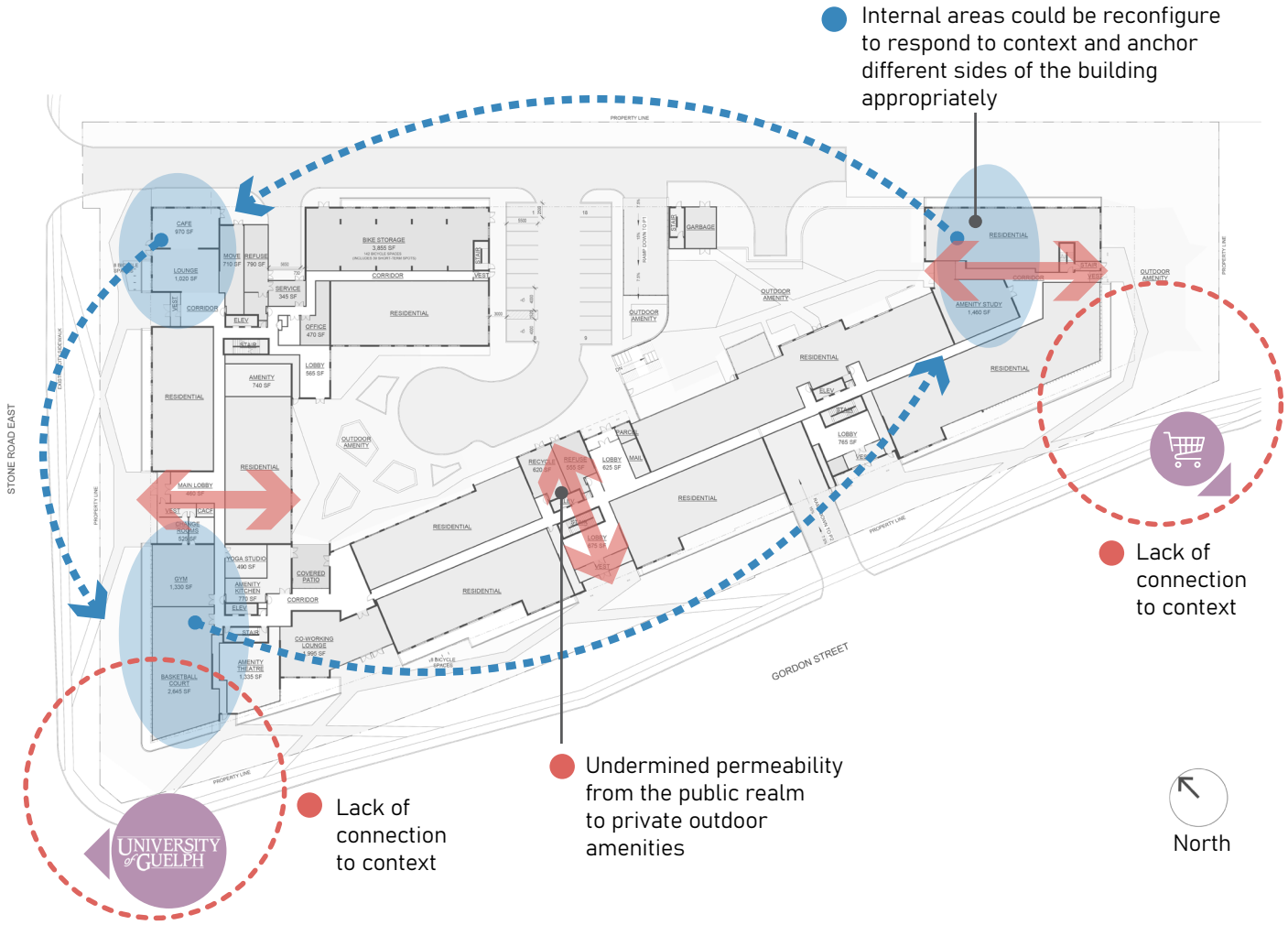

Figure 3. Internal Programming analysis - Ground Floor

On the upper levels, the internal programming would also benefit from the consolidation and alignment of vertical and horizontal circulation. On Level 4, for instance, the proposed internal amenity spaces should be aligned with the internal corridor and provide a more integrated, visual, and direct connection between the different rooftop amenity areas (see Figure 4). The staircase and elevator areas could be better aligned to allow for vertical directness between some amenities and for a better connection between the public realm and the private outdoor amenity spaces on the ground floor.

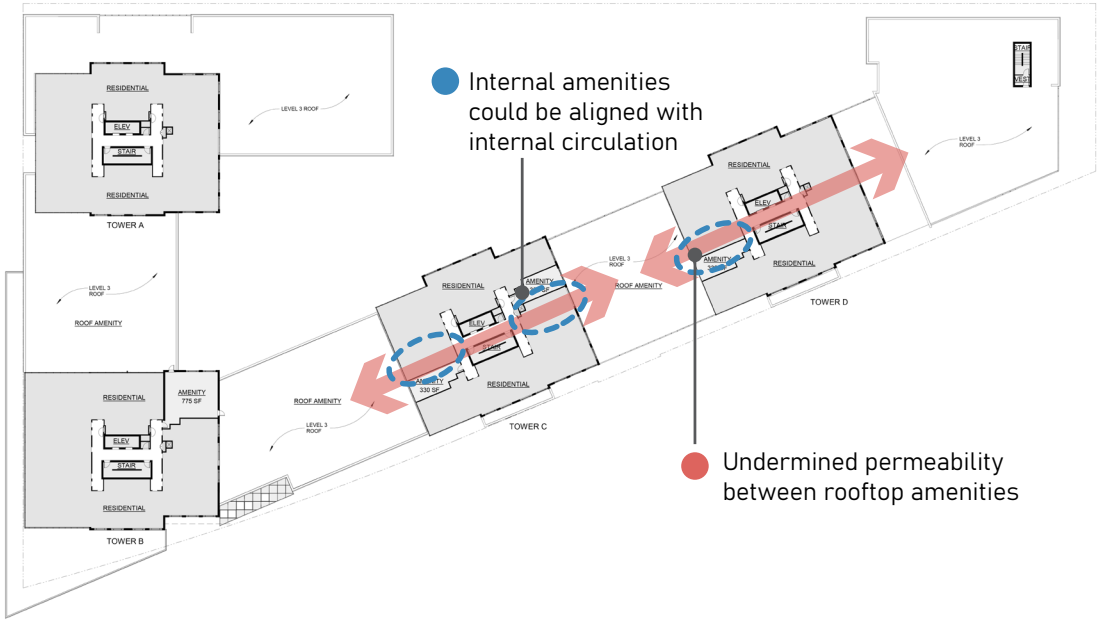

Figure 4. Internal Programming analysis - 4th Floor

3.6 Parking, Access and Loading

The proposed development generally locates parking and loading at the rear of the site, hidden from view either behind or below the building, minimizing its impact on the streetscape and public realm. The site has two vehicular accesses from the street, one from Stone Road East at the rear of the building with access to surface parking, loading, and services areas, and underground parking on P1 and one with access to P2 from Gordon Street. Underground parking levels P1 and P2, however, do not appear to be connected internally and even though most of the parking, access, and loading is at the rear of the building, it is not consolidated and requires multiple points of access which constantly interrupts the pedestrian circulation (see Figure 5). This could be due to the over-programming of the site and breaking the development into at least two buildings should help create additional opportunities to consolidate parking, access, and loading facilities.

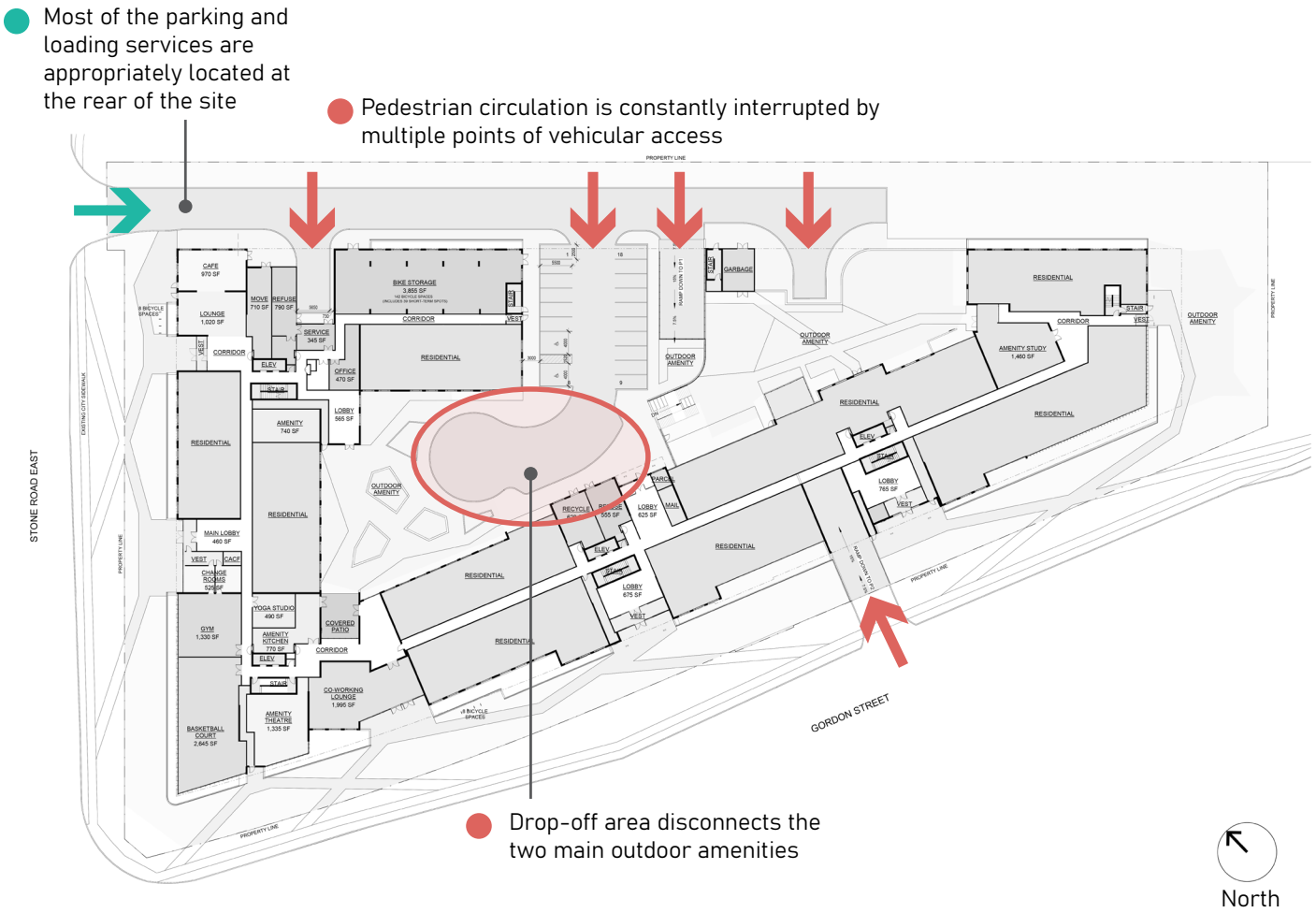

Figure 5. Parking, access and loading analysis - Ground Floor

It would be ideal to consolidate street access at the rear of the site (i.e. remove the access from Gordon Street), consolidate internal parking, loading, and service access, consolidate most of the parking and services facilities underground, and have levels P1 and P2 connected internally.

The proposed plan includes visitor surface parking areas and a drop-off area at the rear of the building which helps mitigate impacts on the streetscape. However, these are located directly between the primary outdoor amenity spaces, disrupting the pedestrian circulation and disconnecting the two main outdoor amenities (see Figure 5). The applicant should explore opportunities to remove or reduce the size of these areas. If required, they should reflect a pedestrian-priority and should be carefully designed as an extension of the outdoor amenities that can be closed and used as public space as needed. A redesign could include interesting materials such as stone paving or public art to reduce impact, enhance the area, and provide opportunities to double as useable open space if needed.

3.7 Common Amenity Areas and Open Spaces

At the centre of the proposed development, there are two large outdoor amenity areas, which are shown to feature landscaping and recreational spaces. However, they appear to be disconnected from each other by the drop-off area, as well as a change in grade between the spaces. The function and enjoyability of the two central outdoor areas could be improved by a better connection and the reconsideration of the parking and drop-off areas (as previously suggested). Access to these two outdoor amenity areas from Gordon Street and Stone Road East is also limited, and the attractiveness and use of the spaces would benefit from more direct access from the street through the internal configuration of lobbies and common areas (or breaking the building into two structures as previously suggested).

Outdoor amenity A (see Figure 7) is the largest, most enclosed, and central outdoor amenity in the open space hierarchy and is mostly surrounded by residential areas that will provide casual surveillance and consistent use.

The landscape design of the area, however, is currently designed to be more visually attractive rather than to functionally reflect its character as the primary outdoor plaza space. The applicant should consider making the planters smaller, remove the wall-mounted benches, and replacing them with additional (and more flexible) bistro seating with attached umbrellas. The applicant should also consider adding lighting, garbage bins, and outlets to the raised planters. This, along with making the drop-off into a pedestrian-priority area, could transform the area into an attractive flexible open space.

Outdoor amenity B (see Figure 7) is partially open and partially enclosed, and is on a lower level than outdoor amenity A. These characteristics make it an ideal space for a more relaxed and private environment, juxtaposing and complementing outdoor amenity A. However, the proposed landscape design currently reads as an extension of outdoor amenity A (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Render showing Outdoor amenity B

The applicant should consider redesigning the area as a softscaped amenity by removing the plaza hardscape and only leaving the paths and by creating sod berms for students to lounge, play and relax. Another recommendation would be adding trees within the planting areas (i.e. on top of the underground parking garages), creating landscape berms in most of the landscaped areas, or selectively raising certain planters, to provide visual interest, give more planting medium for trees, soften up the courtyard, and create buffers to the loading and parking areas.

In addition, the applicant should consider assessing accessibility issues as some of the sections of this area do not seem to be AODA compliant. The standards indicate that for an outdoor eating area to be accessible there should be clear space so people can smoothly approach the tables, the ground surface leading to the tables should be level firm and stable to accommodate mobility aids, and at least 20 per cent of the tables should be accessible.

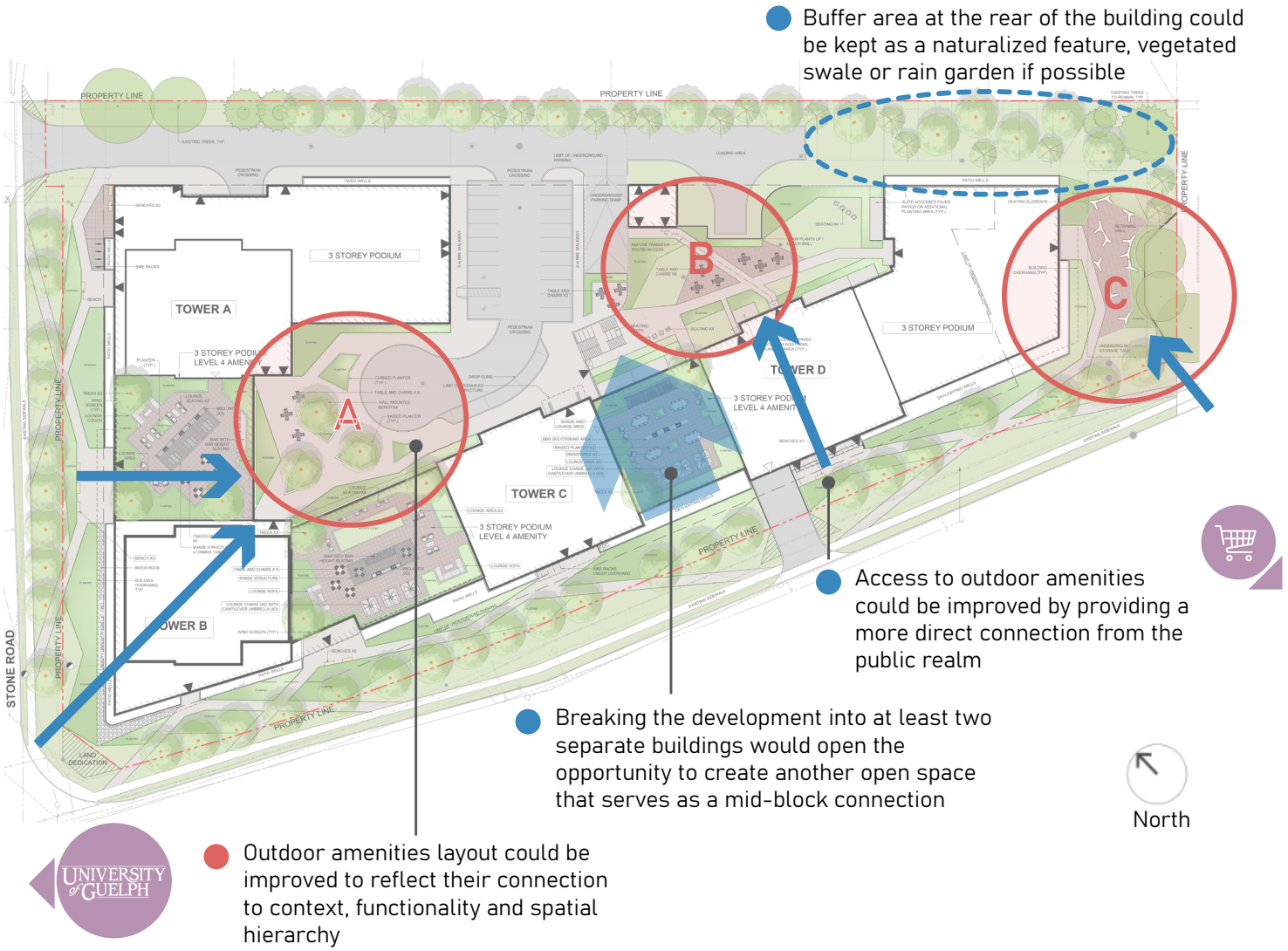

Figure 7. Common amenity areas and open spaces analysis

At the south end of the subject site, outdoor amenity C (see Figure 7) offers a buffer to the neighbouring lower-scale building and features a combination of hardscape and softscape elements. The area will be very transited and of great importance for the students as it is the closest outdoor space to the shopping plaza across the street and other nearby retail areas. The current layout does not reflect this key functionality and character, which may impact its use and attractiveness. The landscape design should respond to the surrounding context and offer a more direct path from the building entrance toward the direction of the nearby retail areas. In addition, the applicant could consider adding bistro tables, garbage bins, lighting, bike racks, and seating places with electrical outlets for the students to work, and lounge. To the east of the hardscape area, it would be beneficial to include additional trees, especially coniferous trees, and hedging to reduce northern winter winds.

To the northeast of outdoor amenity C, the proposed design features a large green buffered area of approximately 875 m2. Currently, the landscape design includes some existing trees to remain and newly proposed ones, but is otherwise underutilized given its size. This could be an ideal location for a vegetated swale or a rain garden that contributes to the City's efforts to reduce water use and storm water runoff through rain garden installations as part of the Rain Garden Rebate Program. If due to grading or other reasons this is not possible, the area could be kept as a naturalized feature to provide variation from the other outdoor amenity areas and enhance the on-site sustainability efforts. This could include species that attract pollinators and promote biodiversity. The applicant could also consider including a meandering path through the trees and planting to further transform the area into a high-quality green space for residents seeking a more natural and quieter space.

This treed area extends along the eastern edge of the site, providing an ~4.5m buffer to adjacent residential uses. It is recommended that this buffer be at least 6m to appropriately space and stagger new trees and shrubs that could create a healthy grouping of mainly native species, and provide understorey screening as well as overhead canopy throughout the year.

On level 4, the proposed design features three rooftop amenity spaces above the podium. The areas are of a generous size and could accommodate a variety of recreational uses, however, the current design shows similar features (BBQ and seating areas) among the three spaces. This could become repetitive undermining the attractiveness and use of the spaces. To solve this, the applicant should consider providing more variation in uses (i.e. outdoor fitness, pet areas, etc.) and creating a continuous experience so that students can move between them and have different options to use the space.

The general recommendation to break the proposed development into two buildings would also open opportunities for another open space that could serve as a mid-block connection that provides direct access to the outdoor amenity spaces at the centre of the development. Such a space could offer opportunities for seating and passive recreation and could generate better views and variety for the rooftop amenity spaces on the upper levels by planting trees and displaying a varied landscape design.

Lastly, there is a significant grade change between outdoor amenity A and outdoor amenity B, with primary access provides via a staircase. All efforts should be made to ensure convenient, safe and barrier-free access for all users between these two spaces.

3.8 Facade Design and Articulation

The facades show significant efforts to visually break the development into distinct-looking buildings linked by a common podium. The facades are highly articulated through recesses and projections, changes of materials, and colours to provide variation and interest. However, the variation of forms does not reflect a clear intention behind the design, and the articulation appears overwhelming and confusing, some of the facades do not reflect their internal uses and the overall architectural design seems disorganized and heavy (see Figure 8).

The configuration and use of materials should reflect a clear spatial relationship and hierarchy of forms and show a clear distinction between the individual building forms, as well as the base, middle, and top of each building form.

Ideally, there would be a clean break between the different buildings (on the elevations), which could be accommodated, for instance, by using brick for the building podiums and clear glazing for the adjoining sections (see section 11).

The facade on Stone Road East generally reflects an appropriate transition by changing materials within the podium between a more contemporary urban character closer to Gordon Street and the residential uses to the northeast. In addition, significant recesses within the podium on Stone Road East create a meaningful reduction in the mass of the building and provide better articulation. However, the architectural design on this wing could be much clearer by minimizing the overlap between the different treatments, i.e., brick extending into stone, weather protection canopy extending to the stone facade, etc.

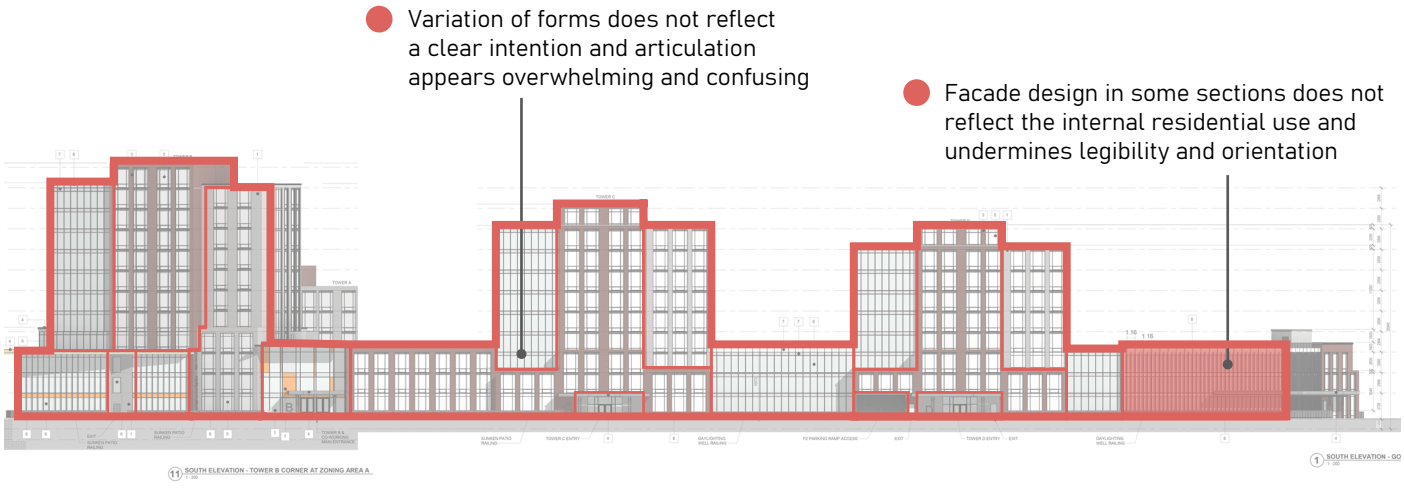

Figure 8. Facade design and articulation analysis - Front Elevation facing Gordon Street- Part I

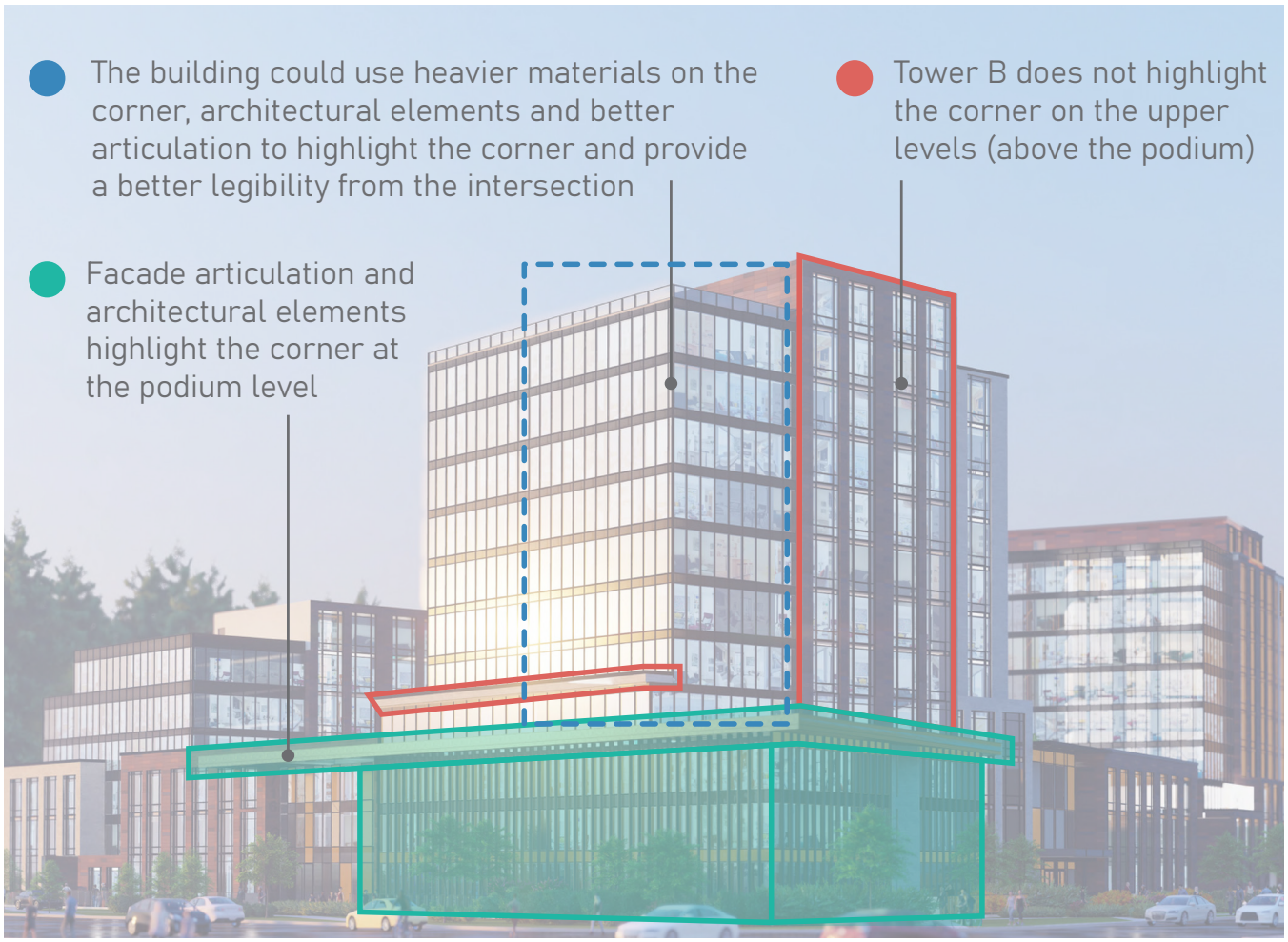

Figure 9. Facade design and articulation analysis - Render showing the corner at Gordon Street and Stone Road East

At the corner of Stone Road East and Gordon Street, the podium is well set back with substantial protruding elements that give the appearance of a step back above the podium accentuating the corner (see Figure 9). However, Tower B itself could use some articulation and 'heavier' materials (i.e. stone, brick) that continue highlighting the corner vertically within the tower. This could help in defining a hierarchy of forms along the Gordon Street façade, enhancing legibility and visual attractiveness at the corner.

On corner buildings, a continuous facade articulation on both frontages that accentuates the corner creates a more human-scaled and attractive building that enhances the skyline.

The design of the podium at the southern edge along Gordon Street uses different materials and articulation which helps to differentiate the volume from the rest of the development. However, the facade design defines an institutional character that does not reflect the internal residential use and undermines legibility and orientation (see Figure 10). The applicant should consider using materials and articulation that provide comfort for their residents and that visually represent their internal use.

Figure 10. Render showing the corner at the southestern edge along Gordon Street

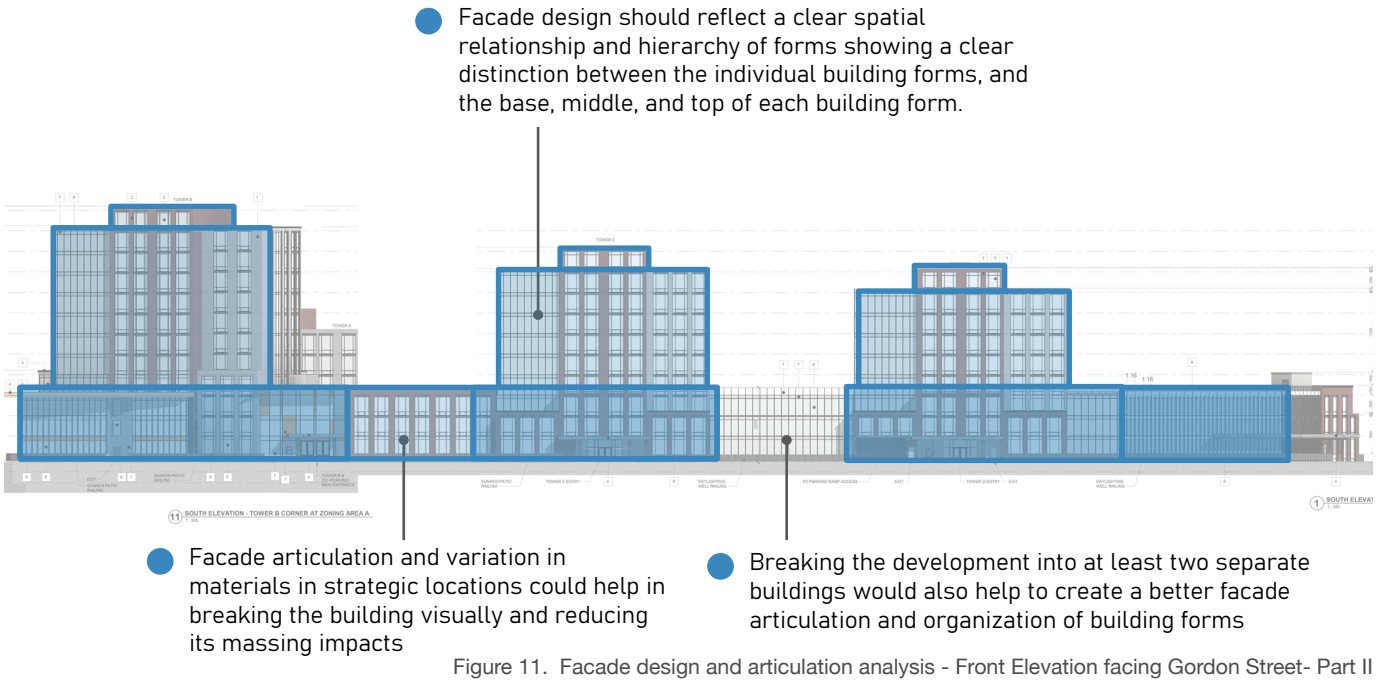

Figure 11. Facade design and articulation analysis - Front Elevation facing Gordon Street- Part II

3.9 Streetscape

The building is well set back to accommodate landscaping elements and allow for enhanced streetscapes along both Stone Road East and Gordon Street. However, some of these elements do not respond appropriately to their context. Located across the street from the iconic Gryphon Statue, the streetscape at the corner of Stone Road East and Gordon Street should respond accordingly and should reflect a gateway and landmark character by giving a sense of entrance and contributing to the image and identity of the place. The building and landscape design at the corner, however, does not reflect its character and importance (see Figure 12). The building is set back from the corner and physically separated by the patio wells, which avoids any street interface and creates an unwelcoming and unapproachable corner. The use and character of the building at the corner should be ground-oriented to allow for a vibrant streetscape, and the landscape design should provide a physical and visual connection to the internal use of the building and to the surrounding context. The applicant could consider using public art, paving, and plantings as elements to highlight the gateway and landmark character of the corner.

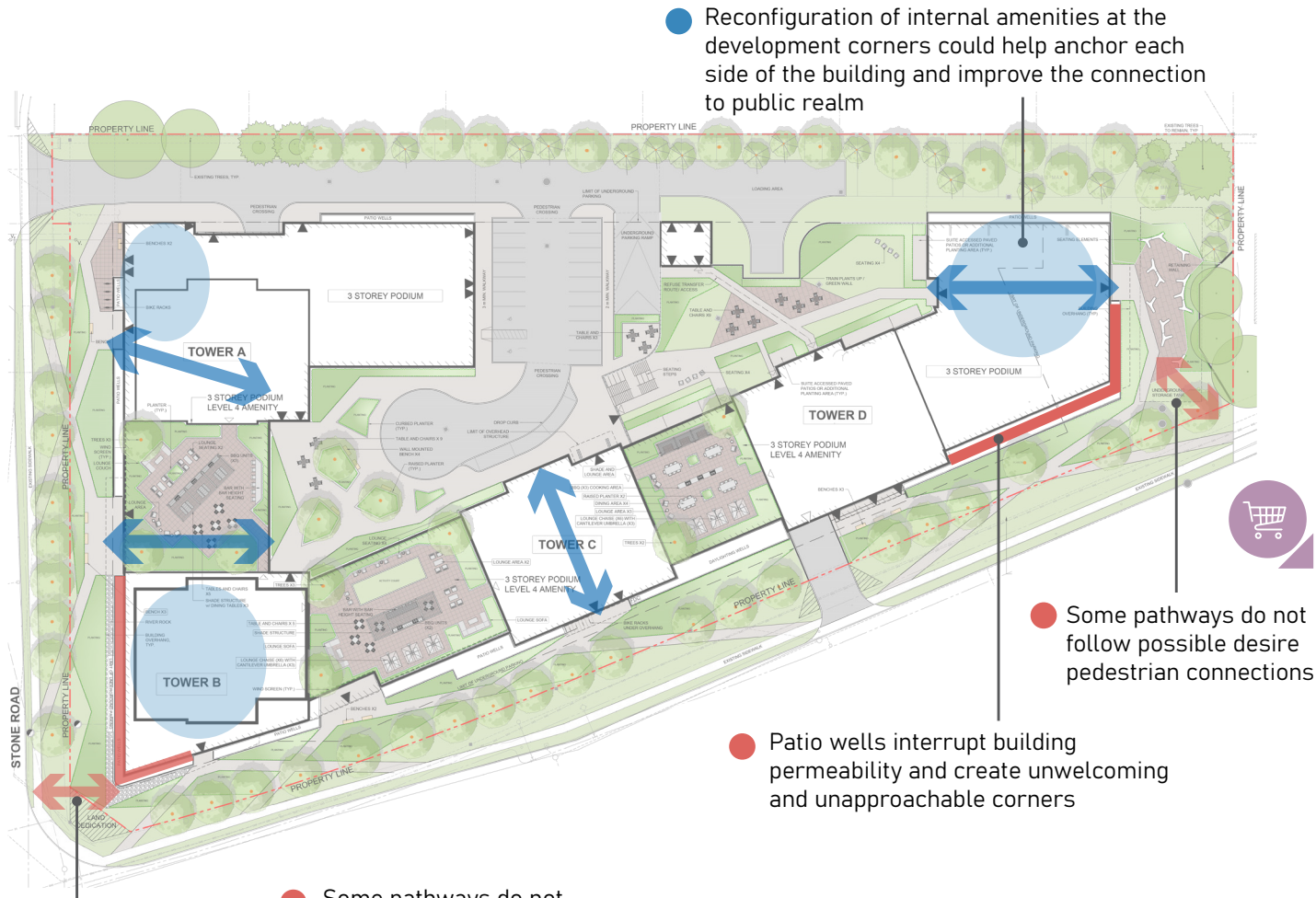

Figure 12. Streetscape analysis

Around the entire development, trees are proposed to provide shade and comfort. Pathways with interesting diagonal shapes are proposed along both abutting streets allowing pedestrians to take shortcuts and improving interconnectedness, however, some of these paths do not reflect anticipated desire lines. For instance, at the southeast end, the pathways do not connect the outdoor amenity space with the sidewalk towards the south, and this would be a desired path for students going grocery shopping across the street. Therefore, the applicant should consider assessing their current pathway design and adapting it to match the possible desire lines for pedestrians providing better directness and comfort (see Figure 12).

At the southern end of the property, the streetscape should reflect its importance and use as it would be the first part of the building approached by students coming back from the nearby retail areas. The building, however, is separated from the streetscape and the outdoor amenity space by the patio wells such as in the corner to the north. The applicant should consider anchoring this side of the building with an interesting internal use such as the basketball court and gym that frames the corner and provides a better transition and connection to the outdoor space.

4. Conclusion

This Urban Design Review has evaluated the proposed development for 716 Gordon Street in Guelph, Ontario according to urban design best practices, the City's Official Plan, and the Urban Design Manual. The review finds that the proposed development could represent a positive impact on the area by providing student housing and amenity spaces close to the university, however, there are fundamental design, massing, and site plan issues to be resolved. While several recommendations were outlined to enhance the design, the fundamental issues to be resolved are the following: the long massing results in an overbuild of the site and should be broken down into at least two buildings; the configuration of internal uses should be better organized, articulated, and respond to the context; the facades should reflect internal uses; the design should promote an active corner; and, all residential units should be located to ensure optimal living conditions.

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Urban Design Peer Review

716 Gordon Street
Guelph, ON

CITY OF Guelph
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