

PLANNING JUSTIFICATION BRIEF

Prepared for: RPD Studio

Property Address: 4531 Morrison Street, City of Niagara Falls, Ontario

Application: Minor Zoning By-law Amendment

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1. Introduction

The Planning Justification Brief is submitted in support of a revised residential development proposed at 4531 Morrison Street in Niagara Falls. The subject property is zoned R5F (Residential Apartment 5F Zone) under Zoning By-law No. 79-200, as amended by A-2024-49. An earlier concept for the site, which proposed 32 stacked townhouse units, received approval for multiple minor variances for lot area, frontage, setbacks, and lot coverage. In response to current market trends and the demand for more flexible, ground-oriented housing, the applicant has revised the proposal.

The updated proposal includes a total of 7 townhouse units and 2 semi-detached units, each of the primary units will have two additional residential units (ARUs). This revised design maintains a similar scale and density of the previous concept while improving adaptability and livability. The introduction of a central mews to updated design will consolidate the amenity space, access and parking. Planning justification brief demonstrates that the revised proposal continues to conform to the overall intent of the R5F zoning, respects the previously granted variances, and aligns with provincial, regional and municipal policy objectives.

2. Site Description and Context

The subject site is located at 4531 Morrison Street in the City of Niagara Falls. The site is located on the north east side of the Morrison Street and Crysler Avenue intersection with AJ McKinley Park to the south, Niagara Falls Public Library is to the south and west, and the University of Niagara Falls is located to the north and east site along Ontario Avenue.

The subject site is an irregular L-shaped parcel with an approximate frontage of 30.48 meters along Crysler Avenue and 45.75 meters along Morrison Street, and the eastern depth of the site is approximately 45.72 metres. The land is generally flat with no significant topographic features, and aerial photograph shows an existing building on the property.



Figure 1: Aerial Photograph and Site Context

3. Proposed Development

The earlier proposal at 4531 Morrison Street proposed 32 stacked townhouse units, which were designed to align with the intent of the R5F zone, similar to the form and density of a low-rise apartment building. In order to facilitate this earlier proposal was granted with minor variances for the following:

- Minimum lot area
- Minimum lot frontage
- Minimum front and rear yard depth
- Minimum exterior side yard depth and width
- Maximum lot coverage

The revised proposal retains similar (refer to figure 2) site planning and design principles, setbacks, and overall architectural style, and provides a compatible ground oriented built form, consisting of the following:

- Building A comprises of 7 primary townhouse units, each with 2 Additional Residential Units (ARUs), with the exception of the southwest corner unit (unit 7, refer to figure 2) which includes only 1 ARU.
- Building B includes 2 semi-detached primary units, each with 2 ARUs.
- The current proposal includes a total of 26 potential rental units, comprised of 9 primary units and 17 ARUs.
- The inclusion of mews in the site layout design enhances the internal pedestrian circulation, provides centralized parking, and creates a shared outdoor amenity space for future residents.



Figure 2: Revised Proposed Site Layout

4. Planning Policy

The subject site is designated as Residential in the City of Niagara Falls Official Plan. This designation encourages a wide range of housing types and tenures, residential intensification, and promoting housing options that address affordability and demographic changes.

The subject site is also designated Residential - High Density in the Transit Station Secondary Plan Area (Schedule A-5 Land Use). Since the land use for the site has been established in the Official Plan, the scope of this high-level Planning Policy analysis will be determined accordingly.

4.1 Provincial Policy Statement, 2024

The Province of Ontario Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) came into effect October 20, 2024 and applies to all Planning Act approvals made after that date. The following key Provincial Policy Statement policies are relevant to the proposed Minor Zoning By-law Amendment.

2.1.4 - To provide for an appropriate range and mix of housing options and densities required to meet projected requirements of current and future residents of the regional market area, planning authorities shall:

- a) maintain at all times the ability to accommodate residential growth for a minimum of 15 years through lands which are designated and available for residential development;*

2.2.1 - Planning authorities shall provide for an appropriate range and mix of housing options and densities to meet projected needs of current and future residents of the regional market area by:

- a) establishing and implementing minimum targets for the provision of housing that is affordable to low and moderate income households, and coordinating land use planning and planning for housing with Service Managers to address the full range of housing options including affordable housing needs;*
- b) permitting and facilitating:
 - 1. all housing options required to meet the social, health, economic and well-being requirements of current and future residents, including additional needs housing and needs arising from demographic changes and employment opportunities;*
 - 2. all types of residential intensification, including the development and redevelopment of underutilized commercial and institutional sites (e.g., shopping malls and plazas) for residential use, development and introduction of new housing options within previously developed areas, and redevelopment, which results in a net increase in residential units in accordance with policy 2.3.1.3;**

The proposed infill development makes use of land already identified and designated by the City of Niagara Falls for residential intensification. With a total of 26 potential rental units, the project comprises of 9 primary units and 17 ARUs. The overall revised proposal aligns with the PPS objectives, and is introducing gentle density and rental housing in a compatible urban form.

4.2 Niagara Official Plan

The Niagara Official Plan is revised and re-approved by the Province that the November 4, 2022 version is in force and effect.

The proposed development will facilitate the achievement of the Region's objectives to provide intensification, density and a range of attainable housing options in accordance with Growth Management Objectives 2.2(b), 2.2(e), 2.3(a), and 2.3(b).

As mentioned above, proposed development consists of townhouse and semi-detached built form with 26 total residential units on a site that is 0.163 ha in area, and represents a density of 159.5 units per hectare. As such, this proposal provides a compact built form design that is transit supportive and provides attainable housing options for future residents and changing demography. Furthermore the subject property is located adjacent to existing municipal water and wastewater services, and located along an existing active transportation network.

4.3 City of Niagara Falls Official Plan

The September 2023 Consolidation of the City of Niagara Falls Official Plan, as available from the City's website, was used in the following analysis.

The subject site is designated as Residential in the City of Niagara Falls Official Plan. The property is also designated Residential - High Density in the Transit Station Secondary Plan Area (Schedule A-5 Land Use), refer to Part 5 and Section 2 of the Official Plan.

Schedule A – Future Land Use designates the Subject Property as Residential.

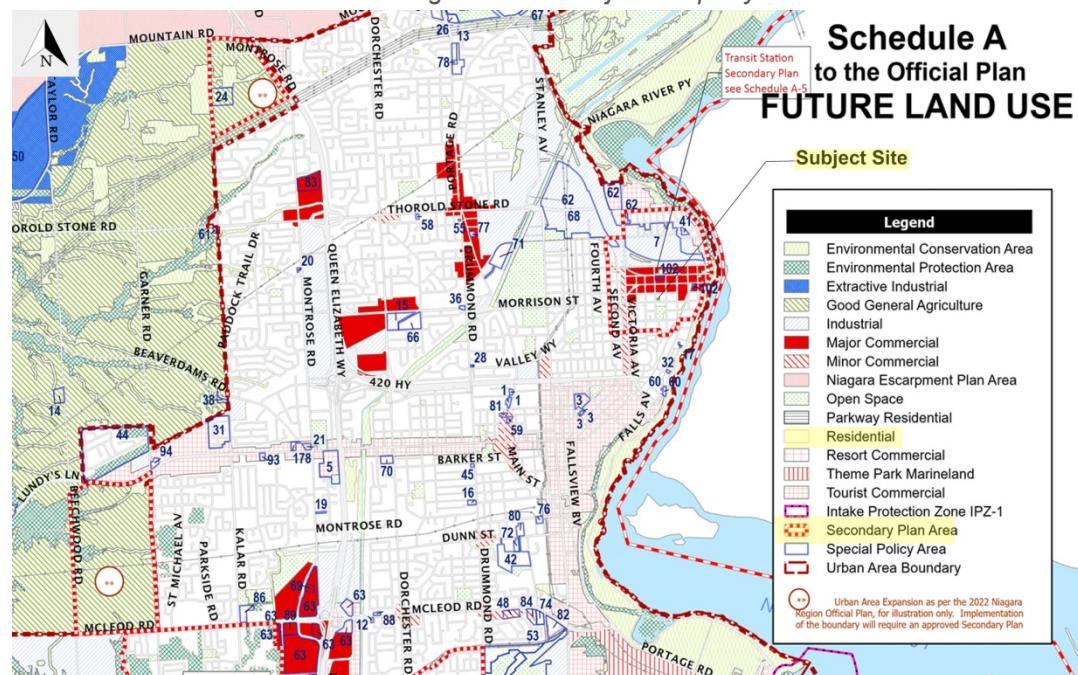


Figure 3: City of Niagara Falls Official Plan: Excerpt from Schedule A

Section 2.3 High Density Residential of the Official Plan, permits the following:

2.3.1 - The planned function of the High Density Residential designation is to provide

opportunities for residential development in higher intensity development format. Diversity of dwelling types is encouraged to support the City's range of accommodation options.

2.3.2 - Permitted uses include:

- a) Mid-to-high-rise apartments; and
- b) Other multiple dwellings (as defined in this Plan).

2.3.4 - A maximum net density of 200 units per hectare may be developed on lands fronting onto Morrison Street between Buckley Avenue and Ontario Avenue.

As per Figure 12 (Planned Active Transportation Network) of the Official Plan, Morrison Street is planned for a bike route/lane.



Figure 4: City of Niagara Official Plan: Excerpt from Figure 12: Planned Active Transportation Network

The revised proposal represents an approximate density of 159.5 units per hectare. The proposal's compact built form design aligns with the City's Official Plan. The proposed development is located along a future planned bike route along Morrison Street and is in close proximity to both an existing and a conceptual multi-use trail, refer to figure 4.

4.4 Housing Impact Statement

In accordance with Policy 4.4 of Part 1 of the Official Plan, certain Planning Act applications must submit a Housing Impact Statement as part of the a complete application.

The proposed development is anticipated to contain 26 potential rental units, comprising of 9 primary units, and 17 ARUs, approximately with twenty (20), 2 bedroom units and six (6), 1 bedroom units. Rentable unit sizes range from 63 m² to 80 m² with smaller units generally on the lower 2 floors and the larger units on the upper floors. (Policy 4.4(a))

The proposed development will not include affordable units and will not contribute toward the City's goals set in Policy 4.8(a) and 4.8(b). (Policy 4.4(b))

The proposed development is anticipated for purpose built rental units. The final configuration of this management/ownership structure has not been decided at this time.

However, it is anticipated that per unit with initial rents around \$2,000 per month. (Policy 4.4(c))

Phasing is being contemplated for the proposed development, however, the timing and configuration of each phase has not yet been determined. Phasing would align with the provision of one or more complete buildings per phase. (Policy 4.4(d))

Policy 4.4(e) is not applicable as no units are proposed to meet the definition of affordable.

4.5 City of Niagara Falls Zoning By-law 79-200, as amended

The subject site is zoned R5F - Residential Apartment 5F Density Zone, which permits high-density residential uses such as apartments and stacked townhouses. While semi-detached dwelling is not listed as permitted use in R5F, however Building B has been designed to reflect the compatible character, height, and massing of a townhouse built form and does not represent a significant departure from the high-density residential intent of the zone.

Furthermore, the proposed Additional Residential Units (ARUs) are in alignment with provincial legislation (Bill 23) and the Planning Act, which now mandates their permission as-of-right in residential zones. The revised design is not exceeding the previously approved density or built form thresholds and remains consistent with the approved minor variances.



Figure 5: City of Niagara Falls Zoning Schedule Excerpt

5. Planning Rationale

The revised proposal maintains the intent of the previous proposal while strengthening its responsiveness to rental housing needs through the following measures:

- Maintains high-density built form design that is consistent with R5F zoning.
 - Market responsive design incorporates townhouse and semi-detached dwellings with ARUs to improve housing attainability, affordability and support multi-generational living.
 - Site layout incorporates a mews that enhances the internal pedestrian circulation, shared amenity space, and parking configuration.

- No additional variances are requested beyond those already approved per the decision of the Committee of Adjustment (municipal file #: A-2024-049), dated January 6, 2025.
- The revised proposal is in compliance with the PPS 2024, and Region's and City of Niagara Falls Official Plans.

From a rental housing perspective, the revised proposal delivers comparable outcome to the previously approved 32 unit stacked townhouse concept, and introducing a built form that is responsive to current market demands and trends. Each of the 9 primary townhouse and semi-detached units includes two ARUs, corresponding to the previously approved proposals density target. The Additional Residential Units are ideally suited for rental tenure and offer flexible living arrangements that appeal to a broad range of tenants, including students, young professionals, extended families, and multi-generational households. Unlike, previously proposed stacked townhouses, the revised ground-oriented built form design provides private entrances, improved outdoor access, and enhanced liveable features that are increasingly required in current rental market trends.

The revised proposal preserves the original rental yield while delivering a more adaptable, desirable, and family-friendly built form that contributes meaningfully to the City's attainable and rental housing supply and intensification goals. The proposed semi-detached dwellings (Building B) are sympathetic to the proposed townhouse built form (Building A), and helps to optimize the use of land and infrastructure while contributing to the mix of housing types encouraged by all levels of policy framework.

6. Conclusion

The revised proposal at 4531 Morrison Street is aligning with the City's planning goals and objectives, as well as the overall intent of the R5F zone, and the broader provincial policy framework. The proposal provides an adaptable residential built form by incorporating a mix of townhouses, semi-detached dwellings with ARUs that are consistent with the character, scale, massing, and density of the previously approved proposal. The overall design complements the adjacent land uses and built form and is representing sound planning.

Based on the analysis provided, I respectfully request the City of Niagara Falls to consider the revised proposal and recognize its contribution to the City's housing supply and alignment with policy objectives.

Yours Truly,

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