

**Public Meeting – 66-68 Queen’s Road  
Wednesday, November 27, 2019  
Canon Stirling Auditorium, St. Mary the Virgin Anglican Church,  
80 Craigmillar Avenue**

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**Present:**     **Facilitator**  
Marie Ryan

**City of St. John’s**  
Ken O’Brien, Chief Municipal Planner  
Ann Marie Cashin, Planner III, Urban Design & Heritage  
Deputy Mayor Sheilagh O’Leary  
Hope Jamieson, Councillor – Ward 2  
Shanna Fitzgerald, Legislative Assistant

**Proponents**  
Rick Pardy, Parish Lane Development  
Phillip Pratt, Architect  
Paul Chafe, Architect  
representing the proponent, Parish Lane Development Inc.

There were approximately 135 people in attendance, including Deputy Mayor O’Leary and Councillor Jamieson.

**CALL TO ORDER AND BACKGROUND PRESENTATIONS**

Marie Ryan, Chairperson and Facilitator for tonight’s meeting, called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm and outlined the process to ensue. The comments expressed tonight will be provided to Council. Any written submissions received prior to referral of this report to Council will be appended to this report and all personal information included on any submissions will be redacted as per ATIPP legislation. Chairperson Ryan noted that people speaking will need to be brief.

The Chair invited staff from the City’s Planning, Engineering & Regulatory Services Department to outline the planning review process for the proposed development, followed by comments from the developer and feedback from the residents in attendance.

Architectural renderings of the proposed development were displayed during the meeting.

**PURPOSE OF MEETING**

Ann Marie Cashin, Planner III, Urban Design & Heritage for the City, outlined the purpose of the meeting which is to consider an application to rezone land to the Commercial

Central Mixed Use (CCM) Zone for the purpose of a 40-unit residential development at 66-68 Queen's Road. An amendment to the St. John's Municipal Plan would be required.

**Staff Presentation re: Background and Current Status:**

City Staff advised that the property is currently zoned Institutional (INST) at the front of the property along Queen's Road and Open Space (O) at the rear of the property along Harvey Road, which does not permit the type of residential development proposed.

At the April 29, 2019 Regular Council Meeting, Council considered the amendment and set a Terms of Reference for a Land Use Assessment Report so that more information about the proposed development could be presented to the public prior to Council deciding on the application. The Land Use Assessment Report has now been finalized and is available on the City's website for public viewing.

The applicant is proposing to develop two buildings on the site. The building in Phase 1 would consist of twenty-five (25) units, is proposed to be located at the rear of the lot and would have a main access onto Harvey Road. Given the steep slope of the property, the Phase 1 building will be 4 storeys above Harvey Road, but 10 storeys above grade at the center of the lot. The Phase 2 building will front onto Queen's Road, consist of fifteen (15) units and is proposed to be 4 storeys in height. The applicant also proposes underground and above ground parking, public spaces throughout the property and protection of the existing trees at the perimeter of the property.

Ms. Cashin provided background on the current zoning of this property. Dating back to the 1955 City Zoning Map, this property, as well as all the institutional lands in this area were zoned Open Space. As the Institutional Zone was introduced, the zone was applied to the institutional buildings only, leaving sections of Open Space zoning. While the land at the rear of the property is zoned Open Space, it is a private open space area and the City does not have intentions to purchase this property.

Cathedral Parish Hall is designated as a Heritage Building by Council and the designation is confined to the footprint of the building. The main entrance is designed in the Classical Revival style. From the Statement of Significance, the character defining elements of this building include the original main entrance, the house like addition on the left gable end of the building, and the size, dimension and location of the building. Further, the site is located in Heritage Area 1 and the St. John's Ecclesiastical District.

If this proposal proceeds, the applicant is requesting to demolish a large portion of the building but will maintain the residential building at the left gable end of the building and will incorporate the original arch and adjacent original windows into the new development. This property is in one of the few areas of St. John's that is comprised of primarily brick and stone heritage buildings. The materials used will have to be sensitive to the context of the site within downtown and the Ecclesiastical District. The applicant met with the Built Heritage Experts Panel prior to preparing the Land Use Assessment Report. Comments

from the Panel will be provided to Council alongside the information that goes back to Council following this meeting.

Following this meeting, minutes will be prepared and presented to Council prior to Council deciding whether or not to proceed. As a Municipal Plan amendment is required, should Council decide to proceed with the amendment, a Public Hearing would be set later.

## **PRESENTATION BY THE DEVELOPER**

Rick Pardy introduced himself, Philip Pratt and Paul Chafe to speak on behalf of the developer, Parish Lane Development. A presentation was displayed, and the following points were noted:

- Historical perspective – Synod Hall (Cathedral Parish Hall) was an important community asset and a vibrant part of the community. It was damaged by fire in 1966 and rebuilt. It was abandoned in 2016 and offered for sale in 2017.
- Current situation – this is an untended site. Parish Hall is in semi derelict condition. The house can be reused.
- Housing is logical reuse for this property and an adaptive reuse of site. Increasing residential density downtown is supported by the Municipal Plan.
- Project is viable for the proponent.
- Feel this project is complimentary to the neighborhood.

Paul Chafe spoke about the design, referencing slides to illustrate the following points:

- Green space was noted to be important and a key attribute. The intent is to retain 60% of the mature trees.
- Pedestrian walkway with seating and viewing area at the top.
- There is a requirement of a viewing angle of 45 degrees looking upward from the back of the adjoining Garrison Hill homes and the proposed Harvey Road building is significantly lower than required to keep the 45-degree angle unobstructed.
- Heritage house and remaining arched entrance were brought into the proposed development and are key features of the site.
- New building scale will be similar to the original Synod Hall, before the fire.
- Imagery of the City was considered from an architectural standpoint – 3 scales considered. City scale looking from Signal Hill; and the scale of the streetscape on Church Hill, Queen’s Road and Harvey Road, and the scale looking down from The Rooms.
- St. John’s is a mix of older buildings with sloped roofs, dormer windows and pitched rooflines. Newer structures have flat roofs and are boxy and square. This new design picks up some of the elements from both.

- Streetscapes – Queen’s Road and Church Hill relate more to the church and the red brick structures in the area, including Gower Street Church.
- Harvey Road relates to surrounding buildings – The Rooms and the Kirk (St. Andrew’s Church).

Phillip Pratt spoke on the Historic Context and the following was noted:

- Part of the Ecclesiastical District.
- Buildings, open spaces and walkways in and through the site.
- Complements red brick churches on Queen’s Road.
- New walkway will be public laneway connecting Harvey Road to Queen’s Road.
- The developer is conscious of the view from The Rooms and the view of The Rooms. They developed criteria to protect the view from The Rooms. He feels they balanced this with some of the other objectives including what the building looks like looking down from The Rooms. The roof of the building will be highly visible, and they felt the sloped roof has more visual appeal.
- Impact of height and density - project is balanced in the area. Density of this building is 1 residential unit per 120 square metres and is fairly similar to residential density surrounding it. Number of units per square metre of land is similar to the rest of downtown. The form of the building reduces the visual impact. The building was designed to minimize impact on the site.
- Mix of condo and rental units with different size units.
- Innovative approaches such as “sharer” units, live-work options.
- Floor-area ratio (FAR) is a major issue downtown in the sense that buildings tend to be built right to the property line. This proposal has an FAR of 1.8. The CCM Zone allows an FAR of 3.0 so the buildings are comparably smaller.
- Project is responsible in terms of its impact on the site and the area.

In summary, the proponents felt it was a thoughtful design which provides an appropriate balance in the neighbourhood.

**COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR**

Facilitator Marie Ryan invited those who wanted to speak to line up at the center microphone. Approximately 28 of the 30 individuals who spoke during the meeting were opposed to the development.

The following is a summary of comments that represent the people who spoke and opposed the development at the meeting. It is noted that the majority of those opposed to the proposed development live near the subject property.

- Tree inventory in LUAR has significant errors. The inventory lists 3 species of trees: maple, aspen and poplar, none of which are on the lot. The remaining trees on the lot include beech, apple, mountain ash, choke cherry, pin cherry, hawthorn, and one spruce which are not mentioned.
- A study was conducted on November 22, 2019 by a resident who is also a science teacher. Forest is densely packed. There is an average density of 24 trees per square metre - far more than the 36 total trees listed in the LUAR.
- Claim of developer is to protect the trees over a certain trunk size. Trees in Newfoundland have a short growing season. Height and diameter do not give an accurate reading on the age of the tree. This forest is a vibrant and changing ecosystem. On October 28, Deputy Mayor O'Leary stated we should not be cutting down forests for urban growth.
- There was no community outreach or consideration given to the effect this proposed development will have on existing community.
- This proposal is about getting an unobstructed view of the Narrows from this new development at a great cost to the rest of the city.
- Open space is important to the community. It's the last naturalized green space in downtown St. John's and should be preserved.
- Once rezoned, the developer does not have to abide by the proposal. Page 15 of LUAR lists the limitations on the CCM zone and the ability of the development to be altered.
- This development is next to 3 story houses and out of scale and goes against the City objective to protect the architectural scale of downtown.
- There is a petition to reject this application. The petition currently has 4000 signatures and is still growing.
- The Chair of the Board of Directors of The Rooms read an excerpt from a letter submitted against this development:
 

*Testimonials from our visitors - provincial, national and international - indicate that the panoramic view of the cityscape and harbour is a highlight of their visit to The Rooms. This magnificent view figures large in our visitors' memories, comments and photos. The view from The Rooms is regularly the subject of enthusiastic social media posts, inviting visitors from afar to come and share this experience, similar to comments we receive about our permanent exhibitions. As the custodians of this view, we feel obligated to oppose the change in zoning.*
- Development is an important part of the city but there is social change in our city that is concerning. There is an increasing wealth gap and there needs to be a focus on affordable housing.

- Encouraged decision-making to think of this as two separate proposals: the rezoning of open space and the rezoning of institutional space. It was noted there is support of rezoning the institutional space but not the open space.
- New objectives in the Envision Municipal Plan reference the protection and expansion of the urban forest in existing neighborhoods. The Plan references the retention and use of existing privately-owned recreation facilities and open spaces to supplement useful parks and facilities. Thought has gone into protecting these lands around town so there should be thought about this land.
- Demolition of the Parish Hall building will happen to allow the construction of the Harvey Road building, before the construction of the new Queen's Road building. There will be a vacant lot on Queen's Road for a few years or potentially indefinitely, as the LUAR has an asterisk next to the lower (Queen's Road) building indicating that this will be constructed based on demand.
- Neighbors do use the area as there is open public access to it. The neighbors tap the maple trees, their kids explore, and they clean up the property each year.
- These suggested revisions to the plan should be considered:
  - Shift some of the massing to protect more of the green space.
  - Cover over the parking lot. There is more parking there than needed.
  - Shift density so the green space will be an amenity for people who live in that building and nearby.
  - Refuse the rezoning of the open space land and allow the rezoning of the institutional space.
- An "accidental forest" downtown is an asset to the community. There should be a willingness to sit down and work through more amenable versions of design.
- Forest is not untended as in the spring the neighbors meet in the back and pick up garbage. It's very much tended space.
- Kids use this space in the winter, they tap the maple trees, they enjoy the nature and they live near some wildness because of the space.
- This benefits the children of the city as a model of green space. They learn about community through the forest. Kids need regular opportunities to play in wild space. There is a profound value in access to play in wild natural spaces as it gives them open-ended possibilities and allows them to appreciate nature. This space can enrich the lives of other kids downtown.
- A regular renter of 68 Parish Hall spoke on the loss of space. There were artistic shows and plays built in that space and it was unrivaled as a big room with a kitchen and other spin-off rooms and 2 dance studios. The arts are important to the fabric of Downtown St. John's and there need to be spaces where artists can work.
- The Star of the Sea Hall on Henry Street was a proposed development approximately 10 years ago. The original was 71 condos and is now 85

apartments. The design of that building changed. Once a decision is made to rezone and it is approved, it will move forward and can be changed after the zoning is changed. Star of the Sea is still being worked on because they cannot sell units.

- Residents cautioned that this development is disproportionate to neighborhood and this economy right now may mean they cannot sell and that would require more action down the road that would disrupt the neighborhood.
- A Historian spoke and identified the Cathedral Parish Hall as a National Historic Site in the middle of one of only two Ecclesiastical (Church) National Historic Districts in the country. There is an opportunity in future to nominate this district as a World Heritage Site under UNESCO.
- Issue with the process of consultation as there was a decision note sent to Committee of the Whole in April 2019 referencing continued consultation with key stakeholders. The City process was questioned, as the public did not see that document until 3 weeks ago.
- Currently the area is a National Historic District and the building is a National Historic Site and as such, the City must be careful about what goes in that area. Inappropriate development could damage the chances of having a World Heritage Site as well as damage the commemorative integrity of the National Historic District that already exists there.
- Proposal needs to be considered within the context of being an integral part of National Historic Site. This should be treated as a special case and decisions should be made about the site as a whole.
- Archeological study was not done, and it was questioned why it hasn't been, as this is a core piece of property that has not been developed and there is no indication of what could have been there 200 years ago. UN, national and provincial legislation requires it.
- Affordable housing in downtown is needed and not more condos.
- There are large open pits located top of Lime Street at LeMarchant Road and at Margaret's Place behind McPherson School – areas which were previously planned and approved for condominium developments which never came to fruition. Regulations should require the open construction pits be remediated before another open pit is created.
- No study was done on the impact of shadowing and the loss of light in the gardens of Garrison Hill properties, especially in the winter months because of the impact of the new building.
- A representative of Heritage NL spoke about heritage preservation of this area as many buildings have been designated as heritage structures comprising the National Historic District. It is an incredible collection of buildings that are nationally significant and possibly internationally significant, so decisions should

be made with care surrounding this property. To find balance it was noted that new developments should not overpower the other significant heritage values and should be compatible in scale.

- There is an increase in new parking facilities downtown and heritage is lost to accommodate cars. The development should not exceed the parking requirements for the site.
- Engagement processes are lacking. The neighborhood needs to be consulted with it being noted that if there was community buy-in, people would be satisfied and more supportive of development, enabling a more fluid process. Developers were encouraged to step back and do more community engagement to find the right balance that meets the needs of the city.
- LUAR terms of reference should have had input from residents.
- Height restrictions are a concern.
- Parking layby on Harvey Road to service the rear building will impact traffic.
- Proposal does not conform to the intent of the Municipal Plan.
- Reference was made to Section 4.6.9 of the Envision Municipal Plan in relation to the requirement of public open space through the development approval process where proposed development includes lands identified as part of the St. John's open space master plan or as an open space land for public use.
- Heritage is a fragile gift and not a renewable resource.
- This development is not compatible in terms of height or scale with Garrison Hill or any other neighboring buildings.
- This development will shade windows during the day and light up the area during the night which will affect the neighboring residents.
- Pedestrian walkway is metal and will be noisy for the neighbors. Patios and balcony will also add noise.
- The 5-year-plus building schedule will mean children will spend 1/3 of their young lives with noise.
- Tourists spend time with people in the area and take pictures of houses on Garrison Hill. This development will affect the tourism in the area.
- LUAR does not identify the effect to properties on Garrison Hill and neighboring properties. Residents of Garrison Hill were not contacted about this development.
- This space is a peaceful open space and is enjoyed by residents and people walking along Harvey Road.
- Birds in the area will be affected.
- Traffic is an issue as Queen's Road is already busy. More cars will create more problems.
- Excavating the hill will create problems as they will lose the natural sponge that soaks up the water and the water will pool and cause flooding.



- Depiction of the development is inaccurate. The depiction in the Telegram is deceptive to the public as it shows more trees than possible.
- Similar residential units sit empty in the downtown area and empty buildings do not increase residential density.
- Painful lack of engagement for the community. This could have been done in a way that was collaborative.
- Vacancy rate is high.
- Point of this project is to monetize the view of the Narrows.
- Not the City Council's role to consider the financial interests or health of this one church above the interests of the whole downtown.
- The use of open space was questioned, as the remaining trees will be fenced in and the walkway will not be open to the public. The residents of the new development will not want the public on their ground.
- An enormous project like this should be evaluated. It was questioned if a gender-based analysis was done. Development in the city needs to answer questions such as how this improves the lives of women and what impact this development has on their lives.
- Red brick does not authenticate as heritage.
- Old Parish Hall can be redeveloped as community space or art space.
- A biologist spoke about how the land acts as a sponge and helps reduce urban floods. In adaptation to climate change we should be building green spaces and not reducing them. In the state of climate emergency declared by City Council, this needs to be considered.
- Market is terrible and condos are not selling so it doesn't make business sense to create another condo development.

The following is a summary of comments in support of proposed development:

- A resident spoke in favor of the building but not the location.
- The Parish Hall is an eyesore and a health hazard that will soon fall down.
- The Anglican Diocese took over the Parish property with the hope to sell it.
- "Rather see condos go there than condoms". Problems with needles and condoms in that area. Weekly clean-ups are done.
- Not healthy green space. Area should be developed.
- Historic district does run from the Anglican Cathedral up to and including Mount St. Francis Monastery on Merrymeeting Road. Parish Hall is not a historic building, but the footprint of the building is historic. The historic entrance and house will be preserved by this development.

- No obstruction of view. People losing view of Narrows are people walking on Harvey Road. It shows in the slides that the architect considered the view from The Rooms.
- Parish cannot afford to keep property standing. Money would help ministries.
- Parishioners are decreasing in numbers and the parishes that own these old buildings cannot afford to keep them up.
- Anglican Cathedral Parish made a commitment to the long-term viability of their congregation as a downtown congregation. Churches are about people and not about buildings.
- Derelict building with no remaining heritage. If we count the trees on the site, we should also count the varieties of mushrooms and fungi growing inside the Hall.
- Open space is not public space.
- Great love of old St. John's with local support of downtown is important. Unless residential downtown exists, the retail stores, coffee shops, restaurants will not exist. Downtown life in St. John's is declining.
- From a real estate perspective there is a trend where people are selling their homes and choosing to rent. People are moving from suburbia to enjoy downtown in retirement.
- This is private land so investment is at the developer's risk.

The Facilitator acknowledged the many written submissions which will be included in this report.

This report highlights the points made without reference to the person responsible for making them. The Chair encouraged those who wished to have their comments registered to do so by making written submissions which would be appended to this report.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Facilitator Marie Ryan indicated that once the minutes of this meeting are prepared and combined with written redacted submissions, the matter will be included in the published Council Agenda in due course.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:04 pm.

Marie Ryan  
Chairperson/Facilitator