

Urban Design Brief

576 Ridge Road North

Fort Erie, ON

August 2023

**Upper Canada Consultants
3-30 Hannover Drive
St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A3**



UCC Project No. 2152

Contents

1.0 PREFACE 2

2.0 BACKGROUND AND SITE CONDITIONS 3

 Site Context..... 3

 Existing Conditions..... 4

3.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT 6

 Neighbourhood Context and Built Form Character 7

5.0 PROJECT DESIGN ANALYSIS..... 10

 Single Detached Lots..... 10

 Block Townhouses (Block 50)..... 11

 Stormwater Facility..... 12

 Town of Fort Erie Urban Design Policies..... 13

 Town of Fort Erie Official Plan 13

6.0 CONCLUSION..... 22

1.0 PREFACE

This Urban Design Brief (Brief) has been prepared by Upper Canada Consultants (UCC) on behalf of the owner of 576 Ridge Road in the Town of Fort Erie (the subject lands). The subject lands are the site of the former Ridgeway Crystal Beach High School for which applications for Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment, Draft Plan of Subdivision and Draft Plan of Condominium have been submitted to enable the residential redevelopment of the property.

The above-noted applications were submitted to the Town of Fort Erie on April 5, 2023. An incomplete application letter was subsequently provided by Town Staff on May 5, 2023 detailing the outstanding requirements for a complete application, including the requirement for an Urban Design Brief.

This Brief has been prepared to provide design overview and rationale for the proposed development in accordance with the applicable Urban Design policies in Section 5.6 of the Town's Official Plan. This Brief supplements the Planning Justification Report (PJR) prepared by UCC for the proposed development. The PJR should be consulted directly for more detailed analysis of the development proposal and policy conformity.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND SITE CONDITIONS

Site Context

The subject lands are the site of the former Ridgeway Crystal Beach High School. The Ridgeway Crystal Beach High School was closed in 2017, with the opening of the Greater Fort Erie Secondary School which consolidated the Ridgeway Crystal Beach High School and the Fort Erie Secondary School into a single facility.

The subject lands are located in Fort Erie's Urban Boundary in the Ridgeway Neighbourhood on the east side of Ridge Road North. Prospect Point North forms the eastern property boundary and the lands are located on a block bound by Nigh Road to the north and Hazel Street to the south. See **Figure 1** for an aerial view of the subject property.



Figure 1 - Aerial View of the Subject Lands (Niagara Navigator Imagery)

Existing Conditions

In total, the subject lands are surveyed to be 6.3 hectares in area and contain the former high-school building, associated parking area, asphalt track and manicured grounds. The school building and parking areas are clustered in the southwestern portion of the site. The original high school building was constructed in 1927 with several additions being constructed at various times. The original façade and school grounds are shown in **Figures 2 and 3**,



Figure 2 - Front Facade of the Original School Building

respectively.



Figure 3 - Existing School Grounds Viewed from the North

The Niagara Official Plan (2022) identifies that the subject lands are within the Provincially-determined Urban Built-up Area. The Town's Official Plan (2014) designates the subject lands as Institutional and the property is Zoned as Institutional (I) under the Town's Comprehensive Zoning By-law (129-90) in accordance with its former use as a high school.

3.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Draft Plan of Subdivision proposes the creation of 49 single detached lots (yellow), one Block for 70 Condominium Townhouse Dwellings (Block 50) (orange), and Blocks for a stormwater management (SWM) facility and a pedestrian trail / SWM access (green). A copy of the Draft Plan is included as **Figure 4**. The portion of the property containing the original high school building and heritage-designated façade is excluded from the present development applications (grey).

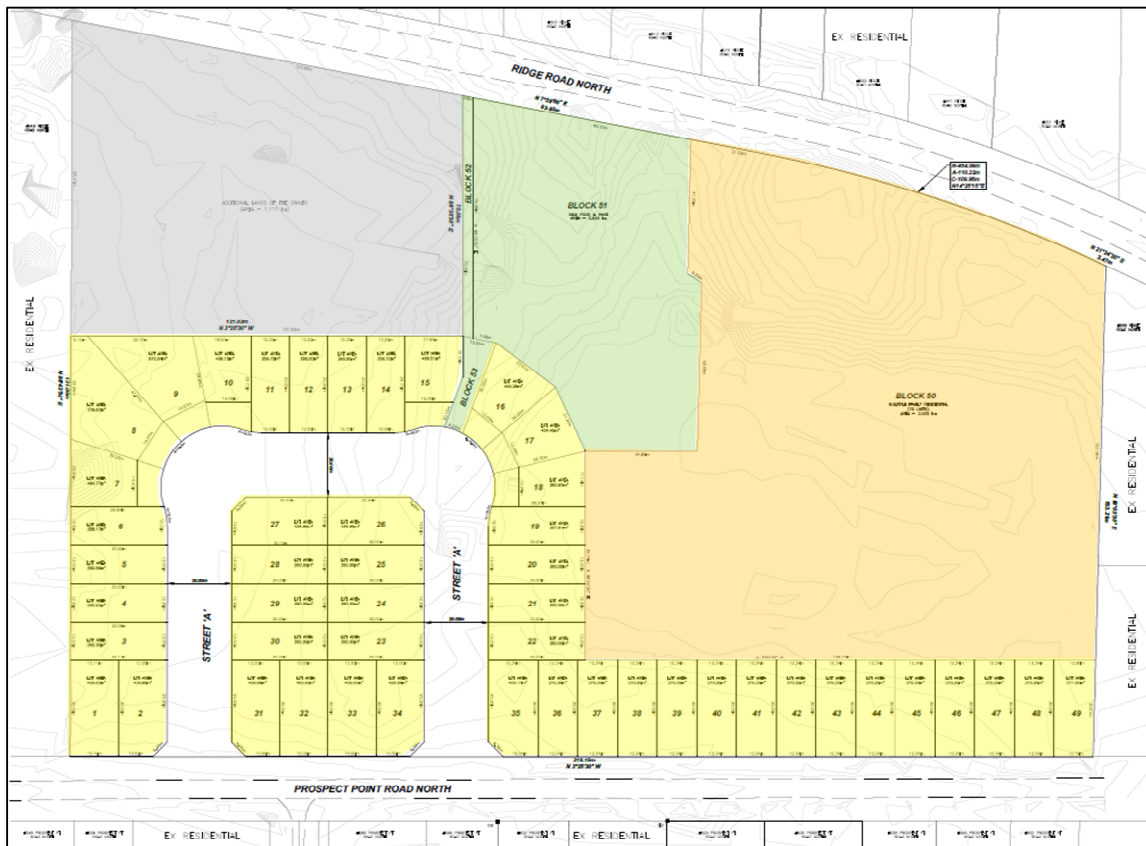


Figure 4 - Proposed Draft Plan

Neighbourhood Context and Built Form Character

The subject property abuts residential uses on all sides with the predominant residential typology being single detached dwellings.

Several two-storey dwellings on larger lots are located to the north of the subject lands.

The dwellings to the east along Ridge Road North appear to be exclusively single detached and do not follow a common design theme, with examples of both bungalow and two-storey dwellings, appearing to reflect building styles ranging from the late 19th century to more contemporary styles (see **Figure 4**). Lot shape, frontage and size also varies significantly along Ridge Road North, with most lots having between 18 and 30 meters of frontage.



Figure 5 - Existing Single Detached Dwellings along Ridge Road North

A new development called the Royal Ridge Subdivision is currently under construction behind the established residential dwellings along the west side of Ridge Road North and contains townhouse and single-detached dwellings (see **Figure 5**). While this new development does not directly interface the subject lands, it is indicative of the evolution in built-form that has been occurring in the Ridgway community.



Figure 7 - View of the Royal Ridge Subdivision

To the east of the subject lands along Prospect Point Road North are single detached dwellings which are primarily bungalow dwellings which appear to have been constructed in the 1960s – 1970s. While not uniform, the lotting along Prospect Point Road is more consistent than that of Ridge Road North, with most lots having between 18 and 22 meters of frontage. The existing dwelling at 630 Prospect Point Road is shown in **Figure 6** and is indicative of the existing built-form character on Prospect Point North.



Figure 6 - Existing Dwelling at 630 Prospect Point Road

The property to the south contains a large single detached dwelling which was constructed in 1928. The property and the dwelling are designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act. The dwelling is shown in **Figure 7**.



Figure 8 – Existing Heritage-designated Dwelling at 546 Ridge Road North

5.0 PROJECT DESIGN ANALYSIS

A conceptual Site Plan of the proposed development is shown in Figure 5 which demonstrates how the development could conceivably look after constructed and landscaped. An overview of the specific design considerations for the different elements of the development is provided below.

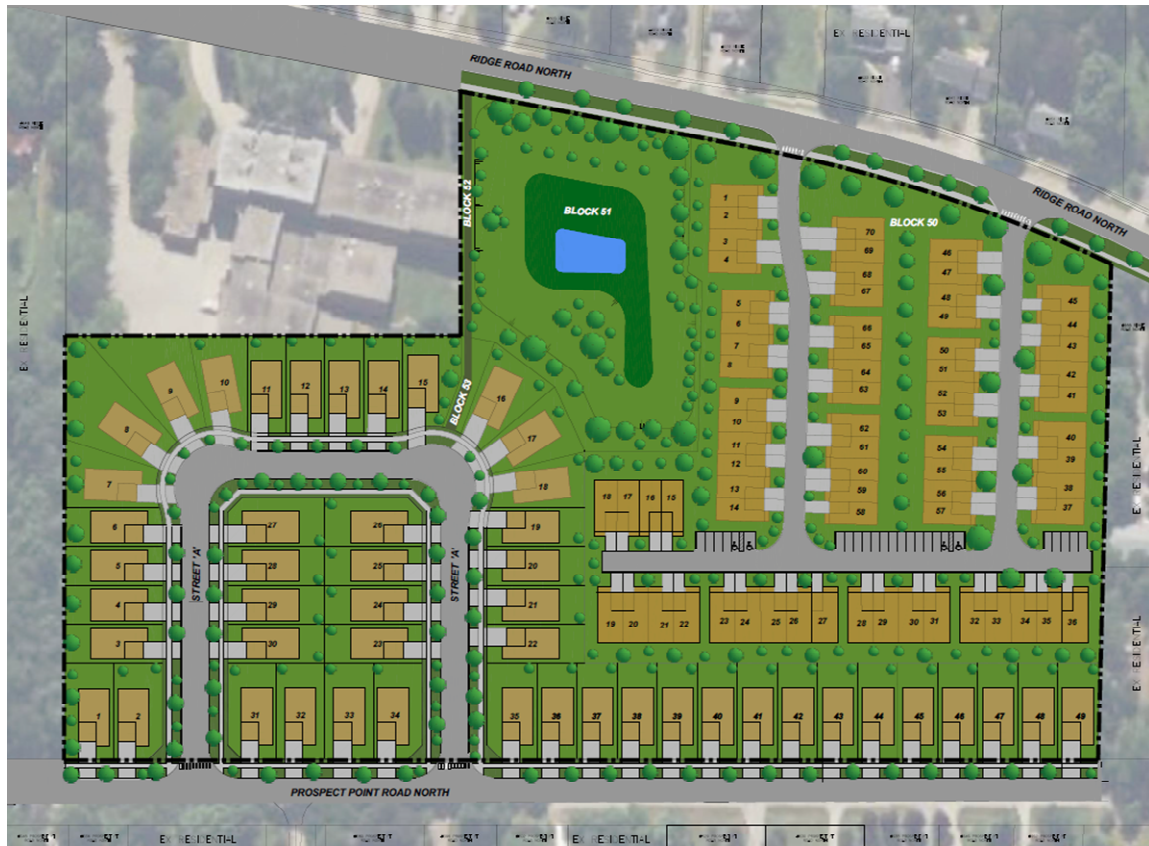


Figure 9 – Conceptual Development Site Plan

Single Detached Lots

The single detached lots have frontages generally ranging from approximately 12 meters to 15 meters (40 – 50 feet) and lot areas generally ranging from approximately 350 square meters to 370 square meters (3,700 – 4,000 square feet). Some larger “pie” lots are also accommodated, as provided by road and property geometry. The proposed lot sizes are typical for modern suburban, single detached development and reflective of more recent development patterns in the municipality including in the Ridgeway community.

The proposed single detached lots form a consistent lotting pattern along Prospect Point Road North. A crescent road is also proposed which provides additional frontage for the interior of the site. The lotting along Prospect Point Road North is a logical continuation of the existing lotting on Prospect Point Road North and emulates the established lotting pattern in the

Ridgeway community. The provision of a crescent road to improve land use efficiency is a common condition and examples of this type of design exist throughout Ridgeway (i.e. Hazel Crescent), albeit the proposed crescent road is looped with two connections to Prospect Point Road North and more closely mimics the established grid layout of Ridgeway than a cul-de-sac type crescent.

The design details of the future dwellings are unknown at this time, but it is anticipated that they will be typical 2-storey single detached dwellings, with an attached garage. The bulk, height and placement of the dwellings will ultimately be dictated by Zoning requirements which regulates appropriate setbacks, lot coverage and height.

Block Townhouses (Block 50)

Block 50 is proposed to be developed with a private roadway and 70 condominium townhouse dwelling units. The private roadway has two connections to Ridge Road North and forms a loop to facilitate efficient and safe vehicular movements within the development. Visitor parking spaces are accommodated along the bottom stretch of the private roadway and are located a significant distance from Ridge Road North and out of site from the public realm.

The proposed townhouse dwellings will be ground-based with attached garages and private driveways for off street parking. Structures containing between 4 and 6 attached units are proposed with all of the units facing towards the private roadway.

Design details of the proposed dwellings are unknown at this time, however the location and size of the dwellings as shown on the conceptual site plan (**Figure 9**) reflects the Draft Plan of Vacant Land Condominium that has been submitted for this block. Therefore, pending approval from Town Council, this reflects the final layout of the development.

The proposed development will increase the development density of the proposed subdivision and aid in accommodating additional residential housing types while also achieving compatibility with the surrounding area. As noted, the proposed dwellings are traditional ground-based townhouses which are consistent and compatible with the surrounding area which is comprised of single detached dwellings, as well as contemporary townhouse dwellings (ie. the Royal Ridge Subdivision). Of particular note, the maximum height for townhouses in the Town's Zoning By-law is equal to the maximum permitted height for single-detached dwellings which ensures that townhouses do not physically overwhelm the community. Furthermore, the proposed townhouses feature a large setback to Ridge Road North (8 meters) which, when combined with the adjacent stormwater management pond, creates a sense of openness along Ridge Road North which reflects the former interface between the school site and the neighbourhood. This larger setback also ensures that the new development does not physically

obscure the original high-school building and its built heritage attributes, ensuring that the structure remains as an important identifiable landmark element in the community.

Stormwater Facility

The stormwater pond occupies a significant amount of space along Ridge Road North and, as noted, contributes to the sense of openness along Ridge Road North. It is intended that the pond be landscaped so that it can be incorporated as a neighbourhood feature for the development and surrounding area.

Town of Fort Erie Urban Design Policies

Town of Fort Erie Official Plan

Section 5.6 of the Town's Official Plan contains the Urban Design policy considerations. The intent of the Urban Design policies is to provide a method for providing a visual contribution to the establishment of the character of the Town and its distinct neighbourhoods.

5.6.1. GENERAL POLICIES

- I. Urban character will be achieved within the Town's neighbourhoods, along major roads and significant public spaces, and elsewhere as identified by this Plan or subsequent Planning Documents.***

The subject lands are located along Ridge Road North which is the major thoroughfare through the Ridgeway Community. Urban character considerations are therefore applicable.

- II. A distinct character for each neighbourhood will be established through the road pattern, building height and massing, streetscape elements, preservation and incorporation of heritage features and buildings, and prominent placement of institutional and open space uses.***

The proposed development contributes positively to the evolution of built character in the Ridgeway community and can be easily incorporated into the neighbourhood.

The applications do not propose any alteration to the heritage designated façade of the original high-school building, and it will continue to serve as an important landmark in the community.

The proposed stormwater management facility has been located next to the original school building which will help to preserve the open space character of the school while also providing separation and visual depth between the school and the proposed medium density uses.

- III. Road and lotting patterns will respect the established development patterns and heritage resources of each community and where possible facilitate active transportation.***

The subdivision proposes a consistent lotting pattern along Prospect Point Road North which reflects the established lotting pattern in the area.

The development condition proposed along Ridge Road North compliments and upholds the character of the original high-school building by providing the stormwater facility adjacent to the school and by providing increased setbacks to the block townhouses.

The development facilitates active transportation through the inclusion of a multi-use trail between Prospect Point Road North and Ridge Road North.

IV. Residential development will be planned to preserve privacy, comfort, and amenity spaces while providing easy and safe pedestrian and cycling movement to commercial and community facilities.

The proposed single detached lots are appropriately sized to accommodate a single-detached dwelling along with sufficient rear-yard amenity space in accordance with applicable Zoning requirements. The Condominium Townhouse Block (Block 50) has been similarly designed to accommodate residential units with private “rear-yard” amenity space per applicable amenity requirements in the Zoning By-law.

The proposed development will enable more efficient pedestrian and cycling movements through the provision of a mid-block connection between Prospect Point Road North and Ridge Road North.

V. Heritage resources will be conserved and incorporated into new development in a manner that enhances the resource and makes them focal points for the community or neighbourhood.

No alterations are proposed to the heritage-designated front façade of the original school building and this feature will retain its prominence within the community. This also ensures that the heritage attributes of the adjacent heritage-designated dwelling at 546 Ridge Road North are preserved as the proposed development is separated from this dwelling by the school building.

VI. Proposed development patterns will encourage open space connections that link public parks and community facilities through the use of pedestrian and cycling walkways, trails, and other such connections.

The proposed development includes a linkage between Prospect Point Road and Ridge Road North which can facilitate pedestrian and cycling circulation.

VII. Generous planting of native species will be provided appropriate to the circumstances and location, and existing vegetation will be preserved to compliment the built form and to create an established appearance.

The Town’s Subdivision Control Guidelines require that one tree per lot and two trees per side yard flankage are required between the front lot line and the roadway curb line. A suggested tree list of appropriate species is also provided in the subdivision control guidelines. The subdivision control guidelines also require that stormwater management facilities be

appropriately landscaped and designed as neighbourhood feature. These requirements will ensure that the proposed lots, blocks and stormwater management facility are appropriate landscaped and will compliment the established community.

VIII. Appropriate Gateway treatments will be provided at major entrances to the Town (Peace Bridge Area, QEW, Highway No. 3) and distinct communities within the Town through appropriate signage, landscape and streetscape design, and building massing or any combination thereof.

Gateway features for the Ridgeway Neighbourhood are shown on Schedule RTB-2 of the Ridgeway Thunder Bay Secondary Plan. No gateway features are identified in proximity to the subject lands.

IX. Consideration will be given to matters relating to exterior design in terms of character, scale, appearance, sustainability and design through site plan control for areas in accordance with urban design guidelines developed as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process.

Single detached dwellings are not subject to Site Plan control, however their location, bulk and massing is dictated by Zoning requirements. The Condominium Townhouse Block (Block 50) will be subject to Site Plan Control, in addition to Zoning requirements.

5.6.2. STREETSCAPES

I. The streetscape is the character of the street space as determined by the design of the street right-of-way and the portion of abutting lands from the street edge out to and including building facades.

The introduction of residential development along an existing residential street helps to activate and enliven the streetscape which contributes to a sense of place and community. The location of structures relative to the street is dictated through the Zoning By-law (front / exterior side yard setbacks). The proposed development will fill in an empty piece of the block face on both Ridge Road North and Prospect Point Road North and will contribute positively to the evolution of the community through the introduction of a residential to residential interface which is consistent with the built form found throughout the Ridgetown community.

II. The design of major roads and their streetscapes will create a safe, enjoyable, and attractive environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and other non-motorized users through, where appropriate, the use of reduced street width, buffering sidewalks and bikeways, and minimizing the distance of road crossings for sidewalks and bikeways.

The design and functionality of roadways is a municipal responsibility. The applications do not propose any modifications to the existing conditions of Ridge Road North and Prospect Point Road North.

- III. *Streetscapes will incorporate visually important vistas and views with particular emphasis placed on Lake Erie and the Niagara River. Such vistas and views shall be maintained and enhanced where appropriate.***

The subject lands are not located near the water and the development therefore has no impact on views to Lake Erie or the Niagara River. The development maintains views and vistas of the original high-school building through larger setbacks from Ridge Road and the provision of a stormwater management facility adjacent to the school.

- IV. *Where appropriate with the existing urban character new development should be sited close to the street and aligned with it to enclose the street space.***

The provision of consistent a consistent single detached lotting pattern along Prospect Point Road North reflects the logical and natural progression of development on the street and completes the block face.

A generous setback which exceeds Zoning requirements is provided between the proposed block townhouse dwellings and Ridge Road North which reflects the previous character of the school grounds and their interaction with the street.

- V. *Streetscapes adjacent to natural areas and the Lake Erie and Niagara River shorelines should be designed or enhanced in a harmonious fashion that extends the visual effect of the naturalized area by the location of streets and height and spacing of buildings.***

The subject lands are not adjacent to natural areas or the Lake Erie or Niagara River shorelines.

- VI. *Special attention will be given to major intersections to create sense of identity and heightened architectural interest. For the purpose of this subsection, major intersections means arterial intersections and other significant intersections which, due to their location and function, serve as an entry point or other high profile feature of the community.***

The subject lands are not located adjacent to an intersection.

- VII. *Buildings and streetscapes will be designed to create a sense of identity through rational and sensitive treatment of architectural features, forms, massing, layout, and landscaping.***

The proposed development emulates the previous built form relationship between the school and the community by preserving the original façade, and by providing generous landscaping and open space along Ridge Road North.

Single detached dwellings are proposed along Prospect Point Road North which is compatible and consistent with the existing development patterns on this street. The proposed lots have been designed to be more compact than existing lots to achieve the efficient use of land and infrastructure in recognition of the cost of services, land and housing.

From an urban design perspective, the introduction of more compact lots provides for variation and character in the streetscape. The size, location and bulk of the future dwellings will be dictated through Zoning which will ensure that they do not overwhelm or otherwise negatively impact the existing dwellings and street character.

VIII. Signage and utilities shall be designed to minimize visual clutter and shall be integrated into the landscape and designed to achieve scale mass and height relationships.

The location of signage and utilities is determined through detailed engineering in accordance with the Town's Subdivision Control Guidelines.

IX. It is Council's preference that utilities will be located and relocated underground and where this is not practical utilities shall be designed, clustered or grouped to minimize visual clutter. Utility providers shall consider innovative methods to contain utilities and determine appropriate locations for large equipment and cluster sites subject to Town approval.

These policies are reflected in the Town's subdivision control guidelines and are implemented through detailed engineering design and municipal review and approval.

5.6.3. BUILDINGS AND PUBLIC SPACES

I. The effect of buildings and spaces on the surrounding environment will be considered equally with the function and aesthetics of the site to complement surrounding site conditions, including heritage elements, and the intended character of the area.

A conceptual rendering of the built-condition of the proposed development is shown in **Figure 9**. The proposed development preserves the heritage-designated façade of the original school building, interacts positively with existing development and emulates the existing residential character of the area.

II. Building and site design will:

- a. Be compatible with surrounding site conditions including heritage elements, and the intended character of the area;**

The proposed development maintains the heritage-designated front façade of the original high-school building and the design of the subdivision respects the open space character of the former school site by locating the stormwater management pond adjacent to the school building, and by increasing the setback from Ridge Road North to the proposed block townhouse dwellings.

The provision of single-detached dwellings along Prospect Point Road North compliments and extends the existing low-density character of the area.

- b. Respect adjacent buildings and the street setting in scale, proportion, continuity, and texture;**

The development has been designed to maintain the scale, proportion and texture of development along Ridge Road North by providing more separation and open space along the road through the location of the stormwater management pond, and the increased setbacks to the proposed block townhouse dwellings in order to not overwhelm the heritage attributes of the school.

The proposed single detached dwellings along Prospect Point Road North results in the continuity of the existing development patterns and the completion of the block face.

- c. Incorporate personal safety measures and provide comfort and amenity space both on the site and on the abutting streetscape;**

Private amenity space for both the single-detached and block townhouse dwellings will be provided by way of a traditional “rear yard” area.

- d. Facilitate the preservation and where appropriate, the enhancement of natural features found on the site;**

There are no natural features located on site, however it is intended that the stormwater management facility will be naturalized per the Town’s subdivision control guidelines.

- e. Locate parking, loading, and storage areas to minimize their presence from the street having regard for personal safety;**

The proposed development consists of traditional ground-based dwelling units with driveways at the front of the dwelling. Each unit is proposed to include a garage which would allow for the storage of vehicles out of public view.

f. Minimize the overall effects of noise and other negative impacts; and

The surrounding area is predominantly residential and there are no significant sources of noise, dust or odour in proximity to the subject lands. As the proposed uses are also residential, there are no anticipated nuisances from the proposed development on the surrounding uses.

g. Provide for appropriate bicycle parking.

The proposed single-detached and block townhouse dwellings are ground-based units with attached garages which can accommodate bicycle parking. Bicycle parking for the Condominium Townhouse Block (Block 50) is considered more particularly during the Site Plan approval process.

III. Landscaping and planting will:

a. Integrate with the landscaping of adjacent sites and the streetscape;

Streetscape plantings are required through the Town's subdivision control guidelines and the type and location of such will be verified through the detailed design of the subdivision. Similarly, details for the landscaping for the stormwater management facility will be provided at the time of detailed design.

Landscaping details for the Condominium Townhouse Block (Block 50) will be provided through the Site Plan approval stage.

The landscaping requirements for the proposed development ensure that it will be integrated well into the existing community and streetscape.

b. Enhance personal safety both on site and on the streetscape;

The introduction of residential uses does not cause personal safety concerns.

c. Define and enhance pedestrian and bicycle routes and accent entrances;

The existing cycling route on Ridge Road North will be enhanced by way of a trail connection through the development to Prospect Point Road North.

d. Screen and buffer parking, loading, and storage areas;

The proposed development is residential in nature and loading and storage areas are not proposed. Each dwelling will have a private driveway for vehicle storage as is common and anticipated for residential development.

e. Screen unattractive views and buffer adjacent land uses;

The proposed residential uses are similar to and compatible with the existing residential uses. Additional buffering is therefore not warranted.

The stormwater management facility is proposed to be naturalized so that it integrates into the proposed and existing development patterns.

f. Promote a diversity of native plant materials; and

Plant species will be confirmed through the appropriate approvals processes in accordance with this policy.

Boulevard tree plantings are to be chosen from the Town's approved list. The landscape plan for the Condominium Townhouse Block (Block 50) will be prepared by a Landscape Architect.

g. Where appropriate enhance and buffer adjacent natural areas.

There are no natural areas present on site, however, the stormwater management facility is intended to be naturalized.

IV. In order to encourage the efficient shared use of parking, loading and storage areas for commercial and industrial uses on adjacent lots, landscaping and buffering requirements between adjacent lots should be applied to perimeter locations where appropriate.

The development proposes traditional ground-based residential dwelling units with private garages and driveways which is consistent with the built form character and parking arrangement of the surrounding area.

V. Where employment, industrial, and commercial uses are located adjacent to noise sensitive uses, adequate acoustic protection and buffering shall be employed at or near the source of the noise to ensure compatibility and acceptability of adjacent land uses.

The subject lands are not in proximity to non residential or obnoxious land uses and do not introduce any noise, dust or air quality impacts to the surrounding area.

VI. Measures will be incorporated into new residential development to buffer the dwelling units from incompatible traffic noise. Such measures will be incorporated into specific development applications.

The adjacent roadways are not considered to produce an incompatible amount of noise for residential uses.

VII. Building and site designs that conserve energy and water will be encouraged. Energy conservation will be addressed at the development application stage and during the preparation of detailed building and site design. Buildings should, wherever possible, be designed to minimize interior heat loss and to capture and retain solar heat energy during the winter and to minimize solar heat penetration during the summer.

Specific opportunities for energy and water conservation through building design can be considered through the design and construction of the future dwellings. In general, the comprehensive development of a large piece of property enables more efficient development patterns which is conducive to energy and water conservation.

VIII. The interconnection and integration of pedestrian, cycling and vehicular access is encouraged on abutting lands to facilitate safe and efficient movement to and from the public road network.

The development includes a trail connection which provides a mid-block connection between Prospect Point Road North and Ridge Road North for pedestrian and bicycle circulation.

IX. Development should be orientated to ensure that main entrances face the streetscape with strong pedestrian connections and landscape treatments that connect the buildings to the street.

The proposed development is comprised of traditional ground-based residential dwelling units which are oriented towards the public street, or private roadway, where applicable. Streetscapes will be enhanced through a combination of boulevard tree plantings and private landscaping.

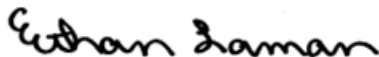
6.0 CONCLUSION

This report has been prepared as part of the Applications for Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment, Draft Plan of Subdivision and Draft Plan of Vacant Land Condominium for the proposed development at 576 Ridge Road North in the Town of Fort Erie. The applications propose the re-development of the former Ridgeway-Crystal Beach Secondary School lands with a mix of single detached and block townhouse dwellings, in addition to a stormwater management facility and mid-block trail connection.

The proposed development is reflective of typical suburban development patterns found throughout the Ridgeway community and will be a positive addition to the surrounding area while also providing additional housing options needed to support the Town's growth. The development does not introduce incompatible land uses or nuisances which would impact existing land uses. The proposed development patterns integrate well into the existing community and do not create any undue impacts to neighbouring properties. The development has regard for the heritage-designated attributes of the former school building and does not overwhelm the school, or its physical importance in the community.

The proposed development is therefore desirable and appropriate from an Urban Design perspective and aligns with and implements the applicable Urban Design policies in Section 5.6 of the Town's Official Plan.

Submitted by



Ethan Laman, B.U.R.Pl.

Junior Planner

Upper Canada Consultants