



**ZELINKA PRIAMO LTD**

*A Professional Planning Practice*

February 3, 2020

City of London  
City Planning  
300 Dufferin Avenue  
London, ON N6B 1Z2

Attention: City Clerk

Re: Proposed Victoria Park Secondary Plan

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We are the planning consultants for St. Peters Cathedral and the Roman Catholic Diocese of London.

By letter dated September 18, 2019 (attached) we raised several concerns regarding the proposed policies of the Secondary Plan. With representatives of the cathedral and the diocese, we have also spoken directly to planning staff to further explain our concerns.

From our review of the recommended Secondary Plan document it is evident that most of the concerns set out in our letter have not been addressed.

Moreover, the recommended plan contains a new policy 3.6.5(e) which was not in the previous draft, nor was it discussed with us, yet it could potentially negate the height and intensity permissions of the Plan in order to avoid casting shadow on the concrete pad east of the park bandshell. We have not been provided with information on the effect of this new policy nor the logic behind it, nor have we had the opportunity to conduct studies of our own to determine the effect on the cathedral lands.

We ask the Committee to consider the concerns set out in our attached letter, and ask that the Committee defer any decision on the Plan so that we might have the opportunity to study the potential effect of the newly proposed policies and to present those findings to the Committee.

We thank you for your consideration of these matters.

Yours very truly,

ZELINKA PRIAMO LTD.

Richard Zelinka, MES, MCIP, RPP  
Principal Planner

cc: RC Diocese and St. Peters Cathedral



**ZELINKA PRIAMO LTD**  
*A Professional Planning Practice*

September 18, 2019

City of London  
City Planning  
206 Dundas Street  
London, ON

Attention: Michelle Knieriem, Planner

Re: Draft Victoria Park Secondary Plan

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I am writing on behalf of St. Peter's Cathedral and the Roman Catholic Diocese of London. We thank you for the opportunity to provide further input into the Secondary Plan process by commenting on the Draft dated June 2019.

These comments build on our submission of March, 2019 (attached), and address several of the specific elements of the Draft Secondary Plan.

As an overview we would like to raise our concerns that the Draft in its current form is overly prescriptive, lacks the flexibility necessary to ensure a high quality of design sensitive to the Cathedral, unnecessarily restricts the development potential of the Cathedral lands, and introduces elements which may further limit the design options for the lands.

For ease of reference, our comments generally follow the structure of the Draft Plan, itself.

Section 3.2 View Corridors and, even more so, Section 3.3 Connections are written in a manner which potentially imposes significant constraints on the future use of the lands north of the Cathedral building. Identifying Kent Street as a view corridor which is required to be maintained (Schedule 3 and 3.2(b) and (d)) could compromise development options. Unlike Wolfe Street, for example, where views terminate in Victoria Park, itself, currently the Kent Street view corridor effectively terminates in the street trees and the parking lot on the east side of Richmond Street. Views of the park from the west are obscured, at best.

We have no objection to a policy which would require that any application for site plan approval investigate possible ways to maintain or enhance existing view corridors.

Policy 3.3 is potentially more problematic as it, combined with the Demonstration Plan detail in Appendix E, appears to assume creation of a formal public connection through the Cathedral lands. There is no explanation as to why the existing pedestrian crossing and public access at Angel Street (midway between established traffic signals) is inadequate as a connection. Such a policy approach could split the site and create design and functional issues.

The St. Peter's Parish Community and the Diocese have a desire to maintain the visual prominence of St. Peter's Cathedral in the area. This can best be achieved at the site plan and architectural design stage.

Excessive policy direction may constrain design options and actually prevent the optimal design solutions, particularly on a site as unique as the Cathedral site.

For example, the principle of framing Victoria Park with a street wall can work contrary to certain potential beneficial design solutions. A low building, set back from the sidewalk would obscure the Cathedral less from the public realm than a building close to the street line. A one-storey parish centre would be less obtrusive than a minimum 2-storey building as proposed in the draft Plan. The Cathedral site, unlike most other blocks in the Secondary Plan, does not have an established building line or street wall. The site is valued, in part, for the interesting, non-standardized urban spaces the site affords.

Section 3.6 speaks to providing a transition "between the downtown and low rise residential neighbourhoods". Like the lands to the west of Richmond Street and the lands to the south of Dufferin Avenue, the Cathedral lands in their entirety are within the Downtown Place Type which allows a 20-storey height, bonusable to 35 storeys. The transition is not to occur within the Downtown, which is the area intended to "permit the tallest buildings and highest densities in the City" (London Plan policy 802).

Even the proposed standardized requirement in policy 3.6.1 for high-rise buildings to have a distinct base, middle and top could prevent innovative architectural designs more sympathetic to the unique form of the Cathedral.

Policy 3.6.3 requires main building entrances to front onto the Park (or onto Richmond Street). Given the significant orientation of the Cathedral to Dufferin Avenue it may be more desirable for a future building to reinforce the Dufferin orientation by having its main entry facing Dufferin. Again, the proposed policy lacks the flexibility to address this special situation.

Policy 3.6.4 prohibits parking between a building and a public right-of-way. Since the Cathedral lands are surrounded by public rights of way it is very difficult to meet such a standard requirement.

In our March, 2019 submission, we asked to retain the potential for intensive development east of the Cathedral, but indicated our current priority for intensive development (to the London Plan maximum height) in the north part of the site. East of the Cathedral we asked for the flexibility to build a one- or two-storey parish centre on part of the site to meet nearer-term needs.

Regrettably none of these requests has been addressed in the Draft Secondary Plan: East of the Cathedral intensive development potential is proposed to be completely removed, drastically reducing the long-term potential of the site, yet the minimum height is proposed to be 2 storeys which denies the option to build a single-storey parish centre. To the north of the Cathedral building, maximum heights are proposed to be reduced from the Downtown permissions currently in the London Plan.

We respectfully request that you consider our concerns in the re-drafting of the Secondary Plan.

We would be pleased to meet with you again to elaborate on any of these points, or to discuss other options.

Yours very truly,

ZELINKA PRIAMO LTD.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Zelinka', written in a cursive style.

Richard Zelinka, MES, MCIP, RPP  
Principal Planner

RZ/ld

## St. Peter's Cathedral Basilica – City of London (March 2019)

### **The Past**

St. Peter's Cathedral Basilica has a rich history in the City of London. However, St. Peter's Cathedral was preceded by 3 churches dedicated to St. Lawrence. The first St. Lawrence Church was established in 1834 and served the London Catholic Community well until it was destroyed by London's Great Fire of April 1845. A second St. Lawrence Church was built on the same site but also met its end in a fire. A third St. Lawrence Church was built of white brick and completed in 1852. This church featured a high pointed steeple, 2 side galleries and a seating capacity of 700-800 people. The church was located on the current Cathedral grounds, southwest of where the St. Peter's Cathedral Basilica now stands facing Richmond St. There was a name change in 1856 from St. Lawrence Church to St. Peter's Cathedral.



Bishop Walsh realized that even with many changes to St. Peter's Cathedral a larger Cathedral was needed for the Diocese of London. The Cathedral was designed by renowned architect, Joseph Connolly and construction started in 1880. The architect chose a style of architecture that is reminiscent of the middle French Gothic period. The materials used on the outside are of durable, hard-fine sandstone, cut from a vein found in the State of

New York. The current Cathedral was completed in 1885, however, without the 2 towers that stand today due to lack of funds. It would be 70 years later that the two towers were added to the Cathedral under Bishop Cody's leadership as well as the 12 bells that were made in Holland and named after the 12 Apostles. The first stained glass windows of the Cathedral came from Innsbruck Austria and were added in 1889. The rest of the stained glass windows were completed in 1926. The Casavant organ which sits in the Cathedral to this day was also installed in 1926. The imposing structure is over 200 ft. in total length and a total width of 115 ft. Height to the top of the top of the towers rise to a height of 150 ft. and the spirelet extends to a height of 185 ft.

In addition to the towers and the carillon bells, the sacristy and the Lady Chapel were also added to the Cathedral in 1959. The Cathedral was given a further honour as a minor basilica bestowed by Pope John XXIII in December 1961. The Cathedral's stature as a minor basilica is considered a high honour not only

for the church and Diocese of London but for the City of London as well. There are only ten minor basilicas in all of Canada.

In 1967, the sanctuary also underwent an extensive renovation in keeping with Vatican II. Marble flooring as well as a marble altar were the main items that were changed as a result of this renovation. Throughout the years other improvements have been made including the slate roof and repointing the sandstone.

### **The Present**

St. Peter's Cathedral Basilica has to be included in any visitor's list of places to visit in London. The Cathedral Parish is active and vibrant and in addition draws parishioners throughout the City of London to the downtown core. Below are some key statistics from the Cathedral records.

<b>Registered Parishioners:</b>	3,500 families are registered to St. Peter's Cathedral
<b>Mass during the Week:</b>	Currently, 60 people attend the 7:30 am Mass on Tuesday and Thursdays. 120 people attend Noon Mass on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.
<b>Number of Masses on weekend:</b>	Saturday 6:00 pm Sunday 8:30 am, 10:30 am, 12:30 pm and 7:30 pm
<b>Attendance for Mass on weekend:</b>	1800 people
<b>Weddings:</b>	48 Weddings
<b>Funerals:</b>	23 Funerals
<b>Baptisms:</b>	123 (116 infants and 7 adults)
<b>Events:</b>	As the principal church in the Diocese of London (southwestern Ontario), we host 5 Diocesan events and people come from 131 Parishes and Missions.
<b>Visitors during the week:</b>	Our volunteer security person informs us that on average 25 to 150 visitors come for prayer and meditation. The cathedral is a spiritual oasis in a busy city core.
<b><i>We estimate the Cathedral draws 150,000 persons to the downtown-Victoria Park area each year.</i></b>	

St. Peter's has thirty-seven ministries, committees and organizations that continue to grow and serve our congregation and the City of London through St. Vincent De Paul, the needs of the poor, missions outreach, Share Lent, refugee sponsorship, local Catholic Women's League charitable works and Knights of Columbus charitable works. St. Peter's Cathedral has a very engaged group of parishioners that give of their time to the parish, other charities and the City of London.

The St. Peter's site extends from Dufferin Avenue to Angel Street, between Richmond Street and Clarence Street.

### **The Future**

St. Peter's Cathedral Basilica will continue to be a visitor draw in London in the future as well as an integral part of the community serving all citizens of London. We will continue serving the local Catholic Community and continue our outreach to the vulnerable in the City of London.



The Cathedral will eventually need a parish centre to replace the space

provided by the building of the former St. Peter's school on the site. The role of a centre is multi-faceted in that it supports parish activities with offices, meeting rooms, and event space, and it supports St. Peter's in its community outreach by providing space that can be used by other agencies that are involved, as St. Peter's is involved, in ministering to the needs of homeless, poor, and vulnerable individuals who live in or spend time in London's core. St. Peter's plays a key role in the core, working with and supporting the work of social and health agencies which serve the needs of the core. Currently, we have a number of tenants which are education related and which we may want to accommodate in a future building as well.

Parking continues to be a hot button issue for the City of London, and is a key need for St. Peter's Cathedral. Our on-site parking lots are needed to accommodate parking for daily Mass, Sunday Mass, weddings, funerals, staff, tenants, meetings and special events that are held at the site. Our needs are currently satisfied by the three parking lots that are located on Cathedral grounds.

The City and its consultants have recently presented three scenarios for the Victoria Park Secondary Plan. All three conceptually show three towers on the Cathedral lands, and all three posit the future

construction of one of the highest towers on lands to the east of the Cathedral, including a substantial podium extending to the front face of the Cathedral.

Given the size and complexity of the St. Peter's community, we have not been able to consult broadly on the three scenarios; however, we wish to raise some initial comments, concerns and observations.

Representatives of the Diocese of London and of the St. Peter's community are interested in the future redevelopment of the Cathedral lands to the north and east of the Cathedral building and, in particular, the lands to the north.

While we are happy to retain the option of intensive redevelopment east of the Cathedral for further discussion, at this time the priority is twofold: to retain a clear view of the Cathedral, which is a landmark edifice in the Downtown, from the east; and to ensure the opportunity to build a parish centre as a one or two-storey building (rather than a tower or a 3-4 storey podium). This has implications for any "minimum height" requirement that may be considered in the Secondary Plan.

We are interested in high density development in the north part of the site, where it would be a backdrop to the Cathedral, with the flexibility to have the maximum London Plan height available for the entire area south of Angel Street in order to maintain design flexibility, possibly even stepping up from the Cathedral to the north, rather than stepping down.

We appreciate the opportunity to further discuss our interests with you as part of the Secondary Plan process for Victoria Park.