

Visual Impact Assessment for:

King Street Suites

Project No.: 20-056

Project Name: Hamilton ON, Residential & Retail

Project Location: 215 & 217 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario

Closest Major Intersection: King Street West & Caroline Street North

Date of Report: September 22, 2022

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1 Introduction to the report

a. Executive summary

The following report analyses a proposal for a new mixed-use development to be included in Hamilton's heritage downtown context, specifically in the southwest corner between King Street West and Caroline Street South. Currently the site is occupied by a small one storey commercial building to be replaced by a 14-storeys mixed use tower with a brick-faced podium. Due to its height and its position adjacent to a view corridor to the Niagara Escarpment, the proposed development is to be studied for its potential visual impacts on the surrounding areas and significant views of the landscape.

The building occupies a small lot and thus has a limited footprint. It is also much shorter than other towers already present in the study area. These factors, combined with the application of obligatory setbacks to the design of the tower, ensure that the new development does not negatively affect views and is, in fact, well blended within the neighbourhood's context.

b. Scope of work

This Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) report is meant to evaluate the effect of the new proposed development on the King Street Corridor and the absence of significant obstructions on the views to the Niagara Escarpment. The following report will therefore compare the development against the requirements by the following documents:

- Urban Hamilton Official Plan
- Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan
- Niagara Escarpment Plan
- Corridor Planning Principles and Design Guidelines
- Downtown Hamilton Tall Buildings Guidelines

2 Introduction to the development

a. Location and context

The Subject Site (215-217 King St W) is located at the southwest corner of the intersection between Caroline Street South and King Street West in Hamilton, Ontario. It is part of the vibrant downtown community of the city. In this specific area though, numerous on-grade parking lots create voids in the urban fabric and populate a primary downtown zone with low intensity uses. There are a number of proposed developments aimed at filling such voids with mostly mid- to high-rise buildings, some of them already under construction. The rest of the nearby streetscape, especially on the North side of King Street West, is characterized by a mix of tight-knit low rise residential and commercial buildings, of which many are registered or designated as heritage properties. The Subject Site is currently occupied by a parking lot and a one storey commercial building in less than desirable conditions, despite being less than 50 years old.



2-1 Source: Bing Maps. Aerial view of the King Street West and Caroline Street South corner, annotated to show the Subject Site and street names.

b. Proposed development

The following description is based on the Design Package sent to Lavish Design Build (“Client”) by API Development Consultants Inc. and Saplys Architects Inc. in the month of August of the present year.

The proposed development consists of a 14-storeys mixed use building, with the first level meant to host commercial uses and the ones above intended for residential purposes. 23 parking spots will be placed in the three levels of underground car garage.

The designer proposes a five-levels brick clad podium, with a chamfered corner facing the intersection of King Street West with Caroline Street South. The facades of the podium not fronting the streets are clad with a mix of brick and stucco. The west façade of the podium (facing the adjoining lot’s on-grade parking) is blind. Pedestrian access to the residential floors will be from King Street West, while vehicular access to the underground parking will be provided from Caroline Street South.



2-2 Perspective view of the new proposed development inserted in the Hamilton urban context at the intersection of King Street and Caroline Street. Source: API and SAI

c. Policy Framework

Volume 1, Chapter C.1.1 of the Urban Hamilton Official Plan states:

“The Niagara Escarpment is a prominent natural feature that traverses the breadth of the City. It provides a distinctive landscape and performs many ecological functions. The natural and physical features of the Escarpment should be protected through policies which apply to the physical features themselves and to a protective buffer. The Niagara Escarpment Plan provides for the maintenance of the Niagara Escarpment and land in its vicinity substantially as a continuous natural environment and to ensure only such development occurs as is compatible with that natural environment.

(...)

1.1.6 To minimize the impact and further encroachments in the Escarpment environment, for those lands located within the Niagara Escarpment Plan area identified on Schedule A - Provincial Plans, the following policies shall apply:

a) The design of the development shall be compatible with the visual and natural environment;

b) Setbacks and screening adequate to minimize the visual impact of development on the Escarpment landscape shall be required;

(...)”

One of the objectives of the Niagara Escarpment Plan is *“to minimize the impact and prevent further encroachment of urban growth on the Escarpment Environment”* (Section 1.7.1), and parts of Hamilton fall under the Urban Area designation for this specific policy. Section 2.3.1 of the Plan also cites:

“Scenic Resources

1. Development shall ensure the protection of the scenic resources of the Escarpment.

2. Where a visual impact on the scenic resources is identified as a concern by the implementing authority, a visual impact assessment shall be required.

3. A visual impact assessment shall:

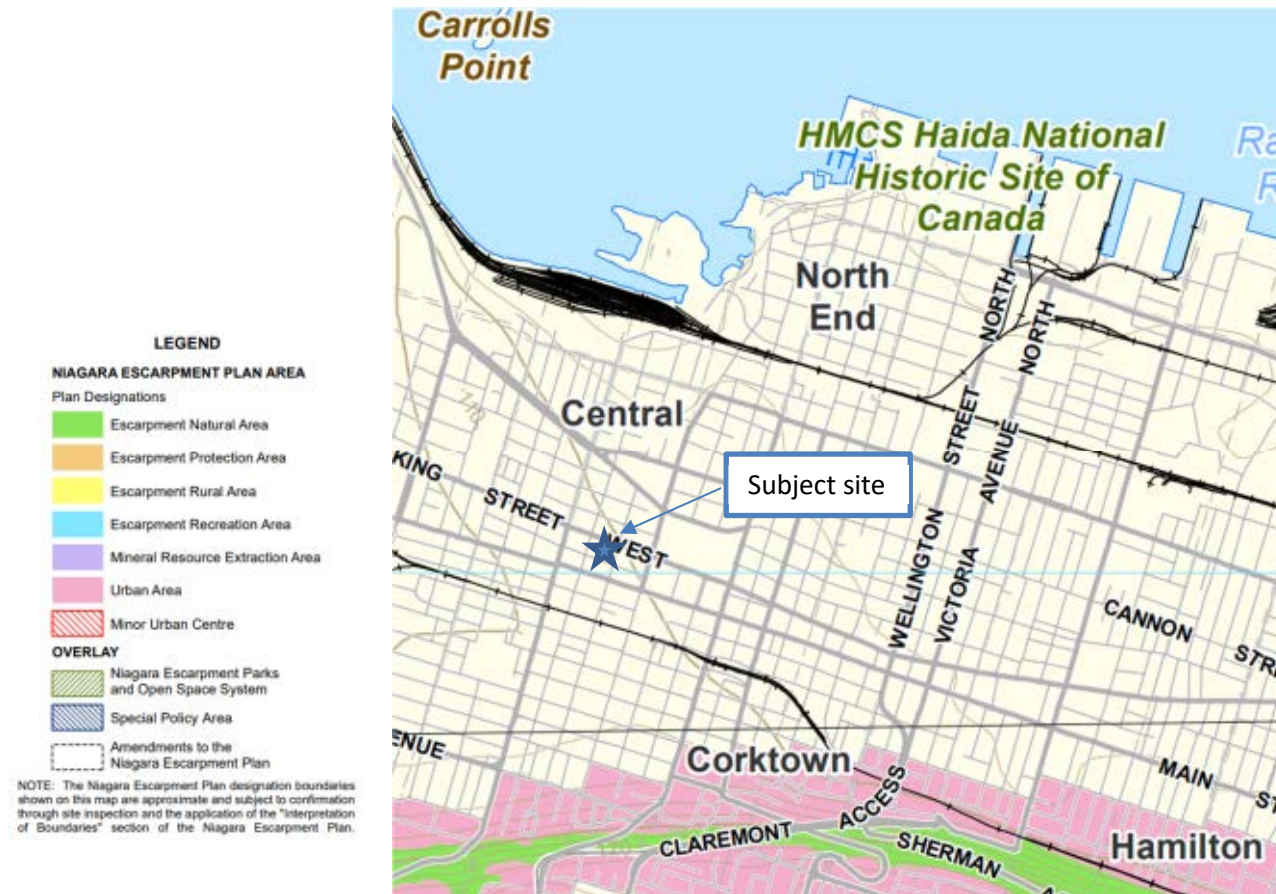
a) establish a baseline for the existing conditions;

b) identify the proposed physical changes; and

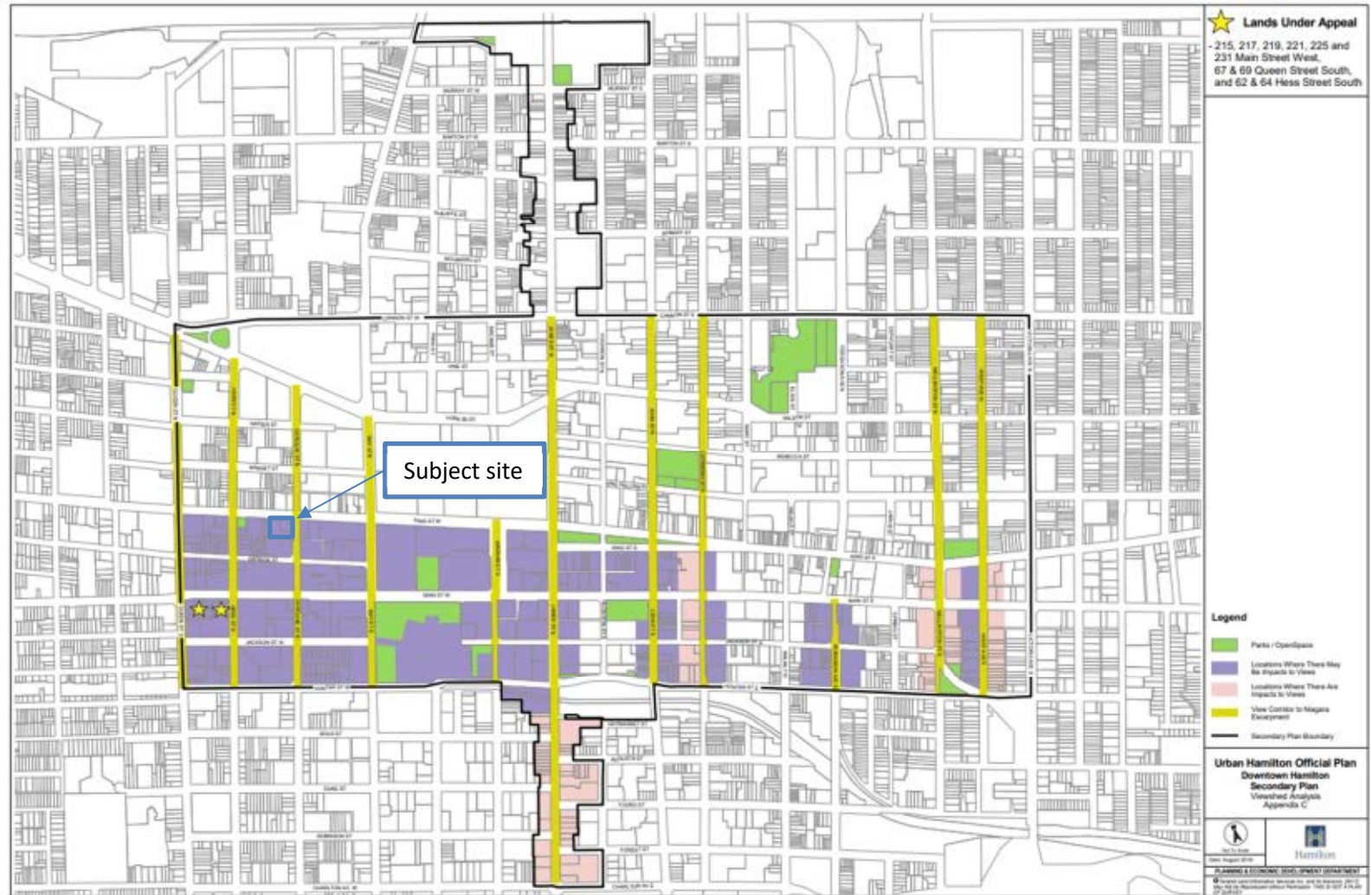
c) assess the impact of the proposed change on the scenic resources of the Escarpment; and

d) propose measures to minimize any visual impacts.”

The Subject Site, whilst falling out of the Niagara Escarpment Plan designated areas (see figure 2-3), is still considered to be in close proximity to them, enough so that there might be impact to views, as it can be observed in figure 2-4.



2-3 Excerpt from the Niagara Escarpment Plan - Map 2. Annotated to show the Subject Site.



2-4 Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan. Viewshed Analysis Appendix C. Annotated to show the Subject Site which falls under "Locations where there may be impacts to views" and directly adjacent to a "View corridor to Niagara Escarpment".

On this subject, Volume 2, Chapter B.6.1 of the Urban Hamilton Official Plan dictates:

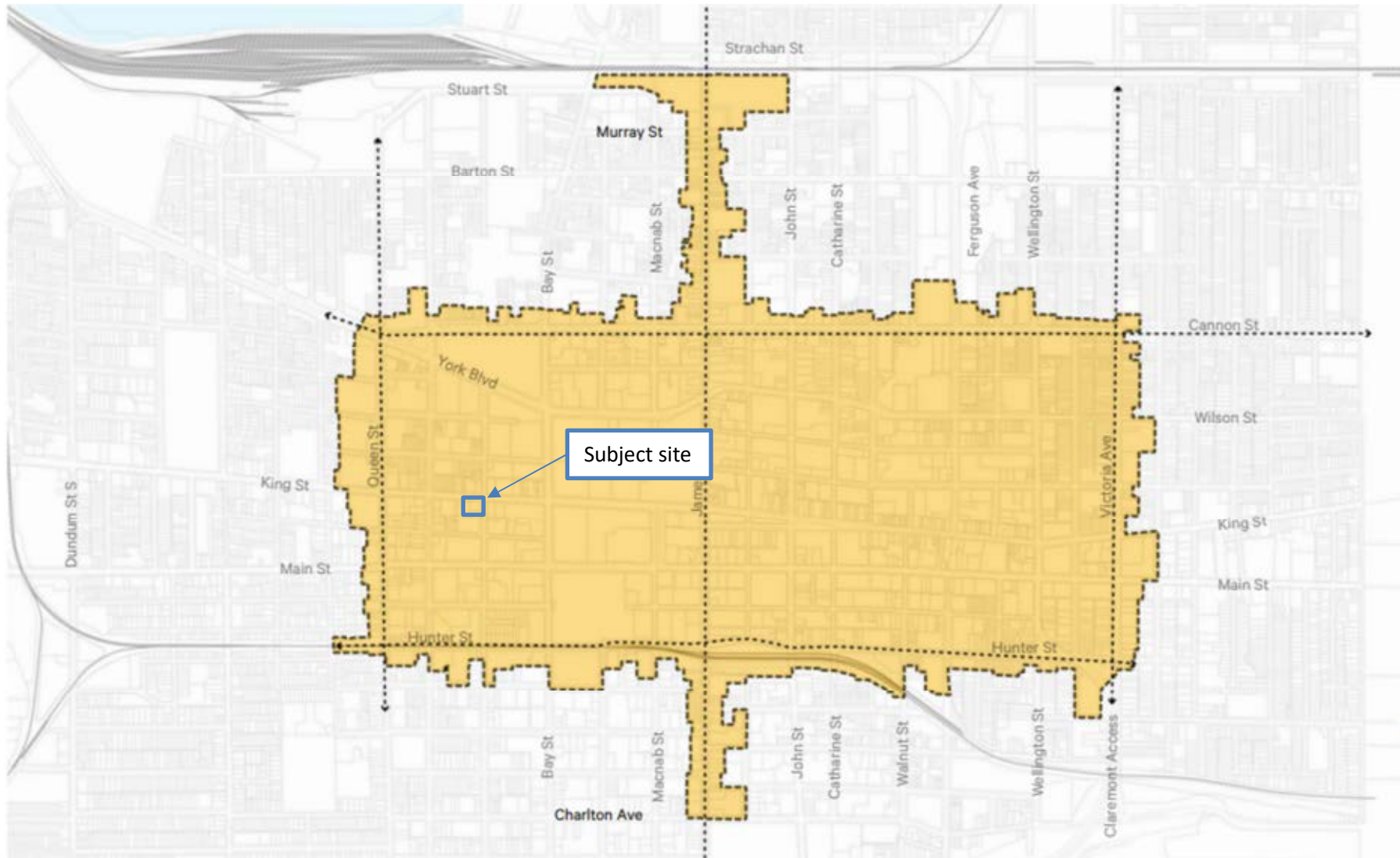
“6.1.10.6 A Visual Impact Assessment may be required for development located on streets identified as View Corridors to the Niagara Escarpment, and properties identified as Locations Where There May Be Impacts to Views, as shown on Appendix C – Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan – Viewshed Analysis.

6.1.10.7 Visual Impact Assessments shall be required for development on properties identified as Locations Where There Are Impacts to Views as identified on Appendix C – Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan – Viewshed Analysis.

6.1.10.8 Development shall be required to provide setbacks, stepbacks, or reduced heights in order to mitigate the impact of the proposed development on existing views.”

Furthermore, the Subject Site falls in the area of the Downtown Hamilton Tall Building Study (see figure 2-5) and thus it is recommended to refer to the Downtown Hamilton Tall Buildings Guidelines when designing high-rise developments in such locations. The Guidelines explain in section 3.6:

- “a. Any development application shall identify, maintain and enhance viewing opportunities towards the Escarpment;*
 - b. Tall buildings should be located in a fashion that preserves key views to existing landmarks and termini to and from the Downtown;*
 - c. Tall buildings shall contribute to an interesting skyline and be sufficiently spaced apart to minimize the loss of sky views;*
 - d. The silhouette of existing important landmark buildings should be protected, and the view corridor leading to them should remain legible;*
 - e. Tower step backs should be increased to preserve the view to an existing important local landmark;*
 - f. Views of the Escarpment should be preserved; and,*
 - g. An assessment of impact on views to/from the Escarpment will be required as part of development applications. The development of tall buildings should provide connectivity to streets and public spaces, and orient windows, entrances, balconies, and other building elements to surrounding points of interest, including the following:*
 - a. Views of Gore Park from King Street, James Street, Hughson Street, and Catharine Street;*
- (...)”*



2-5 Downtown Hamilton Tall Buildings Guidelines. Study area map. Appendix "E" to Report PED18074. Annotated to show Subject Site.

3 Simulated views



3-1 View from Caroline Street North at the intersection with York Blvd, looking South towards the Escarpment. Source: Google Maps.



3-2 View from Caroline Street North at the intersection with York Blvd, looking South towards the Escarpment, showing the proposed development. Source: Google Maps, modified through the insertion of the building model.

The view corridor to the Niagara Escarpment appears to not be negatively impacted by the presence of the new development. The proposed building respects the necessary setbacks and is significantly shorter than other nearby constructions. Most of its northern façade is hidden by existing buildings and trees.



3-3 View from the intersection between Caroline Street South and Main Street, looking North towards the lake. Source: Google Maps.



3-4 View from the intersection between Caroline Street South and Main Street, looking North towards the lake, showing the proposed development. Source: Google Maps, modified through the insertion of the building model.

The building is well visible but the proportions of its podium fit well into the nearby context, creating a visual relationship with the adjacent hotel and with the other podium across the street on 213 King Street West.

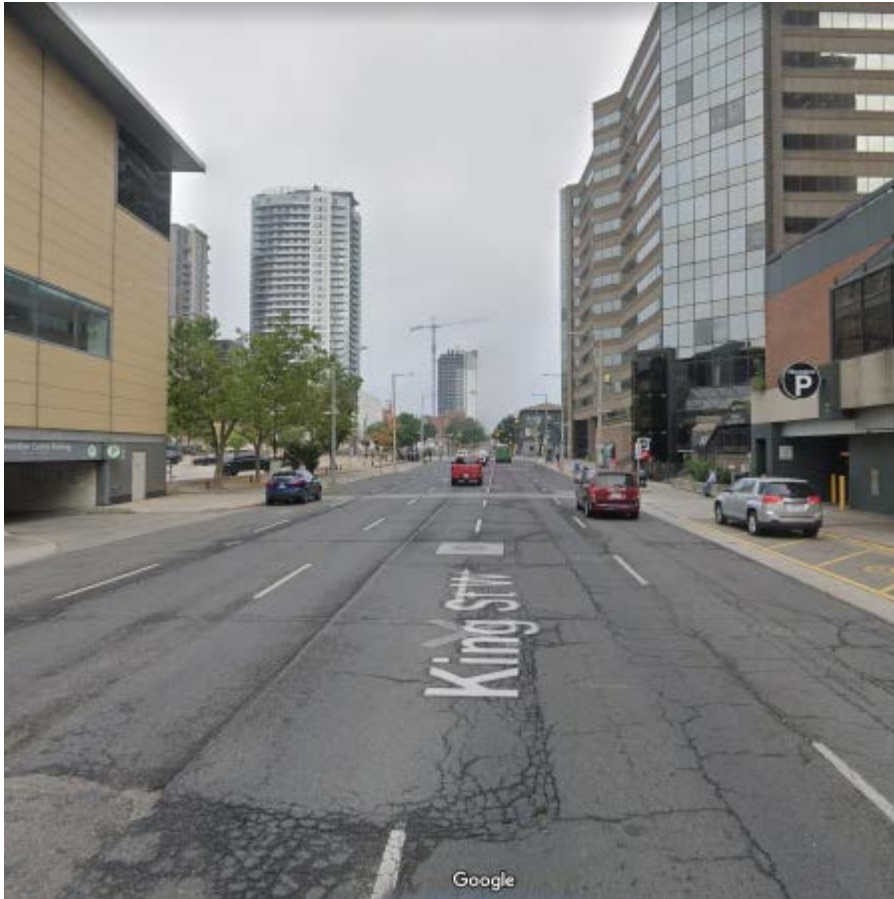


3-5 View from King Street West, just East of the Art Gallery of Hamilton looking West. Source: Google Maps.



3-6 View from King Street West, just East of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, looking West, showing the proposed development. Source: Google Maps, modified through the insertion of the building model.

The building is hidden by the suspended walkway and has no impact on views. Only the lower portion of the podium is visible.

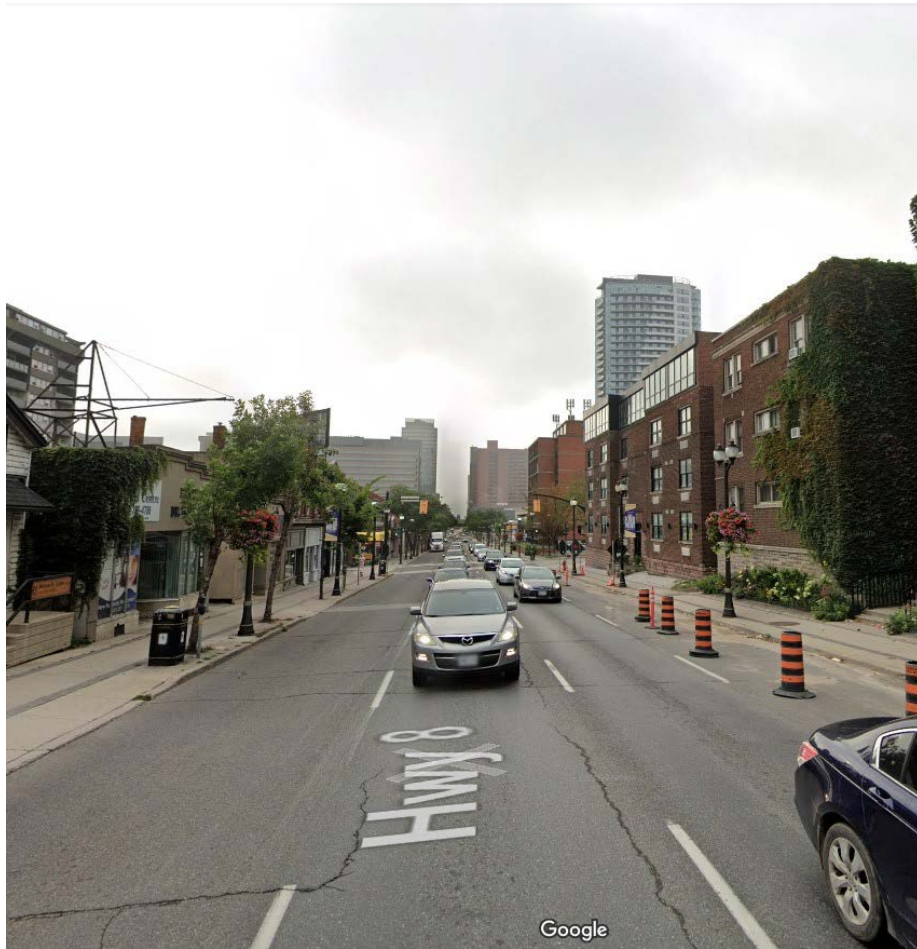


3-7 View from King Street West from the Art Gallery of Hamilton looking West. Source: Google Maps.

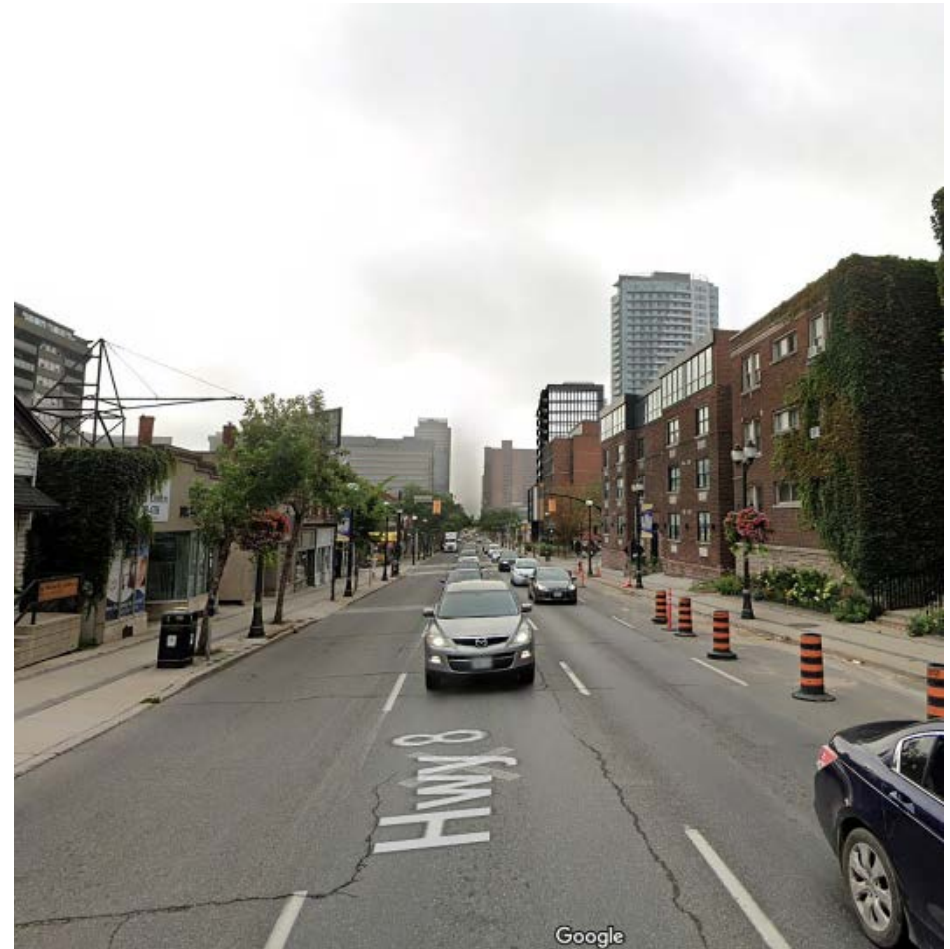


3-8 View from King Street West from the Art Gallery of Hamilton, looking West, showing the proposed development. Source: Google Maps, modified through the insertion of the building model.

Past the suspended walkway, the building is visible but is still significantly shorter than some nearby developments. Its overall proportions fit well within the surrounding area and thus the edifice becomes an interesting feature of the street corner.



3-9 View from King Street West just past the intersection with Queen Street, looking East.
Source: Google Maps.



3-10 View from King Street West just past the intersection with Queen Street, looking East, showing the proposed development. Source: Google Maps, modified through the insertion of the building model.

The new development is mostly hidden by existing buildings; only the top storeys are visible. It appears significantly shorter than some adjacent constructions.

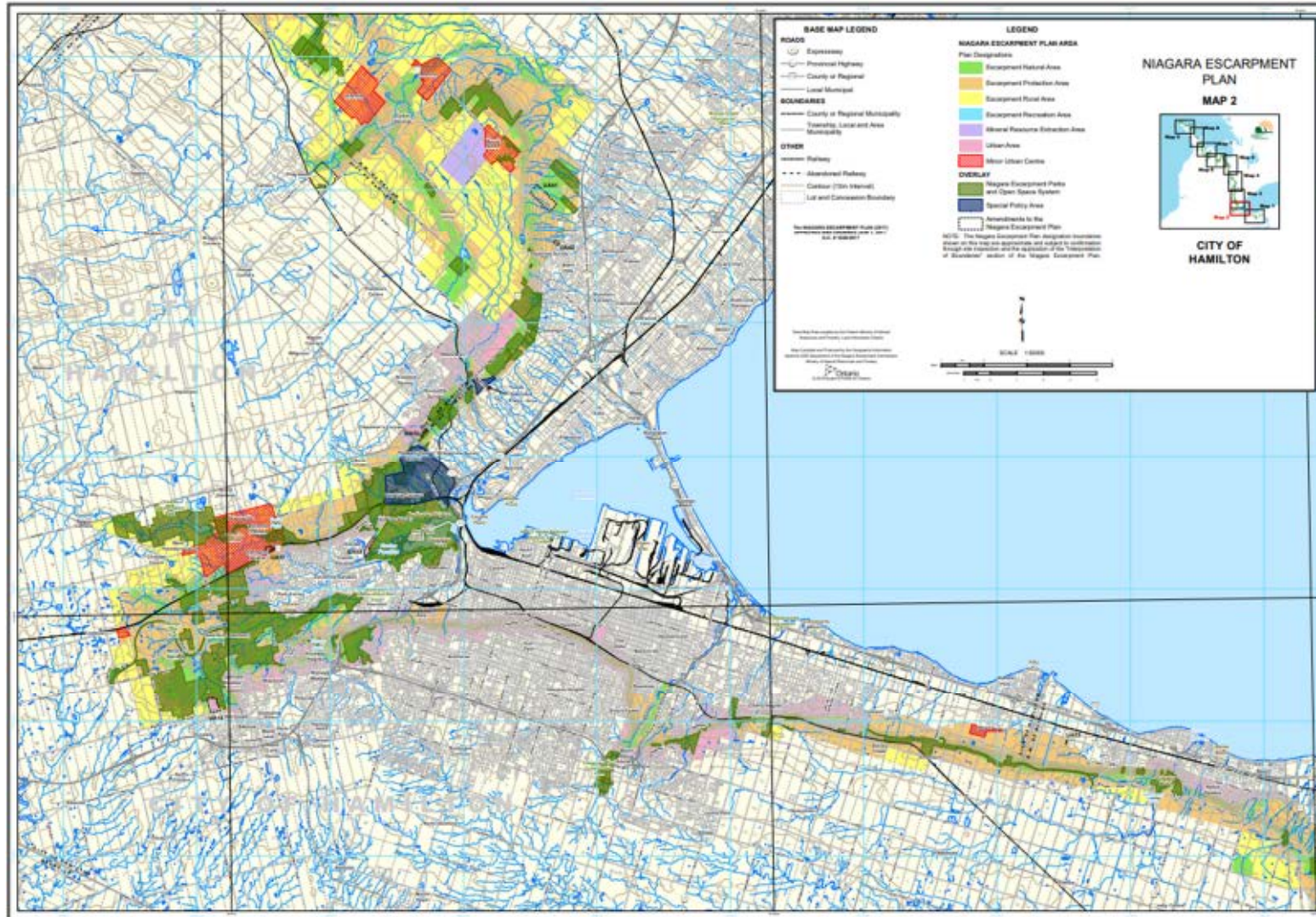
4 Conclusions

Based on the above simulated imagery, the new development does not seem to affect the view corridor to the Niagara Escarpment. Furthermore, the proposed building appears to be shorter and less impacting than nearby developments. Its overall appearance and the proportions of its podium, fit well within the local urban context.

5 Cited Materials

- *Urban Hamilton Official Plan*, <https://www.hamilton.ca/city-planning/official-plan-zoning-by-law/urban-hamilton-official-plan>, accessed 13 September 2022
- City of Hamilton's Planning and Economic Development Department, *City Wide Corridor Planning Principles and Design Guidelines*, April 2012, <https://www.hamilton.ca/sites/default/files/media/browser/2014-12-18/city-wide-corridors-planning-principles-design-guidelines.pdf>, accessed 13 September 2022
- SvN & City of Hamilton's Planning and Economic Development Department, *Downtown Hamilton Tall Building Guidelines*, February 2018, <https://www.hamilton.ca/sites/default/files/media/browser/2018-03-16/downtownhamilton-dhtallbuildingsstudyguidelines-mar2018-1.pdf>, accessed 13 September 2022
- Niagara Escarpment Commission, *Niagara Escarpment Plan*, <https://escarpment.org/land-use-planning/niagara-escarpment-plan/>, accessed 13 September 2022

6 Appendices



Appendix A: Niagara Escarpment Plan

Geographic Information
Systems (GIS)
Department of the
Niagara Escarpment
Commission, Ministry of
Natural Resources and
Forestry, *Niagara
Escarpment Plan – Map
2, City of Hamilton, 2018*