

February 18, 2022

MEMORANDUM

To: AHBR Members

From: Nick Sugar, City Planner

Subj: Staff Review Comments – S. Darrow Road Townhomes Case 21-1248

Project Background

Staff notes the project was presented to the AHBR for informal review at the 1.12.22 AHBR meeting. During the meeting, significant discussion occurred on the placement of the garage doors relative to the front entryway. The Board concluded that aligning the front entryway and garage doors on the same elevation could be considered due to the location of the development and the significant setback from Darrow Road; however, making a recommendation is challenging without seeing a proposed elevation. Other discussion items included:

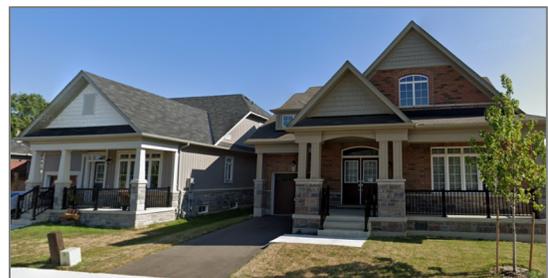
- Mix of colors and materials vs. a uniform building design
- Concern with the highly visible sides of buildings and questioning if some of the units should be turned towards the drive.
- Recommending fenestration be carried over to side and rear elevations.
- Concern of the overall appearance and presentation from the street and with the development feeling uninviting.

Following the meeting, staff recommended the applicant present example elevations to the Board in order to provide a more thorough and informed recommendation to the Planning Commission.

Summary Staff Review Comments:

- **Design Standard:** *An attached garage may be located in a wing or the main body of the building but it **must** be entered from the side yard or the rear. The main body must be the largest visible mass. The front face of the main body must sit forward at least 18" from the front face of the wings.*

Staff Comment: Staff notes the intent of the regulation to minimize view of garages should be met by designing a more prominent/wider entryway and setting back garage doors/garage masses from the front face of the building.



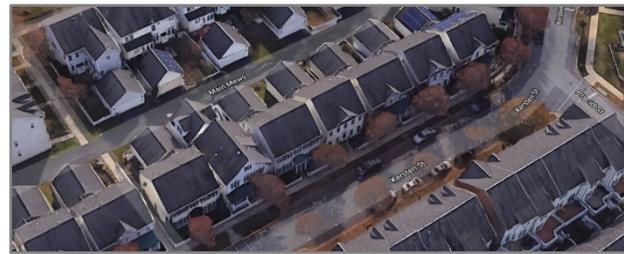
Niaqara on the Lake, Ontario Canada



Niagara on the Lake, Ontario Canada



Kentlands, Maryland



- Design Standard:** *No more than three primary materials may be used on any building.*
Staff Comment: Suggest a more uniform building design be implemented akin to previous iterations (see below). Variety could be achieved through the use of horizontal and vertical siding, accent materials, overall roof materials (metal vs. asphalt), window styles, garage door styles, overall building color, etc.



- Design Standard:** *To avoid long unbroken expanses of roof, roofs must be broken with cross gables, a change in roof height or orientation, or an offset of at least 18 inches.*
Staff Comment: Staff suggest each unit be broken up by varying roof heights to avoid a combined block appearance for units.

Waiving Requirements:

The AHBR may waive any requirement of these Standards in order to approve a proposed project, if the AHBR finds that the project fulfills the five principles enumerated in Section I-2, and meets one of the following conditions:

(1) The project is an exceptional design, meaning that it is either especially creative or it is designed in response to unique situation, such as a very difficult site or an unusual program requirement.

or

(2) Exceptional and unique conditions exist that create a practical difficulty in complying with the requirements of these Standards. The AHBR should consider the factors enumerated in as defined in the Land Development Code in determining "practical difficulty".

Five Principles of Section I-2

- *The creation and maintenance of the "public realm" takes precedence over individual buildings.*
- *Buildings shall maintain a high level of architectural quality.*
- *The site plan and building shall respect the land and the environment in which they are placed.*
- *There shall be architectural variety within a defined framework.*
- *New buildings and alterations shall respect the existing context and framework.*

Staff Comment: After collective review of the above requirements, staff notes the applicant has not demonstrated exceptional design, nor a practical difficulty preventing the applicant from meeting all applicable design standards. The placement of (1) the garage doors facing the front, combined with (2) the garage doors begin forward of the main mass/door , and (3) the garage doors taking up the majority of the front façade all compound to significantly conflict with the Architectural Design Standards.