

# Visual Impact Assessment

**354 King Street West  
King West Crossing Ltd.**

City of Hamilton

Official Plan Amendment & Zoning By-law Amendment

December 2019



Prepared for:  
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# 1. Background

King West Crossing Ltd. Is proposing a high-rise mixed-use redevelopment of its property at 354 King Street West in Hamilton. The proposed redevelopment includes a 12-storey hotel and 25-storey student residence, both of which include ground floor commercial units. Parking is provided principally within a two-level underground parking garage, although there is a small surface parking lot for residents and visitors.

In October 2019, Site Plan Approval was granted for a 10-storey hotel and 6-storey student residence on the site in keeping with the site’s existing zoning. Subsequently, a foundation building permit was issued. The owner has initiated construction on the foundation for the approved 10-storey hotel and 6-storey apartment building.

King West Crossing Ltd. is now proposing an Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment to permit additional building height above the previous Site Plan Approval for the site. The proposed for of redevelopment for the subject Amendments utilizes the same site organization and building footprints as that in the approved plans, but with taller buildings. The formal submission requirements identified in April 2019 requires the preparation of a “visual impact study”. GSP Group was retained in 2019 to undertake this Visual Impact Assessment.



**Image 1:** View of subject site (bound by construction hoarding) looking east along King Street West.



### Site Location

Source: Google Aerial Imagery (2019)

Figure  
**1**

## 2. Policy Context

The subject site is designated “Mixed Use - Medium Density” on Schedule E-1 of the Urban Hamilton Official Plan. This designation is generally intended to accommodate a full range of uses and activities in a mid-rise form that accentuates and supports a pedestrian environment. The proposed Official Plan Amendment seeks to redesignate the site to a “Mixed Use – High Density” designation, which has a similar general intent although in a taller building form.

With respect to views, Section 3.3.5 of the Urban Hamilton Official Plan generally describes public views and vistas as *“significant visual compositions of important public and historic buildings, natural heritage and open space features, landmarks, and skylines which enhance the overall physical character of an area when viewed from the public realm. Vistas are generally panoramic in nature while views usually refer to a strong individual feature often framed by its surroundings. Examples of existing significant vistas include the panorama of the Niagara Escarpment, Hamilton Harbour and the Downtown skyline as viewed from various vantage points throughout the City.”* In terms of incorporation of views and vistas, Section 3.3.5.2 of the Urban Hamilton Official Plan identifies that *“views and vistas shall be achieved through alignment of rights-of-way, layout of pedestrian circulation and open space systems, and the siting of major features, public uses, and built form”*.

The site is within the boundaries of the Strathcona Secondary Plan. One objective in Section 6.3 of the Strathcona Secondary Plan is to *“Integrate views and vistas of historic landscapes, buildings and natural features, where possible, through design”*. Further to the general Official Plan design policies above, Section 6.6.10.1k) identifies that *“Existing significant views and vistas contribute to the unique identity, sense of place and character of the Strathcona Neighbourhood”* and *“shall be maintained and enhanced, where possible”*. These include view corridors to the Escarpment along north-south public streets and views from vantage points within Victoria Park.

The Queen Street corridor is the westernmost edge of the Downtown Hamilton boundaries, with the site sitting outside of its boundaries. The corridor between York Boulevard and Hunter Street on Appendix C of the Secondary Plan as a “View Corridor to Niagara Escarpment”. On the east of Queen Street within the Downtown boundaries, the area to the south of King Street to Hunter Street is identified as *“Locations Where There May Be Impacts to Views”*; the area north of King Street is not part of this designation. Section 6.1.10.5 identifies the intent of these defined corridors is to *“understand and limit the loss of views to the Niagara Escarpment”*. Section 6.1.10.6 identifies that a visual impact assessment *“may be required for development located on streets identified as View Corridors to the Niagara Escarpment”*.

## 3. Method

### 3.1 Scope of Visual Assessment

For the purposes of this Visual Impact Assessment (VIA), “visual impact” is meant generally as the extent of change in the visual landscape created by a proposed development. Per the City’s policies, the visual landscape for this purpose includes both the natural landscape as well as the built landscape. This VIA is meant to be read in conjunction with the other design-related reports prepared as part of the complete application for a fulsome discussion of the proposed building’s impacts.

Per the above policy direction, this Visual Impact Assessment explores three potential impacts from the proposed development:

- (a) Potential visual impacts related to the Niagara Escarpment, either as potential vistas of broader skyline from a distance or views up the Queen Street corridor;
- (b) Potential visual impacts on the Queen Street and King Street streetscapes; and
- (c) Potential visual impacts on Victoria Park at the centre of the Strathcona neighbourhood.

### 3.2 Visual Impact Modelling and Simulation

The below outlines the progression of the method used for the modelling and photo-simulations used in this VIA.

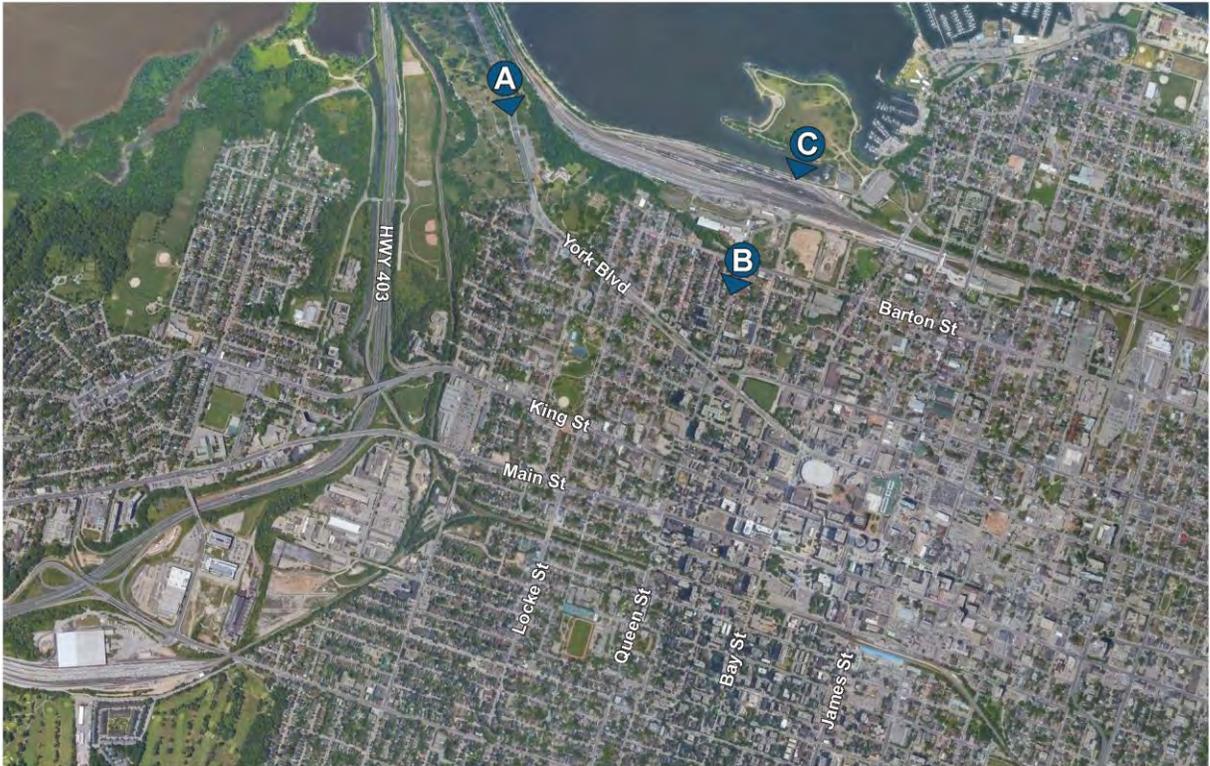
1. A 3D Model of the proposed building was prepared by SRM Architects using Revit software in support of the proposed Amendments. This model was geo-referenced using survey and base CAD information.
2. GSP Group inserted the 3D Model using Google Earth Professional software to create an interactive “viewshed model”, which allowed the proposed building to be placed into the existing built form context of the surrounding area using coordinates to accurately position the new building. This was combined with viewshed analysis to demonstrate visibility of the proposed building from key vantage points using ARC GIS.
3. From these viewshed techniques and considering the relevant policy direction of the Urban Hamilton Official Plan and Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan, specific view and vista points were selected to illustrate potential visual impacts for assessment purposes. Figure 2 illustrates the location of the selected vista and viewpoints for detailed modelling.
4. Site visits and photographs were taken on December 11, 2019. Photographs were taken on the far-side vantage point to the site, mid-point on the sidewalk at a height of

approximately 1.8 metres from the ground surface. Camera settings were set to a 16:9 format to better replicate a pedestrian's wider views.

5. GSP Group prepared a 3D Contextual Model using SketchUp software that established the massing and heights of the built form fabric within the affected vantage points identified above. Building footprints were positioned using available base digital mapping, and building heights and forms were verified using Google Earth Professional and site photographs to ensure currency of the built form and landscape fabric surrounding the site. The surrounding built form is generically shown to illustrate the visual impact of mass and form of the proposed building, rather than architectural detailing and treatments.
6. The model of the proposed building was inserted into the 3D Model to visually demonstrate potential impacts of the proposed building on the surrounding environment. Views from this combined model were exported to simulate the selected viewpoints identified on Figure 2.
7. The assessment of each view point illustrates: the existing view using the photograph on the far side facing the site (which demonstrates the most visible position looking to the site; the existing view showing the 3D Model view mimicking the view of the photograph; and, the proposed view showing the 3D Model with the proposed building inserted to show the view change in the built form environment.



**Image 2:** Rendering of proposed mixed-use redevelopment.



View Points  
Source: Google Aerial Imagery (2019)

Figure  
**2**

## 4. Existing Visual Characteristics

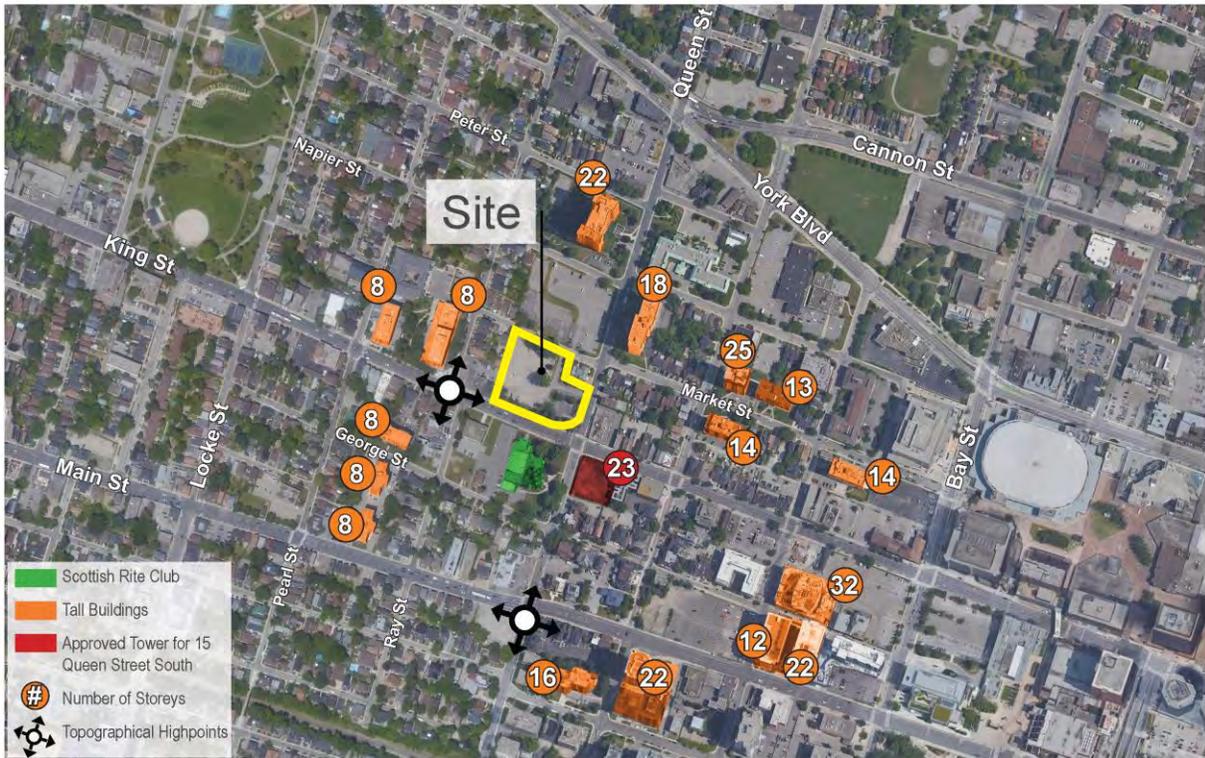
The subject site is located at the northwest corner of King Street West and Queen Street South and is municipally known as 354 King Street West. The site is approximately 0.7 hectares in area with approximately 95 metres of street frontage on King Street, 57 metres on Queen Street and 70 metres on Market Street (all post-widening dimensions).

The site's existing topography drops generally from King Street to Market Street as well as around the King Street and Queen Street intersection. There are no existing building or structure on the site. The site has been undeveloped vacant since 2015 following the demolition of the former Mount St. Joseph orphanage. There is no significant vegetation currently on the site following demolition of the existing building and current construction activities on the site. There are no street trees along the site's frontages within the public street right-of-way.

The immediately surrounding neighbourhood context is a mixed-use neighbourhood with a general low-rise profile, but with pockets of taller buildings throughout the area. The surrounding King Street West corridor is principally oriented to commercial and community use that are generally 3 storeys or less in height. The surrounding Queen Street South corridor is a mixture of commercial, community, and residential uses along either side of King that are also generally 3 storeys or less in height. There are several taller apartment buildings ranging between 8 to 26 storeys in height within the immediately surrounding area, as illustrated on Figure 3.

The site is close to topographical high points within the surrounding neighbourhood context. Along the King Street corridor, the intersection of Ray Street and King Street West is a high point from which the topography drops generally in both directions along King Street West. Along the Queen Street South corridor, the intersection of Main Street West is a high point from which the topography drops generally in all four directions. Generally, the site first comes into view from the public sidewalks:

- Near the Ray Street intersection approaching the site from the west along King Street West;
- Near the Main Street West intersection approaching the site from the south along Queen Street South;
- Near the Caroline Street intersection approaching the site from the east along King Street West; and,
- Near Napier Street approaching the site from the north along Queen Street South.



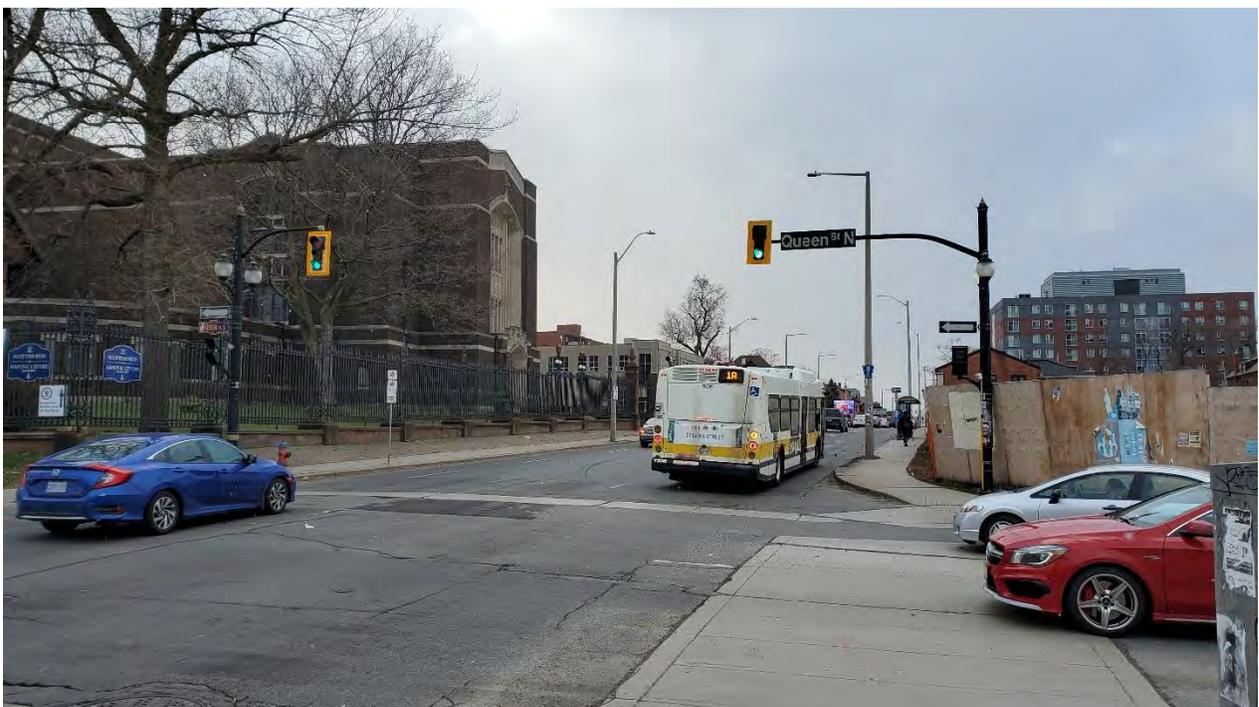
Tall Buildings Surrounding the Site  
 Source: Google Aerial Imagery (2019)

Figure  
**3**

### King Street Corridor



**Image 3:** View of King Street West looking to the east towards the core of Downtown (looking from east of the Queen Street South intersection).

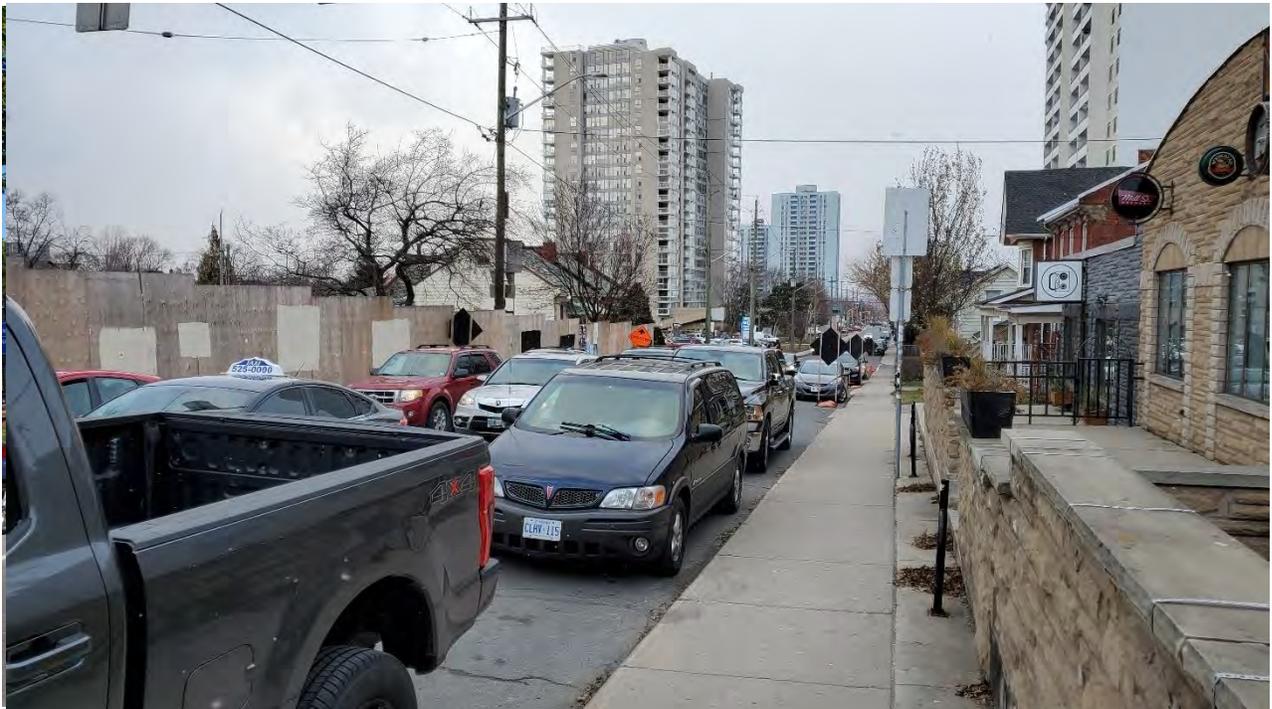


**Image 4:** View of King Street West looking to the west (from east of the intersection of Queen Street South) with the subject site to the right in the foreground.

## Queen Street South Corridor



**Image 5:** View of Queen Street South looking to the south towards Main Street West (from south of the King Street West intersection).



**Image 6:** View of Queen Street South looking to the north towards the waterfront (from north of the King Street West intersection) with the subject site to the left in the foreground.

## 5. Visual Impact Observations

### 5.1 Vistas

Figures 4, 5 and 6 demonstrate the expected visual impacts of the proposed buildings on Vistas A, B, and C, respectively, as identified on Figure 2. The proposed building would not result in a change in the landscape that detrimentally alters any existing views to the Niagara Escarpment or the waterfront. The proposed development would not result in a significant change to the skyline of Hamilton as viewed from these vantage points as they are minor alterations from a visibility perspective and would fit within the urban context and fabric of Downtown Hamilton. Specifically:

- **Vista A:** The upper half of the proposed student residence building would be visible from this vantage point on the York Street bridge; the Niagara Escarpment's profile is not visible at this vantage point.
- **Vista B:** The upper parts of the front portion of the proposed student residence hotel building would be visible from Queen Street at Barton Street; the Niagara Escarpment's profile is not visible at this vantage point.
- **Vista C:** The middle and upper portions of the student residence building and the upper portions of the hotel building would be visible from Bayfront Park, together with other tall buildings; the Niagara Escarpment's profile is not visible at this vantage point.

### 5.2 Views

Figures 7 through 18 demonstrate the expected visual impacts of the proposed building on Views 1 through 12, respectively, as identified on Figure 2. These views demonstrate the most visible views of the proposed building along the street corridors as they are viewed from the "far-side" sidewalk facing the subject site, recognizing that the "same-side" vantage points would be significantly less visible given the angle of viewing in the middle and longer distance views. Of note, the simulated conditions include the addition of the approved tower at 15 Queen Street South (diagonally facing the site at the King and Queen intersection) that is currently under construction.

On King Street approaching from the west, the 25-storey student residence building is highly visible, with the hotel building generally obscured by the student residence.

- From a longer distance at Locke Street (**View 1**), the western side of the student residence building is largely visible at this location, including all the side of the 15-storey "wing" along King Street and all the tower portion starting generally on the 18<sup>th</sup> storey where it emerges above the commercial streetscape.

- Closer to the site at Pearl Street (**View 2**), views to most of the western side of the student residence are open except for the lower three storeys obscured by abutting King Street commercial buildings and the portion obscured by buildings on the Good Sheppard / Martha House site.
- Most immediately at Ray Street (**View 3**), the student residence fills the view of the western side of the streetscape with the both the front and western sides of the student residence visible at this location; additionally, the front face of the hotel building comes into view, although slightly.

On Queen Street approaching from the south, the 12-storey hotel building is more pronounced visually than the student residence given the site's organization.

- Further away from the site at York Boulevard (**View 4**), the northern side of the hotel building is entirely visible, except for the lower two storeys obscured by the abutting duplex dwelling while the eastern side obliquely and a portion of the northern side is visible, the remainder being obscured by existing residential towers on the west side of Queen Street. Only a portion of the Scottish Rite building is visible under existing conditions at this vantage point with obstructions of trees, poles and wires; the hotel building generally blocks this view.
- Moving closer to the site at Napier Street (**View 5**), the most of the hotel building's northern side is visible, except for the portion obscured by the abutting duplex dwelling, and its eastern side is obliquely visible. The student residence would be generally entirely visible from this vantage point, although in the viewer's peripheral vision and obscured to a degree by development on the abutting property (200 Market).
- Most immediately at Market Street (**View 6**), most of the hotel building's south side is visible, except for the portion obscured by the abutting duplex dwelling, and all of its eastern side is visible facing Queen Street. The student residence sits to the side in the viewer's peripheral vision, the lower storeys obscured by the abutting duplex dwelling. The hotel and student residence forms overlap in terms of sky visibility at this vantage point. The Scottish Rite building is visible at this vantage point under existing conditions, again obscured by trees, poles and wires; the hotel building maintains views to the Scottish Rite's eastern side and more pronounced architectural details given its setback from the post-widened Queen Street.

On King Street approaching from the east, the 12-storey hotel and the 25-storey student residence are visible from all three vantage points, the former in front and the latter behind.

- From a longer distance at Bay Street (**View 7**), the uppermost storeys of the southeast corner of the hotel building is visible from this location, the remainder

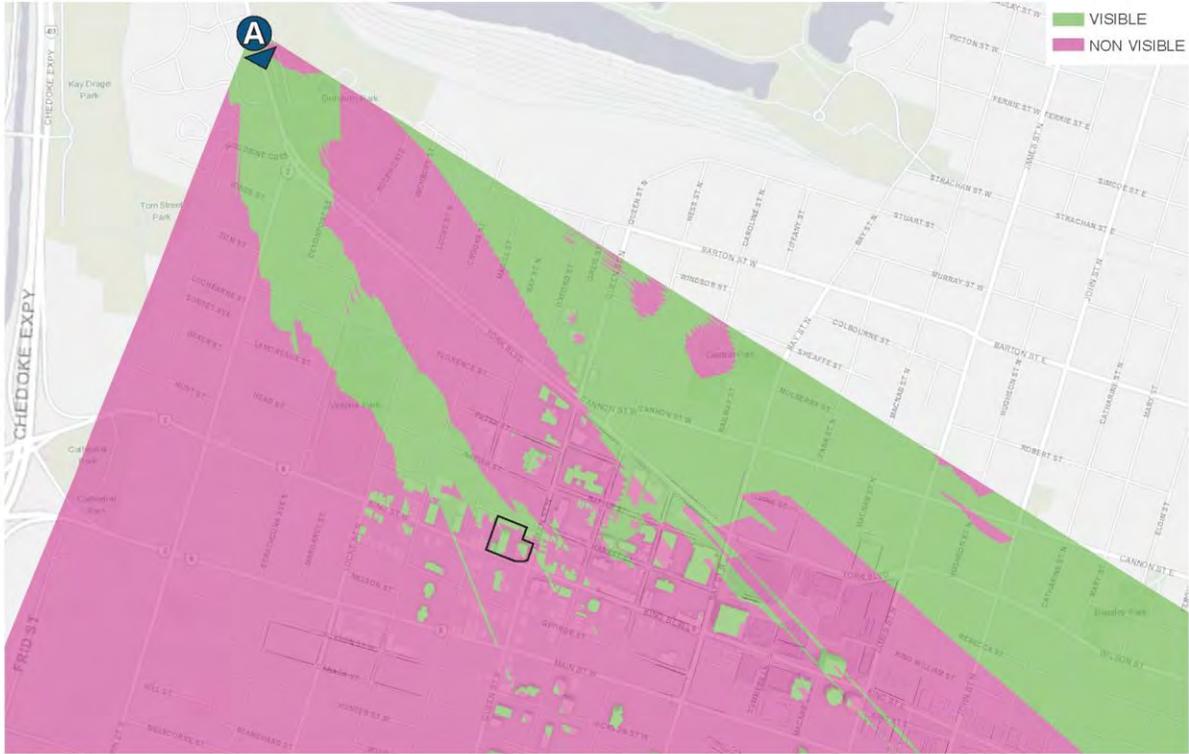
blocked by the commercial streetscape. The front portion of the building base's eastern side below the 15<sup>th</sup> storey is visible with the lowest storeys blocked by the commercial streetscape and the back portion blocked by the hotel building. Most of the student residence building's eastern side above the 15<sup>th</sup> storey is visible from this vantage point.

- Moving closer to the site at Caroline Street (**View 8**), both buildings become more visible as the blocking commercial streetscape recedes. Most of the student residence building's east side is visible, except for those portions blocked by the hotel building in the foreground and views generally to the 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> stores blocked by the commercial streetscape. Generally, the upper half of the hotel building is fully visible at this vantage point, the lower half still obscured by the commercial streetscape.
- Most immediately at Hess Street (**View 9**), the views are like the Caroline Street vantage point, except the southern faces of both buildings are obliquely visible and all the front portion of the student residence is visible. The other difference is that the buildings are more pronounced to the viewer and have larger potential impacts on sky view perspectives of the pedestrian.

On Queen Street approaching from the north, the 12-storey hotel building and 25-storey student residence are viewed together side-by-side.

- Farther at Main Street (**View 10**), the entirety of the hotel building's southern side would be visible, although obscured by existing street trees to the front of the Scottish Rite building along Queen Street. The portion of the student residence's southern and eastern sides is fully visible generally above the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> storeys where the building arises past the commercial properties in the foreground.
- Closer at George Street (**View 11**), the views are like the Main Street vantage point, except full views of the eastern side of the student residence (also obscured by street trees similar to views to hotel building) become visible moving past the Scottish Rite building.

Within Victoria Park at the Peter Street and Locke Street (**View 12**), the tower top of the student residence is marginally visible as it rises above the residential buildings on the east side of Locke Street. Visibility of the student residence would increase backing away further into the park from this vantage point, however, the increasing distance would further diminish its effect.

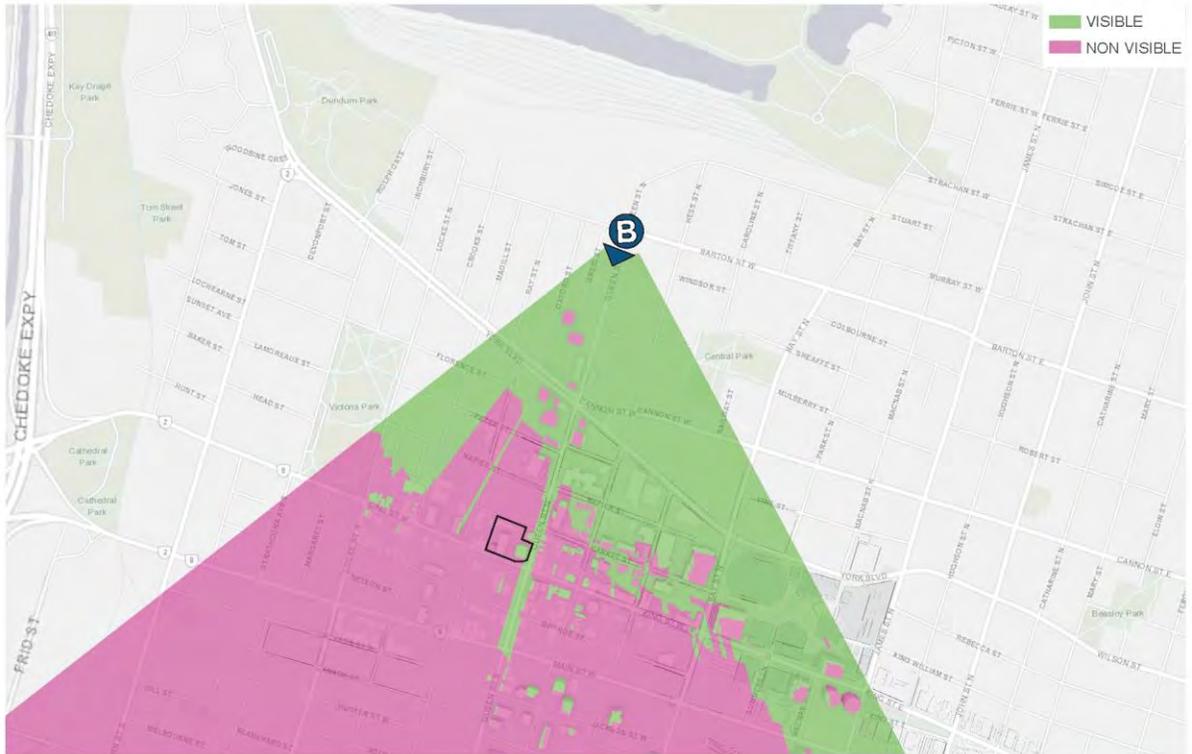


Proposed Building View A -  
Viewshed Looking South along York

Source: Google Earth (2018); GSP Group (2019)

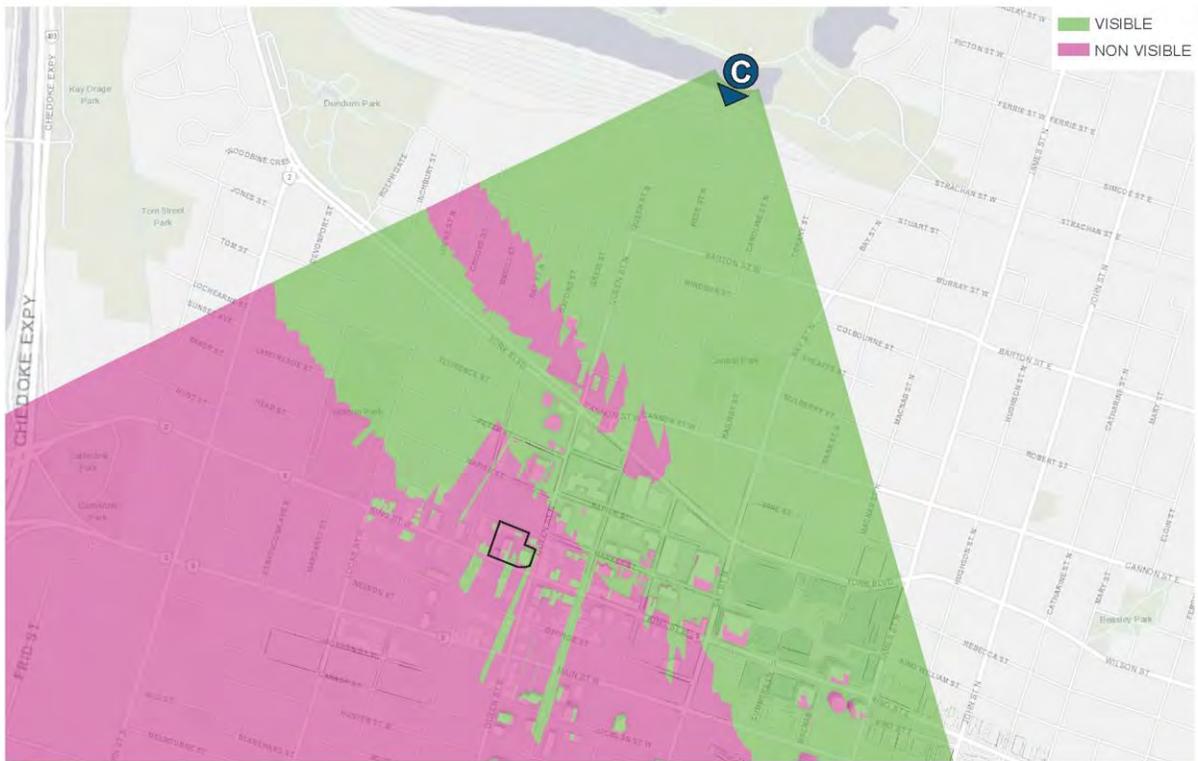
Figure

4



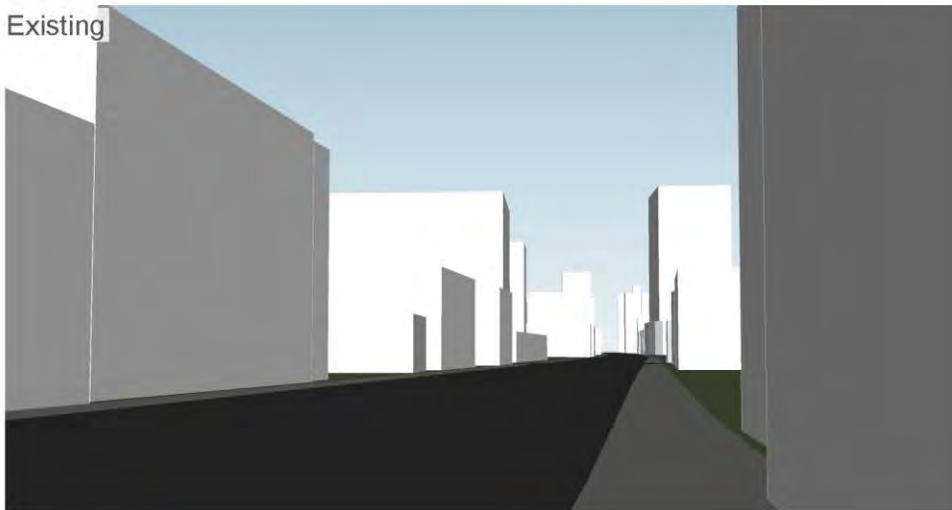
Proposed Building View B -  
Viewshed Looking South along Queen  
Source: Google Earth (2018); GSP Group (2019)

Figure  
**5**



Proposed Building View C -  
 Viewshed Looking South from Bayfront Park  
 Source: Google Earth (2018); GSP Group (2019)

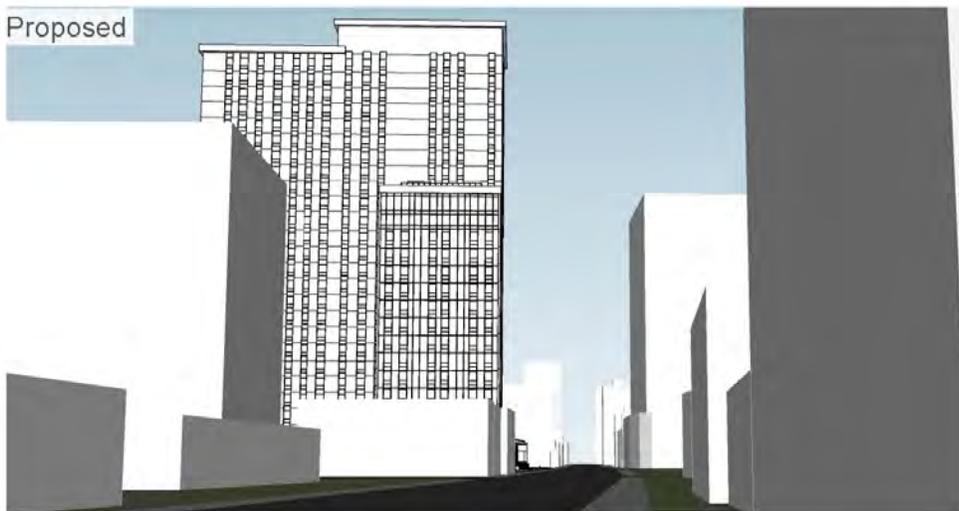
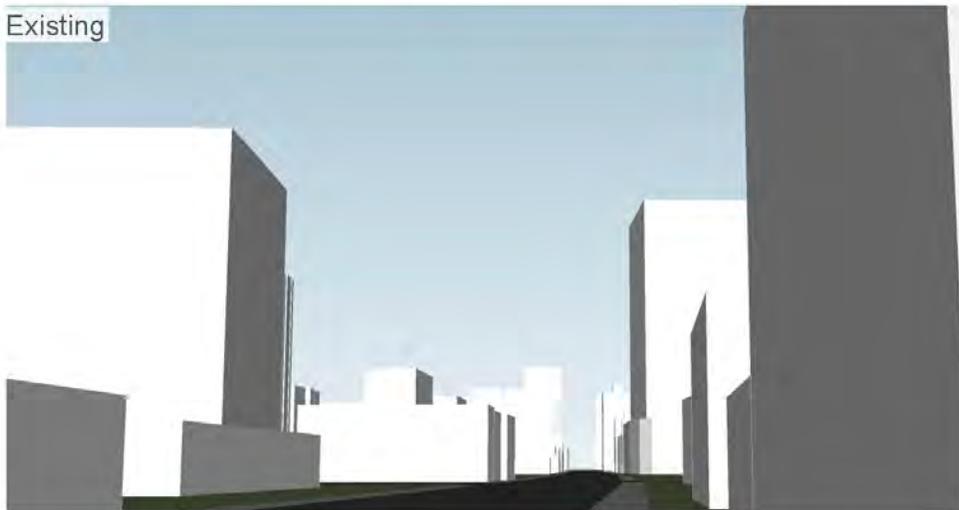
Figure  
6



Proposed Building View 1 -  
Looking East along King near Locke

Source: Google Streetview (2018); SRM Architects (2019); GSP Group (2019)

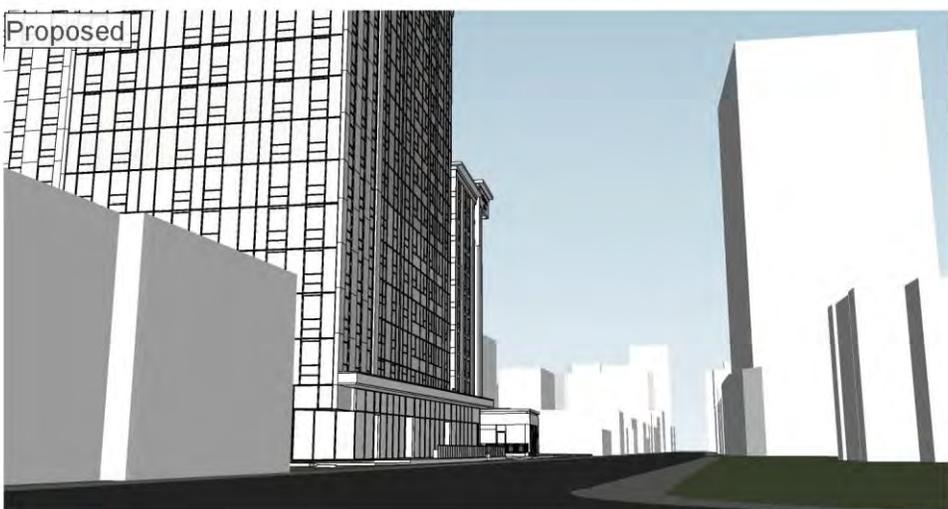
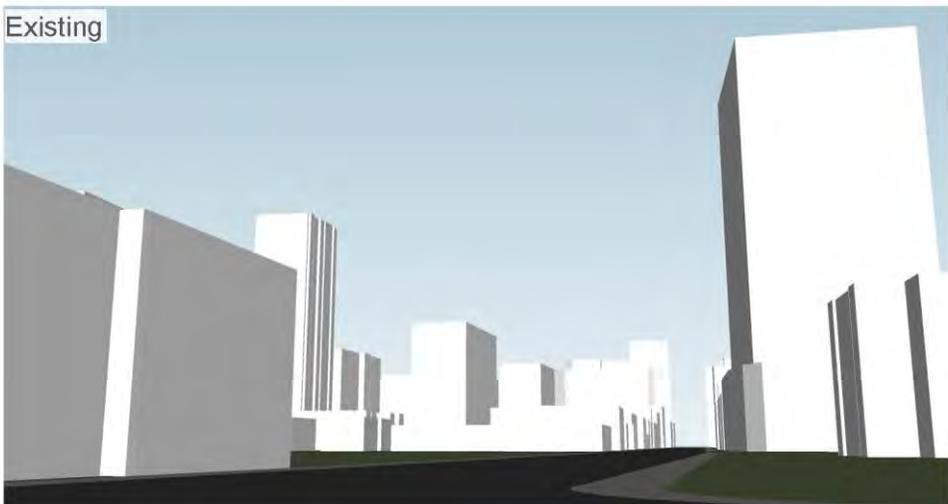
Figure  
**7**



Proposed Building View 2 -  
Looking East along King near Pearl

Source: Google Streetview (2018); SRM Architects (2019); GSP Group (2019)

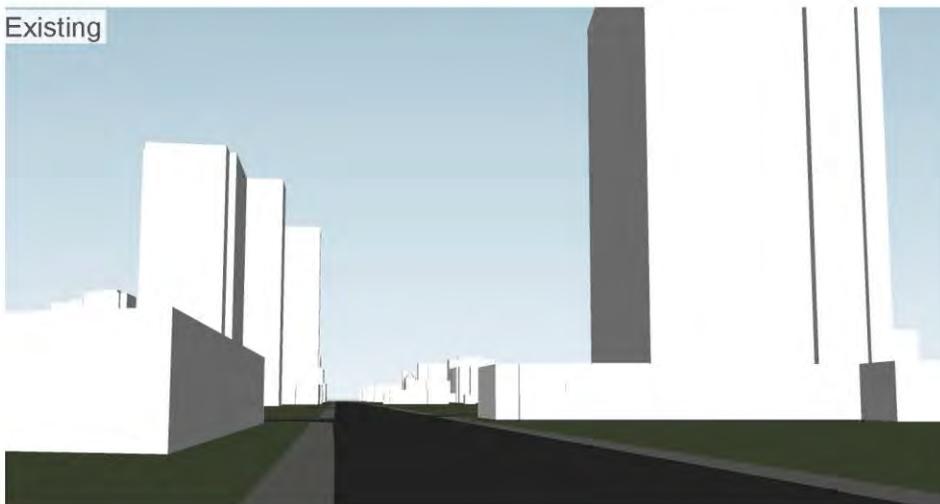
Figure  
**8**



Proposed Building View 3 -  
Looking East along King near Ray

Source: Google Streetview (2018); SRM Architects (2019); GSP Group (2019)

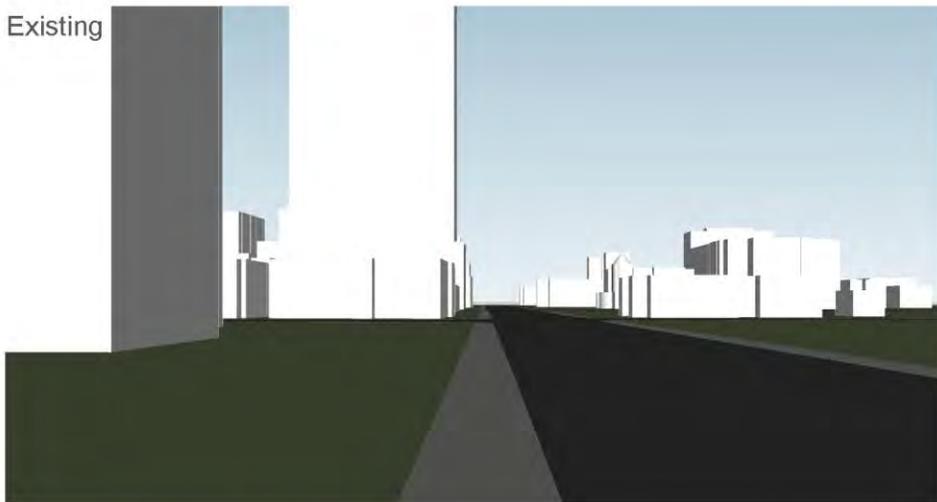
Figure  
**9**



Proposed Building View 4 - Looking South along Queen near York

Source: Google Streetview (2018); SRM Architects (2019); GSP Group (2019)

Figure 10



Proposed Building View 5 -  
 Looking South along Queen near Napier  
 Source: Google Streetview (2018); SRM Architects (2019); GSP Group (2019)

Figure  
**11**



Proposed Building View 6 -  
 Looking South along Queen near Market  
 Source: Google Streetview (2018); SRM Architects (2019); GSP Group (2019)

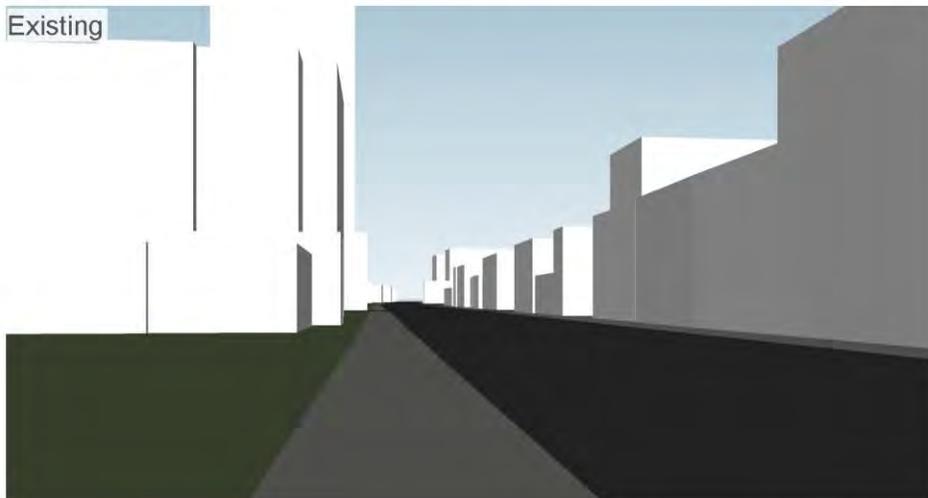
Figure  
**12**



Proposed Building View 7 - Looking West along King near Bay

Source: Google Streetview (2018); SRM Architects (2019); GSP Group (2019)

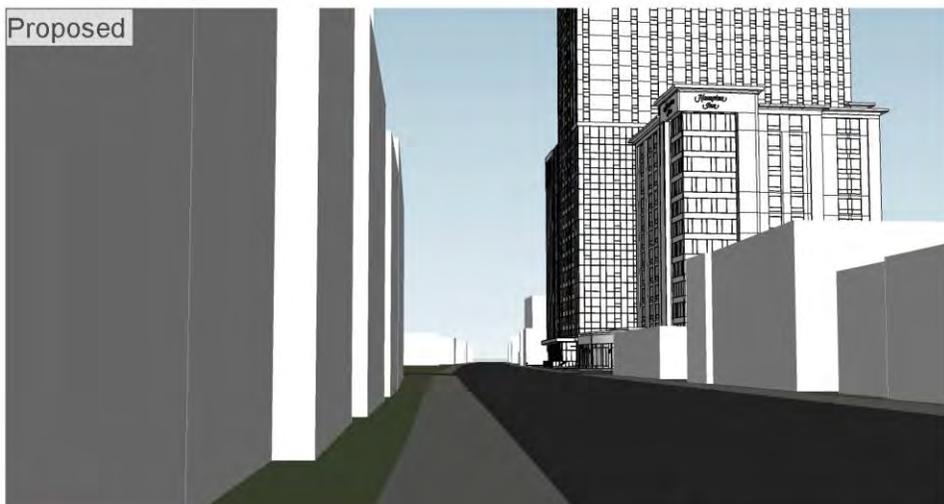
Figure  
**13**



Proposed Building View 8 -  
Looking West along King near Caroline

Source: Google Streetview (2018); SRM Architects (2019); GSP Group (2019)

Figure  
**14**



Proposed Building View 9 - Looking West  
along King near Hess

Source: Google Streetview (2018); SRM Architects (2019); GSP Group (2019)

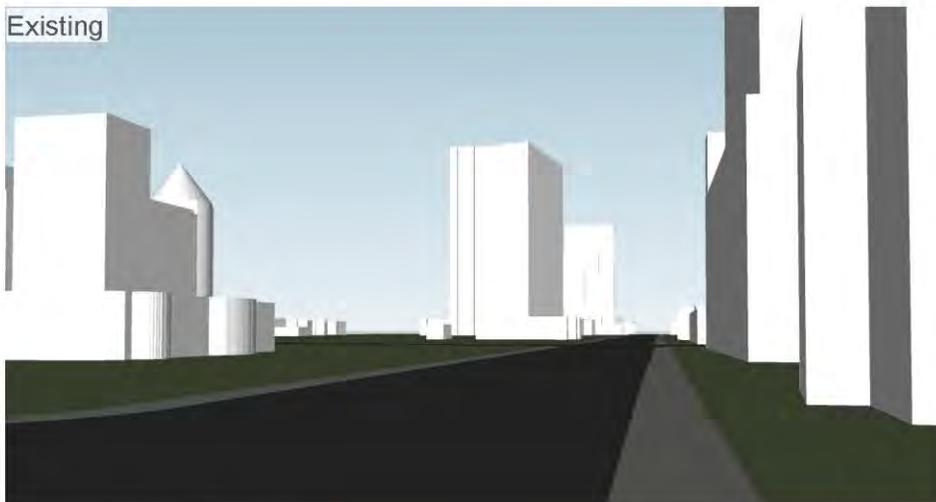
Figure  
**15**



Proposed Building View 10 - Looking North along Queen near Main

Source: Google Streetview (2018); SRM Architects (2019); GSP Group (2019)

Figure  
**16**



Proposed Building View 11 - Looking North along King near George

Source: Google Streetview (2018); SRM Architects (2019); GSP Group (2019)

Figure 17



Proposed Building View 12 - Looking to the Site from Locke at Peter

Source: Google Streetview (2018); SRM Architects (2019); GSP Group (2019)

Figure  
**18**