

URBAN DESIGN BRIEF

Windsor Park Development

11630 – 87 Avenue NW, Edmonton
8715 & 8719 – 117 Street NW, Edmonton



Submitted by:
GSA Consulting
July 2024



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1. Project Overview

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Summary

Green Space Alliance Consulting Inc. (GSA) on behalf of the Westrich Pacific Corp. has prepared this Urban Design Brief to support the rezoning of the properties located at 11630 – 87 Avenue NW (“Site 1”) and 8715 & 8719 – 117 Street NW (“Site 2”) in the Windsor Park Neighbourhood. The Site 1 is proposed to be rezoned from the CN – Neighbourhood Commercial Zone to the MU – Mixed Use Zone, and Site 2 is proposed to be rezoned from the RS – Small Scale Residential Zone to the MUN – Neighbourhood Mixed Use Zone.

The site is situated on the northeast corner of 87 Avenue and 117 Street, on either side of the north-south alley located between 116 Street and 117 Street. This Rezoning Application supports a diversity of housing units at a greater intensity while also providing commercial opportunities for the neighbourhood. This Urban Design Brief outlines work on the project to date and offers an overview of the subject site, the neighbourhood context, the design intent, and the benefits for the community.

Location

Site 1 is legally described as Lot 9A, Block 25, Plan 9221629 and Site 2 is legally described as Lot 7 & 8, Block 25, Plan 715HW. Site 1 consists of approximately 2049.4 sq.m. Site 2 consists of approximately 1,543.1 sq.m. Site 1 is within the University-Garneau Major Node, while Site 2 is directly adjacent to the Major Node. The site consists of one square-shaped lot with a single-storey commercial building fronting 87 Avenue NW and 117 Street NW, and two residential lots fronting onto 117th Street NW. The site is a corner site surrounded by small-scale residential houses to the north, an institutional use to the east, and other multi-unit developments, including a tower, to the west. It connects to a wide range of transit opportunities along 87 Avenue and the University.



Figure 1: Location Map

Background and Purpose

Overview

Neighbourhood – Windsor Park

Legal Description –

- Site 1 – Lot 9A, Block 25, Plan 9221629
- Site 2 – Lot 7 & 8, Block 25, Plan 715HW

Site Area – 3592.5 sq.m total

- Site 1 – 2049.4 sq.m
- Site 2 – 1543.1 sq.m

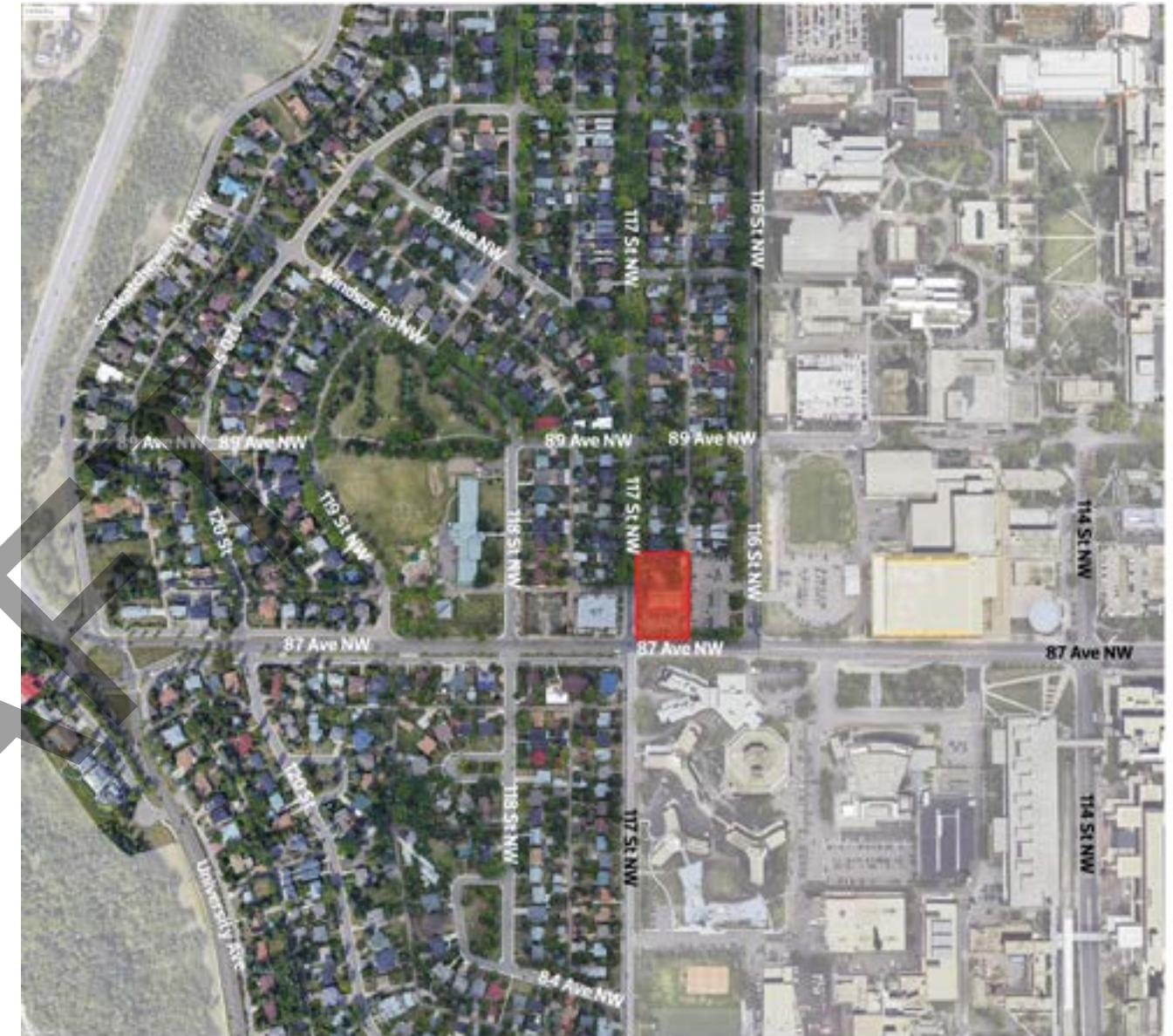
Current Zoning –

- Site 1 – CN – Neighbourhood Commercial Zone
- Site 2 – RS – Small Scale Residential Zone

Community Stakeholders – Windsor Park Community League

Planning Framework

- The City Plan
- The District Plan Policy
- The Scona District Plan



 Subject Site

Figure 2: Context Map

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Relevant Plans and Guidelines

The City Plan

The City Plan directs how districts should evolve to maximize city and transportation infrastructure, supporting higher densities and population increases in areas across Edmonton. The City Plan Nodes and Corridor framework emphasizes that in order to achieve the City Plan vision, a greater range of uses, building massings, and a variety of built forms are encouraged in addition to single-family housing in every neighborhood. This is supported in areas where nodes and corridors transition into low rise residential neighbourhoods. These edge conditions are critical for this site, as taller built forms transition into a small-scale neighbourhood. The City Plan references the District Plans to direct development and building transitions on the edge of key node and corridor areas within each district.

Scona District Plan

The Windsor Park neighbourhood is situated in Scona District on the west side of the University of Alberta North Campus. The Scona District is expansive and includes other prominent areas of interest, including Whyte Avenue and Southgate Mall. The key focus of the Scona District plan is to direct growth within key nodes and corridors around these amenity and employment areas.

The Site 1 is located within the Nodes and Corridors Boundary and Site 2 is located directly adjacent to the boundary as identified in the Scona District Plan, Maps #2-7. The site is adjacent to the 87 Avenue Arterial Roadway and situated between other existing mid and high rise buildings within the neighbourhood and on the University Campus. Other mid and high rise buildings adjacent to the site apply appropriate transitions to support a tall high rise building on this site. The existing built form and massing context provide a gradual transition from the proposed tall high rise through high and mid rise buildings into the largely single detached neighbourhood.

District Policy Subsection 2.4.3.3 for Major Nodes "support[s] Tall High Rise development within Major Nodes where all of the following criteria are met:

- (a.) the site is within 200 metres of a Mass Transit Station or along an Arterial Roadway, and
- (b.) the site size and context allow for appropriate transition to surrounding development.

Statistics

According to the 2021 Federal Census, approximately half of Edmonton's housing stock (49.6%) comprises single detached houses. Single detached houses in Windsor Park account for 87.3% of the neighbourhood housing stock, which is far lower than the city average and reflects poorly on the neighbourhood's housing diversity.

Additionally, there are limited existing commercial opportunities within the neighbourhood. This project proposes to exchange the existing commercial uses on Site 1 to provide a mixed-use development, with new street-facing retail and larger commercial uses on the ground level. In addition, Site 2 is also proposed to provide smaller scale commercial opportunities on the ground floor of the building. Multi-unit housing will be provided above the podium to increase the quantity and diversity of residential units in Windsor Park.

Based on the 2021 Federal Census, the majority of residents in Windsor Park are between the ages of 20-24. This suggests that a large number of students reside in the neighbourhood adjacent to the University Campus. Additional housing units and types would accommodate this demographic and develop the land more efficiently. The need for intensification is imperative in Windsor Park to provide further attainable housing options in the University-Garneau Major Node.



Figure 3: Scona District Plan - Map 4

2. Neighbourhood Analysis

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Neighbourhood Context

Windsor Park is a central neighbourhood south of the river in the City of Edmonton. The neighbourhood is bordered by the University of Alberta on the east and overlooks the North Saskatchewan River Valley to the north and west. The residential neighbourhood of Belgravia is situated further south on University Avenue NW. Windsor Park is in the proximity to some of Edmonton's most prominent parks and trails, including those through Emily Murphy Park and William Hawrelak Park. The focal point of the community is the central green space and the Windsor Park School, north of 87 Avenue.

Most dwellings are single detached homes, however new infill developments comprising small-to-medium scale housing and multi-unit developments are slowly being constructed. This includes the concentration of multi-unit buildings being constructed along 87 Avenue, at the edge of University-Garneau Major Node. This transition area for parcels west of 116 Street to the internal collector roadways (southeast of 92 Avenue, Windsor Park Road, and 119 Street) provides a gradual increase in built form between the small-scale housing within the neighbourhood's interior and the University Campus.

Although the neighbourhood is primarily residential, there are a few shops and restaurants located on 87 Avenue. The urban design analysis for the Windsor Park Neighbourhood outlined below considers how the new development will fit in with the existing neighbourhood context and how development would complement the neighbourhood and the broader district.

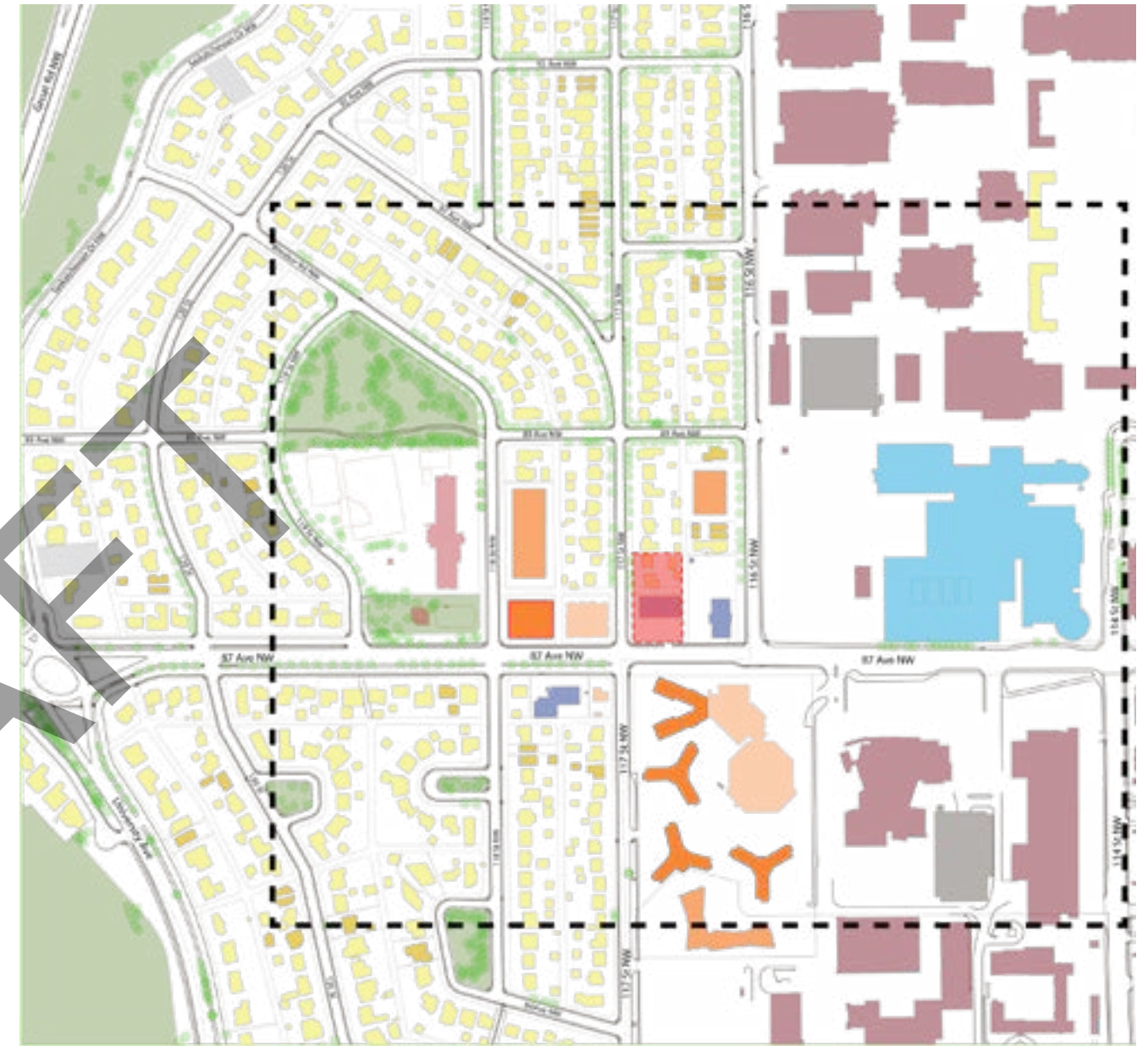


Figure 4: Neighbourhood Context Map

Land Use and Character

Windsor Park was known as River Lot 3 until it became a residential subdivision in 1911. The subdivision ultimately became part of Edmonton during the City of Strathcona amalgamation in 1912, however the neighbourhood was not fully built out until the 1940s/50s corresponding with the construction of the Groat Road Bridge.

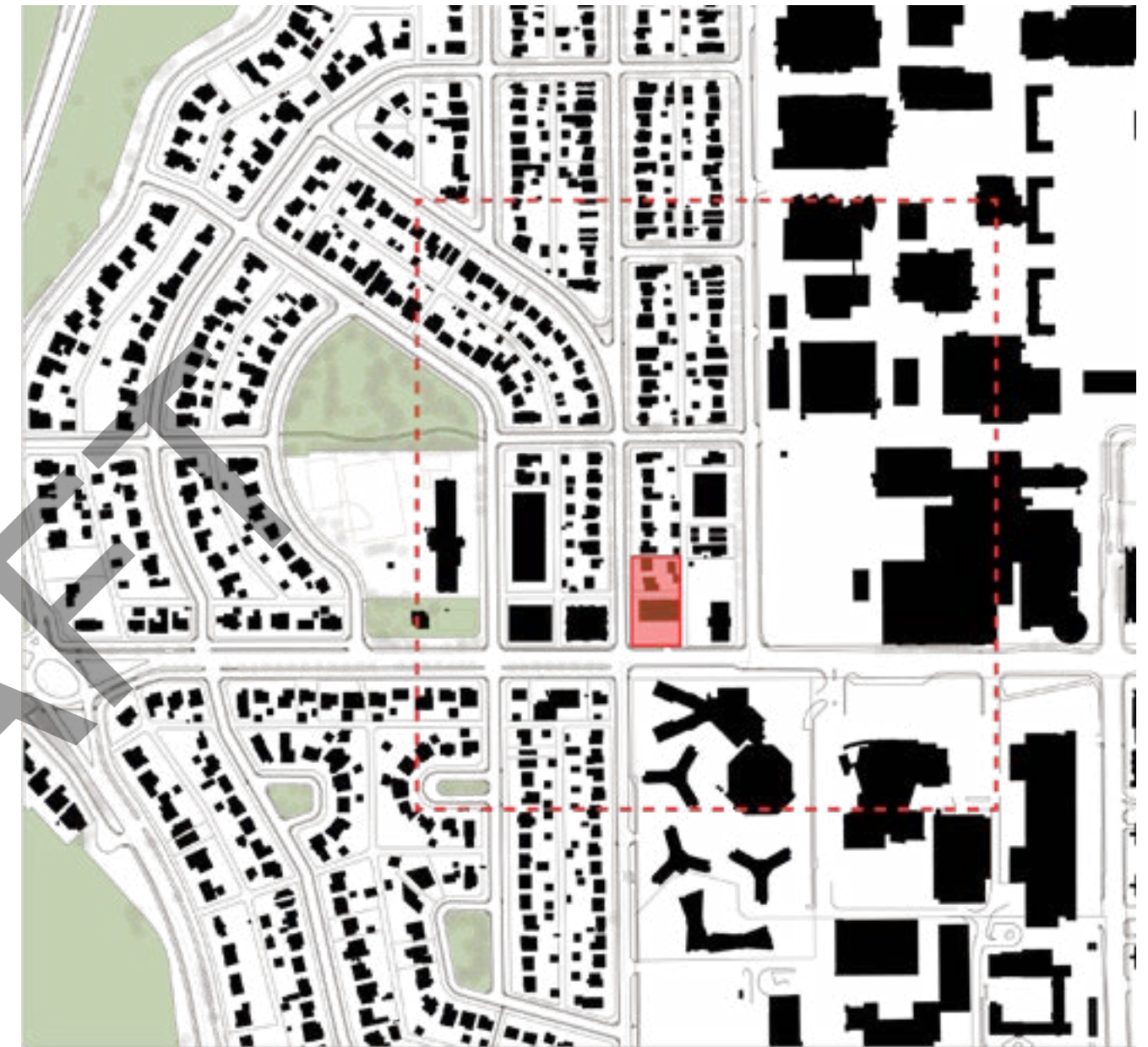
As seen in Figure 4 (previous page), the interior blocks of the neighbourhood remain dominated by the single detached house stock. While the existing RS – Small Scale Residential Zone allows up to eight units on a lot, there has been limited infill opportunity to meet the increase in housing demand. Small-scale infill will occur at the interior of the neighbourhood, however larger parcels along the edge of the community will attract new multi-unit developments in proximity to mass transit and local amenities. This is already occurring along 87 Avenue and 116 Street.

Additional land uses in the neighbourhood include some commercial uses, parks and service uses containing a school and open space, recreational uses, and institutional uses. The direction from The City Plan and Scona District Plan is used to inform this project; this site is strategically located to develop a higher density while providing a variety of new services and commercial amenities. The proposed development will also support existing land uses within a 400-metre radius of the site. Parcels to the southwest along 87 Avenue have been rezoned to accommodate taller, multi-unit housing buildings that provide a physical transition to the University lands to the east. Simultaneously, a handful of new single detached houses are constructed on narrow, subdivided lots to provide residential density and new housing options within the neighbourhood interior.

Urban Pattern

Windsor Park's urban pattern is composed of a hybrid curvilinear grid pattern of residential streets and avenues. Roads are articulated in a grid and slowly converge with the curvilinear pattern from north to south across the neighbourhood. All roadways encircle the large open Windsor Park green space with the Windsor Park Community League and School grounds.

Generally, block sizes are approximately 153 metres by 55 metres long and follow this atypical hybrid block pattern. Deviations in the block pattern are in the form of 87 Avenue cutting through the neighbourhood and dividing it into two distinct parts, north and south. Roadways within 400 metres of the site range in width from two to four-lane local and arterial roadways, with some on-street parking.



Subject Site
Study Area

Figure 5: Urban Pattern Map

Accessibility and Connectivity

The urban pattern surrounding the site is well connected to the robust set of transportation modes that allows excellent connectivity to not only downtown, but the North Saskatchewan River Valley and the rest of the City by way of public transit, walking, cycling, and strolling. Access to Edmonton's River Valley is a unique asset in Windsor Park. The neighbourhood is surrounded by and well-connected to the river valley parks and trail system to the north and west. Access to Edmonton's Light Rail Transit (LRT) system from the site is excellent; both the University Station and the Health Sciences Jubilee Station are within 900 metres of the site. Painted bike lanes are situated north-south along 116 Street and east-west along 89 Avenue, connecting the site to Edmonton's broader bicycle network. Windsor Park features monolith sidewalks, many with rolling curbs. These sidewalks are well-connected and feature grade crossings and strolling access. The City installed marked crosswalks (controlled and uncontrolled) during the 2013 neighbourhood renewal project.

Fast-forward to 2024, the neighbourhood is also ready to accommodate the additional density with a strong bus transit service along 87 Avenue, two LRT stations within 900 metres, and shared use pathways and bike lanes for strolling and biking. The site is within walking distance of major transportation options from the University of Alberta, including major bus routes and the Capital and Metro LRT lines. Development on this site aims to increase density and act as a built transition from the towering University buildings to the single detached dwellings in Windsor Park's interior.

The grid pattern that accommodates vehicular traffic in all directions surrounding the site. The 87 Avenue Arterial Road connects the neighbourhood to the University-Garneau Major Node further east. Collector and Local Roads including 116 Street and 117 Street, among others, intersect the neighbourhood to connect residents to Saskatchewan Drive and the River Valley. The neighbourhood is well positioned to support a variety of transportation options over the river by the Groat Road Bridge, the High Level Bridge, and the Capital/Metro Line LRT Bridge.

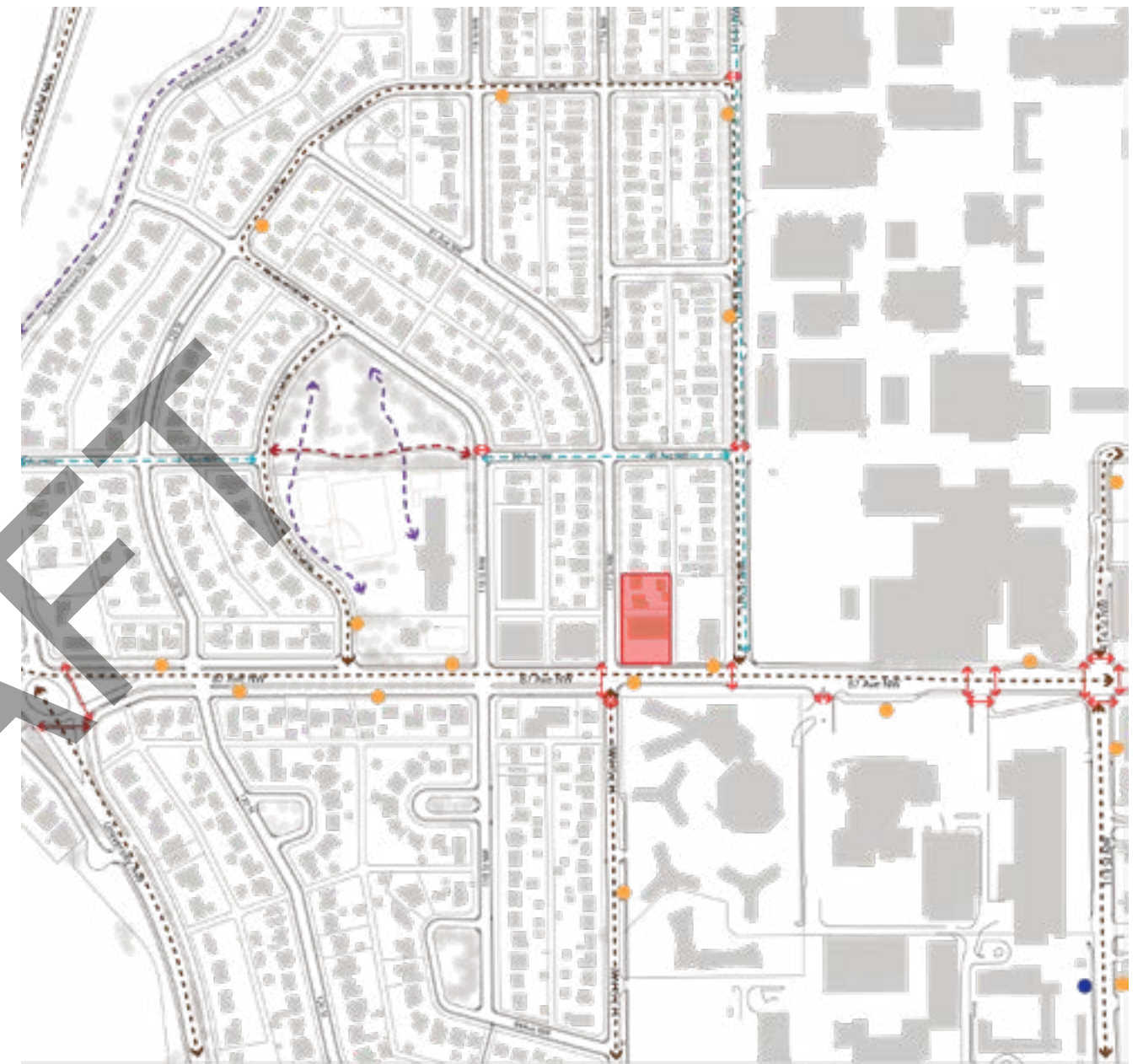


Figure 6: Accessibility and Connectivity Map

3. Site Analysis

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Built Form

The built form within 400 metres of the site consists mainly of 1- to 2-storey single detached dwellings. Several parcels adjacent to 87 Avenue are already zoned to allow for denser, multi-unit development, including the 4-storey Bently building and the 11-storey Windsor Terrace building. A mid rise development situated north of the Windsor Terrace building is at the development permit stage and set for construction in 2024 or 2025. Additionally, the University buildings east and southeast of the site tower well over ten storeys. Figure 7 provides insight into the height transitions between mid and high rise development on campus and the neighbourhood.

The 87 Avenue Arterial Road and the 116 Street Collector Road are starting to build up to support higher densities with access to transit on the interface with the University-Garneau Major Node. The District Policy Plan supports redevelopment at the edge of the University-Garneau Major Node to provide higher densities and more efficient uses of land. The proposed development will be an appropriate transition between the University lands and the small-scale built form to the west.

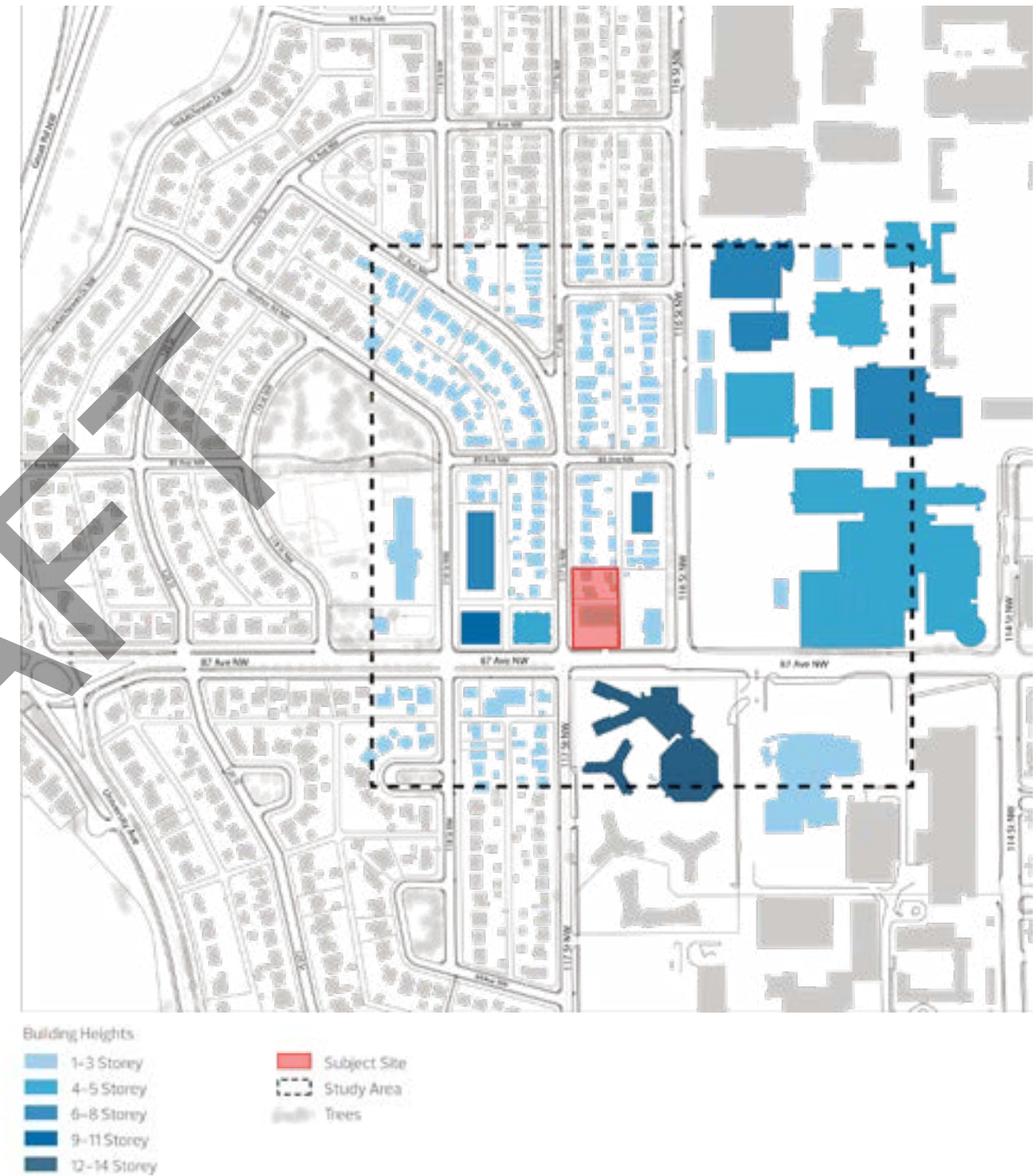


Figure 7: Built Form Map

Visual Quality and Legibility

Paths, Edges and Districts

Paths

Windsor Park has a variety of pedestrian routes and paths connecting the neighbourhood to the University-Garneau Major Node. These routes consist of residential sidewalks along streets, avenues, and lanes. Lanes are present in almost every block and run north to south, with some on a diagonal axis. East-to-west access is rare due to the short length of the blocks in that direction. The site has wide sidewalks on the south and west sides, allowing pedestrians to move along 87 Avenue and up 117 Street into the neighbourhood.



Figure 8: Paths along 117 Street NW

Edges

The neighbourhood has stark edges ranging from roadways, the river valley, to the University to the east. While the north and west edges into the river valley provide excellent access for the existing single detached dwellings, this may not be the most equitable approach to providing access to nature. Additionally, the transition from the University's mid to high rise buildings is non-existent into the neighbourhood. This forms a physical and residential inequity in the neighbourhood by not only limiting appropriate built forms in the community, but also additional residential units addressing market demands (for students) immediately adjacent to the University-Garneau Major Node.

The site's edges are defined by the north-south alley to the east, an Arterial Road with 87 Avenue to the south, and a Local Road with 117 Street to the west. This western edge provides a healthy treed boulevard that extends north into the heart of the neighbourhood. The existing east-west alley is proposed to be relocated to the northern portion of Site 2 in order to create a north edge and buffer between the development and the adjacent single detached houses. Commercial frontage onto 87 Avenue will be reintroduced in the proposed development to support an active edge on 87 Avenue and portions of 117 Street, where people may sit, window shop, have a meal, or provide a pleasant environment to spend time rather than just passing by. The proposed development will enhance the commercial element on 87 Avenue that will have interactive interface and uses, and will introduce smaller-scale commercial development on Site 2 along 117th Street.



Figure 9: Edge of 87 Avenue NW

Districts

Site 1 is located within one of Edmonton's most significant districts and employment areas, The University–Garneau Major Node. The Major Node has evolved over time with the development of mid and high rise buildings immediately adjacent to Windsor Park, providing a stark difference in built form and building massing. A significant factor for the existing development is the University itself, access to transit, and amenities. Site 1 is identified within the Nodes and Corridors Boundary in the Scona Plan, and the proposed development aims to complement existing development while adding new units and uses. In addition, Site 2 responds to being located directly adjacent to the Nodes and Corridors Boundary by providing appropriate transition to the interior Windsor Park Neighbourhood.



Figure 10: Location Map, Adjacent to the University–Garneau Major Node



Figure 13: Path From 89 Avenue NW into Windsor Park



Figure 12: Edge of 116 Street NW, Adjacent to the University



Figure 11: Built Form and Massing Adjacent to the University–Garneau Major Node

4. Design Intent

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Design Process

The proposed scale and massing carefully reflects on the surrounding built form context. Windsor Park is currently experiencing intensification along 87 Avenue, as seen with the Bentley and the Windsor Terrace residential developments. Recent development continues to increase in height, with Windsor Terrace reaching up to 11 storeys. Further south, the Lister Hall Residences on the University of Alberta Campus reach up to 12 storeys. The intention for the proposed development is to provide a tall high rise development within the Node and Corridor Boundary, and low rise development on the two interior parcels to scale up from the existing built form.

A series of massing models were prepared with standard zones to determine the preferred form, scale and massing for the new project. A variety of heights and associated setbacks and stepbacks were considered for the new design. Ultimately, the MU – Mixed Use Zone was selected for Site 1 based on its flexibility in height and FAR, and its alignment with the intentions of the project. The MUN – Neighbourhood Mixed Use Zone was selected for Site 2 based on its lower height and FAR to better suite the interior position of the site.

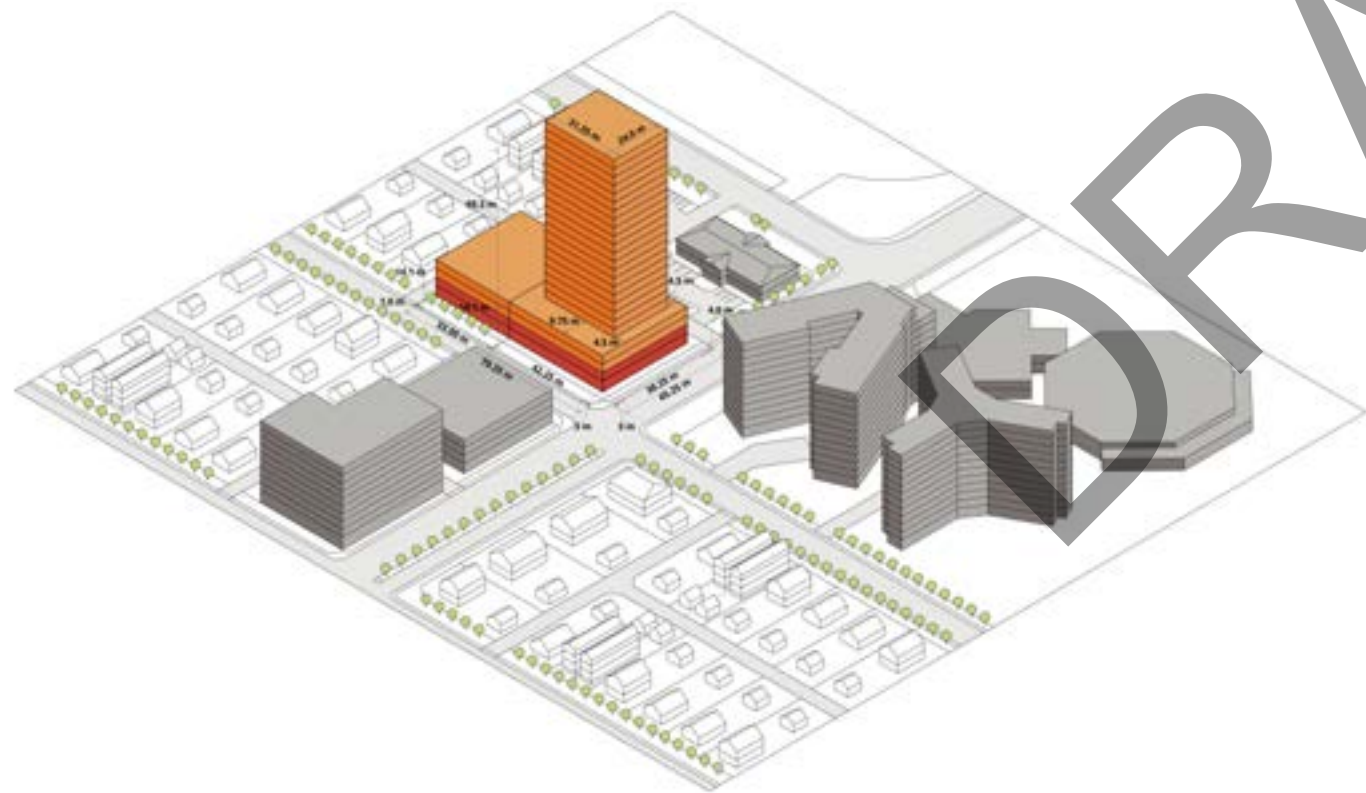


Figure 14: Concept Massing Model – 26 Storeys (4 Storey Podium)

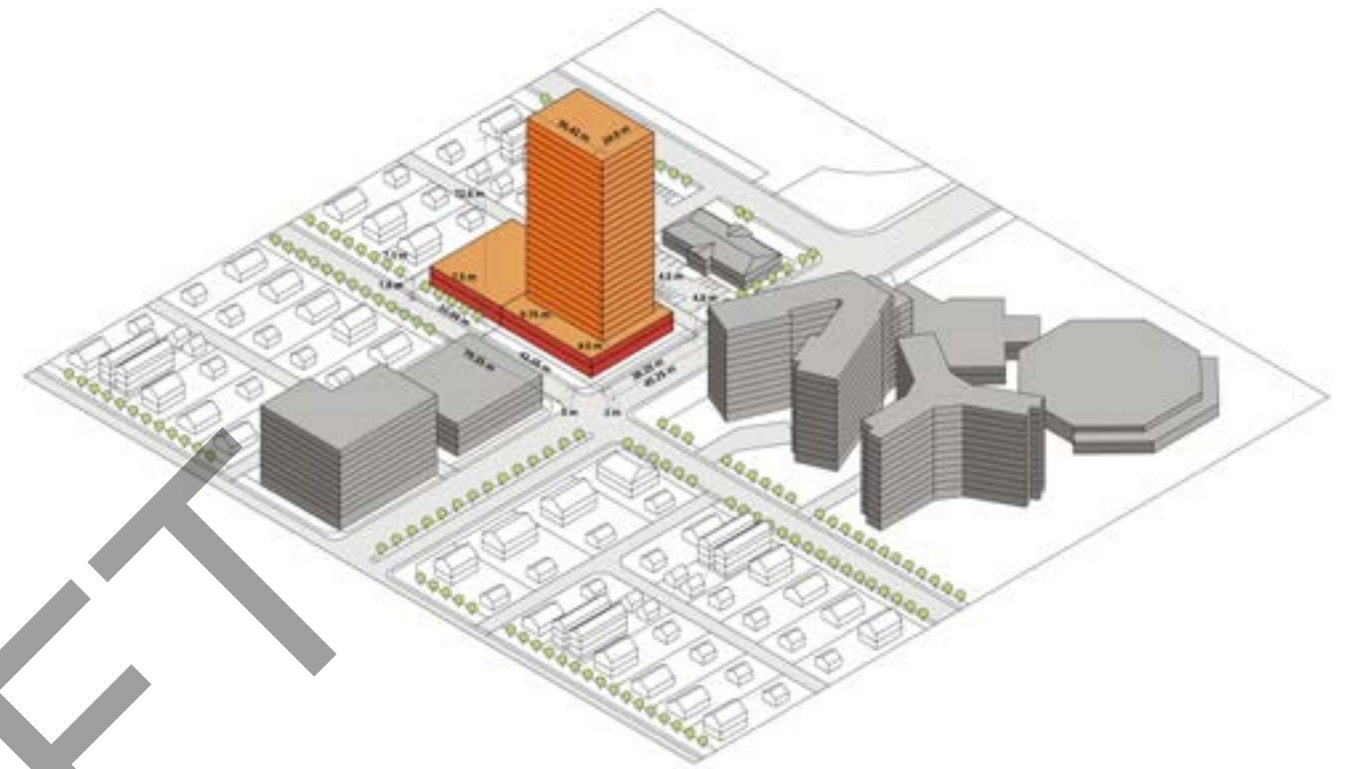


Figure 15: Concept Massing Model – 24 Storey Building (2 Storey Podium)

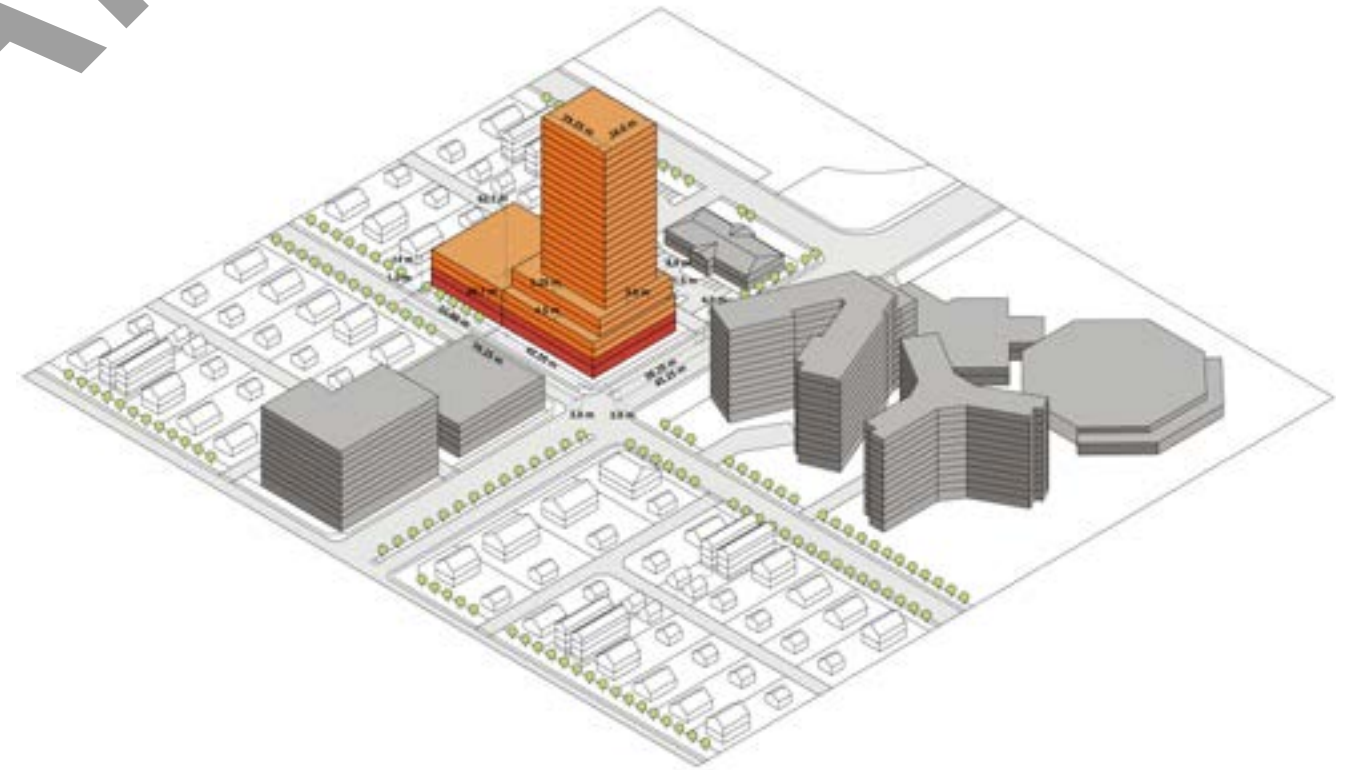


Figure 16: Concept Massing Model – 25 Storey Building (6 Storey Podium)

Tower and Massing

A 25-storey concept model was created after Site 2 was added to the project. The concept incorporates a human-scaled podium reaching 4 Storeys on Site 2, and 6 Storeys on Site 1. A tall high rise building is located on Site 1. Setbacks and stepbacks on 87 Avenue and 117 Street sensitively transition the podium away from the public realm while offering ground oriented commercial opportunities and rooftop amenities for residents. The proposed tower is stepped back from the streets and articulated with a small floor plate to maximize light to pass by the building.

Site and Development

The podium is central to the design process; commercial uses will be retained on this site, while a more attractive and appealing public realm and improvements are proposed to transform the site into a destination. The building will be designed with quality and durable materials to enhance the urban landscape and establish retail shops for both residents and visitors. The site is situated at the end of a block with a healthy treed canopy. Landscaping contributions will enhance the existing greenery and create a new and exciting place for people to gather and socialize.

Detailed plans outlining the proposed design are missing at this stage in the process. An updated concept will be prepared in the future as the project progresses.

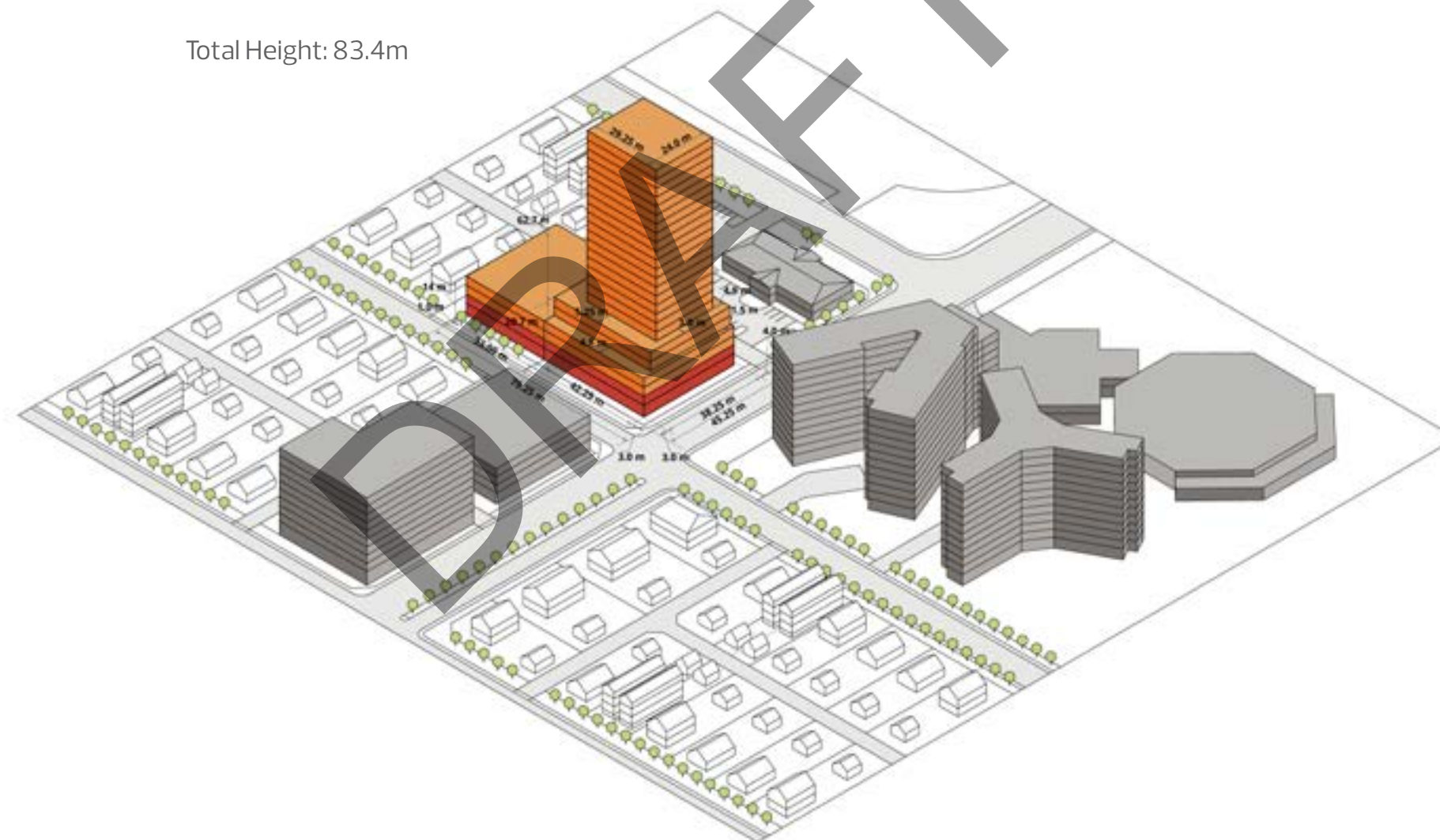


Figure 17: Concept Massing Model – 25 Storey Building (6 Storey Podium)

Rezoning Application

The proposed scale and massing carefully responds to the surrounding built form context. Windsor Park is currently experiencing intensification along 87 Avenue, as seen with the Bentley and the Windsor Terrace residential developments. Recent development continues to increase in height, with Windsor Terrace reaching up to 11 storeys. Further south, the Lister Hall Residences on the University of Alberta Campus reach up to 12 storeys. The intention for the proposed development is to provide a tall high rise development within the Node and Corridor Boundary to scale up from the existing built form, while also providing low rise development adjacent to the node. An updated concept will be prepared in the future as the project progresses.

Conclusion

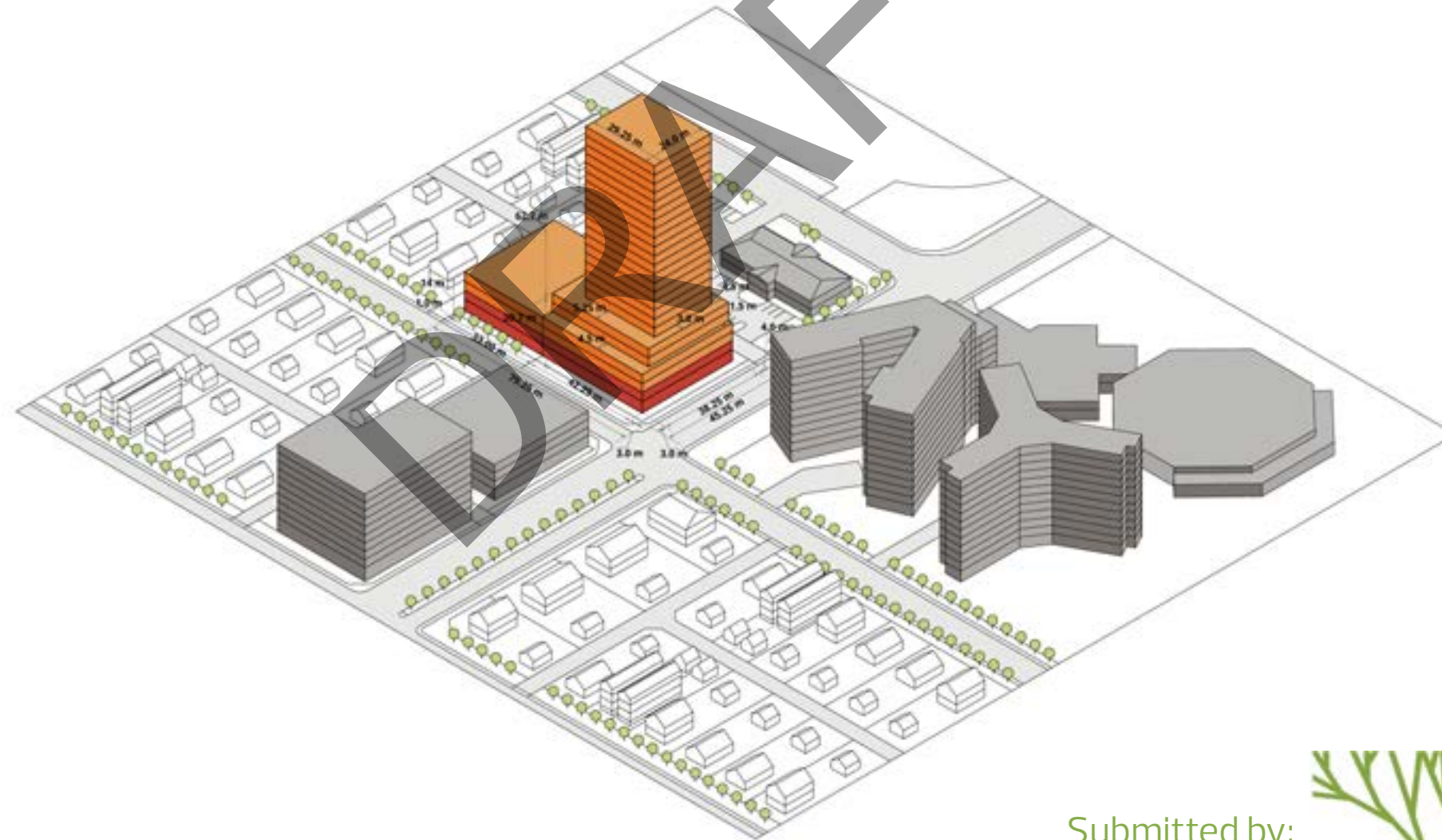
Thank you for the opportunity to share our preliminary submission to the Edmonton City Administration. Rezoning the property at 11630 – 87 Avenue NW to the MU Zone, and the properties at 8715 & 8719 – 117 Street NW to the MUN Zone is an opportunity to redevelop this site to improve housing stock and diversity within a mixed use, multi-unit development.

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