91 Front Street, Hamilton, Proposed Demolition and New Building
Design Statement & Grounds in Support

Introduction
This Design Statement and Grounds in Support document is submitted in support of a planning application to demolish existing buildings and construct a new retail and office building. The through-block site is bounded by Front Street to the south, Chancery Lane to the west and Reid Street to the north. There are three separate but interconnected buildings on site. Their addresses are 91 Front Street, 1 Chancery Lane and 54 Reid Street. The planning application is to demolish these buildings and construct a new retail and office building.

The building will be partially occupied by the owners who have a vested interest in enhancing the public face of the building and their station in Bermuda. As Class A office space, the materials and detailing will be high quality and service and maintenance procedures will be as appropriate for a prestigious building.

In addition to this Design Statement and Grounds in Support document there is a separate Environmental Impact Statement prepared by Bermuda Environmental Consulting Ltd. The EIS incorporates a Visual Impact Statement and the basis for the Construction Management Plan.

Existing Conditions
The site is within the Front Street Historic Area but there are no listed buildings involved. The historic and retail designations only apply to the building facing Front Street. The roof and floors of the existing building at 91 Front Street have deteriorated and are not fit for renovation. The floor levels do not relate to Reid Street and prohibit logical integration into a through-block development. Tank capacity, fire separations and fire exits are well below code and safety requirements render repurposing of the buildings inappropriate for a Class A office/retail building. As a consequence, comprehensive development for this through-block site is necessary.

Searches to date, including the Bermuda Archives, record the history of ownership of the Front Street property but have not established the precise date for construction of the current building at 91 Front Street. Photos circa 1910 illustrate significant changes that have occurred to the street front of the building since then. Photographic records indicate that the building originally had no verandah, a single-storey verandah was added, the cupola on the southwest corner removed, and later, the current verandah was added. The cast iron rails were added in or around 1969.
The dimensions of the existing buildings have been recorded and as-existing floor plans produced. A photographic survey of the building and exterior details has been conducted.

In consultation with Philippe Rouja and Wendy Tucker, an area of approximately 70 square feet of brick salvaged from the English ship Caesar, have been identified in a stairwell at 91 Front Street. The Caesar was wrecked on the reefs in Bermuda in 1818 whilst on route from England to Baltimore. The intent is to remove these bricks and incorporate them in an area to be visible in Chancery Lane.

**Demolition**

The existing buildings have been inspected for contaminated materials and minor quantities of asbestos-containing material identified. A qualified asbestos removal company has been appointed to remove asbestos containing material by approved methods and in consultation with the Health Department. The three buildings on the development site will be demolished in accordance with a comprehensive method statement and procedures to be submitted with the demolition and building permit application. The EIS establishes principles and criteria for the demolition and construction.

**Design Intent**

The emphasis is on street presence and place making with setbacks for public space and high-quality materials to provide a good experience for the public. This will be achieved by:

1. Giving up some property at the entrance to Chancery Lane and creating a publicly accessible colonnade to the south half of the lane. The building entrance is close to the midpoint of the lane and will enhance the activity and vitality of the lane.
2. Following Pre-consultations with Planning, two micro-retail spaces have been added along Chancery Lane to further enhance the appearance and public use and amenity.
3. Brookfield’s demand for quality materials on Front Street, Reid Street setbacks and along the refurbishment of Chancery Lane.
4. Emphasis on materials and detailing for the ground plane, walls and soffits along the street and lane frontages.
5. Promoting retail use on Front Street with glazing and signage.
6. An increased setback and creating building and tenant entrance on Reid Street.

Front Street has evolved over the centuries, as is evident in the original uses transitioning from warehouse to the more recent uses of retail, restaurants and bars. The buildings, especially their Front Street frontages, have evolved in keeping with the changes of use and expectations of a modern city. The eclectic mix of building and verandah style is the dominate visual character of Front Street. This reality is accepted at 91 Front Street with flexibility for use at street frontages and accommodation for international business above.
**Design Approach**
The prominent feature of Front Street is the eclectic mix of styles, proportions, materials, details and colour. There is no particular theme to adopt other than a general impression of vertical proportions. The proposed design promotes verticality in contrast to the “layer cake” appearance of recent buildings designed in accordance with prescribed setbacks. The Front Street façade is modulated to avoid plain full site-width planes and a mix of two storey elements. Pergola structures, balconies and railings are introduced in a partially random pattern to add interest, emphasize the vertical and reduce the visual scale and massing. These external elements provide opportunities for lighting that will enliven the building and streetscape at night. The building has a defined base and top storey to further reduce the visual scale and massing.

**Place Making**
Emphasis is on place making at Front and Reid Streets. Setbacks larger than required provide covered public areas for pedestrian gatherings and street activity at both ends of Chancery Lane. In consultation with the Corporation of Hamilton, a widened area of Reid Street sidewalk and a cross walk are proposed at the top of Chancery Lane to facilitate safe pedestrian crossing of the road.

**Uses**
The site is within the Historic and Retail District and as such the majority of the above-ground portion of the ground floor is designed for retail use, either as a retail store or some form of food and beverage related use. The main entrance to the building is located off Front Street to allow maximum retail frontage on Front Street and Chancery Lane. The proposal conforms with Hamilton Plan DEV.2.

The north halves of the lower two levels are below Reid Street and are below ground. These uninhabitable spaces are utilized for building service facilities and a small parking garage. Parking for eight cars and racks for 14 pedal bikes are provided. It is acknowledged that the site is within a Restricted Parking Area, Hamilton Plan TPT.5, but it is also noted that to be a viable Class A office building, some onsite parking is required. In particular, the inclusion of ADA parking is considered essential as there is no public parking in the immediate vicinity.

Level 2 on Reid Street has a glazed frontage with a street entrance to promote activity on this street. This floor will be available for retail or business uses.

All floors above Reid Street are designated for business use and it is intended that the building will accommodate the business offices related to the developer. Significantly the building will be partially occupied by the owner.
Front Street Setbacks
In accordance with the Hamilton Plan, PED.5, and compatible with adjacent buildings, the first three floors of the building are set back nine feet with these setback spaces covered as verandahs. Above the third floor (Level 2), the Front Street façade steps back in a staggered pattern that does not conform to the Hamilton Plan. This is to allow viable floor plates, and more importantly, avoids horizontal layering that is out of character with Front Street and older buildings. The varied setbacks, pergola structures and balconies are of a scale and design that is appropriate for Front Street. It is understood that the proposed Hamilton Plan 2025 is sympathetic to this approach.

HSC.8 Further to policies HRD.9 and HRD.11, the Board shall have the discretion to reduce the upper storey setbacks within the Front Street Historic Area, provided that:-
(a) the proposal adds a significant contribution to the architectural character of the Front Street Historic Area;
(b) the proposal is supported by the Advisory Architectural Panel and the Historic Buildings Advisory Committee; and
(c) the grounds in support of the application, as submitted by the applicant, justify the exercise of the Board’s discretion.

We request that the Board exercise their discretion and permit the reduced setbacks on the grounds that the proposal adds a significant contribution to the architectural character of the Front Street Historic Area.

Reid Street Setbacks
The lower two floors at Reid Street are set back nine feet rather than the six feet in the Hamilton Plan. This is a gesture to make the sidewalk at the top of Chancery Lane a gathering space and to give a generous entrance to the building. The floors above this two-story setback are not set back as consistent with the current buildings on site and the substantial building to the west that is built to the lot line. These upper floors create covered space at street level. The uppermost floor is set back nine feet.

Chancery Lane Setbacks
The Hamilton Plan does not require any setback from the lane, but the design includes a setback of twelve feet starting from Front Street and reducing to nine feet further along the lane. While this enhances the entrance to the building it also physically and visually opens the lane to the public. The subject site is only 50 feet wide and therefore it is not feasible to incorporate an internal link between Front and Reid Streets as prescribed in Hamilton Plan PED.3. Furthermore, this would detract from the vitality of Chancery Lane and the gestures to the colonnade along the lane and subsequent post construction upgrades are preferable to an internal corridor. Chancery Lane will be rebuilt in concert with the Corporation of Hamilton.
Height
The Hamilton Plan, DSN.4, sets a three-storey limit on Front Street with a maximum of five, except as a through block lot, limitations on Reid Street apply. Permitted height on Reid Street is four stories with a fifth if set back. Given the height difference between streets is two stories, this translates to seven floors above Front Street. With a maximum floor to floor height of 14 feet, the permitted height above Front Street is 98 feet and, allowing for minimal proof parapet, this translates to datum + 116 feet. The proposed building is nine stories plus mechanical penthouse, with the main roof parapet level at datum +136 feet. This is below the Cathedral ridge datum of +138 but does not conform to the current Hamilton Plan, DSN.4. However, we understand that the Hamilton Plan 2025 will be less prescriptive on matters such as height and it is our contention that sensitive design of the public realm and building are more significant than building height.

DSN.5 (2) In exceptional cases, such as proposals for a rooftop feature or structure, the Board may approve a development which exceeds the maximum overall height limit set out in policy DSN.5(1)(b) provided the Board is satisfied that the development:
(a) does not negatively impact the aspect or prospect of the Anglican Cathedral;
(b) creates an attractive addition to the city skyline;
(c) the proposal has been reviewed by the Advisory Architectural Panel and the Corporation of Hamilton; and
(d) the grounds in support of the application, as submitted by the applicant, justify the exercise of the Board’s discretion.

Chancery Lane
The Corporation of Hamilton have been consulted and have indicated their interest in participating in the design and upgrading of the lane. The current paving is in need of restoration and after construction of the new building repaving is anticipated. The Corporation will take this opportunity to upgrade and services under and around the lane. The design drawings submitted with the planning application indicate concepts for the lane including paving, lighting, and art features. The intent is to maintain the special character of the lane, especially for the north half. Where possible the steps will be reconfigured for easier us and to provide more landing space at Reid Street. The Corporation indicate they agree with the design proposed for widening the sidewalk and adding a crosswalk at Reid Street. Decorative lighting is attached to the new building and additional “fun lighting” is to be suspended above the lane. The lane is owned by the Corporation of Hamilton and there will be ongoing design development with them. The representations included in this application are conceptual and subject to resolution with the Corporation of Hamilton.

Water Collection & Storage
Potable water will be collected from clean roof surfaces and discharged into potable water tanks. Rainwater pipes and tank capacity have been calculated by mechanical engineers
using established climatic data and predicted use for kitchen sinks, handbasins and showers. Greywater will be collected from roof terraces and discharged into separate greywater tanks. Greywater drainpipes and tank capacity have been calculated by mechanical engineers using established climatic data and predicted use for flushing, irrigation, and exterior building maintenance. In addition, there is a dedicated tank for the fire suppression sprinkler system with capacity determined in accordance relevant codes and standards. Any surplus potable water will discharge into the greywater tanks. Any surplus greywater will discharge into a disposal borehole located within the site. There will be connection to Bermuda Waterworks for supplementary water supply.

**Servicing**
The Corporation of Hamilton has been consulted regarding connection to the city sewer and for trash collection. A recycling center is located in the car park area and Corporation standard trash and recycling bins will be wheeled out to Reid Street at the prescribed collection times. This will minimize impact on Front Street and Chancery Lane.

Belco and the data/com service providers have been consulted and provision made within the building for their equipment and service connections.

**Design Statement**
In accordance with the Bermuda Plan 2018 paragraph DSN.3

(2) This Design Statement, in conjunction with the application drawings and documents, explains and illustrates the design principles and design concept for the proposal.

(a) The building is scheduled for completion in late 2025 and by this time the Hamilton Plan 2025 will be in place. The proposed building anticipates the concept of relaxation of height and setback with design emphasis on the ground plane and place making.

(b) Emphasis on the ground plane (see (c) below) and a focus on the character of Chancery Lane are the prime features for enhancement of the area. In addition to working with the Corporation of Hamilton, it is intended to consult with appropriate art organizations to enhance the lane with interesting art and lighting. The building design incorporates quality and durable materials.

(c) The design adopts the Place Making strategy promoted by Planning. Key features are the colonnade along the south half of Chancery Lane and an increased setback with widened sidewalk at Reid Street.

(d) The building adheres to or exceeds the ground level setback and provides cover for these setbacks. The building entrance is deliberately placed part way up Chancery Lane to add life and vitality to the lane. Entrances to the main lobby, the retail space at Front Street and the Reid Street entrance are all ADA compliant.
(e) The building’s scale, massing, fenestration, detailing and materials are indicated in the application drawings and documents. A LEED/sustainability consultant has been engaged and is working with the design team to ensure that materials and mechanical and electrical systems are energy efficient. The intent is to achieve LEED Gold Certification and the developer is actively pursuing the possibility of LEED Platinum certification.

(f) Landscaping is predominant repaving the sidewalks at Front and Reid Streets. Similarly, Chancery Lane will be re-paved, and the steps modified slightly for greater comfort and safety. Soft landscaping comprises of street trees at Reid Street that are being agreed with the Corporation of Hamilton and David Cox Landscape Architect. Existing trees on Reid Street will be protected or temporarily removed during construction and at least one additional street tree will be planted. Tree pits will be large and appropriately filled and grated to encourage healthy growth. Additionally some soft landscaping is proposed along Chancery Lane.

**Grounds in Support**

In accordance with the Bermuda Plan 2018 paragraph GEN.26 these Grounds in Support are submitted in writing at the time the application is submitted. Detailed relevant information to describe the project is provided with the application and related documents. The Board is requested to exercise its discretion for the following areas where the application does not conform to the Hamilton Plan 2015.

1. Parking for eight cars and four bikes within an enclosed parking garage in an area of Restricted parking as delineated in the Hamilton Plan 2015.
2. Exceeding the permitted number of floors and building height prescribed in the Hamilton Plan 2015.
3. With setbacks from Front and Reid Streets that are less than prescribed in the Hamilton Plan 2015.