

Planning Brief

World Exchange Plaza

1.0 Introduction

Fotenn Consultants Inc. (“Fotenn”) has been retained by QuadReal Property Group (“QuadReal”) to prepare a Planning Brief in support of a Site Plan Revision application for the lands municipally known as 111 Albert Street in the City of Ottawa’s downtown area.

2.0 Site Context

The subject property, 111 Albert Street is commonly referred to as “The World Exchange Plaza”. It has frontage on Queen Street to the north, Metcalfe Street to the east, and Albert Street to the south. Access to the underground parking garage is via a ramp located directly east of the site, parallel to Metcalfe Street (Figure 1).



Figure 1 - World Exchange Plaza (subject site), view northwest

The World Exchange Plaza itself is an office and retail complex that covers the entire city block between Metcalfe Street and O'Connor Street, Queen Street, Albert Street. The two towers hold offices for a variety of companies with a shopping mall located at the ground floor. The plaza operates as a privately owned public space (“POPS”). The intent is that the plaza presents itself as accessible to the public, however management and maintenance of the space is undertaken by the owner rather than the City (Figure 2).

The property is located within the Central Business District (“CBD”) of Ottawa and is within a block of the Parliament Light Rail Transit Station. The plaza is unique in being one of the largest urban open spaces within the CBD, which is otherwise generally characterized by high-rise office buildings built to the street edge.

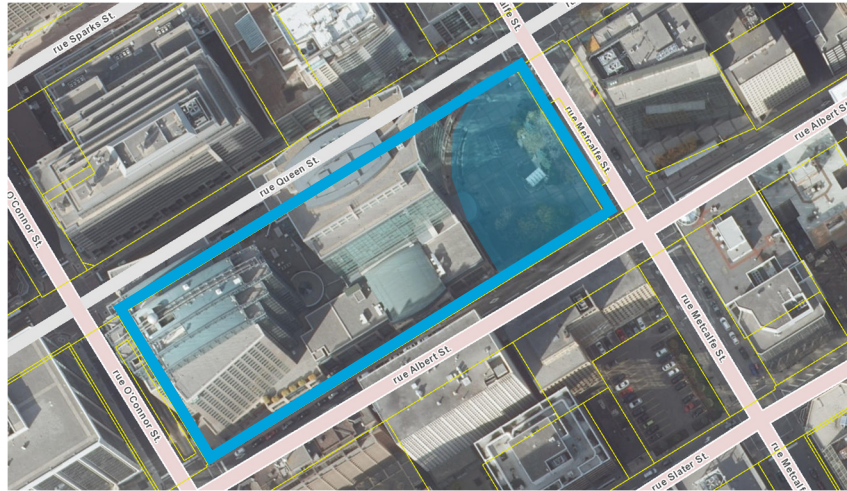


Figure 2 - Outline of World Exchange Plaza, POPs shaded

3.0 Proposed Development

The applicant is proposing a re-imagined Privately-Owned-Public-Space (“POPS”), which occupies the eastern edge of the property. Works are also proposed on the Queen Street frontage to improve the prominence of entrance as it relates to the public ROW. A new “pop-up” building is also being considered for the space beneath the elevated walkway. It is proposed to add 45 m² of Gross Floor Area (“GFA”) to the site. There is also consideration for a commercial patio (Figure 3).

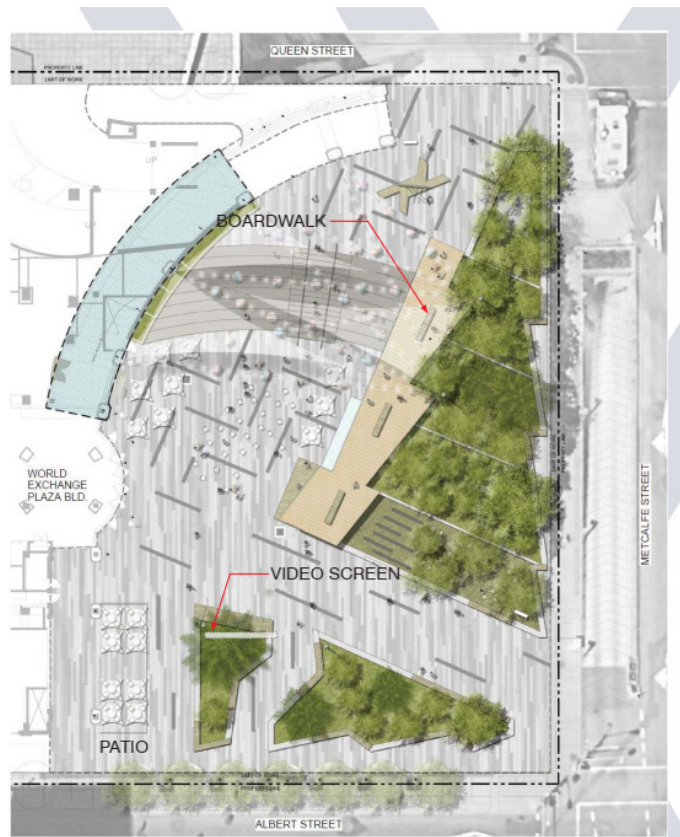


Figure 3 - Proposed Plaza Site Plan

What follows, below is a brief, high level overview of the different elements of the proposal. Further imagery and descriptions can be found in the accompanying Design Brief prepared by Chmiel Architects, with the support of other members of the project team.

3.1 Plaza

Most of the change will occur at the east end of the site, within the existing plaza. The proposal includes the following in the redesign of this Public, Private, Open Space (POPS):

- / Introduction of a large video screen, to encourage public viewings of news, events, and sports.
- / Construction of an elevated boardwalk, providing an additional pedestrian amenity and views to the video screen.
- / Replacement of the existing Canadian Shield inspired rock formation and landscaping with something more “wild-like” in experience.



Figure 4 - View of the Reimagined POPS

3.2 Pop-up Building

A pop-up building is being proposed underneath the new elevated walkway. It will take advantage of the sub-structure space created to construct the walkway. Users of the pop-up have not yet been confirmed; however, it is envisioned that it would function similar to that a food-truck or what is found in farmer's markets. It will be designed with flexibility to allow for long-term or short-term tenants. A portion of the area will also be reserved for a covered event stage area (Figure 5).



Figure 5- View of New Pop-Up Retail Space

3.3 Outdoor Patio and Restaurant Space

Another key aspect of re-creating this versatile plaza is the incorporation of a 150 m² outdoor patio and restaurant space. It is imaged for the southwest corner of the POPS, fronting onto Albert Street (Figure 6).



Figure 6 - Commercial Patio Concept

3.4 Queen Street Entrances

This proposal also includes changes to the Queen Street entrance, necessitated by the introduction of the LRT. The proximity of this entrance to Parliament Station has resulted in its repurposing to a primary entrance. The Queen Street entrance will have elevator access, a generous revolving door and an overhead canopy, which warrant exterior changes that are incorporated in this Site Plan Revision application (Figure 7).



Figure 7 - Reimagined Queen Street Entrance

4.0 Policy Framework

4.1 City of Ottawa Official Plan (2013, as amended)

The Official Plan outlines how Ottawa will grow and provides the policy framework to achieve this city-wide.

Among other elements, the Official Plan outlines various design objectives which impact the design of open space. The re-imagining of The World Exchange Plaza is affected by these policies, which are highlighted below:

Section 2.5.1 – Designing Ottawa

The intent of Section 2.5.1 of the Official Plan is to encourage good urban design which stimulates the creation of lively community places with distinctive character that will attract people and investment to the City.

The Design Objectives listed in the Official Plan provide direction to influence the built environment as the city matures and evolves. Design Objectives are broadly applicable, to plans and development in all land use designations, and from a city-wide to a site-specific basis. The Design Objectives applicable to this project include:

1. To enhance the sense of community by creating and maintaining places with their own distinct identity.
2. To define quality public and private spaces through development.
3. To create places that are safe, accessible and are easy to get to, and move through.
5. To consider adaptability and diversity by creating places that can adapt and evolve easily over time and that are characterized by variety and choice.

The changes proposed through this Site Plan application will evolve an identifiable, open space which will create a safe and accessible place, that is inviting to the public.

Section 3.6.6 – Central Area

The subject site is designated “Central Core” on Schedule B in the current Official Plan. This area is the economic and cultural heart of the city and the symbolic heart of the nation, based on its unique combination of employment, government, retail, housing, entertainment, and cultural activities. It is also the main tourist destination in the National Capital Region. Policies affecting development in this area promote its vital role in the city.

This proposal follows the policies of the Central Core, creating a space that reflects a human scale of development, and is guided by design criteria, which will result in a significantly enhanced pedestrian environment.

Section 4.11 – Urban Design and Compatibility

The subject property is within a design priority area. In design priority areas, all projects within and adjacent to the public realm are reviewed for their contribution to an enhanced pedestrian environment and their response to the distinct character and unique opportunities of the area.

Design Priority Areas are subject to Section 4.11 of the Official Plan, which provides direction regarding urban design standards. The policies applicable to this proposal are discussed below:

Policy 22

For the portion of building that is adjacent to the public realm the design should:

- / Use architectural treatments (e.g. projections from continuous building lines, awnings, canopies, alcoves and bays) to soften the interface between buildings and the public realm;
- / Have sufficient lighting sources for public uses after dark and to accentuate and animate buildings, natural features, public monuments and public spaces;

- / Use Signage that contributes to the character of the surrounding area and architectural design of the building through appropriate architectural design elements, materials, and colour.

The proposal addresses the adjacent public realm by introducing elements that soften the interface of the building. The improvements to lighting, signage and landscaping will contribute to creating a welcoming space.

Policy 23

The portion of a development which impacts the public realm should incorporate enhanced public realm improvements, such as:

- / weather protection elements, (e.g. colonnades, and awnings);
- / shade trees, median planting and treatments and other landscaping;
- / wider sidewalks and enhanced pedestrian surfaces;
- / coordinated furnishings and utilities, transit stops, and decorative lighting; and
- / memorials and public art commissioned for the location.

Once completed the elements proposed within the Plaza will elaborate upon and improve the public realm experience.

4.2 Central Area Secondary Plan

The site is subject to the Central Area Secondary Plan. This document provides guidance on how the Central Area should be developed. The World Exchange Plaza is designated within the “Core” Character Area of this plan, which has similar goals to that of the “Central Area” of the over-arching Official Plan. Highlighted below are additional policies related to the subject project.

Section 1.3.1 – Vision, Enhanced Pedestrian Environment

A key component to the Vision for the Central Area is that pedestrians can enjoy a safe, secure, comfortable, enriched, and enhanced street environment. Retail and other vibrant uses will provide direct access to the street along main pedestrian corridors.

Section 1.3.3(i) – Open Space

This policy indicates that “City Council shall promote and ensure the provision of a variety of usable open spaces and pedestrian amenity areas particularly on corners, in the Core, such as, green pocket parks, plazas, rooftop terraces and/or indoor winter gardens.”

As an urban plaza, this proposal works towards achieving the policy direction of the Core Character Area of the Central Area Secondary Plan.

4.3 Transit-Oriented Development Guidelines

The Transit-Oriented Development Guidelines aims to leverage the City of Ottawa’s investment in a new public transit system by providing guidance on accessing, promoting, and achieving Transit-Oriented Development. The World Exchange property is within 600 metres walking distance of two rapid transit stations (Lyon and Parliament), so TOD guidelines are applicable. The following policies are achieved through the proposal:

Built Form - Place-making’ is an important element in transit-oriented development.

Pedestrians & Cyclists - Making the experience of walking or cycling both convenient and positive in a way that will enhance the overall experience of getting to and from the transit stop or station.

Streetscape & Environment - The quality and design of the spaces along public sidewalks and internal pedestrian walkways, particularly those that lead to and from transit stops or stations, is an important element in the overall transit experience.

Guideline 14: Provide architectural variety (windows, variety of building materials, projections) on the lower storeys of buildings to provide visual interest to pedestrians.

Guideline 28: Design ground floors to be appealing to pedestrians, with such uses as retail, personal service, restaurants, outdoor cafes, and residences.

Guideline 48: Provide quality benches, tree guards, street lighting, bicycle racks, and garbage receptacles.

Guideline 50: Incorporate special street lighting in significant areas to help define a pedestrian realm and to promote walking to and from transit.

Guideline 52: Plant shade trees and shrubs and use permeable surfaces and light-coloured hard surfaces where possible to help reduce urban heat and to create a more comfortable microclimate.

Guideline 56: Incorporate signage that respects building scale, architectural features and the established design objectives of the streetscape.

The proposed development is in line with the intent of the Transit-Oriented Development Guidelines, promoting use of Ottawa's transit system.

4.4 Downtown Moves: Transforming Ottawa's Streets

Creating a Central Business District (CBD) that is more vibrant, inclusive, safe, and accessible for all is the goal behind the Downtown Moves document. By redistributing and improving the streetscape environment, walking, cycling and transit use will become more comfortable and convenient. The following policies are met by the proposed project

Section 3.2 Pedestrian

Improving the quality of the pedestrian experience is important to establish a character and identity for downtown Ottawa, and a step toward developing downtown as a more vibrant and diverse destination and neighbourhood.

Pedestrian Connections Between & Through Buildings (P6)

Mid-block outdoor and indoor pedestrian connections create a finer-grained, more permeable pedestrian network, improving the efficiency of walking trips.

The Downtown Moves document highlights approaches to enhance existing connections and improve the pedestrian environment. *The proposed changes to the plaza at the World Exchange building will help achieve through the following policy approaches:*

- / Make mid-block outdoor and indoor pedestrian connections well lit and signed to increase usage, safety, and comfort. (P6.1)
- / Explore the possibility of retail, restaurant, cafe, and other active uses along outdoor and indoor pedestrian connections. (P6.2)
- / Retrofit existing private and public open spaces that are underutilized. (P8.3)
- / Introduce pocket parks and explore the possibility of temporary/seasonal open spaces to provide welcome relief and respite in downtown Ottawa. Quality open space will become increasingly important as downtown Ottawa intensifies. (P8.4)

- / Include elements in open spaces to activate the street edge, e.g., outdoor cafes, pop-up patios, fountains, and public art. (P8.13)

4.5 A Renewed Action Plan – For Arts, Heritage and Culture in Ottawa (2013-2018)

A Renewed Action Plan – For Arts, Heritage and Culture in Ottawa was a document created to build pride in Ottawa as a vibrant, cultural city. It sets out a path aimed at leveraging opportunity and strengths to create a city that reflects its unique and authentic identity.

This plan offers recommendations that preserve and develop cultural and creative places and spaces. The proposed project help achieve the recommendations below.

Recommendation 6 - Encourage the Inclusion of Cultural Space in Private Development

Recommendation 8 - Nurture Quality Architecture, Urban Design and Public Art

4.6 Downtown Ottawa Urban Design Strategy 20/20 (DOUDS) – Business Precinct

Establishes a broad urban design framework for the downtown of Ottawa is the purpose of the DOUDS. The goal is to create an attractive and lively downtown, for all residents, workers, and visitors.

One of the key Strategic Directions for this area is to create more hospitable and pedestrian-friendly street level environments for residents, workers and visitors to the Business Precinct. The subject site is within the Business Precinct.

The DOUDS identifies the Business Precinct as suffering from a lack of open space and the City intends to work with developers on private site design to create open spaces that are high quality, attractive and durable. It is further noted that Queen Street has the potential to be one of the healthiest streets within the Business Precinct.

The Strategy states that the World Exchange Plaza is a unique site in the urban core. There are limited comparative spaces in the surrounding area. Its location within the CBD, near transit, walking distance to Parliament and City Hall affords it the opportunity to help the City realize the goal of creating a downtown with improved open spaces that encourage pedestrian connections while interacting with adjacent built form.

4.7 Ottawa Comprehensive Zoning By-law

The City of Ottawa's Comprehensive Zoning By-law 2008-250 indicates that the subject property is zoned Mixed-Use Downtown – Schedule 35, MD S35 (Figure 8).

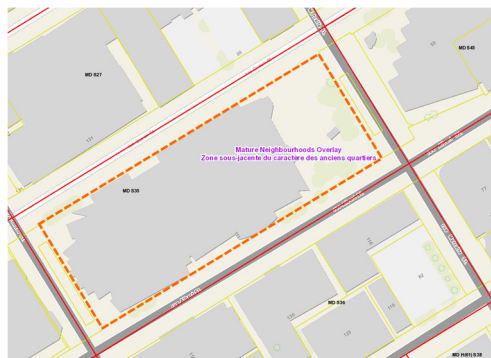


Figure 8 - Zoning Schedule

The purpose of the Mixed-Use Downtown zone is to:

1. Support the Central Area as the central place in the region for employment and shopping while also allowing residential, cultural and entertainment uses;
2. Ensure that the Character Areas in the Central Area continue to serve as primary business or shopping areas and maintain their distinct character;
3. Facilitate more intense, compatible and complementary development to ensure that the active, pedestrian-oriented environment at street level is sustained; and
4. Impose development standards that will protect the visual integrity and symbolic primacy of the Parliament Buildings and be in keeping with the existing scale, character and function of the various Character Areas and Business Improvement Areas in the Central Area while having regard to the heritage structures of the Central Area.

The zoning provision relevant to evaluate this proposal for conformance are summarized in the following table.

I - ZONING MECHANISMS	II - PROVISIONS	III - COMPLIANCE	
(c) Minimum front yard and corner side yard	No minimum	Renovated Queen Street Entrance is no closer than the existing building	complies
		Pop-Up setbacks are; / 13.3 m from Queen / 5.8 m from Metcafe / 19.3 m from Albert (Figure 9)	complies
(f) Maximum building height	(as per Schedule 35)	Pop-Up Height is 3.5 m	complies
(h) Minimum width of landscaped area	No minimum, except that where a yard is provided and not used for required driveways, aisles, parking, loading spaces or outdoor commercial patio, the whole yard must be landscaped	Complies	

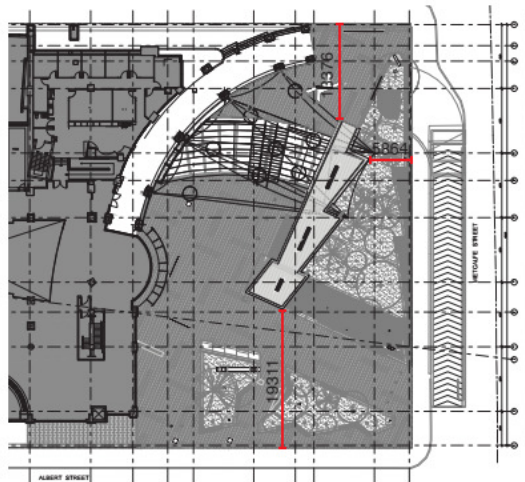


Figure 9 - Pop-Up Setbacks

The proposed development conforms to the existing Mixed-Use Downtown zoning. Further it meets the purpose of the zone by providing a use which improves the pedestrian-oriented nature of the Central Area, it adds to the vibrancy of the area offering "new" uses to the space. The enhanced plaza, including an area for a commercial patio and pop-up as sized are permitted as proposed. It is understood that future uses for the proposed pop-up, retail space will be within the parameters of the MD zoning.

5.0 Conclusion

It is the opinion of Fotenn that there is ample planning policy to support the evolution of this plaza as proposed in this Site Plan Revision. It represents a renovation that aligns with the City of Ottawa's policy framework.

- / The proposed project conforms to the Official Plan (2003, as amended), including policies related to the Central Area designation, urban design, and compatibility objectives.
- / The proposed project conforms to the Central Area Secondary Plan, specially regarding policies related to the pedestrian environment and open spaces.
- / The proposed project meets Guidelines related to Transit-Oriented Development and pedestrian mobility in Ottawa's CBD.
- / The proposed project supports the goals of strategies developed to promote Arts, Heritage and Culture and Urban Design in the City's downtown core.
- / The proposed project conforms to the zoning currently applicable to the site.

Further, supporting studies confirm that the proposal is functional and appropriate for this location.

In conclusion, the application by QuadReal Property Group for a Site Plan Revision for the World Exchange Plaza at 111 Albert Street is appropriate, represents good planning, and is in the public interest.



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