



PLANNING RATIONALE

Minor Zoning Bylaw Amendment Application
139 and 143 Balsam Street and 20 Larch Street
TEMPORARY PARKING

June 2022





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1.0 Introduction

GBA Group (GBA) has been retained by Ottawa Preston Holdings Ltd. to prepare a Planning Rationale in support of a Minor Zoning Bylaw Amendment to permit temporary parking for a period of three years at 139 and 143 Balsam Street and 20 Larch Street.

The purpose of this Planning Rationale is to assess the proposed temporary use and ensure it is consistent with Municipal policies and regulations.

The site has an area of 7216m² and is outlined in FIGURE 1.

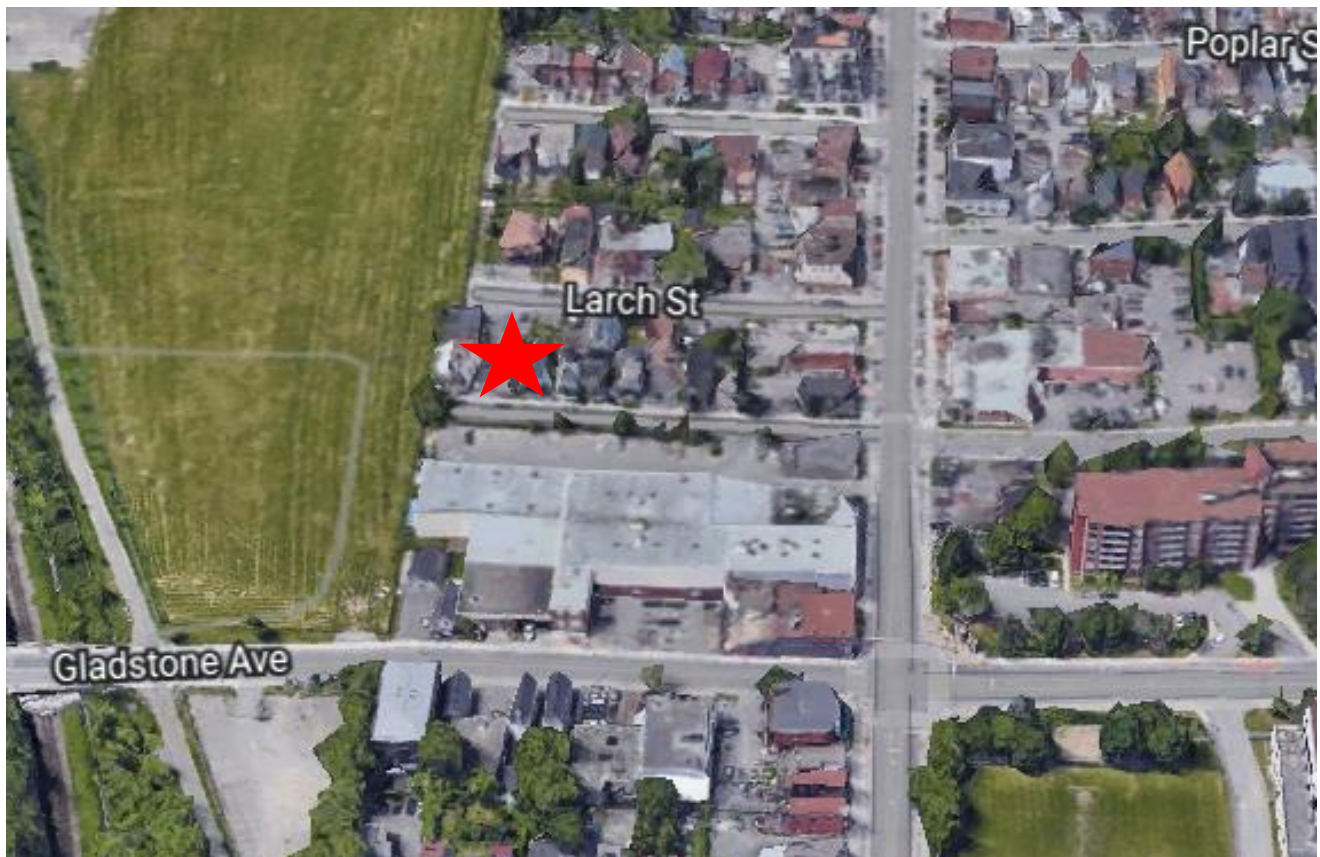


FIGURE 1 – Subject Site

The site is located within an area known as little Italy, a downtown/inner-city mixed-use community characterized by pockets of mixed use and small-scale residential development adjacent to Preston Street which is the heart of the Little Italy community. The site is at the far west end of Larch and Balsam Streets where it terminates in a dead end adjacent to lands to be developed by Ottawa Community Housing (OCH). The site previously accommodated two small residential use buildings and a small industrial building that have been demolished. Lands to the east still accommodate the small-scale residential buildings that characterize this area of little Italy. Lands to the south along the south



side of Balsam Street extending from Preston Street to the vacant OCH lands to the west accommodate Preston Hardware with customer parking located along the north side of the building along Balsam Street. This parking area is screened from Balsam Street with mature landscaping.

2.0 Proposed Development

The intention is to redevelop 139 and 143 Balsam Street, 20 Larch Street, and the lots to the east extending to the rear of the Preston Street properties to construct a six-storey mixed residential and commercial building in the foreseeable future. The ultimate development planned is consistent with directions set out in the Corso Italia Secondary Plan that is included in the 2003 City of Ottawa Official Plan and in the West Downtown Core Secondary Plan that has incorporated the Corso Italia Secondary Plan into the City Council approved new Official Plan.

In the interim, a rezoning application has been filed for a temporary parking lot for a period of three years.

3.0 Background

In 2020, approval was granted for Demolition Control for the buildings on the subject site. As part of the Demolition Control Agreement certain conditions were imposed on the Owner related to:

- Demolition of the buildings
- Replacement of the buildings within five years (September 2025) with the provision of payment in the amount of \$5,960.00 for each house if this did not occur
- Property standards obligations
- No interim uses permitted

An amendment to the Demolition Control Agreement will also be required to address the “no interim uses permitted” condition in addition to the Zoning Bylaw Amendment to permit the proposed temporary parking and a Site Plan.

When demolition approval was granted to the buildings on the site, Preston Hardware had no intention of using the lands for any business-related purposes. They were in the process of consolidating their ownership of the residential lands between Balsam Street and Larch Street and securing vacant possession with the intention of redeveloping the site for a six-storey mixed-use building. These plans were abruptly changed due to COVID-19. Provincial legislation and Preston Hardware’s own decision to stop the process of gaining vacant possession of their residential buildings slowed the redevelopment process, and the economic situation in general curtailed these plans.

However, the determining factor of requesting the temporary parking use was the loss of parking space available to Preston Hardware nearby on the opposite side of Preston Street. This was due to a change of use by a nearby property that negated the shared use of this parking



area. Fundamentally, a nighttime business became a daytime business and Preston Hardware no longer had access to the parking. The loss of vehicle and employee parking close to Preston Hardware has necessitated the use of the subject site for temporary parking. The parking would be for staff only and customer parking would remain on the south side of Balsam Street. There would be no in and out parking during the day. Traffic would arrive and leave at fixed times.

Section 39 of the Planning Act outlines the provisions related to temporary uses allowing City Council to authorize, by bylaw, the use of land, buildings, or structures for any purpose that is otherwise prohibited by the Zoning Bylaw. The timeframe for a temporary use is three years with the possibility of further extensions. The Planning Act provisions allowing for temporary uses is also reflected in policies in both the 2003 and new City Council approved Official Plans.

A formal pre-consultation meeting took place with City Planning Staff and the Dalhousie Community Association on February 9, 2022 regarding the proposed temporary parking. The Community Association expressed concerns over the temporary parking but did agree to provide feedback on the redevelopment of the site.

4.0 Policy and Regulatory Framework

4.1 2003 Official Plan

The subject property is designated Mixed Use Center under the 2003 Official Plan. These areas are located along the City's rapid transit network and are identified as areas where the most significant change will occur to transform these areas into high density and high-profile nodes that will be the centers of activity for the areas where they are located. Policies associated with this designation allow for a full range of residential and office-type employment uses as well as other supporting uses including retail, entertainment and institutional to have them become complete communities within communities.

The implementation section of the 2003 Official Plan, carries forward the provisions of the Planning Act allowing for temporary uses and provides for Council to approve temporary use bylaws for a period of three years where the proposed use is not permitted for a site under the Zoning Bylaw.

4.2 New City Council Approved Official Plan

City Council in November 2021 approved a new Official Plan for the City of Ottawa to replace in its entirety the 2003 Official Plan. This Plan has been forwarded to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval as required by the Planning Act. Comments and ministerial approval are expected later this year.

Under the new Official Plan, the site is located within the "Downtown Core Transect" in an area designated "Hub" with an "Evolving Neighborhood Overlay". The Hub designation applies to areas in proximity to an LRT Station (the Corso Italia Station) where high density high-profile mixed-use



development is to locate. The evolving neighborhood overlay further provides for recognizing the significant change that is anticipated to realize the City's growth and growth management objectives that are focused on having an increasing share of the City's growth being accommodated within the existing urban area. Hubs are key locations for significant change.

The new Official Plan also includes a policy in its Implementation Section (Section 11.6 Policy 9) allowing City Council to enact temporary use by-laws in accordance with the Planning Act subject to considerations on the impact of allowing temporary uses on achieving the broader objectives of the plan.

The proposed temporary rezoning to allow for temporary parking of the site to meet a need resulting from the loss of parking for employees associated with a lot that can no longer be used for this purpose is considered an acceptable and appropriate basis for allowing the temporary zoning. The temporary parking lot is considered an interim use to accommodate a need and does not detract from the site ultimately being developed to advance the objectives of the Official Plan for development of the site and area in general. In fact, it is noted that the new development proposed for the site is to include parking that will include the parking to be provided for employees under the temporary zoning.

4.3 Corso Italia Secondary Plan

Volume 2 of the 2003 Official Plan includes a Secondary Plan for the area around the Corso Italia LRT Station that includes the subject site. This plan known as the Corso Italia Station District Secondary Plan includes the subject lands within an area identified as a mixed-use neighborhood. This area generally extends behind the Preston Street Commercial lands to lands identified as the "Station Area" adjacent to the LRT Line and Station that is proposed to be developed by OCH for mostly high density high-profile affordable housing. For the subject lands and lands to the east located within the same block, development up to six storeys is permitted. The Secondary Plan also provides for future streets to be developed that will include a new street extending north from Gladstone Street to intersect with Balsam Street where it now terminates.

The new City Council approved Official Plan carries forward the directions of the Corso Italia Station District Secondary Plan for the future development of the lands wherein the site is located into the new Official Plan as part of the West Downtown Core Secondary Plan.

The ultimate development proposed for the site for a mixed-use development of six storeys with below grade parking is in accord with the directions of the Corso Italia Station District Secondary Plan and are carried forward into the West Downtown Core Secondary Plan. The proposed temporary use of the site for employee parking while development plans are further evolved and developed will not preclude the ultimate development planned for the site and lands to the east to be achieved. In fact, as was noted, the parking that is to be provided through the temporary rezoning will be included within the proposed development taking what would be a temporary condition of surface parking for employees of Preston Hardware to be accommodated in permanent below grade parking.



5.0 The Zoning Bylaw Amendment

The subject properties are zoned RH-4 – Residential Fourth Density with a Mature Neighborhood Overlay. Parking as a stand-alone use is not permitted. A rezoning is therefore required to allow for surface parking that would be used by employees of Preston Hardware for a period of three years.

As previously noted, this parking would be an interim measure to make use of the land and address the loss of employee parking, while development plans are being pursued for the site and adjacent sites also owned by Preston Hardware for a new medium profile mixed-use development.

The proposed layout of the temporary surface parking lot is as shown in FIGURE 2. The access to the site will be from Balsam Street. There will be no access to or from Larch Street. The existing fence on the west-side of the site will remain and a new screen fence will be constructed along the frontage of Larch Street. The lot will not be paved.

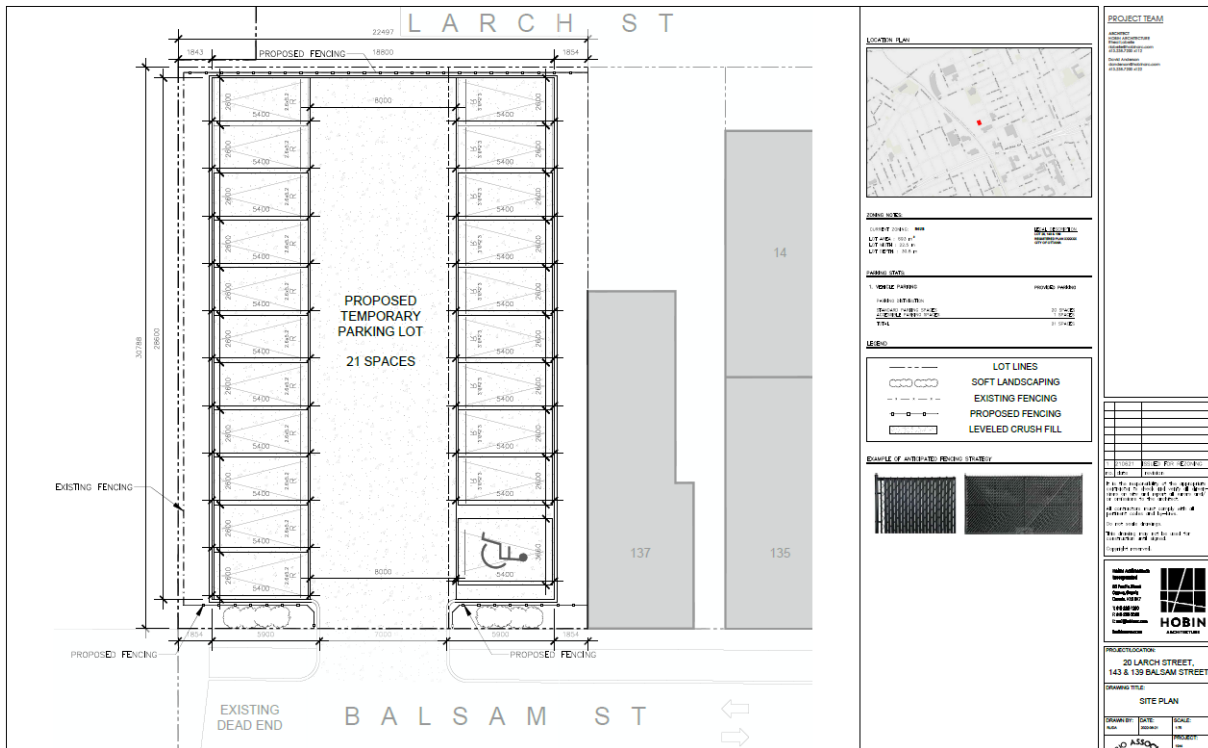


FIGURE 2 – Layout of the Lot

6.0 The Redevelopment Concept

Since 1945, Preston Hardware has been a long-time and well-respected Preston Street business and wishes to remain in the area for the foreseeable future. The redevelopment of the larger site will provide room for expansion and additional parking for customers and staff. In effect, the parking proposed to be permitted on a temporary basis would be included in the redevelopment as below grade parking.

A mixed-use concept has been evolving for the existing residential lands between Balsam and Larch Streets since 2020. As mentioned earlier, COVID-19 related issues have slowed the progress of the project, but a full commitment remains to undertake the construction of a six-storey residential and commercial building.

FIGURE 3 illustrates the site plan for the building containing 76 units on six floors. Townhouse units would be located on the west edge of the building and along Larch Street. Four stories of apartments would rise above the podium. A retail concourse at grade level for Preston Hardware would line the Balsam Street frontage with the entrance to underground parking for Preston Hardware employees, additional parking for customers of Preston Hardware and parking for the new commercial uses to be provided as part of the redevelopment and for residents.

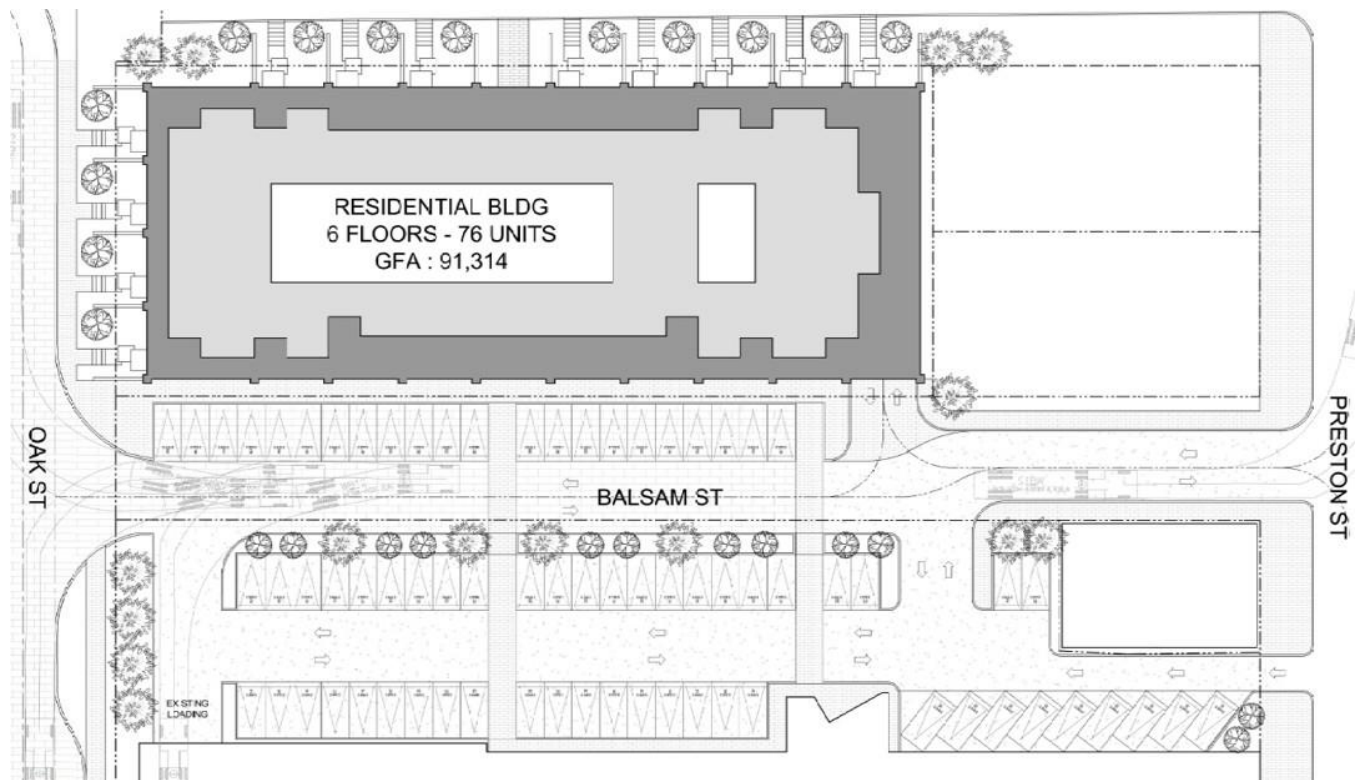


FIGURE 3 – Site Plan

An informal pre-consultation meeting with the Dalhousie Community Association took place on March 24, 2022 on the proposed redevelopment concept. The Community Association provided comments on issues related to policies of the Corso Italia Secondary Plan, provision of trees, sustainable construction to minimize heat sink effects, and the consideration of Net Zero construction.

FIGURE 4 presents a northwest aerial view and FIGURE 5 shows a southeast aerial view.



FIGURE 4 – Looking Northwest from Preston Street



FIGURE 5 – Looking Southeast from Gladstone Village



7.0 Conclusion

Based on GBA's understanding of the Owner's short-term needs and long-term goals, the temporary Zoning Bylaw Amendment represents good planning and is in the public interest.

Preston Hardware, because of circumstances beyond their control, is faced with the need to make interim use of vacant land under their ownership to supply daytime parking for their staff. The commitment to repurpose these and the other adjacent land under their control remains. A mixed-use development is their end goal and one that will be consistent with the Corso Italia Secondary Plan under the 2003 Official Plan and the West Downtown Core Secondary Plan under the new City Council Approved Official Plan. In addition, it supports the City's intensification objectives as expressed in both Plans. Ultimately, Preston Hardware's preference is not to leave the neighborhood.

Located at the extreme edge of the little Italy neighborhood provides for use of the site for temporary surface parking to not have a significant impact on the character of the neighborhood. Use of the parking area by employees will have minimal traffic impact as the traffic generated would be limited to when employees arrive and leave work.

The subject site will be designed to meet City standards for parking lot layouts, it will only have access off Balsam Street and will have fencing along its western boundary and screen fencing along Larch Street. The impact on the neighbouring residential area will be minimal.

Finally, consistent with the authorization of the Planning Act and the current new Official Plan, the requested rezoning is to allow for temporary surface parking use while the development plans for the site are further advanced.

GBA would like to acknowledge the contribution of John Smit, RPP, to this report.

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