

# Planning Rationale Addendum

## 1&19 Sir John. A MacDonald Parkway

May 5, 2021

**Allison Hamlin**  
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Via Email: [allison.hamlin@ottawa.ca](mailto:allison.hamlin@ottawa.ca)

**RE: 1 and 19 Sir John A. MacDonald Parkway – Planning Rationale Addendum**

Dear Ms. Hamlin,

In June 2019, Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment applications for the subject lands located at 1&19 Sir John A. MacDonald Parkway were submitted by Fotenn Consultants Inc., on behalf of the National Capital Commission to the City of Ottawa. The applications included an amendment to the Scott Street Secondary Plan requesting to maintain the Open Space designation on the subject lands, while adding a site-specific exception which would allow the development of embassies (diplomatic missions with associated office use) as well as an amendment to the Zoning By-law requesting to lift the holding zone, and create a new exception exclusively permitting diplomatic missions and office uses within the current O1L zone and R5B zone.

Since submission, the National Capital Commission has received and reviewed technical circulation comments from City of Ottawa Development Review Staff, participated in meetings and further reviewed the applications internally. With that, the National Capital Commission has revised the Concept Plan in response to the concerns raised by the City Staff, the Community Association, and members of the public.

Despite the initial applications, Fotenn and the National Capital Commission would like to revise their requested amendments to the Official Plan and Zoning By-law as follows:

- / Amendment to the City of Ottawa Official Plan (2003, as amended) to re-designate the majority of the subject lands from 'Major Open Space' to 'General Urban Area';
- / Amendment to the Scott Street Secondary Plan (2005) to re-designate the majority of the subject lands from 'Open Space' to a new designation 'Institutional/Embassy'; and
- / Amendment to the City of Ottawa Zoning By-law to re-zone the majority of the subject lands from 'Residential Fifth Density, Subzone B, Maximum Building Height 37 metres' and 'Open Space, Subzone L, Exception 310' to 'Minor Institutional, Subzone A, Exception X' and 'Parks and Open Space, Subzone A'.

It should be highlighted that the revised Concept Plan maintains approximately 1.6 acres of 'Federal Green Space' along the eastern boundary of the site in keeping with the NCC's Ottawa River South Shore Riverfront Park Plan (2019). These lands would remain as Major Open Space in the city's Official Plan, Open Space in the Scott Street Secondary Plan and Open Space in the City's comprehensive Zoning By-law.

The following planning rationale addendum provides a discussion outlining the revised Concept Plan as well as the above-noted requested Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendments and their appropriateness within the greater planning context.

Sincerely,



Ghada Zaki, MCIP RPP  
Planner



Matthew McElligott  
Principal, Planning and Policy

# Planning Rationale Addendum

## 1 and 19 Sir John. A MacDonald Parkway

### 1.1 Revised Concept Plan

Based on comments received from City Staff, the Mechanicsville Community Association, and residents, the revised Concept Plan represents development option for the subject lands, and is comprised of the following features:

- / A reduction in the total number of parcels from six (6) to five (5) for the purposes of future diplomatic missions, based on the scale and layout of other existing diplomatic missions throughout Ottawa.
- / Each future diplomatic mission parcel identifies a 'Buildable Area', which is generally based on the zone provisions of the Minor Institutional, Subzone A (I1A). The proposed zoning responds to feedback from City Staff and community members. Specifically, the proposed zoning requests a minimum front yard setback of 3 metres to allow a street presence that is more in keeping with the surrounding residential context. The proposed zoning also includes requested changes from the standard I1A zone, including a minimum rear yard setback of 15 metres to provide an adequate setback from the Sir John A. MacDonald Parkway, and minimum interior side yard setback that is reduced to 6 metres from 7.5 to ensure a more urban built form.
- / Due to the conceptual nature of the Plan, the 'Buildable Area' does not illustrate building footprints, parking spaces and/or driveways for each parcel. It is strictly intended to outline the boundaries of the development envelope in accordance with the proposed building setbacks.
- / While individual driveways are not illustrated, vehicular access and egress would be provided via the local street network and not from the Sir John A. MacDonald Parkway.
- / An increase in size of the dedicated park space on the eastern portion of the subject lands adjacent to Slidell Street from 3,602 square meters to 6,592 square meters equating to an area that is approximately double in size from the initial submission. This represents 17% of the total area of the subject lands to be retained as open space, which far exceeds the maximum that the City could impose through the Parkland Dedication By-law. It is important to note the current Parkland Dedication By-law exempts this federal land use from any parkland requirements. Moreover, as a Federal authority, the NCC is not subject to this By-law, however, the proposed green space will provide a convivial space for the neighbourhood as well as an enhanced connection to the NCC owned parklands to the north and the existing Laroche Park to the south. The revised park configuration (size and location) reflects what is demonstrated on the Ottawa River South Shore Riverfront Park Plan (ORSSRPP) and is generally consistent with the Scott Street Community Design Plan (CDP).
- / The increased federal green space size also encompasses the City's storm sewer outlet as its western edge, ensuring protection of the asset and ease of access.
- / As noted in Section 4.4.2 of the Scott Street Community Design Plan and the NCC Ottawa River South Shore Riverfront Park Plan, the NCC will retain existing trees, and maintain and enhance the passive greenspace.
- / A 20-metre setback from the Sir John A. MacDonald Parkway featuring a significant landscaped buffer along the northern edge of the subject lands. It is important to note that this space is in addition to the above-noted park space.

- / The initial concept plan was developed and submitted in 2019 in advance of the adoption of the ORSSRPP. This initial concept depicted a pathway along the south side of the Sir John A. MacDonald Parkway. Further study and consultation determined that existing conditions, including topography changes and the presence of rocky outcrops and bedrock, would not permit the development of a path along the south side of the Sir John A. MacDonald Parkway. In 2020, the NCC's Board adopted the ORSSRPP, which placed emphasis on the riverfront pathways and called for the creation of segregated cycling and pedestrian paths between the Parkway and the Ottawa River.
- / Given the infeasibility of the pathway along the south side of the Sir John A. MacDonald Parkway, the mid-block connections lack a function and would prove unsafe dead-ends to the parkway if they were retained. The focus is therefore being placed on the development of segregated cycling and pedestrian paths along the north side of the parkway as well as an improvement of the main intersection (at Slidell Street and Sir John A. MacDonald Parkway) as noted above. Although the mid-block pedestrian connections will be removed, the view corridors will be maintained.
- / It is important to note that the Capital Pathway along the north side of the Parkway is consistent with the ORSSRPP and is anticipated to be delivered in the short term through a separate federal infrastructure project in partnership with Public Services and Procurement Canada.
- / The implementation of the Capital Pathway along the north side of Sir John A. MacDonald Parkway and planned streetscape improvements at the intersection of the Sir. John A. MacDonald Parkway and Slidell Street will strengthen and enhance the connection between the Mechanicsville neighbourhood and the Capital Pathway proposed along the Ottawa River. These improvements include sidewalks, a gateway entrance feature, and a potential pedestrian connection between Forward Avenue and Hinchey Avenue. The design for the improved pedestrian and cyclist connections, along with the improvements to the Slidell-Sir John A. MacDonald Parkway intersection, will be determined at the future detailed design stage.

Overall, the revised Concept Plan presents a more compact urban form that is more compatible with the surrounding residential neighbourhood, provides a larger park space for all users, proposes a significant landscaped buffer along the Sir. John A. MacDonald parkway and strengthens connections to passive recreation and active mode of transportation along the Ottawa River.

It is acknowledged that concerns of public safety have been raised regarding whether diplomatic missions are appropriate to locate in proximity to residential areas. We find no prohibition within Zoning By-law 2008-250, nor any policy within the City's Official Plan, or within the plans of the NCC, to justify this concern. Diplomatic missions have a long-established precedent of being woven into the fabric residential neighbourhoods throughout central Ottawa. Diplomatic missions are permitted by right within many residential zones, including the R5 zones that abut this site to the west and south.

## 1.2 City of Ottawa Official Plan (2003, as amended)

The City of Ottawa Official Plan is composed of eight sections, each addressing a different aspect of the planned function of the City as a whole. Section 2 of the Official Plan provides Strategic Directions for growth and development within the City. The majority of the subject lands are designated Major Open Space with the balance of the lands being designated **General Urban Area** as shown in Schedule B of the City of Ottawa's Official Plan (Figure 1).

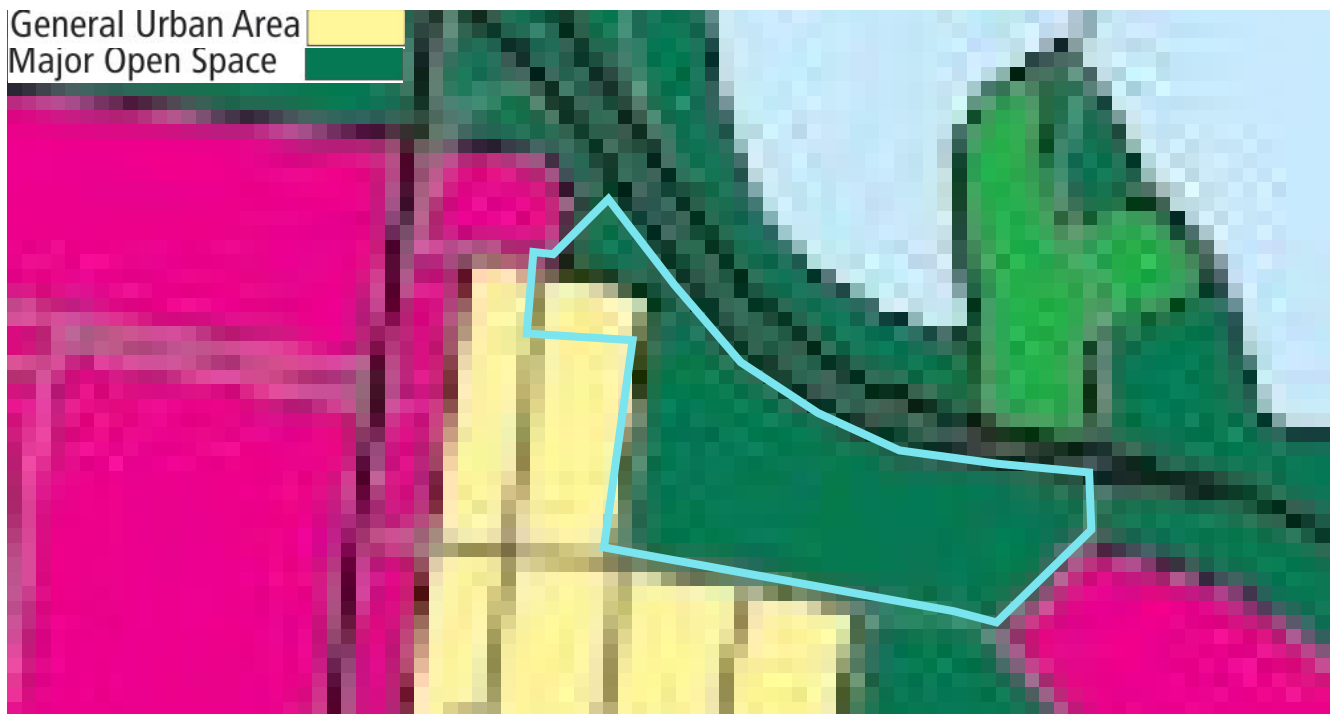


Figure 1: Excerpt from Schedule B: Urban Policy Plan in the City of Ottawa Official Plan.

### 1.2.1 Section 2.2.2 - Managing Growth within the Urban Area

The policy direction of the City's Official Plan is to promote an efficient land-use pattern through intensification of locations that are strategically aligned with the transportation network and in particular the rapid transit network. This section discusses the opportunities that exist for intensification and generally that the City will support such intensification, although such opportunities generally occur at a much smaller scale in the **General Urban Area**.

The scale of intensification in the **General Urban Area** depends on factors such as existing built context and proximity to major roads and transit, although much of the major intensification will happen along Mainstreets, and within Mixed-Use Centres and Town Centres. To achieve compatibility between existing and planned built form, emphasis will be placed on good urban design and architecture.

### 1.2.2 Section 3.3 - Major Open Space

The **Major Open Space** designation includes large regional parks such as Andrew Haydon Park, open space corridors along the Ottawa and Rideau Rivers and the Rideau Canal, parkway corridors and other corridors reserved for rapid-transit and major roadways. This designation represents a key component of the Greenspace Network, which contributes to the quality of life in neighbouring communities as well as to the overall integrity of the natural environment.

The **Major Open Space** designation and policies generally protect the larger open spaces for public use and enjoyment. Provided they do not adversely impact the natural environment, cultural heritage and open characteristics of the area, small-scale commercial activities and institutional uses are permitted in the **Major Open Space** designation provided they contribute to or are ancillary to a use permitted in the **Major Open Space** designation or the Zoning By-law. The policies of the Official Plan encourage the City of Ottawa to work with partners, such as the National Capital Commission, on studies and plans for **Major Open Space** and the Ottawa River corridor.

### 1.2.3 Section 3.6.1 – General Urban Area

The **General Urban Area** designation permits the development of a range and choice of housing types to meet the need of all ages, incomes and life circumstances, in combination with conveniently located employment, retail, service, cultural, leisure, entertainment and institutional uses. The purpose of this designation is to facilitate the development of complete and sustainable communities. A broad scale of uses is found within this designation, from ground-oriented single-purpose buildings to mid-rise buildings with a mix of uses along Mainstreets or Transit Priority Corridors; from a dwelling or corner store to a shopping centre or office.

The proposed policies of the **General Urban Area** seek to support building heights that are compatible with the existing or planned context. The City supports infill development and other intensification within the **General Urban Area** in a manner that enhances and complements the desirable characteristics and ensures the long-term vitality of the many existing communities that make up the city. Heights and uses within this range will be evaluated based on compatibility with the existing context and the planned function of the area.

Throughout the **General Urban Area**, a variety of uses that complement adjacent residential land uses are encouraged where it will complement the existing pattern and scale of development planned function of the area. The City will ensure that these uses take advantage of pedestrian and cycling patterns while facilitating interaction among residents and contributing to a sense of community.

### 1.2.4 Proposed Amendment to the City of Ottawa Official Plan

Lands designated **General Urban Area** can accommodate a range of uses and users, including diplomatic missions and offices; whereas lands designated Major Open Space generally form part of the City's Greenspace Network. Although limited uses including City of Ottawa Fire Stations, the Canadian Geographic Offices, numerous privately-operated restaurant establishments and the Embassy of the United States of America are found within the **Major Open Space** designation, the **General Urban Area** designation accommodates a range of uses and generally permits the proposed diplomatic missions and office uses. The revised Official Plan Amendment requests to re-designate the entirety of the subject lands to **General Urban Area** while the proposed 6,592 square meters of green space would remain **Major Open Space**.

The proposed re-designation of the subject lands to 'General Urban Area' conforms to the policies of City of Ottawa Official Plan by encouraging development which takes advantage of existing infrastructure and is situated in an area that promotes a complete community with a good balance of facilities and services. The amendment to re-designate the lands to **General Urban Area** ensures that the proposed diplomatic mission and office uses are accommodated and permitted within the policy framework of the City's Official Plan.

Building upon desirable established patterns and built form, the subject lands have been identified by the NCC to serve a 'Capital Function' within the established Mechanicsville neighbourhood, due to its location within an urban context surrounded by other low, mid and high-rise residential, institutional, and mixed-use buildings. It is worth noting the proposal is compatible in use with the existing Indonesian Embassy located directly to the west of the subject lands, providing an opportunity to create a diplomatic precinct along a significant federally-owned and operated parkway. Moreover, to ensure compatibility with the surrounding area, the proposal provides a transition in built form from the low, mid and high-density residential use buildings to the south, to NCC owned and operated open space network and Trans Canada Trail located along the Ottawa River to the north.

The existing **Major Open Space** designation will ensure that the lands across from Laroche Park and adjacent the Slidell Street roundabout remain part of the wider green space network. As part of future capital expenditures, the NCC will provide an enhanced connection to the Ottawa River Parkway by establishing a pedestrian sidewalk along the edge of the federal green space as well as making intersection and gateway improvements at the Slidell Street and Sir John A. MacDonald Parkway intersection. The overall goal and objective is twofold: to improve the safety for all users, and; to strengthen pedestrian and cycling connections to the north of the Parkway along the Ottawa River.

## 1.3 Scott Street Secondary Plan (2005)

### 1.3.1 Overview

In 2015, City of Ottawa Council approved the Scott Street Secondary Plan and Community Design Plan to help guide the development of the Scott Street area. The policies of the Secondary Plan are based on the Community Design Plan (CDP) for Scott Street, translating many key aspects of the CDP into statutory policy. The purpose of the Secondary Plan is to direct greater intensification to certain areas while maintaining the low-rise character in other areas. The Neighbourhood Line provides a clear distinction between the low-rise areas of the communities and the other areas within the Secondary Plan that are anticipated to undergo significant change.

The Secondary Plan notes there are strategic sites for redevelopment and several opportunities to improve the neighbourhood for existing and future residents. The Secondary Plan promotes improved mobility and connectivity to the City's sidewalks and multi-use pathway system to expand cycling and walking facilities and connections throughout the wider City. The Secondary Plan further states that the City of Ottawa will work with the NCC to enhance the north/south greenway between the Ottawa River and the planning area.



Figure 2: Snapshot of Schedule A – Land Use (Scott Street Secondary Plan)

The Scott Street Secondary Plan designates the entire NCC parcel (including the lands occupied by the Indonesian Embassy) as **Open Space – Existing** as shown on Schedule A. The Open Space designation identifies areas that are existing open space areas and generally allow the range of uses permitted in the **Major Open Space** designation of the City's Official Plan.

### 1.3.2 Proposed Amendment to the Scott Street Secondary Plan

Permitted uses within the Secondary Plan's Open Space designation are quite broad. Generally, the range of uses permitted are similar to those in the **Major Open Space** designation of the City's Official Plan. The existing designation, as defined in the Secondary Plan, does not explicitly permit the proposed uses (diplomatic mission and office). As such, the revised Secondary Plan Amendment requests the addition of an **Institutional** land use designation to accommodate the proposed land uses. It is requested that this additional **Institutional** land use designation permit the proposed diplomatic mission and office uses and encompass the boundary of the subject lands as per the revised Concept Plan. This would allow the development of diplomatic missions, with associated office use, and ensure that any existing areas outside of the subject lands remain within the **Major Open Space** designation. Building setbacks will be addressed through the requested zoning exception as detailed below.

It is also requested that specific policies be included within the proposed **Institutional** land use. Subject to future development on the subject lands, the following policy direction is being requested to apply to the Institutional designation:

- / Provide for an improved connection to the planned segregated pathways along the northern edge of Sir John A. MacDonald Parkway and the Planning Area;
- / Provide an improved intersection at Slidell Street and the Sir John A. MacDonald parkway for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles;
- / Mark a gateway to the community with a distinctive corner treatment; and
- / Future development of Institutional lands will require NCC Board of Directors Approval through the Federal Land Use, Design and Transaction Approvals process.

Although the Open Space designation already permits the Indonesian Embassy and office use as shown on the Land Use Schedule of the Secondary Plan, Diplomatic Missions and associated office uses are not explicitly listed as permitted uses within the policies of this designation. The addition of an 'Institutional' land use designation on the subject lands is therefore recommended to be the most appropriate for the proposed development. In addition, an Institutional land use designation would require future development proposals to be in keeping with the scale of the existing diplomatic mission use (Indonesian Embassy), maintaining a low-profile and compact built form.

It is important to note that this scale of development is consistent with policies in the Secondary Plan which limits intensification to the north and west of the identified Neighbourhood Line. Furthermore, this designation is also consistent with the National Capital Commission Capital Urban Lands Plan as well as the Ottawa River South Shore Riverfront Park Plan (ORSSRPP). As referenced in the initial Planning Rationale, the ORSSRPP was subject to several public engagement events and designates the subject lands as "Future Diplomatic Mission". Overall, the amendment seeks to introduce a low intensity land use with a publicly accessible open space that respects the character of the existing areas all the while facilitating accessibility to the valuable parkland network along the Ottawa River.

## 1.4 City of Ottawa Comprehensive Zoning By-law (2008-250)

### 1.4.1 Existing Zoning

As illustrated on Figure 3, the subject lands are currently zoned: Residential Fifth Density, Subzone B, Maximum Building Height 37 (R5B H(37)) and Parks and Open Space Zone, Subzone L, Exception 310, with a 'holding' (O1L[310]-h) in the City of Ottawa's Comprehensive Zoning By-law (2008-250). While the majority of the lands are zoned O1L, a square shaped 0.45-hectare parcel of is zoned R5, a zoning that permits high-rise residential uses (approximately 12 storeys). The entire area is covered by the Mature Neighbourhood Overlay.

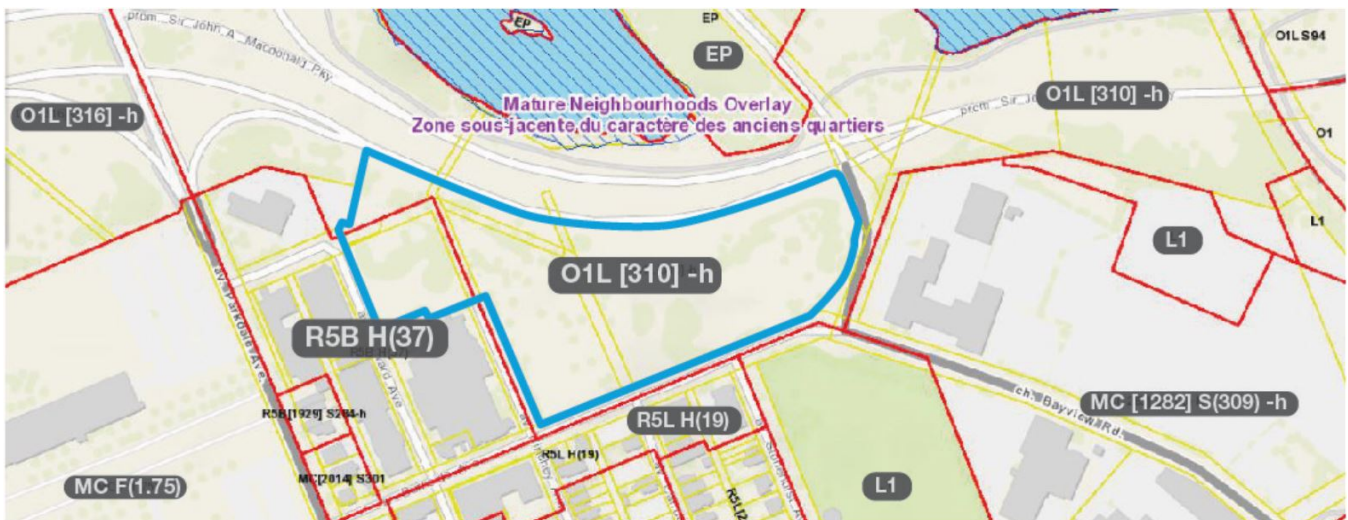


Figure 3: Snapshot from geoOttawa showing the existing zoning

The purpose of the **Parks and Open Space Zone** is to permit parks, open space and related compatible uses in areas designated Major Open Space, among others. The existing zoning is meant to ensure that the range of

permitted uses and applicable regulations are in keeping with the low scale, low intensity open space nature of the lands. Interestingly, Exception [310] allows for additional uses that are not characteristic of the **Major Open Space** or **Open Space** designation in the Official Plan and Secondary Plan. Some high-intensity or non-compatible (to surrounding residential uses) uses are listed. It should be noted a 'dwelling unit' is permitted, however, but 'diplomatic mission' and 'office' are not listed as permitted uses in Exception 310.

The purpose of the R5 zone is to allow a wide mix of residential building forms ranging from detached to high-rise apartment buildings in areas designated **General Urban Area** in the Official Plan. In addition, ancillary uses, limited commercial uses and diplomatic missions are also permitted in the R5 Zone. Office uses, however, are not listed as a permitted use within the R5 zone.

#### 1.4.2 Proposed Zoning By-law Amendment

In the City of Ottawa Zoning By-law, a '**diplomatic mission**' is defined as a 'residential use building of the accredited head or member of the diplomatic mission of a recognized foreign or Commonwealth state having diplomatic or official status in Canada,' and may include: (By-law 2015-190)

- / an **office accessory** to and in conjunction with the diplomatic residence; and
- / a **security hut**. (mission diplomatique).

Although the R5B zone permits diplomatic mission uses, this does not fully represent the proposed use as the intention is to provide a diplomatic mission and an office, with residence accessory to and in conjunction with the diplomatic mission. Consistent with the requested 'Institutional' land use designation, the revised amendment seeks to re-zone the portion of the subject lands with the proposed diplomatic missions to 'Minor Institutional, Subzone 1A, Exception [XXX] (I1A[XXX]) and the portion of the subject lands with the proposed green space to Parks and Open Space, Subzone 1A(O1A).

The purpose of the Minor Institutional zone is to:

- / permit a range of community uses, institutional accommodation and emergency service uses to locate in areas designated as General Urban Area or Central Area in the Official Plan; and
- / minimize the impact of minor institutional uses located in close proximity to residential uses by ensuring that such uses are of a scale and intensity that is compatible with neighbourhood character.

The purpose of the **Parks and Open Space Zone** is to:

- / permit parks, open space and related compatible uses in areas designated Major Open Space, among others; and
- / ensure that the range of permitted uses and applicable regulations are in keeping with the low scale, low intensity open space nature of the lands.

The revised Zoning By-law Amendment seeks to:

- / Propose two distinct zones on the subject lands. The Minor Institutional zone would be strictly applicable to the proposed diplomatic missions and office uses, while the Parks and Open Space zone would be strictly applicable to the proposed park space along the eastern portion of the lands.
- / Create a new exception exclusively permitting **diplomatic missions** and **office** uses. The exception would also address any setbacks and other zoning provisions which may be different from the parent zone.
- / Provide the following zoning provisions:
  - Minimum Lot Area: 400m<sup>2</sup>
  - Minimum Lot Width: 15m
  - Minimum Front Yard Setback: 3m
  - Minimum Rear Yard Setback along Sir John A. MacDonald Parkway: 15m
  - Minimum Interior Side Yard Setback: 6m
  - Minimum Corner Side Yard Setback: 4.5m



The proposed Minor Institutional zone will ensure that the zoning for the subject lands complies to the requested 'General Urban Area' designation within the Official Plan as well as the requested 'Institutional' designation within the Scott Street Secondary Plan. Further, as per the above-noted purpose of the Minor Institutional zone, any institutional uses within the zone are required to demonstrate a scale and intensity that is compatible with neighbourhood character. The amendment is therefore appropriate as it will ensure a more compact urban form, scale and intensity that is compatible with the Mechanicsville neighbourhood character. It is important to note that Subzone A is the most restrictive subzone within the Minor Institutional zone. Although the subzone stipulates the requirement for a minimum interior side yard setback of 7.5m, the proposal requests a 6m interior side yard setback. The requested 1.5 metre side yard reduction further ensures that a compact urban form can be achieved, and that the proposal is compatible with the surrounding neighbourhood.

Lastly, should the municipality approve the Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment applications, each parcel will be subject to a future Site Plan Control Application. Further, each new development and parcel will be subject to a rigorous federal approval process. This will include a Federal Impact Assessment evaluating any environmental assets on the lands and addressing any concerns related to the presence/absence of species at risk and their habitat on the subject lands. There will be future opportunities for additional public consultation and engagement for each Site Plan Application.

## 1.5 Conclusion

The enclosed Planning Rationale Addendum is meant to be reviewed in conjunction with the initial submission dated November 25, 2019. In consideration of the applicable policy and regulatory framework, it is our professional opinion that the proposed development represents good planning and is in the public interest for the following reasons:

- / The proposed development is consistent with the PPS which promotes efficient development of serviced, underutilized lands located within settlement areas. The redevelopment of the site will add density in a location that is well-served with by transit as well as active transportation networks.
- / The proposed development conforms to the Official Plan in terms of the use proposed. In accordance with the Official Plan, the development proposes to intensify an underutilized site that was never intended to function as a park space.
- / The proposed Concept Plan generally conforms to the Scott Street Secondary Plan and advances key objectives within the Open Space designation through the extension of a pedestrian network and the introduction of a park space.
- / The proposed development conforms to the Scott Street CDP and advances objectives for compatible intensification at a key site with redevelopment potential while maintaining a park space as outlined in the CDP.
- / The proposed development generally complies with the City of Ottawa Zoning By-law by proposing land uses in an area characterized by existing diplomatic mission and office uses.

Overall, the proposal advances several key policy objectives at all three levels of government: Federal, Provincial and Municipal levels. Based on the above analysis, the proposed development represents good planning and is therefore in the public interest.