

BLOCK 2 UNION PARK, KINGSTON

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

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Introduction

Major interventions are planned for Union Park Kingston, establishing it as the cornerstone to the Portsmouth Village community, providing much needed housing, employment, and retail/commercial services. These plans include the conservation and adaptive re-use of the prison building (Block 2) as a regional artisan market and business centre, a future new mixed-use development along Union Street (Block 1), a senior's housing continuum of care (Block 3), construction of a hotel (Block 4), the development of the public West Yard Park and interpretive Connecting Pathway on Block 5, municipal road widening on Block 6, and the garden and exterior gallery being developed and managed by the Prison For Women Memorial Collective on Block 7.

The site previously underwent a successful Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment, Heritage Easement Agreement, Brownfield Site Agreement and Plan of Subdivision to facilitate the mixed-use redevelopment proposal. The development incorporates a private internal street, Memorial Garden to be built and maintained by the Prison For Women Memorial Collective Inc. and private park with connecting walking path that will be available to the public. However, with the implementation of the new Official Plan currently paused until 2027, the applications are being advanced under the existing City of Kingston Official Plan framework, which requires an Official Plan Amendment.

Aspects of the design call for the integration of remaining sections of the perimeter walls, the historic grounds with paths and terraced walk, stairways, and seating areas, and maintaining a visual relationship with the museum, men's prison, harbour, and integrating neighbouring Portsmouth residential community.

Design Intent

Block 2 -The Former Prison for Women Adaptive Reuse	
Total Building Area:	40,030 sf (ca. 37 a)
Market Retail Area:	11,494 sf (ca. 11 a)
office areas are	28,536 sf (ca. 27 a)
Vehicular Parking:	134 parking stalls

Bicycle Parking: 24 spaces
 Total Market retail stalls: 32 + market office area with 3–5 employees.

40 Sir John A. Macdonald Boulevard, formally the Prison for Women, is an iconic Kingston historic landmark and the centrepiece of this new application. Using Parks Canada Standards and Guidelines, Union Park was identified overall as a **Rehabilitation Project**, with alterations to the historic place needed to ensure its continued use and economic viability. The conserved Prison for Women will be adapted to accommodate a mixed use range of services centred around an artisan farmer's market at grade, with offices and professional services on the upper floors. The market will serve the immediate Portsmouth neighbourhood, Queen's University and the region as well as being a welcomed tourist destination.

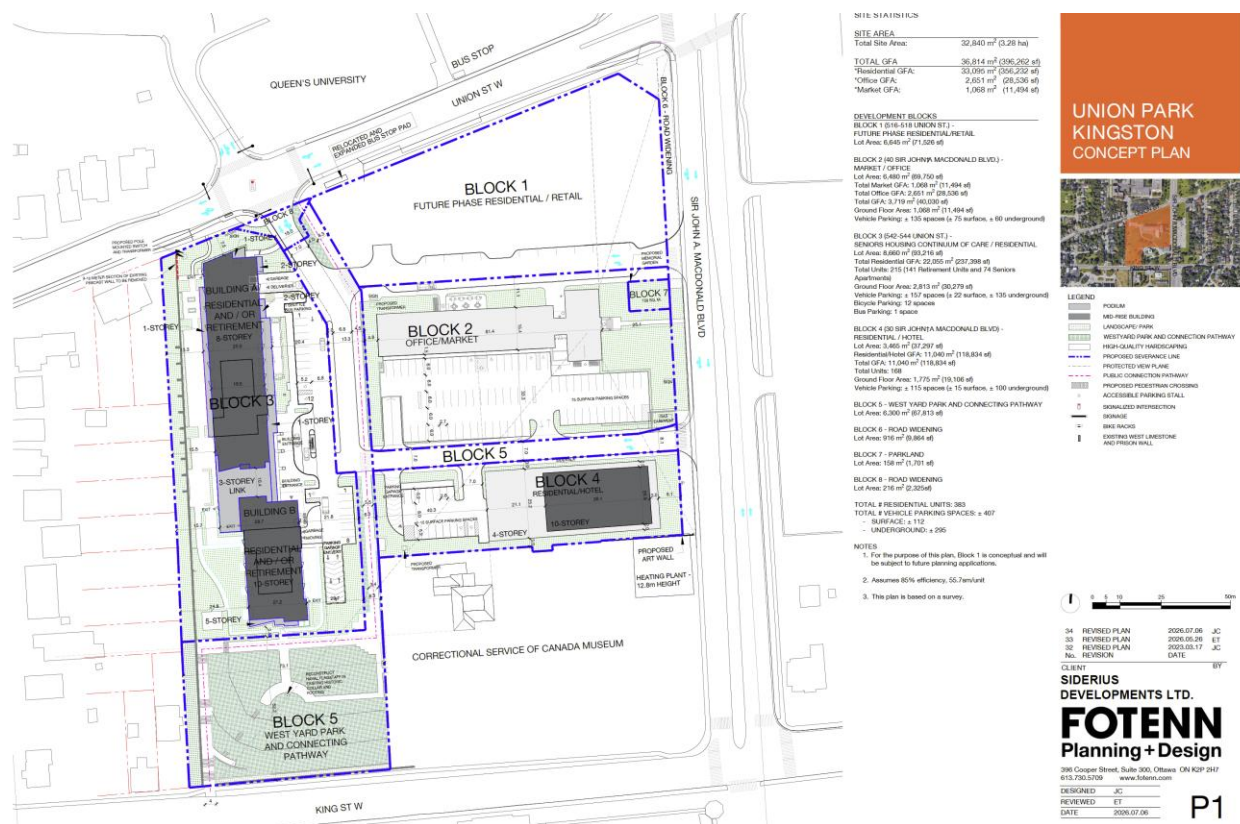


Figure 1: Renamed Union Park, Kingston, the property has been divided into 5 distinct blocks. The plan illustrates each of the Blocks. Block 1 - potentially a residential tower with ground floor commercial uses, Block 2 - the former Prison for Women, Block 3 - A Retirement Community/Residential, Block 4 - A Hotel/Residential, Block 5 - Gardens overlooking Lake Ontario. Block 6 - Road widening and Block 7 - Memorial Gardens. Source: Fotenn Consulting Inc.

The former Prison for Women complex is the anchor around which the new Union Park Kingston development will take place. The initiative establishing commercial and employment uses in the heritage building creates an active community catalyst for future development within Union Park Portsmouth Village district. All the proposed uses remain compatible with city/community building principles.

As the development proposal involves the adaptive reuse of the former Prison for Women (Block 2) to make possible compatible contemporary uses, the primary conservation treatment is ‘**preservation**’ of the exterior. An analysis of the preliminary architectural treatment (Figures 2-5) demonstrates a restrained “fit” of the proposed uses within the building’s envelope, including removal of small structures, the balconies proposed in an earlier scheme, and the demolition of the 1981 Annex. Minor interventions include a small entrance vestibule and access doors replacing windows along the range. An added benefit to this scheme is the main entrance to the administration building, which will serve the professional offices.

For the interior, the planned approach is ‘**rehabilitation**’ for the new commercial market and/or retail uses on the ground floor and professional office uses planned for the Administration Building and upper floors of the Cell Block range. The plans call for the demolition and removal of the interior of the Cell Block as already approved in the Brownfield Agreement, introduction of vertical services, and introduction of a below grade, and surface parking on the south side of the prison.

Planning

The assessment has been prepared, supporting an Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment as required to permit a broader range and scale of mixed uses on the site. The proposed development aligns with the vision and policy direction of the City’s emerging Official Plan framework, which supports mixed-use, complete communities, with residential, commercial, and institutional uses.

Landscape and Parking

It is the intention to dedicate all underground parking (60 stalls) and the east portion of the surface lot (25 stalls) to the office portion of the building, providing 85 stalls for dedicated office parking. The remaining surface parking (49 stalls) will serve short-term office visitor parking, market customers and market vendors. Based on current projections, it is assumed that demand for parking should be adequate during normal operating hours. For heritage reasons, cost reasons, and operational reasons, an above grade parking structure

is not being considered, and based on the financial pro forma, additional underground parking is not financially viable. It is assumed that there will be overlap and periods of high demand for the market uses on weekends and less during the weekdays.



Figure 2: Aerial rendering of Block 2 illustrating the planned above grade parking extending into the front lawn. The potential negative impact is nicely mitigated with the buffering and lower elevation.

Considerations and Potential Impact

Heritage Considerations were defined in the Heritage Conservation Strategy. They are listed here along with comments specific to Block 2 and any potential impacts are discussed. Based on the findings contained in the chart below, it is concluded that the proposed uses and the required interventions are focused on the interior, with **NO** negative impacts that cannot be mitigated on the exterior.

Heritage Considerations	Comment	Potential Impact
(Specific to the Prison for Women) National Historic Site.	1. Standard 3. Conserve heritage value by adopting an approach calling for minimum intervention, which applies to the exterior treatment.	1. No impact to the exterior attributes.
	2. Allow the interior to be approached as a rehabilitation project	2. Extensive modifications are limited to the interior and maintaining a rehabilitation strategy.
Familiar Landmark — Site Arrangement	1. The classically inspired building is the face of the former penitentiary. 2. Clear, unimpeded circulation around the complex conserves its anchor role and capacity to dominate the campus Freestanding focus of the front elevation from Sir John A.	1. The prison's focused role as a freestanding anchor is retained. 2. The new developments in Block 1, 3, & 4 are respectful and setback from the defining visual perimeter

Fixed and dynamic Views The 12 defined views discussed in the Conservation Strategy were considered in analyzing possible interventions.	<i>Both identified long views of the cupola and roof, dynamic views of the front elevation & short views of the complex remain unimpeded and ‘in the round’ are identified attributes that are being retained.</i>	<i>The demolition of the East Annex, as part of the updated plan, successfully allows the complete form of the historic building to be viewed more fully “in the round” and maintain its centrality on the site.</i> <i>Although a portion of the proposed surface parking extends into the open space east of the Administrative Building, the visual impact from Sir John A Macdonald Blvd. is minimized by its depressed elevation and proposed landscape buffer.</i>
<i>Figure 3: The view looking north-west from John A. Blvd was identified in the Conservation Strategy as one of 12 significant fixed views that should be conserved. Utilizing the grade changes and buffer planting, the potential impact with vehicle parking has been successfully mitigated. Both long views of cupola and roof, dynamic views of front elevation & unimpeded short views of the complex ‘in the round’ are maintained.</i>		
Fragments of the Perimeter Wall	<i>The prison wall was a Character defining feature that created a confined, inward-looking environment.</i> <i>Significant associative value contributing to the ‘memory of place’ that the prison was an enclosed and confined space.</i>	<i>New uses and surrounding developments have opened up the site, making it visually and publicly accessible.</i> <i>Opportunity with new development to reference the walls as vestiges of their original use.</i>
Conservation Approach to the Exterior of Administration and Cell Blocks.	<i>Architectural Design and Materiality is intended to preserve the original exterior configuration and massing, with modifications limited to integrate and accommodate new uses.</i>	<i>Diligent preservation of the original configuration of the ‘Federally Recognized’ and ; Designated under Part IV, OHA.</i>
Specific Attributes of the exterior	<i>Foundation – preservation with altering height of windows for access to market</i> <i>Masonry – preservation -limited to repointing and localized interventions — venting</i> <i>Fenestration – glazing pattern maintained —</i>	<i>The plan is extremely sensitive to the preservation of the national historic building.</i> <i>Potentially, the lower portion of fenestration will have to be blocked</i>



	<i>restoration to original appearance. Introduction of doors related to market access.</i> <i>Roof – maintain the metal sheathed roof</i> <i>Cupola — preservation</i> <i>Chimney – preservation</i> <i>repointing as required using traditional lime mortar mix.</i>	<i>out from the interior to allow for the introduction of market stalls.</i>
Exterior Interventions	<i>1. Converting specific windows into doorways for access</i> <i>2. Altering the height of windows in the basement to accommodate doors.</i> <i>3. Demolition of the Annex</i> <i>4. Introduction of below grade parking.</i> <i>5. Introduction of surface parking extending beyond the front façade.</i>	<i>1. Minor impact</i> <i>2. This is a minor intervention that can be discreetly addressed.</i> <i>3. The annex is functionally obsolete, blocking, and compromising views. Its removal has a positive impact.</i> <i>4. Below-grade parking is a requirement for the success of the development plan. It will be important to establish a protection plan as part of the excavation next to the building. Specific structural plan to protect the foundation.</i> <i>5. The introduction of surface parking for food market customers is necessary to promote the economic viability of the proposed commercial uses. (See comments above on the minor potential impact on key views to the site from the public realm.)</i>
Interior Approach to the Administration and Cell Blocks	<i>1. Rehabilitation is the intended conservation approach for the treatment of the interior. It was a specifically designed interior which is obsolete, challenging to adapt with few opportunities to integrate either materiality or form. Removal of the 2nd floor to accommodate the market use. Features such as the mezzanine will continue to be interpreted with setbacks from windows.</i>	<i>1. Consider the potential for salvage and interpretive integration of attributes. Examples include retaining security bars on several select lower windows and prison doors as part of a static display.</i> <i>2. Ability for the building to accommodate up to 100 percent office use should the proposed if market use proves financially unviable over time.</i>

	2. <i>The concept plan has been intentionally designed to provide flexibility in response to future market conditions</i>	
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Massing and Form Guidelines

The following is taken from the *Heritage Conservation Strategy, Former Prison For Women, Union Park Redevelopment Project, Kingston ON. 2022.* The Prison for Women serves as a model guiding all the planned development on the 7 Blocks. *Its **massing, height and material finishes** serve as a guide for potential new development, recommending a podium height of approximately 3 or 4 architectural storeys.* A review of the revised Elevation drawings (Figures 2-5) demonstrates compliance with the approved form and massing guidelines for both Block 2 and for potential new development, and highlights compliance with the guidelines.

1. The heritage value of the existing Prison for Women is defined by the Edwardian Classical architectural style, massing, and form of the Administrative Building and Cell Block. It is recommended that the approach to the exterior of the Administration Building and Cellblock adopt the Standards and Guidelines “Standard 3”: Conserve heritage value by adopting an approach calling for minimum intervention.

- *The guideline supports a strategy where the exterior façade of both the Administration Building and the Cellblock is being preserved and fully rehabilitated in accordance with Standards and Guidelines.*

2. Excluding the prominent entrance tower and cupola, the approximate height of the Prison for Women from grade at its front entrance to its consistent eave line is 12.55 metre (geodetic elevation 106 metres ASL.) This height establishes the essential scale that is part of the heritage character of this recognizable Kingston landmark. It also alludes to the height of the perimeter walls that have been removed.

- *It is recommended that the height serve as a guideline for potential new development, having a podium height of approximately 3 or 4 architectural storeys depending on the floor-to-floor heights. The purpose of these 3 or 4 storey architectural podia would be to establish a strong visual relationship between each new building and the height and massing of the Prison for Women heritage landmark.*

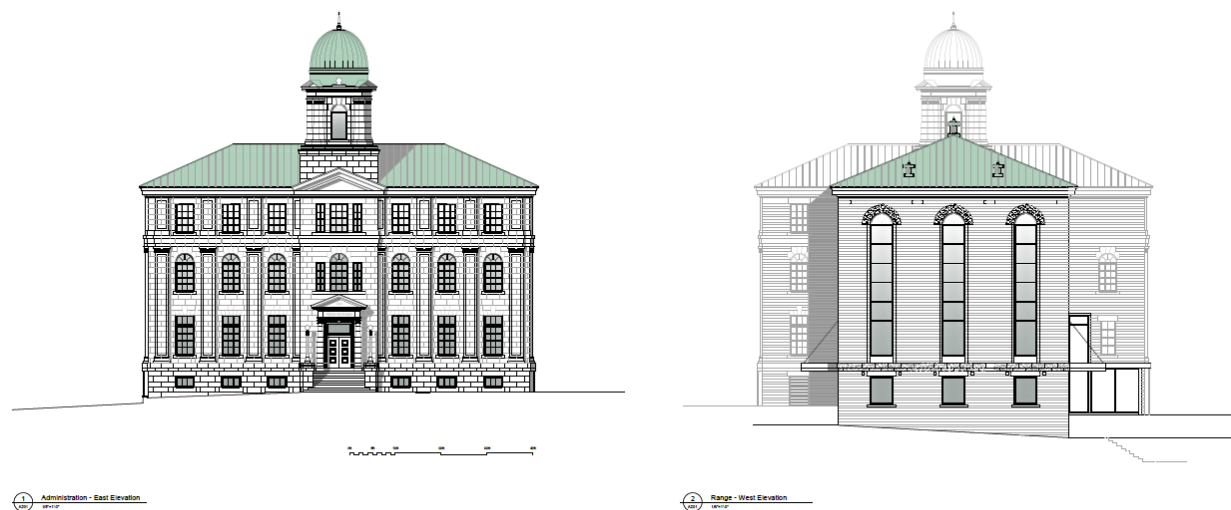


Figure 4: East and west Elevations. Source: Shoals & Zaback Architects Ltd. July 2026

- The concept of podia is to help ‘ground’ taller structures adjacent to lower built-form and to create a more human-scale environment relative to the typical eave height of P4W is site-specific and integrative. The proportional analysis of P4W (Base, String Course, Cornice) and the use of these ratios in establishing the placement of feature elements at the façades of any new buildings allows for general coherence across the site. It is recommended that for any new building grid be set at a repeating 10’-15’, like the existing Administration Building and the Cell Block, with a strong vertical expression for the fenestration.*
3. These recommendations are designed to ensure that any new buildings are visually compatible with the character defining elements of the Prison for Women heritage place, as recommended by “Standards and Guidelines for Historic Places in Canada” (Standard 11).
- It is recommended that significant massing elements such as the verticality of fenestration and its repetition, which reflects the scale of the Prison for Women, be incorporated to demonstrate compatibility with the heritage character of the historic place. (Standards and Guidelines, “Standard 11”: Conserve the heritage value and character-defining elements when creating any new additions to a historic place or any related new construction. Make the new work physically and visually compatible with, subordinate to, and distinguishable from the historic place.)*

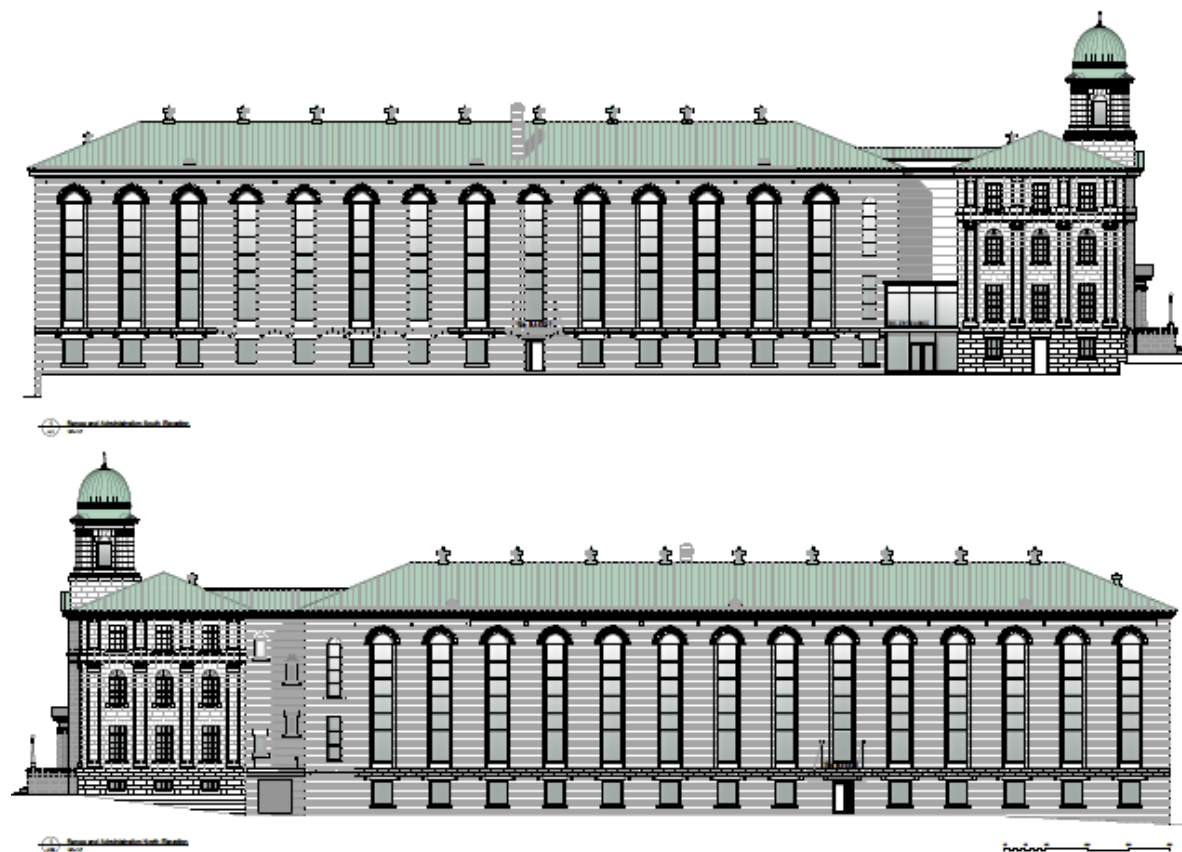


Figure 5: North and south Elevations. Source: Shoals & Zaback Architects Ltd. July 2026



Figure 6: View from the entrance to the Exchange from the parking lot.

References

Heritage Character Statement Kingston Penitentiary Prison for Women (A-3) Kingston, Ontario, 1991.

Johnson, Dana, *Architectural History Branch Kingston Penitentiary King Street, West Kingston, Ontario.* Federal Heritage Building Review, Office Building Report #89-32.

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Stewart, John & Padolsky, Barry, *Union Park Heritage Conservation Strategy Assessment & Heritage Guidelines Specific To Block 1 – Future Phase 3 Residential/Retail Development 2024.*