



Applications filed for an artisan food market, offices and/or rental apartments in former Prison for Women building

Kingston, ON (Sept. 18, 2026) — A year-round indoor artisan food market with approximately 32 permanent vendor stalls is proposed for the ground floor of the former Prison for Women building at Union Park Kingston, with offices and/or rental apartments on the upper floors.

Siderius Developments Ltd. has applied to the City of Kingston for the planning approvals needed to permit the use(s). A community meeting on the applications is set for October 8, 2026.

What the Applications Would Change

The building sits on Block 2 of Union Park Kingston, at 40 Sir John A. Macdonald Boulevard. An Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment was completed to permit only the residential use November 1, 2022.

Siderius has applied for two changes: an Official Plan Amendment to redesignate Block 2 from Residential to Mixed Use, and a Zoning By-Law Amendment to rezone the block and set the specific use criteria that would apply to it. Together they would allow a broader range of commercial uses in the building while keeping the existing permission for housing.

The applications cover Block 2 and Block 7, about 0.66 hectares in total. They were prepared by Fotenn Planning + Design and are on file with the City as D35-003-2026.

The proposal has three parts: a year-round indoor artisan food market on the ground floor, with multiple permanent vendor stalls; offices and/or rental apartments in the former cell block wing and the Administration Building. The Annex and other modern additions would be removed, with the Administration Building and the cell block retained and rehabilitated.

Why the Change is Being Sought

High-end condominiums were originally planned for this building; however, those plans have been set aside as current housing market conditions do not support the viability of condominium development at this time. Office use on the upper floors is being examined. An event centre was also studied alongside the artisan market and found to not be economically viable.

The zoning approved in 2021 and 2022 defined the permitted uses narrowly. This application deliberately asks for a wider range of commercial permissions, so that the building can be put to use now and so that other options remain open if the artisan market does not go ahead.

"The unique and spacious condominiums we planned for this building aren't going to work in this market. We looked seriously at an event centre on the upper floors before we determined that this use was not viable. The year-round artisan food market is the use that fits the ground floor best, and it's the one people are most excited about." — Siderius Spokesperson Martin Skolnick

The Artisan Food Market

The ground floor would hold a year-round indoor artisan food market, designed for approximately 32 permanent vendor stalls across roughly 11,500 square feet. A single business could take one stall or several. Stalls would be built out by their tenants as small permanent shops, each with its own look, rather than as temporary tables. It would be closer to a large indoor city market such as the St. Lawrence Market in Toronto than to a seasonal farmers' market.

Vendors would sell various types of foods, flowers and alcohol: various types of bakeries, butcheries, fish and seafood mongers, produce, prepared foods, cheeses, chocolatiers, fresh herbs and spices, florists, wine, beer and spirits bottle shops, cafés, and various providers of ethnic foods are amongst potential vendor uses envisioned. Artwork, jewellery and general merchandise are currently not part of the concept.

The vendors would be regional and local producers rather than chains, in two broad groups: established Kingston-area businesses opening an additional location, and small independent producers ready to move from working at home to a permanent shop. Plans include indoor and outdoor seating, a small number of food truck spaces outside, and outdoor stalls in summer for seasonal produce growers.

This would be Kingston's only year-round indoor market, and the intent is to add to the city's existing markets rather than take business from them. A feasibility study carried out with Tourism Kingston found the idea workable and identified it as a regional draw with tourism potential.

On the current construction schedule there would be about two years before opening to curate the best selection of vendors, with businesses selected for their high level of quality and uniqueness that fills the niche. By taking this approach, the market vendors complement each other and make for the best customer experience.

The artisan market is still at the concept stage. No vendors or operators have been signed, and the project will need to be financially viable to proceed.

"We're not trying to take business away from the other markets in Kingston or businesses in Portsmouth Village. There is no year-round indoor food market in Kingston, and what we envision is a place where a local baker or a small producer working out of their kitchen can open a proper shop. We have about two years before the doors open, and we'll spend that time curating the right mix of vendors" — Siderius Spokesperson Ben Doornekamp

The Apartments Concept

The former cell block wing and Administrative Building would hold approximately 35 rental apartments. These are intended to be purpose-built rental units, not condominiums for sale.

The layouts are being designed to be very space efficient and are set by the building's existing window openings. A one-bedroom unit takes two windows, one for the bedroom and one for the living room, and a two-bedroom takes three. The large windows are the defining feature of the units. Each would have a kitchen, bathroom(s), and a storage locker in the basement. There are no balconies, and shared amenities are

limited to storage lockers, a pet wash, underground parking, an exercise room, and the one-acre privately-owned public park overlooking Portsmouth Olympic Harbour being created as part of the broader Union park Kingston development.

Without expensive features like balconies and a more extensive package of amenities, the units will be less expensive to build, and the apartments are expected to rent for less than the other traditional purpose – built rental apartments in Kingston. The units are also being designed so that they do not compete with other housing types planned for the other development blocks at Union Park Kingston.

What Changes on the Site

The Annex, a modern addition on the south side of the Administration Building, would be removed and the area used for parking. Other modern additions would also be removed from the heritage designated buildings. The Administration Building and the cell block are kept, remediated, and rehabilitated. Balconies proposed on one side of the building under the earlier condominium development plan have been taken out of the design. Demolition permits for the interior and exterior work have been approved.

Parking on Block 2 would include 75 surface spaces on the south side, plus underground parking.

About 75 per cent of the site is not built on. That figure covers everything outside the building footprints, including parking areas and paved surfaces as well as landscaping, so it describes how open and porous the site is. Heritage views across the site are improved, in addition to the heritage sightlines approved in the Heritage Easement Agreement.

Heritage consultants support the changes, on the basis that the plan opens up the site, removes later additions, and gives the heritage building more prominence. A heritage memo forms part of the submission to the City. Environmental and archaeological investigations, including the question of unmarked burials, are complete, with sign-offs from the Province, the City of Kingston, and Parks Canada.

Servicing in the Area

The area is under a temporary sewer servicing capacity limit tied to the City's Portsmouth Pumping Station Redirect and Trunk Watermain projects. It applies to sewer capacity only. Siderius is working with the City of Kingston and Utilities Kingston on the order in which the blocks can proceed, which is one reason Block 2 is now expected to break ground first.

If the applications are approved, planning approvals and construction drawings would run through the end of 2026, construction would start in 2027, and the building would open in late 2028.

The Rest of Union Park Kingston

Block 1, at the corner of Union Street and Sir John A. Macdonald Boulevard, is a future phase and will require a future rezoning application. A relocated and expanded bus stop pad is planned on Union Street in front of it, to be built by the City of Kingston.

Block 3, on Union Street, parallel to the remaining prison wall, is zoned for retirement, apartment, condominium, or student housing; Siderius continues to work with prospective partners, and its preference remains a retirement residence.

Block 4, on Sir John A. Macdonald Boulevard beside the museum and steam plant, is zoned for a hotel or residential use with commercial space at ground level.

Block 5 remains a privately developed, publicly accessible park overlooking Portsmouth Harbour and fronting King Street.

Block 7 continues to be proposed for a publicly accessible memorial garden that recognizes and interprets the history of the site, built and maintained by the Prison For Women Memorial Collective.

Taking Part

The community meeting is on October 8, 2026 at 6:00 p.m., in Council Chambers at City Hall, 216 Ontario Street, with an option to attend online. A City staff report will be available on October 2. The meeting is for initial discussion and public feedback. No recommendation is made at that meeting; that comes at a later public meeting of the Planning Committee. Written comments can be sent to the City's Planning Services beforehand.

Noise, traffic and related studies filed with the application will be posted on the project website.

"People here have been anticipating the start of construction for a long time, and I'd rather tell them where things actually stand than announce something we can't deliver. Nothing is finalized yet. The applications are in, the meeting is October 8, and we want to hear from neighbours before this goes further."
— Siderius Spokesperson Martin Skolnick

About Union Park Kingston

Union Park Kingston is a \$300 to \$400 million redevelopment of the former Prison for Women site on Sir John A. Macdonald Boulevard in Kingston, by Siderius Developments Ltd. Siderius Developments Ltd. is a partnership between two well known and respected heritage developers, ABNA Investments Ltd. and King's Town Development Corporation.



Questions:

info@unionparkkingston.ca

unionparkkingston.ca

APPENDIX — FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What exactly is being proposed?

Two changes to the City's planning rules for Block 2 and 7: an Official Plan Amendment to redesignate the block from Residential to Mixed Use, and a Zoning By-Law Amendment to rezone it and set the specific use criteria that would apply. Together they would allow a broader range of commercial uses in the former Prison for Women building while keeping the existing permission for housing.

Is the heritage building being demolished?

No. The Administration Building and the cell block are being kept and rehabilitated. The Annex, a modern addition on the south side, and other modern additions are being removed.

What kind of market is this?

A year-round indoor artisan food market with permanent stalls built out by their tenants as small unique individual shops. It is closer to a large indoor city market such as the St. Lawrence Market in Toronto than a seasonal farmer's market. 32 stalls are shown in the current draft design.

Who would the vendors be?

Regional and local food producers rather than chains: Vendors would sell various types of foods, flowers and alcohol: various types of bakeries, butcheries, fish and seafood mongers, produce, prepared foods, cheeses, chocolatiers, fresh herbs and spices, florists, wine, beer and spirits bottle shops, cafés, and various providers of ethnic foods are amongst potential vendor uses envisioned. Artwork, jewellery and general merchandise are currently not part of the concept.

Will it compete with Kingston's existing markets?

This would be the city's only year-round indoor food and beverage market, and it is meant to complement other markets that are already well established, rather than replace them.

Is a commercial kitchen part of the plan?

It is under consideration. The idea comes from Tourism Kingston's culinary tourism work: a kitchen that small producers could rent by the day or week for production runs they cannot manage at their own scale. It is among the less settled parts of the concept.

How many apartments, and what will they rent for?

Approximately 35 rental units, in the former cell block wing and the Administrative Building. Rents have not been set.

Are these affordable housing units?

No. Siderius has not committed to below-market rent, rent-geared-to-income, subsidized, supported, or transitional housing at this early stage of the development and planning process. The apartments are space efficient and simpler than the high-end condominiums originally planned for the building. Without balconies and a more extensive package of amenities, they cost less to build, and they are expected to rent for less than other purpose-built rental apartments in Kingston.

What portion of the building would be used for offices?

Office use on a portion of the upper floors is being considered. The permission for housing is being kept, and other commercial uses are being explored including the market.

What about the memorial garden?

Block 7 continues to be proposed for a publicly accessible memorial garden that recognizes and interprets the history of the site.

Has the archaeological work been done?

Yes. Environmental and archaeological investigations, including the question of unmarked burials, are complete, with sign-offs from the Province, the City of Kingston, and Parks Canada.

How much parking is proposed?

75 surface parking spaces on the south side of Block 2, plus underground parking.

Why has the project taken this long?

The plan of subdivision was finally approved in May 2025; however, the area is now under a temporary sewer capacity servicing limit tied to the City's Portsmouth Pumping Station Redirect and Trunk Watermain projects. Siderius is working with the City of Kingston and Utilities Kingston on the order in which the blocks can proceed, which is one reason Block 2 is now slated to break ground first. It is expected that this temporary servicing constraint will be lifted by the end of 2028.

When would it open?

Planning approvals and construction drawings would run through the end of 2026, construction would start in 2027, and the building would open in late 2028.

How do I support this application?

Attend the community meeting on October 8, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers, 216 Ontario Street, or online, or send written comments to the City's Planning Services beforehand. A City staff report will be available on October 2.

Architectural renderings of the proposed market

