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[Ottawa studies east end transit stations on future LRT line](#)

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Ottawa's planned [light-rail project](#) is creating opportunities for intensity-building development in the nation's capital.

Transit-oriented development (TOD) studies are being done for areas surrounding three of the 13 stations along the first phase of the transit project, which is scheduled to begin operating in 2018.

Chris Brouwer, a senior planner with the City of Ottawa, said the goal is to increase density within 600-metre perimeters of these LTR stations with a mix of residential, office and retail development.

“Really it's about getting cyclists and pedestrians to the stations effectively and trying to plan for a complete community,” Brouwer said.

Study looks at east end stations

The three stations being looked at are all east of Ottawa's downtown core. Brouwer said there is already much density downtown, where the light-rail stations will be underground. Planned stations west of downtown are already part of assessments being carried out separately by either the city or the federal government.

Brouwer said market demand will ultimately determine the proportional mix between residential, office and retail

space surrounding these transit stations subject to the city's TOD studies.

"In a perfect world, we'd have mixed use," he said. "And that can happen both in a single building or in a series of stand-alone buildings."

Brouwer said for each of these areas, the city is looking at development that would accommodate about 40,000 residents and employees combined. That's the long-term objective, and the interim goal is for about 16,000 by 2031 compared to current levels of around 6,000.

"We think that the intensification is going to happen over many, many years. It won't be an immediate response. It's a very long-term plan."

He said building heights would range from about six storeys on the outer parts of these areas being studied to 30 storeys in spots closest to where people catch the trains.

The three future LRT stations under review are in areas where stations already exist for Ottawa's rapid-bus network, which the light-rail line is to replace.

Three east end LRT stations – Train, St. Laurent, Cyrville

Closest to downtown is the Train station, which is in proximity to the city's main Via Rail station and a retail centre known as the Ottawa Train Yards. Further east is the St. Laurent station, which is at the site of the St. Laurent Centre, one of Ottawa's biggest shopping malls. The third site is called the Cyrville station, which is adjacent to a 285,000-square-foot office complex known as the Queensway Corporate Campus.



Image from Ottawa's light rail website [routes and stations page](#) .

Brouwer said there are also light-industrial operations within these areas. While he doesn't consider such businesses "incompatible," he said it's possible that owners of such properties will sell to take advantage of the higher values the more flexible zoning will create, resulting in denser types of development replacing them.

"Things will naturally evolve into more dense uses of land," he said. "We're kind of setting the stage for that through our zoning."

He added that any zoning changes that take place near these stations will provide exemptions for existing businesses. "We're not forcing anyone to go away."

Approximately six-million square feet per station

The city hasn't released development targets in terms of square footage. James McNeil, associate vice-president of Cushman & Wakefield's green real estate practice in Ottawa, said that for office space, each employee typically takes up 150 to 200 square feet. Using such a formula, the city's goals could represent about six million square feet of development around the three transit stations combined over the next 20 years.



Image from Ottawa's light rail website – OttawaLightRail.ca .

Kelvin Holmes, Colliers International's managing director for Ottawa, said the federal government is likely to be a major tenant of office space near these future LRT stations.

"I think what those stations are going to do is really help drive forward Public Works' agenda to move departments and people and space out of the downtown core and into the suburban markets where they can find less expensive space," Holmes said.

"One of the things that Public Works definitely wants to be able to provide its people is excellent access to public transit."

Tech companies to fill downtown vacancies

Holmes said much of the space vacated by government downtown might be taken up by technology companies, which are increasingly moving to Ottawa's core as opposed to west-end suburbs like Kanata.

McNeil agreed the federal government is likely to be a major tenant in new commercial space created near LRT stations. However, given the current "quiet" state of the tech sector, he said it's unclear if this industry could fill gaps left downtown by government.

McNeil said the City of Ottawa should have an economic strategy in place to attract industry to the capital to ensure there is sufficient demand for commercial space along LRT lines and that downtown is not left with an abundance of vacant space.

"The question mark comes down to what industries will the city be going after to attract to Ottawa?" he said. "What we're looking at is an aggregate increase of a fairly substantial amount of office space in a relatively small