

Planning Rationale 2120 Niagara Dr., Ottawa

Proposed Development

The homeowners at 2120 Niagara Drive propose to improve their property by replacing the existing dilapidated garage with a new structure that includes a **coach house** above. Located on a corner lot, the project is intended to provide much-needed additional living space while creating a flexible space for a growing family containing a bathroom studio space and a kitchenette.

The proposed rooflines remain within the principal dwelling height restrictions but exceed the maximum permitted coach house height of 3.6 metres. The proposed structure exceeds this limit by 2.9 metres due to the inclusion of the garage element. To maintain simplicity and consistency with the surrounding neighbourhood, the roofline has been designed as a straight form, allowing for the efficient installation of solar panels.

New windows are proposed on the Front (East), Rear (West) & Left (South) elevations, with glazing percentages compliant on all building faces. The addition is designed to align with the existing house's massing, rooflines, and material palette. Overall, the intent is for the garage and coach house to blend seamlessly with the existing dwelling, appearing as an integrated and original part of the home's design.

The proposed garage/coach house does not project further toward the front lot line than the principal dwelling, as the main house includes an extended front entrance. In fact, the proposed structure is set back a greater distance from the rear and interior side lot lines than the existing building. The additional height, as previously outlined, is necessary to accommodate a functional garage space at grade level. Furthermore, neighboring property owners have expressed their support for this application.

Minor Variance Requested

To make this project happen, we are asking for FOUR variances.

First, To permit a new maximum coach house height of (6.5 meters)
(*Maximum height of 3.6 metres [s.133 (8)(b)]*)

Second, To permit a coach house to build closer to the interior lot line (1.28 m)
(*Interior side yard to be 4 meter in case of window facing the interior lot line [s.133(9)(d)]*)

Third, To permit a new maximum size for the coach house to 51.0 sq.m
(*The maximum allowable coach house footprint is 50 sq.m [s.133(10)(a)]*)

Fourth, To permit a new maximum percentage footprint to 47%
(*The maximum footprint 40% of the footprint of the principal dwelling [s.133 (10)(b)]*)

Regulatory Framework

This home sits in the R1QQ zone, which is meant for low-rise residential areas. The project still fits comfortably within that intent. It stays a single detached home, doesn't increase the footprint, and keeps lot coverage and spacing in check. The Mature Neighbourhood Overlay also applies here, but we're not touching anything major like the streetscape or landscaping. The overall feel of the house stays the same. As for the trees, we're building where the existing garage was located, beside the existing house, so there's no impact expected no removals, just proper protection in place.

Policy Framework (Official Plan)

The house falls in the Neighbourhood designation under the 2021 Official Plan. These policies encourage site development in order to maintain the quality of life in the planning area as it evolves over time. To ensure that neighbourhood development gently accommodates additional density in building types that complement the scale and form of the existing buildings. Employing site designs that maintain the character of the existing neighbourhood, which is defined by low-rise buildings, green front yards and tall trees along the streets.

We're not multiplying driveways, or the widening of driveways, reducing the amount of green front yard, space for healthy tree growth and the viable use of streetside space for street parking and other purposes for all users. We are also planning energy upgrades and making homes more resilient something we're also doing with the new roof, adding solar, geothermal heating and modern more efficient windows.

For new development on this site, the existing garage is being rebuilt to continue the same look and feel with the surrounding area. Lot sizes in the immediate surrounding area propose growth and are considered representative of the typical lot size in this neighbourhood. We are not touching the street trees or any established street tree alignment on the property. We want to maintain the streetscape continuity. This confirms that intensification includes renovating and expanding existing homes.

This proposal keeps all the usual setbacks (except the one that's already there), uses similar forms and materials, and won't stand out on the block. It's the kind of small-scale renewal the city is looking for in neighbourhoods like this.

Rationale The Four Tests

1. Minor in Nature

The request involves only a minor increase in height, with no encroachment toward the street side lot line. From the public way and adjacent properties, the change in appearance will be minimal and will not affect light, views, or privacy. Although the footprint & height is larger, we are also accommodating a new garage & entrance to the coach house. We have also proposed moving the new structure further away from the rear and interior side yard(s). We also have neighboring property owners that have already expressed their support for this application.

2. Desirable and Appropriate

The proposed coach house will enhance the functionality and livability of the property, allowing the family to remain in the neighborhood rather than relocate. It is a logical reinvestment that is consistent with similar improvements made to other homes in the surrounding area.

3. Maintains Zoning Intent

Even with the requested variances, the proposal preserves the overall use, spacing, and low-rise character of the dwelling. The intent and purpose of the zoning bylaw continue to be respected, with only limited relief sought from specific technical requirements to achieve a functional and practical living space.

4. Maintains Official Plan Intent

The proposed project advances key planning policy objectives by supporting reinvestment in the existing urban area, avoiding outward expansion, encouraging energy efficiency, and maintaining active, functional neighborhoods. It represents a modest, well-designed improvement that benefits the homeowners while aligning with the City's broader planning goals.

Conclusion

In summary, the proposed project represents a modest and well-considered improvement that maintains the established use, spacing, and low-rise character of the property and surrounding neighborhood. The requested variances are minor and technical in nature, do not create adverse impacts on adjacent properties, and continue to respect the intent of the zoning bylaw. The project supports reinvestment in the existing urban area, allows the homeowners to remain in the neighborhood, and aligns with broader municipal planning objectives.