

Business and Tenant Support Strategy

ByWard Market Revitalization

ByWard Market Public Realm Office



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1. Introduction

The ByWard Market is one of Ottawa’s most important cultural, commercial and tourism districts. It hosts a diverse mix of small businesses, restaurants, artisans and cultural spaces and is recognized in Ottawa’s Official Plan as a City-defining Special District. This designation underscores the Market’s role as a place that must demonstrate the highest standards in design, programming and economic vitality, while balancing the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.

In the coming years, several major capital projects will reshape the area, including the renewal of key streets and plazas and the rehabilitation or redevelopment of City-owned assets. These investments are critical to the long-term success of the Market but will create short- and medium-term disruption for local businesses, including street-level retailers and tenants in City-owned buildings.

This Business and Tenant Support Strategy (the “Strategy”) sets out an overall framework for how the City of Ottawa, the ByWard Market District Authority (BMDA) and partners will support businesses and tenants before, during and after construction. Individual project-level implementation plans (e.g. William Street, ByWard Market Square, 55 ByWard, 70 Clarence, York Street Plaza) will be developed as separate documents and aligned with this Strategy.

2. Background and Context

2.1 Strategic importance of the ByWard Market

The ByWard Market has been identified by Council as a priority area for revitalization, with multiple Council-approved initiatives focused on economic activity, safety, tourism and housing. The ByWard Market Public Realm Plan provides the overarching vision for transforming public spaces into more welcoming, accessible and pedestrian-focused places.

The Market’s transformation is also tied to broader city-building goals, including downtown economic recovery, improved public realm quality and the district’s 200th anniversary, which presents a milestone opportunity to showcase Ottawa’s culture and history.

2.2 Priority projects

The Strategy is designed to align with and support the following priority projects:

- William Street Renewal
- ByWard Market Square Renewal
- Creation of York Street Plaza
- Redevelopment of the Municipal Parking Structure at 70 Clarence Street into a Destination Building
- Rehabilitation of the Historic Market Building at 55 ByWard Market Square

2.3 Business disruption and opportunity

Construction activity will affect businesses in different ways:

- Businesses operating adjacent to construction zones on William Street, ByWard Market Square and York Street
- ByWard Market District Authority tenants in municipally owned facilities (55 ByWard Market Square and 70 Clarence Street) whose leases may be impacted by rehabilitation or redevelopment
- Businesses across the broader Market area whose trade may be indirectly affected by perceived disruption or access constraints

At the same time, redevelopment will modernize key assets, improve the public realm and create long-term opportunities for new tenants, increased foot traffic and a stronger year-round economy.

2.4 Methodology and Inputs

This Strategy was developed through a combination of feasibility analysis, targeted consultation with internal staff, research into comparable construction mitigation practices and engagement with Bloomberg Associates. Bloomberg Associates contributed external expertise and best practices drawn from major revitalization projects in peer jurisdictions, enriching the development of potential support tools and implementation approaches.

Through this work, the project team developed a structured planning framework to map proposed activities to intended outcomes, identify sequencing and clarify the relationship between early actions and longer-term objectives. This framework served as a planning tool to organize ideas, test assumptions and ensure that recommended supports aligned with the City's roles, municipal authorities and the scope of the upcoming projects. It provided structure for strategic decision-making and shaped the overall approach applied in this Strategy.

3. Purpose and Scope of the Strategy

The purpose of this Strategy is to:

- Provide a coherent framework for business support and support for commercial tenants in City-owned assets across all priority projects
- Clarify the types of tools and interventions that may be used to mitigate construction impacts and support economic vitality
- Outline roles, responsibilities and coordination mechanisms between the City, BMDA and partners
- Establish a basis for project-specific action plans and for future Council decisions where additional authority or resources are required
- Support immediate business continuity during construction while, where feasible, contributing to longer-term business resilience and capacity beyond the construction period.

Scope:

- *Geography*: ByWard Market District, with a focus on the streets and City-owned assets directly affected by the priority projects
- *Timeframe*: Pre-construction planning, construction phases and early post-construction transition
- *Audience*: Businesses, City tenants, property owners, local partners and internal City partners

This is an overarching strategy document. Detailed implementation plans for each project will be developed separately and can be appended or cross-referenced as needed.

4. Strategic Objectives

The Strategy aims to ensure the ByWard Market continues to thrive during and beyond upcoming construction by pursuing the following objectives:

- ***Safeguard and grow economic vitality***: Support a balanced tenant mix, attract diverse vendors and entrepreneurs and help protect small businesses that give the Market its authenticity.
- ***Mitigate disruption during construction***: Provide targeted, practical supports to directly affected businesses through clear communication, coordinated construction planning and, where feasible and authorized, non-financial and financial mitigation tools.
- ***Strengthen community vibrancy and cultural identity***: Maintain and enhance a year-round program of activities that keeps the Market active, welcoming and reflective of Ottawa's diversity and heritage.
- ***Enhance customer experience and accessibility***: Ensure the Market remains safe, inclusive and accessible, with clear wayfinding, maintained pedestrian routes and attention to perceived safety.
- ***Foster resilience and innovation***: Equip businesses with training, tools and peer networks to adapt to changing market conditions, including digital adoption and improved business planning.
- ***Clarify roles and build institutional capacity***: Define the responsibilities of the City, BMDA and other partners; ensure appropriate staffing, governance and resourcing to deliver support measures.
- ***Position the Market as a global showcase***: Uphold a "city-defining" standard by aligning business support interventions with long-term branding, sustainability and investment objectives.

5. Guiding Principles and Pillars of Support

5.1 Guiding principles

The Strategy is guided by the following principles, drawn from the previous analysis, internal discussion and broader project objectives:

- **Transparency and predictability:** Businesses should receive early, clear information about anticipated impacts, timelines and available supports.
- **Fairness and consistency:** Similarly situated businesses and tenants should be treated in a transparent and consistent manner, within the limits of existing legal and policy frameworks.
- **Accessibility and inclusion:** Supports should be accessible to a range of business types and sizes, including equity-seeking groups, and should consider language and cultural needs.
- **Collaboration:** The City, BMDA, businesses and partners function as an aligned support system with shared goals and regular communication.
- **Evidence-informed:** Tools and interventions are informed by best practices from other jurisdictions and adjusted based on feedback and monitoring.
- **Respect for legal and financial constraints:** The Strategy recognizes that certain supports, particularly those involving financial assistance, may require Council approval and are constrained by existing legislation and municipal authorities as well as contractual obligations. Any potential financial tools would not include direct compensation to businesses or property owners and would only explore measures already permitted (e.g. relocation assistance, heritage programs or grant streams subject to Council direction). Consideration of financial supports will be highly controlled to avoid setting unintended precedents for other City-led construction projects.

5.2 Pillars of support

The Strategy is organized around three pillars:

- **Broader Community:** Ensuring residents and visitors continue to view the Market as a destination for culture, dining, shopping and events during construction.
- **Businesses Impacted by Construction:** Delivering targeted continuity measures for businesses directly affected by construction disruption (e.g. access issues, noise, reduced visibility).
- **BMDA Tenants in City-owned Facilities:** Providing clear communication and support for tenants in City-owned facilities (notably 55 ByWard Market Square and 70 Clarence Street) whose leases may be affected by rehabilitation or redevelopment.

6. Impact Profiles and Priority Projects

For the purposes of this Strategy, businesses can be broadly grouped into three impact profiles, noting that opportunities for return to City-owned facilities will be limited by the future space program.

- **Operate in place with disruption:** Businesses that remain in their current premises but experience access, visibility or operational impacts due to adjacent construction.
- **Temporarily relocated with intent to return:** Businesses relocated during internal renovations or public realm works, with limited potential to return based on future space capacity and the tenanting model. Return opportunities are

anticipated to be few, and many existing tenants will fall under the permanent relocation profile.

- ***Businesses requiring permanent transition:*** Businesses that will not have a space within the redeveloped assets and will need to permanently relocate or cease operations as a result of redevelopment or construction impacts.

Project-specific action plans will map businesses to these profiles for:

- William Street
- ByWard Market Square
- York Street Plaza
- 55 ByWard Market Square (interior rehabilitation)
- 70 Clarence Street (demolition and redevelopment)

7. Strategic Areas of Action

7.1 Communication and Construction Coordination

Objectives:

- Maintain safe and clearly signed access routes throughout construction.
- Ensure 100% of affected businesses understand construction impacts and receive a business transition plan¹ outlining timing, support tools, and next steps.

Indicative tools:

- Consolidated construction information hub (webpage, e-mail list, signage)
- Regular construction bulletins and look-ahead schedules (e.g. two- to four-week windows)
- Clear maps showing pedestrian and vehicle access, delivery routes and alternative parking options
- On-site signage reinforcing that the Market remains “open and active during construction”
- Coordination protocols between project managers, contractors, BMDA and business liaison(s) to limit highly disruptive activities to agreed windows where feasible

7.2 Business Outreach, Liaison and Case Management

Objectives:

- Provide a single, reliable point of contact for businesses to raise concerns, seek information and access supports.

¹ A business transition plan is a tailored support plan for each directly affected business. It summarizes anticipated impacts, timelines, available support tools and next steps (including relocation considerations for BMDA tenants in City-owned facilities). A business transition plan is not a legal document and does not create financial entitlements or compensation. It is a planning tool to support business continuity during construction.

- Build trust through consistent and responsive outreach.

Indicative tools:

- Designation of a Business Liaison (or small team) responsible for:
 - Maintaining an up-to-date list of businesses and contact information
 - Conducting proactive visits and check-ins before and during construction
 - Escalating issues to project managers, Legal, BMDA or other City services as needed
- Brief business impact checklist used at key milestones (pre-construction, mid-construction, substantial completion), drawing on templates from other jurisdictions.
- Regular touchpoints with Downtown Rideau BIA and advisory committees.
- Connecting businesses with the appropriate City and BMDA contacts to help them develop and follow through on their transition plans, based on an understanding of their specific disruptions.

7.3 Business Support Services and Capacity Building

Objectives:

- Help businesses adapt their operations to construction impacts, including changes in customer patterns and access.

Indicative tools (non-financial):

- Development of a Business Toolkit with practical guidance on:
 - Signage, wayfinding and storefront presentation during construction
 - Adjusted operating hours and staffing strategies
 - Collaborations and cross-promotions between neighbouring businesses
- Peer-to-peer learning sessions and roundtables to share practical tips led by reputable facilitators
- Referral pathway to Small Business Enterprise Centre (SBEC) programs and advisory support
- Administration of supplemental workshops and one-on-one advisory support on:
 - Digital marketing, e-commerce and social media
 - Business continuity planning and cash-flow management
 - Customer communication and loyalty strategies

Indicative tools (policy options that may require further approval):

Based on current research, the Strategy recommends implementation of the non-financial tools outlined in Sections 7.1–7.4. These measures fall within existing municipal authority and can be advanced through operational planning, standard project management practices and partnership with the BMDA.

In addition, other jurisdictions have used financial tools (e.g. temporary tax or permit relief, façade improvement grants or targeted construction-related funding) as part of construction mitigation. In the context of ByWard, the applicability of such financial

measures would be subject to the City's authority under the Municipal Act and related legislation and would require further legal review and Council approval. These measures are identified for exploration only and do not constitute commitments.

For ByWard, such measures would need to be:

- Clearly defined as options for exploration, not commitments;
- Assessed against municipal authority, legal feasibility and City-wide policy consistency;
- Evaluated against available budget and potential precedent for other construction projects;
- Brought forward for Council consideration, if appropriate, as part of future reports.

7.4 Marketing, Programming and Customer Experience

Objectives:

- Sustain and grow foot traffic during construction by reinforcing the Market's identity as an active and welcoming destination.

Indicative tools:

- A coordinated "Market is Open" campaign (e.g. an "I ♥ ByWard" concept) linked to key milestones such as groundbreaking, major openings and anniversary events.
- Seasonal "shop local" promotions, loyalty programs and bundled offers with participating businesses.
- Enhanced programming (e.g. pop-up markets, music performances, cultural events and winter activations) to keep the district lively year-round.
- Tactical improvements to ambiance (temporary seating, greenery, lighting, art) to counteract construction impacts on the streetscape.

Marketing and programming will be coordinated with BMDA, Ottawa Tourism, Downtown Rideau BIA and other partners.

7.5 Support for BMDA Tenants in City-owned Facilities

This section focuses on tenants operating in City-owned facilities at 55 ByWard Market Square and 70 Clarence Street, where leases are administered by the ByWard Market District Authority under the Service and Asset Management Agreement. These tenants are expected to experience the most direct and sustained impacts from redevelopment activities and therefore require a more structured and proactive level of coordination, communication and support.

Context:

- BMDA is responsible for property management and tenancies, including tenant mix, lease negotiations and enforcement of lease terms and conditions.
- Individual BMDA lease templates include provisions for early termination (with notice) in cases such as demolition or substantial renovation and may also allow for tenant relocation within the complex.

- All lease agreements are required to include provisions permitting assignment to the City, at the City's option, and for early termination without penalty if the City cancels the Service and Asset Management Agreement.

This Strategy does not alter those legal arrangements. Instead, it outlines how the City and BMDA can communicate and coordinate around tenancy changes in a way that is fair, transparent and aligned with redevelopment objectives.

Objectives:

- Provide tenants with clear, early information about potential redevelopment scenarios and associated timelines.
- Ensure that notices and communications from BMDA are coordinated with City project timelines and Council decisions.
- Where feasible, facilitate orderly relocation or succession planning for displaced tenants.
- Refer businesses to available soft supports, including relocation assistance, business transition support and succession planning resources.
- Clarify that return opportunities to redeveloped City-owned premises will be limited and determined through future Council directions and the tenanting model for 55 ByWard and 70 Clarence.

Indicative tools:

- Clear internal protocol for sequencing:
 - Council and/or senior management decisions regarding demolition or major renovation
 - Legal review and guidance to BMDA on use of early termination or relocation clauses
 - BMDA issuance of required notices to tenants (e.g. minimum six-month notice periods where applicable)
- Joint City–BMDA tenant briefings to explain:
 - High-level redevelopment scenarios
 - Expected timelines and phasing
 - Available non-financial supports (e.g. marketing, business advisory services)
- Relocation advisory support, including:
 - Providing information on, and possible access to, other City-area commercial districts and available spaces (in collaboration with Economic Development staff and external partners)
 - Exploring the option of working with a local commercial real estate broker to identify suitable relocation opportunities for displaced tenants within defined radii (e.g. within 500 m, 1 km and 2 km of the Market), subject to procurement and policy considerations.
- Documenting lessons learned from the lease termination and relocation process to inform future redevelopment projects.

Any questions about entitlement, compensation or specific lease terms remain subject to individual leases and formal legal advice. This Strategy does not create new legal rights or obligations for the City or BMDA.

7.6 Monitoring, Evaluation and Adaptive Management

Objectives:

- Track whether supports are achieving intended outcomes (e.g. business continuity, access, customer perceptions).
- Use feedback to refine measures over time.

Indicative tools:

- A simple monitoring framework that tracks the following types of indicators:
 - Business continuity and occupancy trends
 - Reported ability to plan for disruption
 - Foot traffic and event participation (where data is available)
 - Qualitative feedback from surveys, interviews and briefings
- Regular internal reviews (e.g. quarterly) with BMDA and key City departments to adjust communications, programming and liaison activities.
- Public-facing progress updates that summarize key themes and adjustments.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

A more detailed RACI-style table can be added in a later iteration. At a high level:

- **City of Ottawa**
 - Overall coordination of the Strategy and alignment with capital project planning
 - Lead on construction communications, policy options and internal reporting to senior leadership and Council
 - Oversight of monitoring and evaluation framework
 - Business liaison role, including day-to-day coordination with merchants and vendors in the Market building and surrounding public realm
- **ByWard Market District Authority**
 - Front-line role in tenant relations, on-the-ground programming and activation
 - Administration of leases and use of lease provisions in coordination with the City
- **Businesses and Tenants**
 - Participation in communication channels, campaigns and training
 - Providing feedback on construction impacts and the effectiveness of supports
- **Partners (e.g. Downtown Rideau BIA, Ottawa Tourism, Ottawa Board of Trade, community organizations)**
 - Collaborating on marketing, events and outreach
 - Providing sector perspectives and amplifying information to members

9. Implementation Approach and Phasing

Implementation will be phased to align with the broader five-year plan for the priority projects:

- **Pre-construction (planning and design)**
 - Finalize the Strategy and secure internal alignment
 - Establish the business liaison function and basic communications channels
 - Begin business outreach and baseline data collection
- **Construction**
 - Launch project-specific action plans for William Street, ByWard Market Square and York Street
 - Activate core tools: construction bulletins, signage, liaison, business toolkit, early marketing support
- **Major construction and redevelopment phases (including 55 and 70)**
 - Integrate tenant support protocols and relocation advisory activities
 - Scale up programming and marketing interventions as needed
- **Post-construction / early operation of redeveloped assets**
 - Continue selected supports during the first years of operation to help businesses adjust to new conditions
 - Evaluate outcomes and consolidate lessons learned for future projects

A high-level approach to construction mitigation has been developed to support consistent implementation across the five projects and will be applied through individual project plans, as appropriate.

10. Measures Requiring Further Direction and Approval

Some potential tools identified through earlier concept development and external best practices fall outside existing municipal authority. Based on current analysis, the following measures are not being advanced as part of this Strategy:

- Direct financial assistance to businesses, such as operating grants, temporary tax relief or fee waivers
- Construction-specific compensation programs tied to business disruption or revenue loss

Other measures identified through research may warrant further exploration, subject to municipal authority, feasibility and Council direction. These may include:

- Targeted heritage or accessibility-related service agreement grants or improvements, where aligned with existing City programs and eligibility criteria
- Non-financial façade or storefront improvement initiatives delivered through existing programs or partnerships
- Partnerships with external service providers to support tenant relocation planning or advisory services
- Adjustments to existing policies or agreements affecting leasing, parking or programming, where consistent with City-wide policy frameworks

Any such measures would be brought forward for consideration through future reports related to feasibility analysis, implementation planning or funding strategies, as appropriate. This approach aligns with the Strategy's principle of respecting legal and financial constraints and avoids establishing precedents for other City-led construction projects.

11. Next Steps

Immediate next steps could include:

1. Incorporate feedback from internal review, including input from the ByWard Market District Authority and other involved City areas, to finalize the Business and Tenant Support Strategy.
2. Confirm the business liaison structure, internal coordination mechanisms and basic monitoring indicators to support consistent implementation across projects.
3. Prepare concise project-specific action plans to apply the Strategy to the following priority projects:
 - William Street
 - ByWard Market Square
 - York Street Plaza
 - 55 ByWard Market Square
 - 70 Clarence Street
4. Identify any measures arising from the Strategy that would require additional authority, funding or Council direction and outline appropriate pathways to bring these forward through future reports.