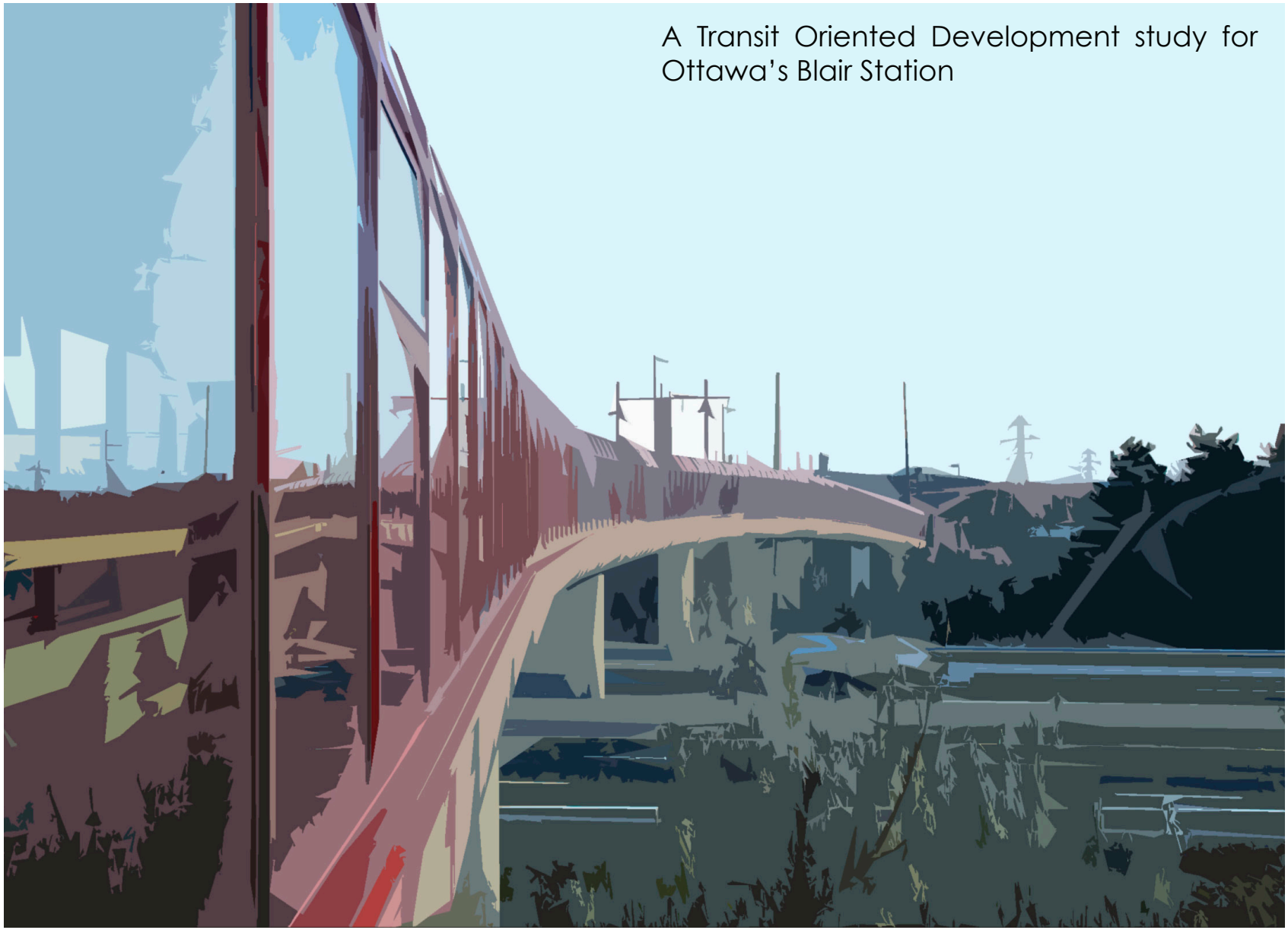
BLAIR STATION (RE)ENVISIONED

A Transit Oriented Development study for Ottawa's Blair Station



This report is the culmination of the Land Use Planning project course at the School of Urban and Regional Planning at Queen's University. This course gives students a simulated professional experience with a professional partner, the Policy Development and Urban Design Branch of the Planning and Growth Management Department at the City of Ottawa. The team presented Blair (Re)Envisioned to the City of Ottawa on December 13, 2012.

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Executive Summary

WHY STUDY THE BLAIR STATION AREA?

The City of Ottawa is converting the existing Transitway Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system from Tunney's Pasture to Blair Station to Light Rail Transit (LRT). This is expected to stimulate land use intensification and transit-oriented development (TOD) around future LRT stations. This study outlines a proposed plan for intensification of the Blair Station Area (BSA) in order to assure it develops into an integrated, complete community that meets the City's TOD density target of 400 people and jobs per gross hectare.

WHO AND WHAT INFORM THIS STUDY?

Four sources of information informed the design concepts presented in this study. First, the team visited the site, analysed policy documents, identified stakeholder relationships, compiled site history and looked at market trends across the region. Second, stakeholders were interviewed and provided valuable local knowledge. Third, the project team organized a design charrette that was attended by various experts in the fields of transportation, urban design and planning. Finally, an extensive study of 81 cases was undertaken to identify the most appropriate best practices from all over the world.

This extensive study helped the project team identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges (SWOC) of the BSA:

STRENGTHS

1. Existing transit infrastructure
2. Multi-use pathway system
3. Proximity to established neighbourhoods and amenities
4. Established employment area
5. Minimal environmental constraints

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Underutilized and vacant land
2. Policy framework
3. Growing employment
4. Future LRT
5. Large Rights of Way
6. Supportive stakeholders

WEAKNESSES

1. Poor internal pedestrian + cycling network
2. Unpleasant built environment
3. Segregation of land uses
4. Superblock development
5. Air & noise pollution
6. No central public spaces

CHALLENGES

1. Fragmented ownership
2. Little publically-owned land
3. Arterials at capacity
4. Disruptive hydro infrastructure
5. Competition from other TOD stations

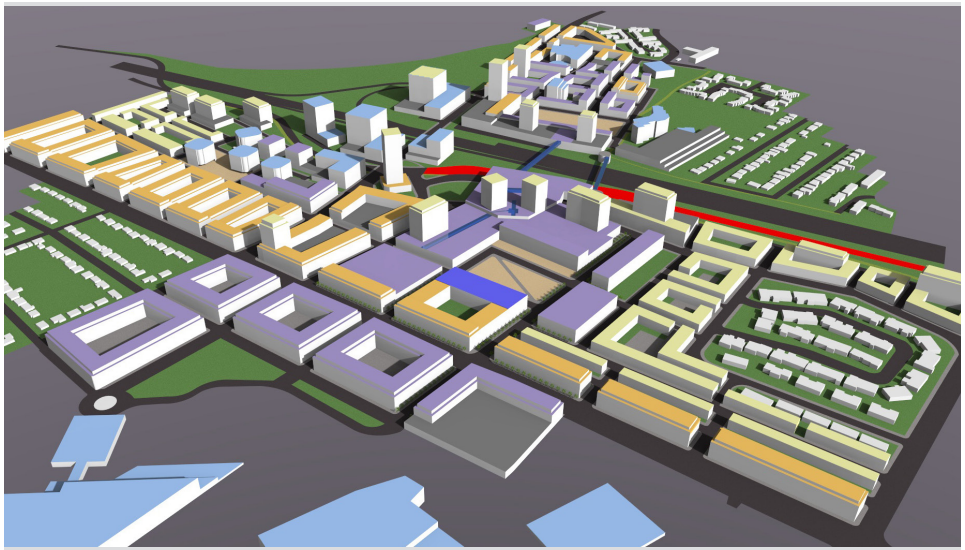
These inputs and the SWOC informed nine principles for design and a vision for the BSA.

PRINCIPLES

VISION

To transform the Blair Station Area (BSA) into a diverse, connected, compact and transit-oriented destination that enhances the quality of life for existing and future residents and transit users.

HOW WILL THE DESIGN ACHIEVE THIS VISION?



TARGET CONCEPT

The recommended design achieves the minimum gross density target of 400 by siting tall buildings appropriately.

KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

- Approximately 420 people + jobs per gross ha
- Towers sited to take advantage of Greenbelt views and minimize shadow impact
- Medium rise and appropriately placed tall buildings
- An urban street network connecting to neighbourhoods and amenities
- Podium-and-tower style of development to ensure comfortable streets
- Primarily perimeter block built form to maximize human-scale density
- Highest density around transit station
- Reconfigured on- and off- ramps to create new land for development
- Re-connected multi-use trail network allows safe, efficient active mobility
- An upgraded pedestrian bridge and new cycling bridge
- Weather-protected, seamless connection from station to shopping centres
- Minimize surface parking using underground and structures

PHASING

The plan is expected to be phased over 25-40 years in order to minimize risk, ensure market absorption of new developments, and create an orderly, appropriate and logical site.

PHASE 1: Station

- Integrate station with Gloucester Centre
- Improve pedestrian and cycling circulation
- Replace Shoppers City East with residential infill

PHASE 2: Placemaking

- Create new public plazas
- Continue infill around plazas
- Construct new community centre
- Make streets pedestrian-friendly

PHASE 3: Infill

- Infill mixed use and residential on existing underutilized parking lots
- Replace some existing buildings where appropriate

PHASE 4: (Re)Envisioned

- Realign interchange
- Infill on CSIS lands
- Extend grid street network to the north

HOW WILL THE DESIGN BE IMPLEMENTED?

TOD plans often go unrealized because not enough attention is paid to practical solutions. This plan incorporates a comprehensive implementation plan with innovative solutions to critical barriers. Ten strategies are recommended to ensure that the plan is implemented according to good TOD principles:

1. Lead rather than regulate development by acquiring land and entering into public-private partnerships (P3s)
2. Create policies and incentives, that facilitate the right kind of development
3. Invest heavily in infrastructure and align improvements with phasing strategy
4. Develop a comprehensive parking strategy
5. Improve the development approvals and review process
6. Develop performance indicators to evaluate and monitor progress
7. Create a Business Improvement Area (BIA) for Blair Station Area
8. Make Official Plan (OP) and Zoning By-law amendments
9. Employ Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies
10. Prioritize effective public consultation

DOES THIS PLAN ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVES?

The existing site and design concepts have been evaluated against criteria developed from Ottawa's TOD guidelines and the precedent studies. While the Carpet Concept meets most of the objectives, the Target Concept is preferred because it reaches a sufficient minimum gross density, creates landmarks, and achieves a greater mix of building types.

	Existing	Carpet	Target
Gross Density	91	360	420
Gross FSI	0.3	1.25	1.55
Net FSI	0.6	2.14	2.65
Dwelling Units	797	8,565	12,533
DU/ha	5.8	62	91
Residents	2,015	15,222	21,598
Residents/ha	15	110	158
Jobs	10,517	34,409	36,231
Jobs/ha	76	250	262
Jobs/Residents	5.2	2.27	1.66
Max Storeys	8 (32m)	8 (32m)	28 (88.5 m)
Parking Spaces	9,195	8,475	9,813

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS?

1. The BSA presents a great opportunity for TOD.
2. Stakeholders should be continuously consulted.
3. The Target Concept design is recommended in order to achieve the vision for the BSA.
4. Development must be phased, employing the ten recommended strategies in order to ensure implementation.
5. A Community Development Plan (CDP) should be prepared to guide implementation and engage the community in the planning process.

Target	Carpet	Existing		
●	◐	○	sufficient density	**Land Use**
●	●	○	complete community	
●	●	◔	mix of land uses	
●	●	○	provide high quality public realm	
●	◐	○	create landmarks	**Built Form**
●	●	○	open space/ green space	
●	●	○	prioritize pedestrians	
●	●	○	integration with existing neighbourhoods	**Streetscape + Environment**
●	◐	◔	mix of building types	
●	●	○	minimize surface parking	
●	●	○	parking at back or underground	
●	●	◐	max. parking standards	
●	●	◔	parking management	**Vehicles + Parking**
●	●	○	promote seamless integration of trans. modes	
●	●	●	proximity to transit	
●	●	◐	infrastructure for cyclists	**Transit, Pedestrians + Cyclists**
●	●	○	complete streets	
●	●	○	amenities at station	
●	●	○	street grid	
●	●	○	internal connectivity	**Layout**
●	●	○	connection to station	
●	●	◔	connection to surrounding neighbourhoods	