

PLANNING & DESIGN REPORT
Official Plan Amendment & Zoning By-law Amendment

**649 Colborne Street
London, Ontario**



Executive Summary

This Planning Rationale Report has been prepared in support of applications to amend the Official Plan and Zoning By-law for the property municipally known as 649 Colborne Street, London, Ontario. The applications seek to establish a site-specific Official Plan policy and amend the existing R02(12) zoning through a special provision to expand the list of permitted uses while retaining the underlying zoning classification.

The proposed additional permitted uses include:

- Personal Service Establishments
- Restaurants
- Bars
- Convenience Stores

No expansion of the existing building is proposed. The application is intended to provide greater flexibility for the continued occupancy of the building while recognizing its long-standing role as a community-serving property. The report demonstrates consistency with the Provincial Planning Statement (2024), conformity with The London Plan, and provides detailed planning justification for a Specific Area Policy under Policy 1738_.

1.0 Introduction

This Planning Rationale Report has been prepared in support of applications to amend the City of London Official Plan and Comprehensive Zoning By-law for the lands municipally known as 649 Colborne Street, London, Ontario. The report has been prepared to satisfy the City's complete application requirements and to provide an independent professional planning opinion regarding the merits of the proposed amendments.

The proposal does not seek to change the underlying RO2(12) zoning classification. Rather, it seeks to expand the range of permitted uses through a site-specific special provision while maintaining the existing building and its established function. The requested additional uses include personal service establishments, restaurants, bars and convenience stores. These uses are intended to complement the building's existing office, medical office and community-oriented functions.

The property has a unique history within the City of London. From 1974 until 2000 it was occupied by the HALO Club (Homophile Association of London Ontario), an important community organization serving London's LGBTQ+ community. Since that time, the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada (ANAF) has occupied much of the building, while other portions are occupied by office and medical office tenants. The proposal will enable the continued adaptive evolution of this established community destination without significant physical change.

The purpose of this report is to demonstrate that the proposed Official Plan Amendment and site-specific expansion of permitted uses within the existing RO2(12) Zone are consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement (2024), conform to The London Plan, satisfy the evaluation criteria for a Specific Area Policy, represent good planning, and are in the public interest.

Section 2.0 – Subject Property Description and Site History

2.1 Subject Property

The subject lands are municipally known as 649 Colborne Street in the City of London, Ontario. The property is situated on the east side of Colborne Street within an established mixed-use area containing institutional, office, commercial and residential uses. The site is occupied by a substantial two-storey masonry building constructed circa 1900. Over its more than one-hundred-year history, the building has accommodated a variety of institutional, community and commercial activities and has become a recognizable landmark within this portion of the city.

The existing building remains in continuous productive use and is capable of accommodating a variety of compatible tenants without significant structural alteration. The property is fully serviced by municipal water, sanitary sewer, stormwater infrastructure and the City's transportation network. Existing parking and site access adequately support both the current tenants and the proposed expansion of permitted uses.

The property is currently zoned Restricted Office Special Provision RO2(12). The applications do not propose to change the underlying zoning classification. Instead, a site-specific amendment is requested to expand the list of permitted uses while maintaining the existing zoning framework and the established character of the site.

2.2 Existing Building

Constructed circa 1900, the existing building represents an important component of the Colborne Street streetscape. The proposal is centred on the continued use and long-term viability of this existing building rather than its redevelopment. Reusing an existing building of this age supports sustainable planning objectives by extending the useful life of the building stock while minimizing the environmental impacts associated with demolition and new construction.

The building currently accommodates the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada (ANAF), professional office tenants and medical office tenants. Interest has also been expressed by a barber wishing to lease space within the building; however, this neighbourhood-serving use is not presently permitted under the existing zone.

2.3 Historical Evolution

For more than a century the building has evolved to meet the changing needs of the London community. Rather than remaining tied to a single institutional or commercial function, it has accommodated successive community organizations and service providers while maintaining continuous occupancy. This long history of adaptation demonstrates that the building has successfully responded to changing social and economic conditions without compromising compatibility with the surrounding neighbourhood.

2.4 The HALO Club (1974–2000)

Between 1974 and 2000 the property served as the home of the Homophile Association of London Ontario (HALO). HALO was one of Canada's earliest LGBTQ+ organizations and the building became an important centre for community meetings, educational programming, advocacy, social events and peer support. This period established 649 Colborne Street as a destination for community activity and forms an important part of London's social history.

The significance of HALO's occupation extends beyond the physical building. It demonstrates a long-established pattern of public-serving and community-oriented activity that has continued through subsequent occupants.

2.5 Continued Community Use

Following HALO's occupancy, the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada (ANAF) became the principal occupant of the main floor and basement. ANAF continues to provide meeting facilities, veterans' services and community programming. The remainder of the building accommodates professional offices and medical offices, reflecting the site's ongoing role as a multi-tenant community resource.

2.6 Existing Planning Context

The proposed applications are intended to facilitate the continued evolution of this established community building. No demolition, building expansion, increase in height, increase in density or significant alteration to the site's physical form is proposed. Instead, the applications seek to expand the list of permitted uses within the existing RO2(12) Zone to include additional neighbourhood-serving commercial uses such as personal service establishments, restaurants, bars and convenience stores.

Recognizing the property's century-long history, its role as the home of HALO, its continued use by ANAF and its established office and medical office tenants, the proposed amendments represent a logical evolution of an existing community destination. They support the continued vitality of the property while preserving its character and reinforcing its contribution to the surrounding neighbourhood.

Section 3.0 – Planning Policy Framework

3.1 Provincial Planning Statement (2024)

The Provincial Planning Statement (2024) provides the policy direction for land use planning in Ontario. The proposed Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment have been evaluated against the applicable policies of the PPS. The proposal represents an efficient reuse of an existing building within a fully serviced urban area and supports a broader range of neighbourhood-serving commercial uses without requiring additional land consumption or expansion of municipal infrastructure.

- Supports complete communities by providing additional neighbourhood-serving commercial and service uses.
- Promotes efficient use of existing land, infrastructure and building stock through continued occupancy of a circa-1900 building.
- Encourages economic development by providing opportunities for small businesses, local employment and investment.
- Represents compatible infill and adaptive reuse with no increase in building height, footprint or density.

In the opinion of the author, the proposal is consistent with the intent of the Provincial Planning Statement (2024) because it promotes efficient development, strengthens complete communities, and facilitates the continued productive use of an established community building.

3.2 The London Plan

The subject property is designated 'Neighbourhoods Place Type' in The London Plan. The Neighbourhoods Place Type supports complete neighbourhoods by providing a mix of housing, employment, institutional, commercial and community uses that serve the daily needs of residents. The proposal does not alter the existing built form or introduce redevelopment. Instead, it expands the range of permitted uses within the existing building to better respond to changing market conditions while preserving compatibility with the surrounding neighbourhood.

The application also seeks a site-specific Official Plan amendment through a Specific Area Policy. A detailed evaluation of the applicable Specific Area Policy criteria, including Policy 1738_, will be provided in a subsequent section of this report.

3.3 Existing Zoning

The property is zoned Restricted Office Special Provision (RO2(12)). The application does not seek to replace or remove the existing zoning category. Rather, it requests a site-specific amendment to expand the list of permitted uses while retaining the underlying RO2(12) zoning framework. The proposed additional permitted uses are Personal Service Establishments, Restaurants, Bars and Convenience Stores.

3.4 Record of Pre-Application Consultation

The proposal was reviewed through the City of London's Record of Pre-Application Consultation process. The purpose of this review was to identify technical matters requiring further study prior to the submission of a formal application.

The following agencies and municipal departments indicated that they had no comments or concerns regarding the proposal:

- Urban Design
- Landscape Architecture
- Development Engineering
- Parks Long Range Planning and Design
- Heritage / Archaeology
- Ecology
- Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA)

The absence of technical concerns indicates that the proposal is not expected to adversely affect urban design, servicing, engineering, heritage resources, archaeology, natural heritage, parks planning or conservation authority interests. The remaining planning issues therefore relate primarily to land use policy and the appropriateness of expanding the permitted uses within the existing RO2(12) Zone.

3.5 Summary of the Planning Policy Framework

The applicable planning framework supports the continued evolution of 649 Colborne Street as a community-serving property. The proposal retains the existing building, maintains the underlying RO2(12) zoning classification, introduces no increase in height or density, and expands the range of neighbourhood-serving commercial uses through site-specific Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendments. Collectively, the Provincial Planning Statement (2024), The London Plan and the results of the City's pre-application review provide a sound policy basis for the proposed amendments.

Section 4.0 – Conformity with The London Plan

4.3 Compatibility with the Surrounding Area

A fundamental objective of The London Plan is to ensure that development and changes in land use are compatible with surrounding properties while contributing positively to the character and function of the neighbourhood. The proposed Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment satisfy this objective.

Importantly, the application does not propose any physical changes to the subject property. There are no additions, no increase in building height, no expansion of the building footprint, no alterations to the existing parking areas, no modifications to site access, and no changes to the established streetscape.

The proposal is limited to a site-specific expansion of permitted uses within the existing RO2(12) Zone. Existing parking facilities, municipal servicing and access remain unchanged and continue to support the proposed uses.

The surrounding area already contains a diverse mix of land uses including a commercial parking lot, an eat-in coffee shop, office buildings, the railway corridor and nearby residential development. Within this established mixed-use urban corridor, the proposed neighbourhood-serving commercial uses are compatible with the surrounding land use pattern and are not expected to create adverse land use impacts.

4.4 Specific Area Policy

Although the proposed uses are contemplated within the Neighbourhoods Place Type, a Specific Area Policy is required because the existing planning framework and RO2(12) zoning do not fully recognize the unique historic function of the subject property.

Constructed circa 1900, the building has served the London community for more than one century. Between 1974 and 2000 it was occupied by the Homophile Association of London Ontario (HALO), one of Canada's earliest LGBTQ+ organizations. Since that time the building has continued its community-serving role through the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada (ANAF), professional office tenants and medical office tenants.

This long-standing pattern of community-oriented activity distinguishes 649 Colborne Street from other Restricted Office properties. The requested Specific Area Policy recognizes the property's unique evolution and establishes an appropriate planning framework for a site-specific expansion of permitted uses within the existing RO2(12) Zone. Because of these unique circumstances, the proposal does not establish an undesirable precedent.

4.5 Professional Planning Opinion

The proposed Official Plan Amendment and site-specific expansion of permitted uses within the existing Restricted Office Special Provision (RO2(12)) Zone represent sound land use planning.

The proposal preserves the existing building, introduces no changes to its scale, massing, parking supply or access, and supports the continued evolution of a building that has served London for more than one hundred years.

The proposed additional uses will enhance the long-term viability of the property while providing increased access to neighbourhood-serving goods and services. This will benefit nearby residents, employees and visitors by expanding the availability of convenient commercial services within an established mixed-use urban corridor.

The proposal is also supported by the City's Record of Pre-Application Consultation, through which Urban Design, Landscape Architecture, Development Engineering, Parks Long Range Planning and Design, Heritage/Archaeology, Ecology and the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority identified no concerns with the application.

For these reasons, the proposal is consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement (2024), conforms to the overall intent of The London Plan, justifies a site-specific Specific Area Policy, represents good planning and is in the public interest.

Section 5.0 – Evaluation of Specific Area Policy (Policy 1738_)

This section evaluates the proposed Official Plan Amendment against the intent of Policy 1738_ of The London Plan. The requested Specific Area Policy is intended to recognize the unique characteristics of 649 Colborne Street and permit a site-specific expansion of permitted uses within the existing Restricted Office Special Provision (RO2(12)) Zone.

5.1 Consistency with the Provincial Planning Statement (2024)

The proposal is consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement by promoting the efficient use of an existing building and municipal infrastructure while expanding neighbourhood-serving commercial opportunities. No greenfield development, expansion of the building or additional infrastructure is required.

Planning Opinion: In my opinion, this criterion is satisfied by the proposed Official Plan Amendment and the site-specific expansion of permitted uses within the existing RO2(12) Zone.

5.2 Conformity with The London Plan

The subject property is within the Neighbourhoods Place Type. The proposed personal service establishments, restaurants, bars and convenience stores contribute to complete communities by increasing access to local services within an established mixed-use urban corridor. The proposal conforms to the overall intent of the Place Type.

Planning Opinion: In my opinion, this criterion is satisfied by the proposed Official Plan Amendment and the site-specific expansion of permitted uses within the existing RO2(12) Zone.

5.3 Site-Specific Circumstances

649 Colborne Street is unique. The circa-1900 building has served the community continuously for more than a century. Between 1974 and 2000 it was occupied by the Homophile Association of London Ontario (HALO). It has since continued as a community-serving property through ANAF together with office and medical office tenants. The existing planning framework does not fully recognize this longstanding pattern of community use.

Planning Opinion: This criterion is satisfied by the proposed Official Plan Amendment and the site-specific expansion of permitted uses within the existing RO2(12) Zone.

5.4 Compatibility

No changes are proposed to the building, parking supply, access, building height, massing or site layout. The surrounding area already includes a commercial parking lot, eat-in coffee shop, office buildings, the railway corridor and nearby residential uses. The proposal is therefore compatible with the existing land use pattern.

Planning Opinion: In my opinion, this criterion is satisfied by the proposed Official Plan Amendment and the site-specific expansion of permitted uses within the existing RO2(12) Zone.

5.5 Public Interest

The proposal broadens the availability of neighbourhood-serving services, supports local businesses, increases opportunities for employment and improves the long-term viability of a significant community building without creating adverse land use impacts.

Planning Opinion: In my opinion, this criterion is satisfied by the proposed Official Plan Amendment and the site-specific expansion of permitted uses within the existing RO2(12) Zone.

5.6 Precedent

The requested Specific Area Policy responds to the unique history and function of this property. It is not intended to establish a broad planning policy for other Restricted Office properties and therefore does not create an undesirable planning precedent.

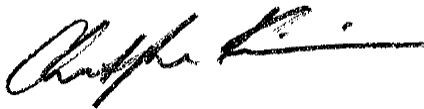
Planning Opinion: In my opinion, this criterion is satisfied by the proposed Official Plan Amendment and the site-specific expansion of permitted uses within the existing RO2(12) Zone.

5.7 Overall Planning Opinion

The evaluation above demonstrates that the requested Specific Area Policy responds to the unique planning circumstances of the subject property while maintaining conformity with the overall objectives of The London Plan. The proposal recognizes the building's historical evolution, preserves its existing form, introduces no physical changes to the site and expands opportunities for neighbourhood-serving commercial uses that benefit surrounding residents, employees and visitors.

It is therefore my opinion that the proposed Official Plan Amendment and related site-specific expansion of permitted uses within the existing RO2(12) Zone satisfy the intent of Policy 1738_, represent good planning, and are in the public interest.

Sincerely,



Christopher L. Kirwin

Direct +1 519 438 4300 x 201 | Cell +1 519 854 4446
649 Colborne Street | London, ON N6A 3Z2 | Canada
6-2557 Dougall Avenue, Suite 244 | Windsor, ON N8X 1T5 | Canada
393 First Street, Suite 307 | Collingwood, ON L9Y 1B3 | Canada

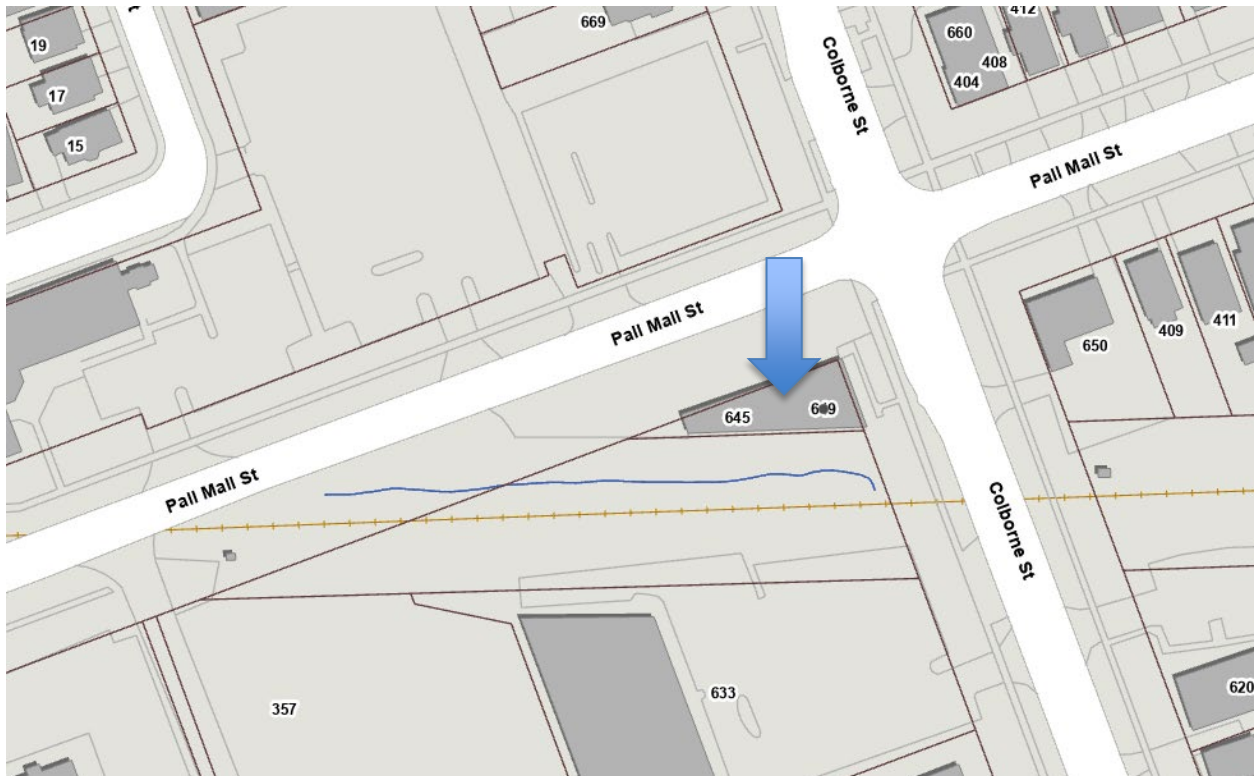
Appendix A

Existing Site Mapping and Photographs

649 Colborne Street, London, Ontario

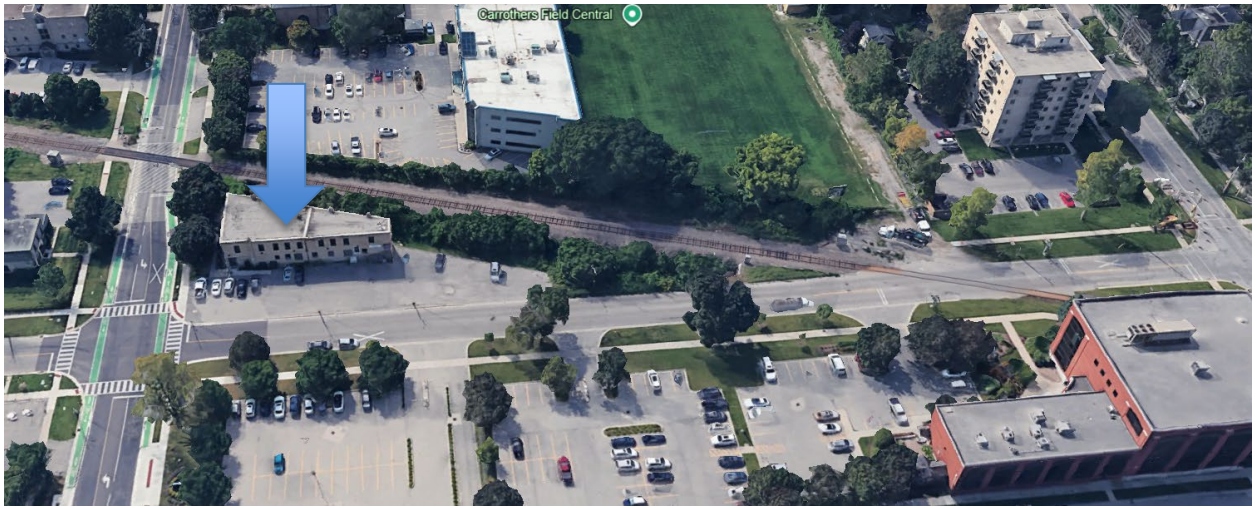
This appendix provides mapping and photographic documentation of the subject property. The figures illustrate the location of the property, its surrounding context, and the existing condition of the building and parking areas. Collectively, they demonstrate that the application is limited to a site-specific expansion of permitted uses within the existing RO2(12) Zone and does not propose physical changes to the building, parking areas or site access.

Figure A-1 – Key Map



Key map identifying the subject property.

Figure A-2 – Aerial Photograph



Aerial photograph showing the building, parking area, railway corridor and surrounding land uses.

Figure A-3 – Front Elevation



View of the principal façade from Colborne Street.

Figure A-4 – Streetscape View



View illustrating the surrounding mixed-use corridor.

Figure A-5 – Parking Area



View of the existing parking area demonstrates no physical changes are proposed.

Summary

The mapping and photographs confirm that the subject property is an established community-serving building situated within a mixed-use urban corridor. The proposal retains the existing building, parking supply and site access, and seeks only a site-specific expansion of permitted uses.