



20 March 2014

The Mayor and Councillors
City of Ottawa
110 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 1J1

Privately-Owned Purpose-Built Student Residence – 275 Laurier Avenue East

Dear Mayor and Councillors:

On March 26, 2014, Council will be called upon to decide on whether or not to grant planning approval for the proposal to build a privately-owned purpose-built student residence at 275 Laurier Avenue East. The City's Planning Committee will recommend approval of this application to rezone the site and amend the Official Plan. We strongly urge you to reject this recommendation.

Action Sandy Hill (ASH) and residents of the community are concerned about the dramatic spot-rezoning that Planning Committee is recommending in this case. Council itself approved a new Official Plan in the fall that ostensibly was intended at least in part to make the rules clearer so that spot-rezoning such as this would become less prevalent. Councillor Hume, Chair of the Planning Committee, indicated that the goal was to have more predictable planning and development outcomes so that residents would know what to expect and developers would know what was allowed. Continuing to allow such significant spot-rezoning is contrary to the stated goal of the new Official Plan.

This large one-acre development would be completely out of scale with its neighbours and out of character with the area. In order for this proposal to proceed, Council would have to approve the demolition of five buildings of heritage value within blocks of Laurier House, Stadacona Hall and many other significant historic buildings. The entire heritage character of Laurier Avenue East – arguably one of the most important historical streets in Ottawa – would be permanently altered. Council would also have to approve significant changes in zoning and to the Official Plan, including that the existing height limit be nearly tripled, the parking requirements be reduced by more than half, the side and rear-yard setbacks be reduced, the density be increased by 5 times, that commercial uses be allowed where the existing secondary plan expressly forbid them, etc. This is what Sandy Hill people, in large numbers, object to. We also object to being accused of discrimination against students when we have clearly chosen to live in a neighbourhood with a diverse population which includes students. We are striving to retain this diversity and, in fact, the developer is the one who would be discriminating by not allowing anyone but students to live in this building if it is built.

ASH accepts that the construction of off-campus privately-owned student residences will likely be necessary given the failure of post-secondary institutions to plan for their growing enrollment. We also believe that they may make a positive contribution in the future, provided that the City develops appropriate policies for siting and planning such developments. Let's be clear, this proposal is not for a standard apartment building, despite the Planning Department's assertion to the contrary. Even the proponent calls this building a, "purpose-built student residence" in their planning rationale. It is in fact a large institutional building in the middle of a predominantly low-rise residential neighbourhood. And it is the first of several such proposals you will be called to decide upon. These proposals currently include:

- 45 Mann – a 9-storey, privately-owned purpose-built student residence with 355 beds;
- 202 Henderson – a 5-storey, University owned purpose-built off-campus student residence in residential Sandy Hill with 172 beds; and,
- The University of Ottawa's RFI to be built somewhere off-campus in residential Centretown, Lowertown, Old Ottawa East or Sandy Hill with up to 1,000 beds.

Rather than continuing to insist falsely that the City cannot zone for users only use, the City needs to address the dramatic impact that such developments will ultimately have on our residential communities.

ASH and nine other community associations from across the City have called upon Council to develop a student housing strategy. Councillors representing the wards where the post-secondary institutions are located support this call and also oppose the Viner development. This is because we are all aware first hand of the effects of poor planning on our neighbourhoods. We are not asking that such developments be banned, only that the City acknowledges that they have different requirements than a standard residential apartment building and need to be judged against unique policies. We are also asking that the City respect the existing Official Plan and Sandy Hill Secondary Plan which do not envisage or permit such a large development in this location.

We believe firmly that the Viner proposal does not meet the policies and objectives of the Sandy Hill Secondary Plan and the City's Official Plan and have an opinion from a professional urban planner supporting our position. We believe it is inappropriate to place a nine-storey institutional building in a residential area zoned for four. We also believe the City must live up to its commitment to achieve more certainty in planning outcomes and stop engaging in dramatic spot rezoning.

Sincerely,



Christopher Collmorgen
President, Action Sandy Hill