



October 2015

Matthew Ippersiel, Planner
Policy Development & Urban Design Branch
City of Ottawa
110 Laurier Ave W
Ottawa (ON)

Re: Draft New Uptown Rideau Community Design Plan and Secondary Plan

Dear Matthew,

As you know, Action Sandy Hill (ASH) has been involved in the process of developing the new Community Design Plan (CDP) and Secondary Plan for Uptown Rideau from the beginning. This has been a lengthy process, beginning with an Open House in March 2014 at the Rideau branch of the Ottawa Public Library. Many of our members, and indeed many residents, attended that open house; admittedly a bit skeptical of the motives behind rewriting a plan less than a decade old. We were convinced at that meeting that City staff had the best of intentions; that the review was needed to give the plan more teeth and make it more enforceable; and that the reason was not to simply permit more high-rises. Sadly, the resulting new draft plans appear to do just that.

Since that initial open house, ASH has hosted city planners at three meetings of our planning committee where we enjoyed comprehensive discussions of the plans and process. We also invited staff to have a table at our Annual General Meeting so they could discuss the plan more broadly with our membership. ASH appointed a representative to the city's public working group for the review of the Uptown Rideau CDP, and we have submitted extensive written comments on the various drafts of the new plan. Given all of this, we will limit our final comments to the most important issues remaining, but expect that all of our previous comments will still be taken into consideration and either incorporated into the plans or addressed in the staff report.

Rideau Street was once a bustling, thriving main street and today it is an unwelcoming street that many pedestrians simply avoid and that cyclists are directed away from. Let's not forget that the current state of Uptown Rideau is largely the result of past urban planning decisions by the City, and of developers who have refused for decades to develop the vacant lots and derelict buildings they own. It is time that action is taken to reverse the harm that has been done, and chart a new course for Uptown Rideau.

It should be clear that we are invested in this project and in the future of Rideau Street. We want to see appropriate redevelopment that will have a positive impact on Rideau and the surrounding communities. The following three aspects of the proposed draft new CDP and Secondary Plan for Uptown Rideau will, in our opinion, undermine the vision and core principles of the plans:

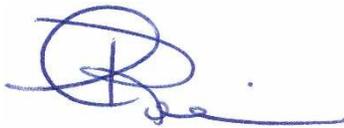
1. The entire vision of the plan rests on establishing character areas and identifying what characteristics make each unique, then basing recommendations for future built form on those defining characteristics. However, the exception being proposed in character area A for 560 Rideau undermines this entire concept. This property, like the rest of character area A, is not appropriate for high-rise development and density redistribution as the lot is too shallow to allow proper transitions to the low-rise buildings behind it. We have engaged a professional planner who believes that City

Council erred in their decision to approve a high-rise at this site; and we are confident that the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) will agree with this assertion. As such, it is critical that this anomaly be removed from the final plans and instead Council's decision, which is not yet in effect, should be more clearly recognized for what it is, an exception that does not yet apply, should not apply at all, and may well be overturned by the OMB. Should this section of the proposed plans not be corrected we will have no choice but to file an appeal with the OMB.

2. ASH, along with other community representatives, have made it clear throughout the review process that we are opposed to the inclusion of the concept of density redistribution in the final plans because it undermines the notion that community planning should result in more certainty. These plans also permit high-rise development, under certain circumstances, on about 70% of Uptown Rideau's street frontage despite the fact that it is designated a traditional mainstreet by the Official Plan, meaning it should generally be a street of mid-rise development. Given all the discussions we have had on this issue, we accept that staff will not remove the concept of density redistribution from the final plans. Therefore, we insist that the pre-requisite requirements be made more onerous. At the least, additional requirements for minimum lot depth and transitions should be added. A minimum lot depth should be determined by following the City's own guidelines and requirements for high-rise development, particularly the transition requirements, and calculating the minimum lot depth needed to meet the City's guidelines. We also want a thorough review of all areas that potentially permit high-rise development, including modeling, to clearly demonstrate the maximum build-out possible.
3. Finally, the core principle of improving pedestrian and cycling links to and through the area is compromised by the complete lack of recommended improvements on Rideau Street itself. While we understand that Rideau Street has just been rebuilt, we believe that further improvements could be made with simple changes, including advanced walk lights, a lower speed limit, and lane reductions through repainting in order to accommodate bike lanes. We are not asking that the right-of-way be widened by acquiring land through redevelopment, rather we are asking that the City consider easy, inexpensive ways to make Uptown Rideau more accommodating and welcoming for pedestrians and cyclists.

After all the time and energy we and other community representatives have invested in this process we hope that the final plans will be amended so that we can support them.

Best regards,



Chad Rollins
President, ASH

Cc: Mathieu Fleury, Councillor – Ward 12