



30 May 2017

Stephen Willis, General Manager
Planning, Infrastructure & Economic Development
City of Ottawa
110 Laurier Ave W
Ottawa (ON) K1P 1J1

Re: Action Sandy Hill's Special Resolution on R4 Review

Dear Mr. Willis,

Action Sandy Hill (ASH) is a volunteer-led community association that represents and promotes the interests of Sandy Hill and its residents. One of our primary objectives is to preserve and enhance Sandy Hill's residential integrity and unique urban heritage in architecture and landscapes. To that end, we believe that development in Sandy Hill should be respectful of the surrounding neighbours and make a positive contribution to the overall community.

As you are aware, development in our near-campus neighbourhood has been of enormous concern over the past several years; with a proliferation of low-rise apartment buildings that are built to the maximum buildable envelope and contain as many bedrooms as possible. These buildings tend to operate outside the law, as they rent individual rooms to complete strangers who share common space but do not function as a housekeeping unit; and, while this effectively makes them rooming houses, they do not register and obtain a rooming house license from the City. These *de facto* rooming houses, often referred to as 'bunkhouses', have considerably altered many streetscapes in Sandy Hill and have created countless nuisance issues which challenge the capacity of By-law enforcement and necessitate more by-law attention and action in Sandy Hill; a completely unproductive use of limited resources.

As such, ASH participated with great anticipation in the Infill 1, Infill 2, and Residential Conversions studies, with the hope of arresting the development of these bunkhouses and the ensuing deterioration of the surrounding areas. Sadly, we have found that these studies have had almost no impact on the development of bunkhouses, which continue to spread virtually unimpeded. Naturally, ASH welcomed the City's announcement of another zoning study, the R4 Review, to try to address this issue once and for all.

However, we are very concerned that the proposals coming from the R4 Review do not address the root of the problem, which is that these buildings are invariably out-of-scale and out-of-character with the neighbourhood, typically increase the number of people on site six-fold or more, and are operating almost exclusively as illegal rooming houses, unlicensed and, most worryingly, uninspected. As such, ASH organized a special meeting of members and residents on 27 April 2017 to discuss the City's ongoing R4 zoning review, as well as the broader issue of development in Sandy Hill. Your attendance, and that of Tim Moerman and David Wise, at that special meeting was very much appreciated.

Subsequently, we drafted the attached special resolution and presented it to our members at our Annual General Meeting on May 18, 2017, where it was unanimously adopted. This resolution calls on the City to take a more holistic approach to this issue and to develop a comprehensive solution that will reverse recent trends in Sandy Hill. It further suggests some measures that should be considered as part of this review, including R4 down-zoning; implementing a Floor Space Index (FSI) for all residential zoning; creating a rental property licensing system; and, maintaining Site Plan Control for all development in Sandy Hill. None of these are new ideas; FSI limits and rental licensing have been used successfully in other parts of Ontario in order to address similar problems.

While we understand from John Smit that the intention is to bring recommendations to Council before year-end, we remain concerned about what will happen in the interim. History suggests that many more bunkhouses may be built over the course of this summer; and each new bunkhouse contributes further to the overall deterioration of Sandy Hill. Not to mention that eventual changes to the R4 zoning will only affect new development and will do nothing to improve these existing buildings. Therefore, we also want to stress the importance of taking some interim measures. A meeting, at your earliest possible convenience, to discuss interim measures is necessary.

In this sesquicentennial year, as we celebrate the 150th Anniversary of Confederation, it is incomprehensible to us that the City of Ottawa continues to allow the wanton destruction of Sandy Hill, a nationally-important neighbourhood which has been home to ten Prime Ministers and seven Fathers of Confederation. Sandy Hill is one of the earliest neighbourhoods in this City, where for much of our history our leaders have lived and breathed and dreamed of Canada. The Prime Ministers' Row initiative – which has been adopted by the National Capital Commission in its 2017-2067 Official Plan as one of the Milestone Projects for the National Capital Region – is endeavouring to create Canada's first street museum along Laurier Avenue East and surrounding areas, straight through the heart of Sandy Hill. Wouldn't it be an amazing Canada150 legacy for the entire nation if the City of Ottawa finally stepped-up, took charge, and did something to preserve and protect the national treasure that is Sandy Hill.

Sincerely,



Chad Rollins
President, ASH

Cc Mathieu Fleury, Councillor – Ward 12
John Smit, Director – Economic Development
David Wise, Program Manager – Zoning & Interpretation
Tim Moerman, Planner II

Encl (1)

SPECIAL RESOLUTION OF THE MEMBERS OF ACTION SANDY HILL
Unanimously Adopted at the Annual General Meeting held 18 May 2017

Preamble

Over the past seven years the City of Ottawa has undertaken several planning studies designed to address problems with infill development in Sandy Hill and other mature neighbourhoods. Action Sandy Hill has actively participated in each of these studies, despite concerns about their scope. The resulting bylaw changes have proven largely ineffective in improving the quality of residential development in Sandy Hill.

The City, recognizing that concerns persist and that undesirable outcomes continue, is now undertaking another planning study, this time focused on residential fourth density (R4) zoning throughout the City. As Action Sandy Hill intends to separately provide written comments on this R4 review, we convened a special meeting of members and residents on 27 April 2017 to review the proposed changes to the R4 zoning and to clearly identify the concerns of residents as it relates to development in Sandy Hill.

From that meeting and other feedback, it is clear that residents of Sandy Hill have strong reservations about the City's implementation of intensification policies and are frustrated at the outcomes in our neighbourhood. While we appreciate that intensification is essential and can be beneficial, there are countless opportunities for intensification in Ottawa which do not necessitate the gutting of established, diverse, densely-populated neighbourhoods like Sandy Hill. In particular, we object to the fact that,

- The majority of new residential construction in Sandy Hill is out-of-scale and out of character with its surroundings, and negatively impacts the character of our heritage neighbourhood and the quality of life of residents;
- These developments are almost exclusively operated as unlicensed rooming houses (i.e. rented by the room) which serve only one demographic, lack future versatility, and undermine the diversity of Sandy Hill; and,
- These developments create numerous bylaw and property standards issues, exploit students and are potentially unsafe for occupants.

Resolution

Therefore, be it resolved that the members of Action Sandy Hill are firm in our conviction that the City of Ottawa, in carrying-out the R4 review, must take a more holistic approach to this issue and develop a comprehensive solution that will reverse recent trends in Sandy Hill. (We note that similar problems have been successfully addressed by other municipalities in Ontario and that their efforts can and should be used as guidelines.) A holistic solution requires that the City of Ottawa,

1. Consider R4 down-zoning;
2. Implement a Floor Space Index (FSI) for all residential zoning (similar to other Ontario municipalities);
3. Create a rental property licensing system (similar to other Ontario municipalities); and,
4. Maintain Site Plan Control for all development in Sandy Hill.