



June 15, 2019

Mr. Jerrod Riley,
By-law Review Specialist,
Emergency and Protective Services
City of Ottawa,
Ottawa, ON

jerrod.riley@ottawa.ca

Dear Mr. Riley,

Action Sandy Hill (ASH) is a not-for-profit, volunteer-led, community association which represents and promotes the interests of Sandy Hill and its residents.

Please consider this letter a written submission from ASH to the City's Rental Accommodation Study. We would be grateful if you could forward it to McLaren Consultants.

The contents of this letter are drawn from the public consultation session on Student Housing that approximately 30 residents from Sandy Hill and surrounding neighbourhoods attended on June 6, 2019 at the Sandy Hill Community Centre. It also reflects the views of the Board of Action Sandy Hill, and our collective experience with student housing over the last 10 years in our neighbourhood.

The views contained here relate to the bylaw aspects of rental accommodation, and more specifically, student housing.

Bylaw and student rental housing

While zoning rules apply to the use, size and shape of housing on a property, bylaw rules apply to how a property is kept and how the people who live on a property behave and interact with neighbours and the neighbourhood around them.

Current state of affairs

Since 2012, the residential core of Sandy Hill has seen nearly 2,900 bedrooms added to its housing stock. Not one new bedroom has been added to its Traditional Main Street, Rideau St. The majority of these 2,900 bedrooms have been purpose-built for students attending the University of Ottawa. Prior to 2017, large bedroom counts were typical of these new builds.

The increase in student tenant density has led to negative externalities for the entire neighbourhood. These directly affect residents' quality of life and include:



- greater instances of excessive noise (over 350 noise complaints registered with 311 in both 2016 and 2017, for example);
- considerably more garbage produced and a commensurate lack of garbage management – leading to garbage in our streets and most recently to an increase in the rodent population;
- instances of large, unsanctioned street parties for Panda Game, St. Patrick's and Canada Day, resulting in trespassing, property damage, and added burden and costs to Bylaw and the Ottawa Police Service;
- numerous cases of rude and anti-social behaviour by students;
- sometimes sub-par housing, and/or quality of life issues for students, in particular the noise issue for those who are trying to study.

Sandy Hill is the only neighbourhood in all of Ottawa with its own property standards Bylaw officer. This is an unfortunate use of City resources and residents deplore that our neighbourhood requires this resource in an attempt to solve essentially garbage management issues. The process for issuing warnings and eventually fining offenders is long and burdensome. It has not seen appreciable results.

Residents have found themselves in the unenviable position of having to “police” the neighbourhood to reduce noise around parks, stop unruly behaviour, and get garbage taken care of, by regularly calling 311. Residents believe it is not their job to do this. They question where the benefits that should come from paying residential property taxes are.

Solutions

ASH calls on the City of Ottawa to immediately institute a rental accommodation licensing pilot program in Sandy Hill.

The goal of the program is to improve the quality of life for residents and students in the neighbourhood.

Specifically, its objectives are:

- To increase safety and maintenance standards in rental housing; and,
- To decrease the number of 311 calls for noise, safety concerns, and garbage, rats and property standards.

One measure of success will be that a dedicated Bylaw officer will no longer be needed for Sandy Hill.

The pilot program does not need to wait for the conclusions of the Rental Accommodation Study to be initiated and in fact, it should inform the study.



Following the example of the City of Oshawa, ASH recommends that the pilot rental licensing program:

- Apply to non-owner-occupied rental housing (whatever the bedroom count per unit), and owner-occupied rental housing that contains any number of units with 4 or more bedrooms;
- Require landlords to apply for a license in order to rent out their property:
 - o To obtain a license, landlords must have their unit inspected by a Certified Property Standards Officer (CSPO) of the Ontario Association of Property Standards Officers, a Building Code Inspector, and the Ottawa Fire Service;
 - o These inspections ensure that landlords meet City of Ottawa and/or provincial and/or national standards for *inter alia*, fire, carbon monoxide and pest prevention and mitigation, structural soundness, windows and doors, kitchens, walls, ceilings, floors, egress, steps, handrails, heating systems, bathrooms, ventilation, yards, garbage sorting systems;
 - o Landlords must allow for one or more trees on the City right-of-way that lies adjacent to their property line(s).
 - o Landlords must be in possession of a current business licence.
 - o Landlords must be able to present current commercial property insurance.
- Be operated on a cost-recovery basis, and in parallel to the 311 reporting system;
- Contain a decreasing licence cost schedule for properties that continue to:
 - o Maintain a “clean” 311 record, and
 - o Achieve 100% compliant inspection results for three years running.
- Complement, but not duplicate, a University of Ottawa landlord contract program (under development).

We look forward to engaging with you on the pilot program, and will be in touch likely through the offices of our Councillor, Mathieu Fleury.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Young".

Susan Young
President, Action Sandy Hill

cc Mathieu Fleury, City Councillor, Ward 12
President, Old Ottawa South Community Association
President, Old Ottawa East Community Association