



June 9, 2020

Tim Moerman
Ottawa City Hall, mail code 01-15
110 Laurier Avenue West, 4th floor
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 1J1

Re: Residential Fourth Density (R4) Zoning Amendment Proposal

Dear Mr. Moerman:

Action Sandy Hill (ASH) has actively participated in this review over the last several years. Beginning in October of 2016 through the 2019 Technical Review Committee process, ASH's goals have been to improve both the quality of new development and accompanying infrastructure and amenities in our already rapidly densifying neighbourhood. We remain invested in the process as we are living the result of planning and zoning policies that are having a significant negative impact on the cultural, socio-economic, and environmental health of our community.

This proposed zoning amendment is important to us because, by setting long-term rules that incentivize the construction of a greater number of low-rise buildings with even greater unit counts, and which have little amenity space and no parking, we fear the R4 proposals will make Sandy Hill increasingly inhospitable to families, retired couples and young professionals. The amendments as they are proposed currently are also concerningly at odds with new Official Plan objectives to stimulate the development of ground-oriented buildings such as "613 Flats" in R4 zones. Significantly exacerbating current harmful development trends, the current amendments will further shift Sandy Hill's demographic balance from long-term residents towards short-term residents who are far less invested in the continued welfare of the neighbourhood.

We wholeheartedly supported the united call by residents and community and non-governmental associations during the recent urban boundary expansion debate for intensification done carefully: with co-created neighbourhood-specific development rules that create 15-minute, walkable communities containing sufficient greenspace and amenities.

Which is why ASH remains disappointed that the City has dismissed our invitations to collaborate in exploring ways to provide affordable options in Sandy Hill for a range of demographics -- our missing middle. Facilitating all housing options and all types of residential intensification is indeed what the new Provincial Policy Statement requires (S. 1.4.3b). The City in its Official Plan growth strategy notes the need to provide more family-suited ground-oriented units in intensification areas. The draft Official Plan suggests a concept of 613 Flats that could address this need, and we would like to explore this and similar

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options for our neighbourhood. For example, we would turn your attention to a pattern zone approach being using in Texas, described here: <https://www.cnu.org/publicsquare/2020/05/12/pattern-zone-enables-quality-infill-development>. This kind of creative thinking would go a long way to increasing housing affordability in the City of Ottawa, and repeats an approach used successfully by the CMHC post-WWII (see www.theglobeandmail.com/real-estate/toronto/article-by-the-pattern-book-how-the-humble-mid-century-bungalow-shaped/).

The R4 zones are one of only a few areas within the city where such units are currently permitted, yet the intent of the proposed R4 amendments is to incentivise the development of a single housing typology: the dense, low cost, low-rise apartment buildings. Considering there is ample land available elsewhere within the urban boundary for the forecasted demand for small rental units, it seems short-sighted to focus on policies whose intent is to stimulate the consumption of limited flexible-use R4 lands by small, dense, apartments.

We have both general and specific comments about the Staff proposals.

1. General comments

Based on numbers alone, implementation of the new By-law would lead to excessive density, which would radically (and unalterably) change the character and demographic composition of Sandy Hill.

In the northern and western areas of Sandy Hill (~50% of its total area), the percentage of lots which could be developed with 8 units or more of apartments changes from 1 in every 5 lots to 1 in every 2 lots. For the R4 zoned eastern sections of Sandy Hill (~50% of the total eastern area of the neighbourhood), 55% of the properties would have their unit limits doubled, from four to eight.

Sandy Hill already has a disproportionately high number of rental units. When combined with the continued demand for student housing created by proximity to the University of Ottawa (and the University's refusal to build more student housing on its campus), the City proposals make the economics of demolishing existing buildings in favour of replacing them with low-end rental development prohibitive to other forms of development. The proposals therefore, unwittingly or not, dis-incentivize other housing typologies, including ground-oriented options such as 613 Flats.

Our neighbourhood and City services are already struggling with what has happened in the last 10 years: the R4 zoned areas of Sandy Hill have seen ~60 projects (conversions or demolitions) which have added some 1100 bedrooms in rental units in low-rise apartments (net of demolitions). A further 1150 rental bedrooms have been created in four mid-rise buildings after rezoning those lots from R4 to R5. Finally, the set of projects listed in Open Development applications represent a further 650 rental bedrooms in primarily low-rise apartment buildings. Given these facts, and the welcome on-going development on Rideau St., we fail to see the rush to implement the current proposals within the interior of our neighbourhood.

Amenities and infrastructure are not being scaled in proportion to development. For example, apart from a handful of chain fast food outlets in the ground floor of one of the above listed mid-rise buildings, there have been almost no additions to the commercial amenities available in the neighbourhood, with the exception of *allsaints*, a community-led development project. Our neighbourhood arena is at risk, and there is a lack of adequate green space in proximity to our three elementary school sites. Moreover, southern Sandy Hill is not within a 15-minute walk to a grocery store or any form of health service. With the basic needs of these residents underserved, and real estate available for redevelopment consumed by

low-rise apartment buildings, these needs cannot be met, and our urban community will remain, for many, unwalkable.

We reiterate our concern about how the proposals fail to mitigate against inappropriate development in Heritage Conservation Districts (HCDs), and within the Sandy Hill Cultural Heritage Character Area. Lax heritage enforcement, little effort by staff to negotiate infill design that harmonizes with the character-defining elements of buildings outside HCDs, coupled with incentivization of demolition, put our built heritage at risk (as we have seen at 231 Cobourg, 201 Wilbrod, and at 71 and 114-122 Russell Ave.).

Finally, demolishing existing buildings often results in the new units being more expensive than the ones that were demolished. This does not help to solve the affordability crisis. A better way to do so is to build new units more quickly on greenfield sites or adding them to existing low-rise commercial, thereby reducing construction costs and preserving existing lower-priced units. Incentivizing demolition has an additional cost – the building with the least environmental impact is the one that remains standing and is adapted and retrofitted to a new use. With the current proposals, but without a solid waste policy that supports the circular use of construction, renovation and demolition (CRD) waste, the City of Ottawa is directly encouraging large amounts of CRD waste to go to its landfill.

2. Specific comments

We also have several specific comments about the Staff proposals. These are referenced below according to the Section number in the proposal document.

Design elements

ASH continues to support the proposed design elements.

Section 161 Amenity Space:

(5) (X1)

(b) (iv) The 25m² minimum aggregate area proposed for common amenity space should be increased to 40m² to support seating/picnic areas and other similar uses. Tree planting in this area should be a requirement, and needs to be located in such a way that it doesn't prohibit these other uses. Bicycle racks/storage space should be required to be either covered or enclosed.

(e) Remove bollards, bicycle racks, raised planters and ornament fences from the list of parking prohibitors, as these would be potentially unsightly and out of character for the streetscape. Acceptable parking prohibitors include hard vertical landscaping, such as low stone retaining walls, and soft landscaping like raised garden beds, trees, bushes, etc. Ramps and lifts should be designed to incorporate landscaped elements.

(j) With the experience of forced confinement imposed by COVID-19, ASH suggests that the balcony requirement be considered for all units, but acknowledges that this will need to be modelled. Some of these balconies may need to be required to be recessed or semi-recessed to create a desirable massing. We would suggest that balconies not be less than 25 SF (5'x5') to be useable.

(l) ASH maintains that all exit stairs should be enclosed within the building envelope for safety, durability, aesthetic and privacy reasons.

(m) Rooftop terraces are not permitted for low-rise apartment buildings, triplexes and stacked units. In the case of triplexes where a rooftop terrace could be allocated for the private use of a single unit, we would support allowing such a terrace, not to exceed 30m².

(n) One of the original objectives of the R4 P2 zoning revisions was to provide a diverse range of dwelling types. To achieve this, ASH suggests that for dwellings with 12 units or more, in addition to one unit out of every 4 requiring at least 2 bedrooms, 1 unit out of 6 should be required to have 3 bedrooms. For dwellings with 8 units or more, 1 unit should be required to have 2 bedrooms and 1 unit to have 3 bedrooms.

(o) We are concerned that Section 5, clause (o), which stipulates that clauses: (f) concerning principal entrances, (g) concerning 25% window requirement for front and corner side facades, (h) concerning 20% recession of front facade, and (j) concerning balconies, do not apply to buildings designated under parts IV or V of the *Ontario Heritage Act* will create a loophole whereby, in the event of demolition of the existing property, new development not subjected to Zoning (By-law No. 2008-250), Part 2, Section 60 will not be subject to the requirements articulated in those clauses. Given that the General Provisions of Section 60 of the zoning bylaw that stipulate "Where a building in an area to which an heritage overlay applies is removed or destroyed it must be rebuilt with the same character and at the same scale, massing, volume, floor area and in the same location as existed prior to its removal or destruction. (By-law 2014-289) (By-law 2015-281) (By-law 2014-289)," have not been upheld or imposed by the City of Ottawa in recent years in Sandy Hill (231 Cobourg Street is an example of this) and elsewhere (58 Florence Street, etc.), there appears to be no assurance that future development will conform to the Heritage Overlay requirements. Should this be the case, relief from the requirements of clauses f-g and j may result in undesirable developments, ones that neither reflect the heritage character (scale, massing, volume, floor area, etc.) of the demolished designated building intended by the Heritage Overlay, nor conform to the new R4 design requirements.

(p) A minimum storage area requirement needs to be added in order to make the units functional. As a minimum, private unit storage (in the unit itself or basement) of a min. 6m² per unit needs to be provided. A minimum of 2m² of secure outdoor storage space must be provided per unit as well (for strollers, bbqs, children toys, etc.).

(X2)

(a) We are not convinced that prohibiting parking on smaller lots is necessary and are concerned that such prohibitions may encourage lot consolidation. We recommend that the City clarify in the wording of the bylaw amendment that the proposed parking prohibitions apply only to low-rise apartment buildings.

Table 162B

ASH very much supports a maximum lot width, but believes that 38m is excessive, and would create lot sizes out of character with the neighbourhood. The size should be determined by the existing neighbourhood fabric (not the building code maximum size under Part 9). We would suggest this limit be reduced to 24 meters, and a provision added that requires an articulation in the building facade (e.g., recess, etc.) so that the new massing reflects the original lot size. Larger lot sizes may be acceptable at corners.

Appendix A: Four new urban R4 subzones

R4-UA:

ASH does not support the unit increase from 4 units to a maximum of 8 units as the modelling of this maximum did not produce units with adequate/desirable living space, storage, etc. to attract a diverse demographic, nor will this maximum allow for a sufficient number of 3-bedroom units. ASH would support a slightly reduced maximum to encourage a mix of slightly larger, more liveable 1, 2, and 3 bedroom units. A minimum storage area and unit-type mixes to include 3-bedroom apartments, etc. should be mandated.

R4-UB:

We have the same comments as for R4-UA on maximum units.

For the maximum of 12 units for 15 m wide lots, we could support a reduced number of units (e.g., 9 units), or alternatively similar zoning as stated above to promote better units and apartment mixes.

Any existing R4H Junior zones that have been up-zoned to R4-UB should be zoned R4-UA, to be consistent with the rest of the R4H zones. These affected areas are primarily in the south-west quadrant of Sandy Hill (south of Somerset) and the east side of Chapel (north of Somerset), as well as Somerset Street itself. Approximately 20% of the R4H lots in Sandy Hill are 10 metres in width. Currently you can only build a semi-detached house on a 10m wide lot in these zones, but an upzoning to UB would allow an 8-unit apartment building. This upzoning is too extreme for a previous R4H Junior zone, and as mentioned, inconsistent with the other R4H zones.

R4-UC

We do not support the lot width and area reductions for these zones. In addition, we do not support the up-zoning that has occurred (Somerset Street at its west end as well as the west side of north of Somerset), for similar reasons mentioned previously. In a UC zone, the provision to allow no limit on unit count for 15m wide lots (from a previous 4-unit maximum) could make lot consolidation very attractive in this area, given the 4-unit maximum applies to all narrower lot widths. This is of greater concern due to the extensive amount of heritage stock in these areas.

R4-UD

We cannot support the proposed reduction of lot width and area in this zone. This zone represents about 50% of the total area of Sandy Hill, and 30-35% of the lots in this area are between 10 and 15m in width. The current zoning for these lot widths (10-15m) have a limit of 3 units. The proposed zoning would allow for 8 units for these lots. The impact of this change is too significant for the neighbourhood, and once again, there is a significant amount of heritage stock in these areas.

In closing, we request that:

- The changes above be incorporated into the new R4 by-law;
- The new by-law be implemented on a provisional basis in Sandy Hill, using a phased approach that applies development project limits such that ensuing development may be evaluated and adjustments made before further implementation;
- The new by-law not be implemented in Sandy Hill before 2022. This approach would allow the approved developments along Rideau St. and in Robinson Village to be built and populated, and for the University of Ottawa to replace on-campus housing for the residences they have recently closed.

We remind City staff that Ward 12 is already one of the densest wards in the City (see Fotenn study for GOBHA, 2020), and has suffered alarming losses of its heritage fabric, further reasons not to rush into these amendments. We also believe that it is imperative for the City to bring the University of Ottawa, the main driver of housing development in Sandy Hill, into the conversation.

We cannot overstate the importance of creating a zoning by-law that encourages demographic balance (multiple entry points/multiple social groups) and does not jeopardize existing heritage protection provisions (Heritage Overlay, Heritage Conservation Districts, Sandy Hill Heritage Character Area). Diversity in housing stock and a rich and varied built heritage, including heritage assets of national significance, are Sandy Hill's defining characteristics and deserve to be protected. For this reason, we request a virtual public meeting to be held in the near future so that City staff can explain how their proposals will meet the specific needs of this neighbourhood.

Sincerely yours and without prejudice,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Young". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Susan Young, President
Action Sandy Hill