



17 March 2021

Andrew McCreight
Planner
City of Ottawa

Dear Andrew,

Please find below comments from Action Sandy Hill. We have been working with a core neighbourhood group that has formed to provide community input to the development proposed for 2 Robinson (320 Lees Avenue).¹ Our goal is to see this input reflected on two fronts: 1) a plan by the City to improve its nearby infrastructure assets to respond to the community's identified needs, as well as those of the considerable number of new residents expected in this south end of Sandy Hill over the coming years, and 2) a development at 2 Robinson that embodies the design excellence described in the Urban Design Guidelines for High Rise Buildings. We are focussed on high levels of livability, resiliency and sustainability for both these fronts. We would expect the City to share these goals, and we provide the comments below based on our neighbourhood knowledge and two community surveys undertaken in March 2021.² ASH's comments should be read in conjunction with those submitted by our neighbourhood partners'.

Overall approach

We are sure it has not escaped the City that the developer is asking for 43 extra storeys without being willing (or obliged?) to provide the details that the community needs to be comfortable with such height. We find the information provided to be insufficient to ensure the development meets the Urban Design Guidelines for High Rise Buildings. Simply stating the development meets a seemingly random list of UD guidelines does not provide the details we are looking for about design excellence.

The developer is also applying for Official Plan and zoning amendments first, and only later will provide the Site Plan details, instead of being transparent about the two at the same time. This strategy is unacceptable, as the height amendments alone could be an enormous gain for the applicant, without having to present any community benefits.

¹ Co-op Voisins, Ottawa Community Housing, and the Sandy Hill Community Health Centre.

² Please see Annex 1 for a presentation of the results of these surveys.

In order to compensate for this, we would strongly support the City defending the public interest at this stage of the application by using what it has as leverage: parking space and height allowances. We ask that the City:

1) Mandate the developer to **reduce the number of planned parking places**. This aspect of the development caused a high level of concern for the 70+ respondents to the community surveys. Reducing the number of parking spaces would:

- Reduce the number of cars on the roads in the area, lessening the impact on traffic flows, preventing incremental GHG emissions, and increasing the use of the LRT providing a return on the considerable investments the City, partners and taxpayers have made;
- Free up capital for the developer to build a greater mix of housing types, not just bedroom counts, thereby ensuring a greater diversity of residents ; and,
- Allow for a greater number of bike parking spaces “on the flat”, instead of being stacked.

2) Negotiate for **30% of the proposed units to be affordable**. As mentioned at the community information session on March 4, the core group is preparing to hire an affordable housing consultant to build a financing proposal for the developer to facilitate this. We invite the City to work with Councillor Fleury as a willing partner in this opportunity, and contribute to ensuring everyone in the City of Ottawa has a place they can call home.

3) Ensure that the vision for this development centres on it being an integral part of a **15-minute neighbourhood**. Built into the 15-minute neighbourhood concept are the City’s ‘5 Big Moves.’ There is an opportunity here for the City to ensure this development and the surrounding area with its City assets fulfill (and ideally, exceed) the objectives of 4 of the 5 policy proposals in the new draft Official Plan. These are:

- Resiliency: A focus on amenities, services and natural infrastructure that promote health and well-being for all members of the community. The property is zoned Mixed Use Centre, but the commercial space seems minimal as a proportion of the entire square footage. Concretely, this means requiring the applicant to fit up commercial space so that it can be leased to provide healthy food (i.e., a grocery store - the highest rated commercial service identified in our survey responses), and fitting up space for other uses, such a work spaces or small businesses.
- It also means that the City understands and plans for a considerable increase in population, and recognizes that this area is currently under-served by City services and programming. We suggest the City build on the Sandy Hill arena and its surrounding land to provide accessible spaces that support social health and cohesion (e.g., a satellite Rideau library and sports facilities including a pool - both also very highly rated in our survey). Spaces for community programming, meetings, offices and professional services are also required, either as part of the development

or renovated City property. The public services described above are needed in this area and will serve not just Sandy Hill but Old Ottawa East as well. Fortunately the City has an adjacent large lot and existing facility to build from in the Sandy Hill Arena, and ASH encourages the City to use the newly-announced federal infrastructure program for public buildings (retrofits, renovations and new builds) to achieve this.

- **Urban Design:** The City will encourage the architect to use materials and design features that “boost creativity in design rather than conformity to the rules.” (5 Big Moves, ‘Big move 3: Urban and Community Design, pg. 14). Modifications to the current design should include varying the heights of the towers to avoid a repetitive look, and ensuring a community-friendly street design is included in the podium aspect of the development.
- **Growth:** The City will enact policy 5: more flexibility in types of housing (pg. 4) and mandate that the developer include a range of affordable and housing types (a mix of 1, 2, 3 and 4-bedroom apartments, garden flats, townhomes.) This development represents a prime opportunity for the City to action its commitment to ensuring there is a ‘greater variety of housing choice among Ottawa residents.” (pg. 4). The savings the developer makes from not building parking spaces can contribute to this goal.
- **Sustainability:** In the review of this development, the City will “move from simply encouraging sustainable site and building design to influencing it through the City’s development application and review processes.” (Big Move 4: Climate, Energy and Public Health, pg. 19). This can include ensuring the development is LEED accredited and employs passive house design principles. The development needs to show how it will be net-zero, and how it will be an early implementer of the City’s Energy Evolution actions.
- **Livability:** Finally, the City will ensure this development has a high level of livability. It may want to consider exploring LEED for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) principles for this entire area, as a means to ensure the quality of life for residents of the future development, along with those currently living in the surrounding neighbourhoods, are enriched. The Co-op Voisins submission speaks to the problems with the applicant’s shadow study. Two other areas in particular can significantly increase the livability of this development:
- **Greenspace:** The public elements of the development (e.g., the central plaza, the northern pathway and any other greenspace) need to ensure that their quality and design meet the needs of community members (Big Move 3: Policy Direction 5: The Design of our City – Built Form and Public Spaces pg. 13). The survey question concerning a park garnered almost equal weight for biodiversity, relaxation and sports. We are not convinced a park in the south-east corner of the site contributes to biodiversity corridors and restful greenspace. Instead, we ask that the City work with the developer to improve the green corridor on the north side of the development, and ensure it links safely with the greenspace on either side of it - at the back of the

arena (an underutilized space, which could also be the subject of the applicant's spending), the baseball diamond (which would benefit from bleachers and greater use, perhaps by other sports) and to the east, to the MUP that leads down to Strathcona Park. This entire eastern access point and the greenspace it goes through could be greatly enhanced for the entire neighbourhood, and through a community design process involving OCH, Co-op Voisins, the volunteer gardeners who tend the north side of the path and the adjacent community gardens, and Robinson Village residents, it could become more of a linear park connecting to Strathcona Park's planned MUP. Improved access from Robinson Village would also be a goal of the design process.

- **Connectivity:** The City will ensure that the developer includes 'attractive and lively public community spaces where people can easily connect with each other and with day-to-day services.' (Ottawa Public Health, 'Health and the Built Environment'). This means ensuring that the community is connected to the development through safe bike paths and walkways. Although the development is classified as a TOD and the surrounding active transportation and rapid transit networks are highlighted, there seem to be insufficient recommendations to enhance its connectivity between the site and these networks. If there is no safe, convenient and connected infrastructure to facilitate walking, cycling and public transit, most future residents will be discouraged to do so and opt to drive instead, which fails to meet the objectives of a TOD and many City planning documents. For example, providing linkage between the site and the MUP along the LRT is critical because the MUP is a cross-town bikeway route.
- Providing secondary accesses from the site to the local roadway/pathway network is important as it presents a more attractive environment for walking and cycling than along the busy arterial (Lees). The City needs to upgrade sidewalk and cycling facilities along Lees to meet MMLOS targets instead of road widening, as this latter action creates induced demand for automobiles and leads to recurring congestion in the future. The current shared road for cycling and the curbside sidewalk without separation create a hostile situation to discourage people who may otherwise choose to walk and bike to access to Lees LRT station. It will also be necessary to ensure pedestrian and bike crossing safety at the proposed Lees and Robinson signal
- On-site vehicle parking seems additional to the 934 underground parking proposed. In lieu of surface parking, we ask that extra bike parking in multiple locations for visitors of the five buildings and shop patrons be provided, as well as street furniture so that the courtyard doesn't feel like a parking lot and residents can comfortably hang out and appreciate the sculpture in the centre.
- More specifically, north-south & east-west pedestrian/cycling paths are needed through the development from Lees and Chapel, and improved MUP were identified as a high priority in the survey responses on transportation. There needs to be excellent connectivity for active transportation to the public infrastructure next to the site: to the east Strathcona Park and uOttawa Lees campus, and to the west, the Sandy Hill Arena, Viscount Alexander School, uOttawa main campus, Saint Germain

Park, the Sandy Hill Community Centre and Annie Pootoogook Park, and beyond to l'École Francojeunesse's two campuses. According to survey responses, areas that require greater lighting and safety features are Lees Avenue (traffic calming) and pathways on Lees and Chapel. The City needs to look at the cumulative effect of recent and future development on connectivity needs, and ensure the developer contributes to the infrastructure that will be needed.


- Access by a MUP to Robinson Field, the rest of Strathcona Park and Robinson Village is already planned, and the developer needs to contribute to this, as mentioned above. Residents of Robinson Village need much greater accessibility to the Lees LRT, and improved active transportation connectivity to the NW towards the main UofO campus and downtown through the 2 Robinson site, for example, through construction of a sidewalk along Robinson west of the Lees overpass, and a crossing at the Robinson-Lees intersection.
- Lay-bys can accommodate pickups, drop-offs and handicapped access, there is no need for permanent parking spaces above ground. As we have alternate suggestions for the park above, we suggest the south-east corner accommodate this function.
- We ask that the City require the developer to complete a traffic circle study, to explore installing a 2-lane traffic circle at the Lees & Robinson Ave. intersection. A traffic circle will enable easier access/egress to the site and will have a calming effect on traffic coming downhill on Lees.
- Lastly on connectivity, a key missing link for active transportation is a crossing of the Lees Avenue/Highway 417 Westbound Off-ramp to connect to the MUP running east of the LRT line. The applicant's TIA claims that "The proposed development conforms to the City's TDM initiatives by providing easy access to the local pedestrian, bicycle and transit systems.". Without this crossing the claim of easy access is hard to justify. About the Lees Avenue/Highway 417 Westbound Off-ramp the TIA [P56] notes that: "As there are no pedestrian crosswalks at this intersection and since cyclists are not permitted on Highway 417, the PLOS and BLOS were excluded from the analysis." This is a non sequitur; just because cyclists and pedestrians are not allowed on the 417 does not mean they should not have access to the MUP from #2 Robinson via the paved connection to the MUP from the south side of Lees at the intersection. The crossing should be made a part of the 2 Robinson development.
- The TIA also states "The Lees Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Plan identifies a future multi-use bridge over Highway 417, to provide a more direct link between the Sandy Hill community via Chapel Crescent and Lees Station. No timing is identified; it is noted as a long-term project.". This crossing needs to happen sooner rather than later for existing LRT users in Robinson Village and future users from 2 Robinson and future 1 Robinson users. When the four sites in Robinson Village were approved with ~300 new units this crossing was stated to be something for the future, now ~1600 units are proposed for 2 Robinson and the crossing is still "noted as a long-term project". The community would like a commitment on when this crossing will be built.

Closing

"We have a transformative opportunity to demand a landmark architectural building surrounded by world-class public realm space at ground level... The development needs character! Enough sterile towers - we are in the Nation's Capital and adjacent to World Heritage Sites - let that history, vibrancy and beauty shine through and be showcased." - comment by a community survey respondent

We look forward to working with the City and the developer to develop 2 Robinson and its surrounding City assets for the benefit of the community - both existing residents and those who we will welcome over the years to come.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Young". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan Young
President, Action Sandy Hill