

Lowertown Community Association
L'Association communautaire de la Basse-Ville

MEETING NOTES / NOTES DE RÉUNION – 10 FEBRUARY 2014 / 10 FEVRIER 2014
ROUTHIER COMMUNITY CENTRE, 7-9 PM / CENTRE COMMUNAUTAIRE ROUTHIER, 19-21h

- **Board members present:** Marc Aubin (President), Michael Kirkpatrick (Vice President), Liz Bernstein (Vice President), Ted Lawrence (Treasurer), Sarah Bonesteel (Secretary), Steve Monuk (Director, Business Liaison), Sylvie Grenier (Director, Planning), John Chenier (Director, Community Liaison).
 - **Appointed members present:** Nancy Miller Chenier (Co-Chair, Heritage Committee), Liz Mackenzie (Co-Chair, Heritage Committee), John Woodhouse (Liaison, Lowertown East Resident's Committee), Norman Moyer (Liaison, Byward Market Safety and Security Committee)
 - **Total community members present:** 35
1. **Welcome Remarks / Mots de bienvenue (Marc Aubin)**
 - Welcome remarks.
 2. **Approval of Agenda and notes from last meeting / Approbation de l'Ordre du jour et notes de la dernière réunion (Marc Aubin)**
 - Agenda and notes from January 10, 2014 meeting approved.
 3. **Councillor's Update / Mise à jour du conseiller**
 - **Present from the Councillor's Office:** Mathieu Fleury, Nathaniel Mullin
 - **Meeting for Beausoleil/Chapel:** Wednesday 6:00pm at the Rideau Street library branch.
 - **Snow:** if you have questions/comments about snow removal, parking regulations, etc., please call the Councillor's office.
 - **Question from resident about cash-in-lieu of parkland:** Money comes from developers. 60% goes to the ward in which the development occurs and 40% goes to the City. The funds are not necessarily used for another park. They could also be used for roads or other items. Use of these funds is reported quarterly and is available to the public. In our ward, over \$1M has been spent on the revitalization of Jules Morin Park.
 - **Question about cash-in-lieu of parking from developers:** This requirement has largely been removed for restaurants so the fund does not build up as quickly as it used to. Also, the required number of parking spots per unit has been reduced in condominium and apartment buildings and this further reduces contributions to the fund. Public access to visitor/public parking in new buildings is also an issue. The City is trying to find ways to enforce access to public parking. The cash-in-lieu system assumes that the City will build those spots within other areas of the neighbourhood, which is not a reality for Lowertown. Cash-in-lieu funds generated from Lowertown have enabled the construction of parking facilities outside of the downtown.
 - **Question about an update on the air quality and climate change plan:** No update is available. The Councillor's office recently spoke with someone at the City who indicated that staff have started to work on the issue and an update should be available in the second quarter of the year.

- **Question about having a plan for development in Lowertown East:** The Councillor's office has not had an opportunity to meet with John Moser (from the City) but the issue is on the office's radar.
 - **Question about introducing recommendations proposed in the Heritage Conservation District study:** Yes, the Councillor's office is following up on this but has not met with John Moser so do not have an official response yet.
 - **Question about the Community Development Plan and whether what is approved in the plan will impact approval of development proposals:** The plan for Rideau Street will be revisited to ensure it aligns with the new official plan. The community plan is a reference document with no set lifespan. The target is for the plan to remain a reference for ten years but the timeframe is dependent on changes to City policies. All layers of planning should align.
4. **Lowertown Community Resource Centre / Lowertown East Resident's Committee Update (John Woodhouse / Yolanda Jones)**
- Yolanda is the Coordinator of Lowertown Our Home and works with the Lowertown East Resident's Committee (LERC), which meets monthly and puts on events to increase safety and build the community in Lowertown east.
 - The Lowertown Community Resource Centre (LCRC) has partnered with the Lowertown Community Association on several occasions: such as Winterfest, heritage walks, the tree nut walk, and movies in the park.
 - Winterfest will be held on Monday February 17 (Family Day), from 1:00 to 4:00pm. Three organizations are organizing this event: the LCA, LCRC and LERC. The event will include horse and wagon rides, a bouncy castle, live performances by drummers, games, a magician, snow shoes, skating, hot chocolate, coffee, snacks, and a barbeque. The LCA is paying for half of horse and wagon and is making a contribution to food for the barbeque. Please let Yolanda know if anyone is interested in volunteering to help out with the event. Also, please let Yolanda know if you have ideas about fundraising or who to approach for additional donations toward food for the barbeque. About 300 people are expected at the event and the organizers currently have \$150 for food. Yolanda can be reached at: yjones@crcbv.ca.
 - Marc noted that the LCA is working on building better partnerships, including with local businesses, to fundraise for a variety of initiatives.
5. **Areas of Interest – Updates / Champs d'intérêt – Mise à jour:**
- **Planning Update / Mise à jour du Comité de planification (Sylvie Grenier)**
 - Aga Khan: This group has submitted their request to the City to have the former War Museum building on Sussex re-zoned to permit office space. If anyone has concerns about this, please send them to info@lowertown-basseville.ca.
 - The University of Ottawa has issued a Request for Proposals for off campus student housing. This may have an impact on Lowertown.
 - The presentation tonight is related to a re-zoning request for a development at Rideau Street and Coburg. The LCA will be providing comments to the City about this development. Any comments should be sent to info@lowertown-basseville.ca.
 - **Environment Update / Mise à jour environnementale (Liz Bernstein)**
 - On January 27, the LCA hosted a winter walkability audit of Lowertown with Councillor Fleury, Sylvie Grenier, John Woodhouse, and the Ottawa Council on Aging. The audit started at the

Routhier Community Centre, went to King Edward Avenue, St. Patrick, and into the Byward Market. Several challenges were identified, including the lack of cleared sidewalks (even though roads were cleared), need for salt and better clearing around poles with walk signal buttons, and Winterlude sculptures taking up sidewalk space. The group is working on a follow up report. Thank you to Councillor Fleury and Alanna from his office for participating in walkability audit.

- Follow up on summer audit for cyclists: The LCA has received the list of where the City will be implementing new ring and post bike parking posts in the Byward Market. If you have specific suggestions for where posts should be located or other walkability issues to raise, please contact the LCA (info@lowertown-basseville.ca) or the Councillor's Office.
- Complete Streets: The LCA worked with other organizations to have this policy included in the master plan and now is the time for implementation. The LCA will be part of a strategy session to be held with other organizations at end of March or early April. Councillor Fleury will be present, along with other Councillors.
- Ottawa River Action Plan: The LCA is trying to ensure federal and provincial funding for the next phases of the action plan are included in the next federal and provincial budgets. Madeleine Meilleur had committed to let us know if it will be in the provincial budget.
- Proposed energy east pipeline: The LCA asked Madeleine Meilleur to provide us with additional information on the Energy Board hearings. The information will be made available once it is received.
- **Safety and Security Update / Mise à jour de sûreté et de sécurité (Norman Moyer)**
 - The committee is looking at four things at the next monthly meeting: how Winterlude is going, local construction and how it affects people and traffic, special programming for the Olympics (hockey, etc) to allow establishments to be open in the morning, and an initial conversation about Canada Day planning. Let Norman know if you have any issues you would like him to raise (info@lowertown-basseville.ca).
- **Heritage Update / Mise à jour du patrimoine (Liz MacKenzie and Nancy Miller-Chenier)**
 - Union du Canada and Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) appeal: The appeal did not result in a height reduction for the new project but the board did provide a positive response about dealing with heritage issues. Additional information is available in the February e-bulletin.
 - Traditional Main Street zoning – Dramatic changes for King Edward Avenue: King Edward Avenue has now been designated a “traditional main street” with new comprehensive zoning. Two and three storey residences can now be replaced with taller buildings. The Heritage Committee is questioning how the new zoning will avoid a wall of towers that overwhelm heritage buildings and further divide east and west Lowertown. The Committee is looking at good and bad outcomes of the zoning. A good outcome would be development of vacant and underused properties, such as those at King Edward and St. Patrick. A bad outcome is the lack of control on building heights and the potential for the few remaining heritage buildings to be overwhelmed by many new tall buildings.
 - The City report is complicated and full of planning jargon. The Heritage Committee feels that much more rigorous public consultation should have been provided. The new zoning specifies a height limit of six storeys. However, simultaneous to the zoning approval, and exception was made to approve a nine-storey hotel at 364 St. Patrick and Murray. The LCA vigorously opposed this exception. The report from the City planner on King Edward

Avenue as a traditional main street notes that “the edge conditionis focused to frame this gateway corridor with attractive medium to higher profile buildings”. The Official Plan defines medium rise as five to nine storeys, while high-rise is defined as ten storeys or more. The Heritage Committee sees this contradiction as an open invitation to developers to apply for height exceptions to the six storey zoning by-law, and notes that the community will once again struggle to control building heights in our neighbourhood.

- The new zoning for King Edward includes the Heritage Conservation District from Bruyere to Murray. The City planner report notes that the “zoning strategy may encourage lot consolidation ...that could result in the application for demolition” of designated heritage properties. The Heritage Committee is concerned about this potential very negative outcome. Exclusion for designated buildings is a patchwork: the Champagne Bath (designated) is excluded from the re-zoning, as is the Église Évangélique Baptist d’Ottawa (constructed in 1905 and not designated). However, the whole of the Shepherds of Good Hope (formerly St. Brigid’s School) is designated but is subject to the re-zoning. Four buildings protected by a heritage overlay on Clarence Street were also included in the re-zoning because the heritage overlay was lifted. The owner of 257 Clarence requested the protection remain in place and the request was granted.
 - Heritage Committee members objected at the City Planning Committee and were completely ignored. The re-zoning of King Edward Avenue was passed without discussion or comment, except for keeping the heritage overlay of 257 Clarence. The LCA Heritage Committee was very concerned that there was no comment from the City Heritage Planner and that the recommendations were not considered by the Built Heritage Sub-Committee. In an effort to stall the process and encourage consultation, a meeting was requested to discuss the heritage issues. The LCA Heritage Committee met with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Built Heritage Sub-Committee, the Heritage Planner and the Councillor. There was no clarification on the implications of the re-zoning or the need for more heritage protection for the Conservation District and other designated buildings on King Edward Avenue. The re-zoning was passed by Council on January 22.
 - The LCA Heritage Committee is pursuing the following initiatives: a request to the Mayor to complete the inventory of heritage buildings in Lowertown west that was promised in 2011 and has now become more urgent with the re-zoning, a request to the Chair of the Built Heritage Sub-Committee (Jan Harder) to clarify the role that the Heritage Planning group and her committee play in the protection of heritage, and consultation with those who objected to the re-zoning about an OMB appeal.
 - Lowertown Legends: an information display will be at Winterfest.
- **Communications Update / Mise à jour des communications (Marc Aubin, on behalf of Michelle Ramsay-Borg)**
 - Michelle has a broken foot and was not able to attend the meeting but provided Marc with notes to speak on her behalf.
 - Progress on the website: The committee has met once and are aiming to have a temporary site up within a week or two. A new site will be drafted within about two months and comments will be solicited.
 - The LCA facebook page now has about 160 followers. The two most popular areas are development and heritage

- Comment from resident: the e-bulletin was “stunning and sterling”, compliments to Michelle and her team from the community.
 - Question about the platform being used for the new website because some are better than others for gathering data on users: The committee is using Word Press.
- **Membership and Volunteers Update / Mise à jour : L’adhésion et bénévoles (Vera Etches)**
 - No update provided.
 - **Gottago! (Marianne Eriksson)**
 - The Gottago! campaign is seeking to implement more public washrooms and drinking fountains in Lowertown. The washrooms would be safe, accessible and possibly self-cleaning. There is a gap between the situation of residents and tourists, and number and location of publically available toilets. The campaign wants something that is available 24 hours per day and year-round (not seasonal availability).
 - There are currently no after-hours toilets in Byward Market, which is not sanitary and is bad for tourism. The Byward Market BIA is on board with the campaign, as is Action Sandy Hill. Councillor Fleury’s office is supporting research into the issue. Part of the campaign is to inform people of current toilet locations.
 - The campaign is seeking information from residents: anecdotes, opinions, suggested locations for public toilets. The campaign is also researching what other cities, particularly capital cities, are doing about publicly accessible washrooms. There is also research going into the design (to ensure washrooms are attractive because they will likely be visible), self-cleaning functions, off-sets to vandalism, and costs.
 - It was noted that the population is aging and people want to be out and about and not worry about the lack of public toilets. Also, our neighbourhood has an issue of homelessness and those who live in shelters lack access to public washrooms during the day. Liz noted that the walkability audit identified the need for more fountains and public washrooms.
 - If you have comments/suggestions for the campaign or would like to volunteer, contact them at: gottagocampaign@gmail.com
6. **Special Feature:**
- **Presentation on Zoning By-law Amendment Proposal for 541-545 Rideau Street / Présentation : Proposition de modification du règlement de zonage pour le 541-545, rue Rideau (Akash Sinha)**
 - Akash Sinha is a former Lowertown resident who started his company, Dharma Developments, ten years ago. The company is focused on residential construction projects.
 - The current project for 541-545 Rideau Street is at the zoning application stage but Mr. Sinha is interested in any comments on the project. The proposed project is at the corner of Rideau Street and Cobourg. Mr. Sinha noted that tall buildings are part of the landscape on Wurttemberg and Rideau, and that Richcraft Homes is proposing to construct an 18-storey building nearby. The proposed project needs to include some form of height and density to make it cost-effective.

- The base has a mixed-use podium with animation at street level, and will also include office space on upper floors, followed by residential units. The mix of office space and residential units is not yet confirmed. The residential units would be in a set-back tower. The parking entrance/exit would be on Cobourg Street. Mr. Sinha noted that he would like to include two and three-bedroom units in the building to encourage families to live downtown but acknowledged that the building is close to the university and would likely appeal to young professionals who would not be looking for so much space. There will likely be about 90 residential units and 76 parking spaces.
- Sensitivity to height and heritage conservation by the community was noted. Mr. Sinha's proposed project would not be built to the property line or have blank walls to encourage light flow and avoid a wall of buildings on Rideau Street. There would be 20-30m between the proposed building and other buildings on Rideau Street. Mr. Sinha noted the importance of sculpting the building to fit the streetscape and the need to make the proposed building fit with current and potential new buildings. He also noted the importance of incorporating green technologies into the building design. The project will go to the City Planning Committee in April.
- **Comments/Questions:**
 - Question (Q): There are many low rises in the area that provide density. There is currently a beautiful heritage building on the site. There is an opportunity to work with the existing building and convert it into condominiums. The proposed project does not represent the neighbourhood. Why has the project been under development for two years and is just being brought to us for discussion now when it is going to Planning Committee for approval in April?
 - Akash Sinha (AS): Within the City Planning process, this is the first opportunity to present to the community. The corner of Rideau and Cobourg is very visible. The heritage building is falling apart. It would be wonderful to preserve it but is not practically possible.
 - Q: The current zoning for that part of Rideau Street is for a traditional main street (up to six storeys). The proposed project is 15 storeys. The current zoning is a result of extensive community consultation that led to the Rideau Design Plan, which recommended buildings of three to five storeys. In that context, how is the proposed project appropriate?
 - AS: Ottawa is facing pressures. As a developer, he does not believe that Rideau should be limited to traditional main street heights. He believes that, as a capital city, Ottawa needs to better address urban design and make the best use of sites to promote sustainability and limit sprawl. His design works with the vision the City wants to achieve overall.
 - Q: Would like to see more art deco influence in the podium. Believes this would be more aesthetically pleasing and a better fit with the neighbourhood now and in the future. Believes that the proposed façade is too cold.
 - AS: Favourable to community input into design. There is a set back from the east and north property lines.
 - Q: Concern expressed because there is an Official Plan, Rideau Design Plan, and zoning that are fairly consistent and the proposed project would be a dramatic change. If approved, the project would set a precedent for other development proposals. This would change the vision of Rideau Street, contrary to the vision in the Official Plan and zoning, and from what the community indicated they wanted.
 - Q: Noted that Lowertown is way behind with development but that developers are not constructing quality buildings. It is hard to have pride in the downtown, given the

challenges of traffic and homelessness. Developers need to make beautiful buildings that people love to encourage pride of ownership. Build at high as you want but make it good.

- Q: Suggestion to do something for the community to address the shortage of affordable housing and fix up the whole block of Rideau Street by approaching the City about the vacant lot, renovating the 13-storey Ottawa Community Housing building, burying parking, and building retail at grade.
- AS: would take so long to get agreement from all parties on project that project would no longer be viable. It is a great idea but as a company he is not in a position to take it on.
- Q: About including sustainable features, making it carbon neutral, and creating efficiency over the life of the building.
- Q: Asked whether City is encouraging developers to propose project outside of what is allowed by zoning? Noted that community does not understand why, if we have plan, we should go of it? The proposed project is a one-off and does not address a whole block.
- Q: Domicile buildings are lower and more civil, they are popular. Why can't project be more like that?
- AS: There are density issues happening across North America. Need to understand what is needed to create a successful project in the context for each parcel of land. The best approach is to get the right density, and then address design and sustainability issues. Keeping to six storeys does not address what the community needs in the future. The City is encouraging higher buildings because more housing downtown is needed.
- Marc: A lesson from the Claridge OMB is that developers are allowed to ask for more height and it is the City's fault if it happens. We need to turn to our Councillor's office for a conversation because the City has policies that allow for different heights when developers ask. Thank you to Mr. Sinha for the presentation and answering questions. The LCA Planning Committee is preparing a letter to the City in response to the proposal. Individuals can submit comments to Doug James and copy the Councillor's office. The challenge on our side is to ask where we can find middle ground, what we can compromise on and where we can work with developer.

7. **Events – Updates:**

- **Photographer (artists/vibrancy and next steps) / Photographe (artistes/vivacité et prochaines étapes) (Marc Aubin)**
- Time did not permit discussion of this item; to be added to future meeting agenda.

Meeting adjourned: 9:00pm