

Presentation to Special Joint Meeting of the Planning Committee and the Agricultural and Rural Affairs Committee, May 11, 2020

Thank you Chair and Councillors. Bon apres midi.

I am speaking to you today on behalf of the Lowertown Community Association (LCA). I have lived in Lowertown since 2005. We also support the excellent presentations made by CAFES, the FCA, as members, and Ecology Ottawa, Peoples Official Plan for Ottawa's Climate Emergency, Greenspace Alliance, Just Food, Alliance to End Homelessness, Healthy Transportation Coalition, OCTEVAW, CAWI and others. It is an incredible indication of the passion Ottawans have for improving our city that in the midst of a pandemic, work & schooling from home, so many citizens & volunteers have engaged virtually in civic organizations to have their say for the kind of Ottawa we want. I am sure you join me in celebrating that so many citizens with such a depth of expertise are speaking to you today.

During this term of Council you have declared both a Climate Emergency and a Housing and Homelessness Emergency. Now we have a health emergency.

We pressed for and applauded the Climate and Housing declarations as they acknowledge what residents of Ottawa truly care about: the livability, sustainability and affordability of our community. Then COVID 19 pandemic hit, and while many things have changed, we now face the trifecta of climate, housing and food security crises as well as health. Now more than ever, in keeping with these declarations, the onus is on you our elected officials to chart a course for our city to thrive in the decades ahead.

We at the Lowertown Community Association urge you to vote **YES** to keep the current urban boundary intact and no to an expansion. If we want to be a world-class city, then we need to plan for the 2020s & 30s, not the 1950s, we must change course and undo some of the damage of a century of car-focused planning.

The pandemic has highlighted the opportunities - as I walk around Lowertown and see empty streets, empty surface parking lots taking up full city blocks, it's clear just how much space has been devoted to car infrastructure, that could easily be repurposed for housing solutions. Let alone office buildings that may be re-thought in the post pandemic world.

Many of you know that in Lowertown we have a variety of housing, as well as a serious lack of housing. We have a large homeless population, and are impacted by the opioid crisis. We are disturbed by this every single day, and desperately want housing options for all. This means affordable housing, as we eloquently heard from Kaite. We acknowledge that saying NO to urban expansion means saying YES to greater density within the current urban boundary. The LCA supports further residential density in our community. We support the addition of more residential accommodation in i community primarily

through mid-rise developments along major arteries. We could also integrate green building principles and retain, renovate and retrofit viable existing dwellings.

The Mayor and some of you have said that "Communities always say they will accept intensification, but they always oppose it when a development is proposed." If communities like ours can have a say in the kind of intensification that will occur we in Lowertown, and other city communities as we've heard support intensification. Indeed we in the LCA are ready to work with the City on an intensification plan. As Robb Barnes said, "community buy-in is there, and it's your responsibility to seize it."

One indication is the appreciation of the City's plan to foster transitions to "15 minute neighbourhoods", if it is sensitive to the needs of existing neighbourhoods, such as Lowertown, which is already a "15 Minute Neighbourhood" that is ready to welcome new residents.

I wanted to focus on our readiness for intensification done well, and housing affordability, but of course want to also quickly note 2 other points raised earlier: 1) the climate implications of expansion of the boundary, and echo Robb & Paul's presentations were very clear & so helpful; 2) loss of greenspace & biodiversity - the pandemic has also illustrated how much Ottawans value access to greenspace for physical and mental health as well as biodiversity. As Dr Vera Etches noted last week how many citizens through the survey and otherwise have spoken up for access to greenspace.

Closing with a quote from Janette Sadik-Khan, the chair of the National Association of City Transportation Officials who we invited to Ottawa a few years ago:

"Density is destiny, and cities across North America are finding that their strength comes not by expanding their boundaries, but by building walkable, bikeable, transit-accessible communities. Compact neighborhoods aren't just better to live in, they can unlock economic potential and maintain cities' competitiveness in a post-pandemic recovery" I urge you to put Ottawa on this path by boldly holding the line.

Thank you, Merci.

Liz Bernstein, Board Member, Lowertown Community Association