



Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital
Alliance pour les espaces verts dans la capitale du Canada

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2 July 2015

To: Selma Hassan and Erin O'Connell,
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(by E-mail, Selma.Hassan@ottawa.ca)

(by E-mail: Erin.OConnell@Ottawa.ca)

Dear Selma and Erin,

Subject: Comments on Former CFB Rockcliffe Draft Community Design Plan (CDP)

On Sunday, November 26, 2006 the Ottawa Citizen published "Green goals for Rockcliffe" (appended below) presenting some of the ideas being considered to make a conceptual design plan for the former Rockcliffe Base more environmentally sustainable:

- Shuttle to the Transitway
- Reduce water usage and collect rainwater
- Reduce stormwater runoff
- Narrower roads
- Green roofs
- Passive Solar orientation and solar roof panels
- Environmentally safe materials
- Control of energy use

On March 3, 2014 the Greenspace Alliance sent similar ideas to the Canada Lands Corporation to enhance the green goals for the CDP:

- Improve and enhance the required buffers to protect valued natural and Environmentally Sensitive Areas.
- Introduce a system of mini-parks to encourage walkability as well as to increase greenspace.
- Include more natural linkages across the entire site.
- Early on, define clear targets for subsequent site plans and building plans for an environmentally sustainable development.

We were quite pleased and encouraged by the willingness of the Canada Lands Company (CLC) to listen to public input on the proposed Community Design Plan. CLC conducted three highly successful public meetings, nine Public Advisory Group meetings and numerous meetings with other groups. Through the City, we congratulate CLC for setting such a high standard of public consultation. Other Ottawa developers need to follow this example. We suggest that more direct input by individual

residents is beneficial, especially when consultants working for developers collect existing conditions information. Soliciting current information directly from local residents and local naturalists is far superior to doing desktop analysis based on out-of-date reports, maps and studies. In particular, this approach yields better information on the presence of wildlife. Neighbours typically have seen far more than a consultant can ever hope to observe during a few visits.

CLC must also be commended for bringing forward the CDP in parallel with the details of the Official Plan Amendment (OPA), the Plan of Subdivision (PoS) and the Zoning By-law Amendment (ZBA). We have long believed that development proposals should be evaluated as a package, including supporting plans for water, sewer, stormwater, traffic and parkland. The City's development review process, however, appears to have trouble dealing with such a comprehensive application. It unnecessarily excluded the public for a year before it formally accepted the applications and then published thousands of pages on its development application web site, spread over three different file numbers. The public was lucky that at the last minute someone realized that asking for feedback within two days after the Public Meeting was unreasonable. It would be so much better if the City followed CLC's example of openness to ideas, genuine dialogue, reasonable deadlines and transparency.

We also commend CLC for adding more forest cover to the Urban Natural Area designated NRC North. We look forward to seeing the effectiveness of the proposed tree protection measures during construction as this will be a significant undertaking, requiring a wide base around the exterior perimeter of the tree canopy and constant monitoring for damage.

The Greenspace Alliance is also quite pleased with the areas designated for parks and parkettes which are estimated to be 19.73 ha (15%) in the CDP at Table 5.2: Land Use Distribution and Density Targets. (There is a slight discrepancy in the CDP as Table 5.1: Parks and Parkettes list the ten parks and parkettes encompassing an area of 23 ha (17.5%).) We expect additional mini-parks to be added to the Site Plans along with more trees along the streets to achieve a forest canopy cover well above 30% for the entire site. We are also hopeful that the additional 6 ha of natural area around the NRC Woods will be fully retained using low intensity development techniques. We also like the excellent way in which CLC has designed a vegetative swale as a buffer around the Environmentally Sensitive Area of the Montfort Woods. In this regard we would like to suggest using milkweed plants or more significant trees in the buffer areas to offset the lost habitat for monarch butterflies and butternut trees.

We support Policy 8 in the Parks Master Plan which states:

“Significant trees and tree groupings have been identified for preservation as identified in the Park Concept Plans (1 through 10) and the Parks and Open Spaces diagram in Chapter 5 of the Community Design Plan (CDP).”

However, the Tree Conservation Report at Annex B lists a possible 69 trees for retention out of a probable tree inventory of 112; 57 of these were rated as being in good condition and 6 more in fair condition. Annex B then identifies only 14 trees for retention, with 19 more to be potentially retained, and 36 not to be retained. We feel that this degree of retention is woefully inadequate and therefore recommend that the determination of whether or not a tree is to be retained be left for the Site Plan Approval stage. In this way all 112 trees can be assessed on a case by case basis. Given that some developers now recognize the tremendous value of urban trees, we hope they will want to incorporate the significant existing trees into their designs.

Both during construction and afterwards, adopting best practices of habitat retention, conflict prevention and natural corridor design are some of the ways to manage co-existence and displaying sensitivity to wildlife. We trust that CLC, its contractors and developers who are awarded lots, will heed the protocol for protection of wildlife during construction now approaching final approval by City Council.

While acknowledging that the Parks Master Plan states that “the facility fit plans (proposed park concept diagrams) are intended for demonstration purposes only and are not to be used to direct the ultimate parks design”, these park designs and their description (including provision of park buildings, playground equipment and puddle ponds -- Concept Plans 1 through 10) appear incompatible with natural space preservation. These concept designs do not reflect the desired policy objective in several areas. This is particularly true of Park 3 with a significant 100+ year old Bur Oak Tree. To build a puddle pond beside such as tree seems incongruous. In order to maximize the retention of significant trees and tree groupings, the demonstration design concepts should show the location of significant trees identified in Annex B of the Tree Conservation Report.

We are disappointed that the draft CDP does not define clear “green” targets for subsequent site plans and building plans so that this development may approach environmental sustainability. The plan does not go far enough in exploiting the opportunities that this site affords to build a futuristic, modern, energy efficient and self-sustainable community.

As the Citizen Newspaper mentioned in 2006, shuttle routes are needed to move people directly to and from the transitway. The vision of aerial trams along Blair Road from the proposed Village Town Centre to the Gloucester Centre Transit Station cannot be prematurely rejected for the future either. Underground connections between buildings need to be planned. For a given width, narrower roads need to be considered which will allow for wider pathways and bikeways at ground level. Treed pedestrian boulevards need to be added to the conceptual design that will link the parks, parkettes, natural areas and the site specific mini-parks.

Minimizing CO₂ emissions must be a major planning objective so eliminating the need for personal fossil-fuel transportation vehicles should be a primary goal for this future development. This could be the first development where roads are primarily for the occasional use of commercial and emergency motorized vehicles. There is a huge opportunity lost here for a new, innovative urban development blueprint that would be designed for people transit rather than car transit. The conceptual design we hoped for would balance the lower infrastructure costs of compact development with a new focus on moving people who would no longer require the use of a private motor vehicle for short travel. People should be able to work, live and play by safely walking or biking to where they want to go within the neighbourhood using greenspace and overhead or underground pedestrian transportation routes. Private automobiles and parking areas should be minimized in favour of sidewalks, bike lanes and public transit corridors. Traffic calming measures such as narrower roads and traffic circles should be utilized. The conceptual design plan does not deliver on this kind of future vision.

We believe that the Canada Lands Company does have the vision and the planning expertise necessary to encourage such a new model of urban development. The problem appears to be archaic traffic standards, design principles and policies that hamper the realization of new and innovative ideas. Innovative changes can only happen if this Conceptual Design Plan clearly outlines the right vision and the right way ahead in making this site a special place to live, work and play in the future.

To this end, the Greenspace Alliance recommends that a new section of the CDP address “green” environmental goals for this development such as:

- the use of geothermal heating systems for energy sustainability
- the use of battery storage and solar panels for energy sustainability to take advantage of the North-South orientation
- the use of wind power for energy sustainability in specific areas of the site
- the use of parks and parkettes for ground water infiltration
- the use of mini-parks at the Site Plan level that will connect the other parks and parkettes identified in the conceptual plan
- the alignment of parks, parkettes and mini-parks so that there is a contiguous path for pedestrians and cyclists on one side of major streets
- the use of public overhead cable trams for the transportation of people to mass transit stations.
- the use of underground tunnels and pathways that connect the various residential and commercial blocks
- the use of above ground bridges that connect commercial buildings
- the use of green roofs for gardens and water collection
- the use of small urban gardens for food, flowers and compost re-cycling
- the reduction of energy use by:
 - a) Centralized heating and cooling facilities (including water heating)
 - b) Demand side management technologies to allow utilities to reduce peak energy consumption
 - c) Water towers or air bladders for energy storage to reduce peak load
 - d) On demand hot water systems
- the use and reuse of rainwater for parks and tree
- streetscapes that prefer personal electric vehicles and motorbikes over fossil-fueled cars.

We would be pleased to provide any additional information you may require on these comments.

Respectfully,

Erwin Dreessen

Erwin Dreessen
Co-chair
Greenspace Alliance

Appended: Green goals for Rockcliffe

Cc: Don Schultz, CLC Project Manager (by E-mail: DSchultz@clc.ca)
Tobi Nussbaum, Councillor Rideau-Rockcliffe (by E-mail, Tobi.Nussbaum@ottawa.ca)

Appendix

Green goals for Rockcliffe

The Ottawa Citizen

Published: Sunday, November 26, 2006

Some of the ideas being considered for the Rockcliffe site that would make it more environmentally sustainable:

Transportation

- Light rail has been considered a key element, either coming into the area or passing along its edge along Montreal Road. This is in jeopardy as Ottawa's mayor-elect Larry O'Brien has said he wants to rethink the light-rail plan and will seek a six-month delay.
- Car alternatives include bike paths, car pools, a shuttle to the Transitway and paying OC Transpo to provide a higher level of service. Canada Lands expects to market the area to people who are interested in less reliance on a car or people who can't afford one -- 25 per cent of the housing is to be affordable.
- Narrower roads use less asphalt and thus allow more green space, which has a cooling effect in summer and reduces the need for air conditioning. The obstacle will be to convince the city, which favours wider roads for the ease of fire trucks and snow plows. The city is setting up a committee of people from various departments to work with Canada Lands on such issues. Could the city rethink the size of vehicles? Fire trucks have been getting bigger, and the city clears snow on residential streets using the same plows as on collector roads.

Water

- Reduce usage: Use 50-per-cent less water than a conventional building using such devices as low-flow toilets and showerheads.
- Collect rainwater: Use to flush toilets, irrigate gardens and wash cars.
- Reduce stormwater runoff: Excess could flow into a stormwater retention system that includes ornamental wetlands and ponds. Shallow ditches between roads would allow the water to infiltrate soil.

"We want to have little or no stormwater leaving the site," says sustainability consultant Ed Lowans.

Energy-efficient buildings

- Renewable or recyclable materials: Such as wood from crop trees rather than old growth. Use materials produced in region, which would draw on less energy to get to the site. Use any trees cut on site for lumber.
- Solar energy: Orient buildings according to sunrise and sunset to take advantage of passive solar energy and shade.
- Solar roof panels: Boost the effectiveness of high-efficiency furnaces and good wall insulation.
- Green roofs: Use to cool buildings in summer and retain heat in winter.

Air quality

- Indoors: Choose materials that don't give off gases, such as wood floors or ceramic tile rather than carpet. Reduce emissions from such building materials as paints, plastics and plywood. Improve ventilation systems, reduce the use of pesticides and begin information campaigns to discourage use of perfume, bug spray and chemical cleaners.
- Outdoor: Plant female tree and plant species, which do not generate pollen.

Garbage

- Compost from grass clippings, wood chips, food waste from restaurants and kitchen waste from houses could be used for on-site greenhouse, fish farm and tree nursery.

Smart meters

- Measure energy efficiency. Technology could control the amount of energy used during peak periods, such as heat waves and cold snaps.

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