

Dear Mayor Watson and Dr Etches,

Please find attached a letter proposed to us by the Healthy Transportation Coalition, a long-time member of the Greenspace Alliance. We fully endorse their call for reflecting the spirit and specifications of the Healthy Streets concept in Ottawa's new Official Plan as it aligns with our vision for a green and healthy capital. Of particular concern to us is the role of trees in providing two of the stated attributes of Healthy Streets: shade and shelter, and clean air.

Even just a nod in this direction in the Strategic Directions section of the Official Plan, to be further elaborated through the Transportation Master Plan, would put us on a path for creating fairer, sustainable and attractive urban spaces.

Paul Johanis,
Chair, Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital

att:

Dear Mayor Jim Watson, Dr. Vera Etches, Councillors and members of the Board of Health,

The state of our streets is a public health issue.

Now, more than ever, we need these public spaces to support the health of all who use them. We cannot afford to let politics, parking and traffic flow dominate.

When we create streets that improve people's health, we also make our neighbourhoods more socially and economically vibrant, and environmentally sustainable. That is what Lucy Saunders, founder of the Healthy Streets Approach, found after researching the effects of transport, the public realm, and urban planning on health. Saunders distilled this research into ten indicators of a Healthy Street:

- Everyone feels welcome
- People choose to walk and cycle
- People feel relaxed
- Easy to cross
- Clean air
- Not too noisy
- Places to stop and rest
- People feel safe
- Things to see and do
- Shade and shelter

The Healthy Streets Approach became the framework of London Mayor Sadiq Khan's 25-year Transport Strategy, part of all the Mayor's statutory strategies, and a pillar of the London Plan (spatial plan). More about the Healthy Streets Approach is available here: <https://healthystreets.com/home/tools/>.

I am asking you to advocate for a similar prioritization of health in decision-making about our public streets here in Ottawa. This would include the following:

1. Making health the top priority in all day-to-day transportation and planning decisions, starting now
2. Launching a program, co-led by Ottawa Public Health and Transportation Services, to quickly transform streets to support safe, active transportation and expand public space during the pandemic
3. Committing to the Healthy Streets Approach in all relevant policy documents, including the new Official Plan, Transportation Master Plan, and Complete Streets policies
4. Requesting that Ottawa Public Health co-lead the development of the new Transportation Master Plan, Cycling Plan and Pedestrian Plan
5. Providing the public with an analysis of the health impacts of all transportation decisions (i.e., adding a “Health Impacts” section in all reports to the Transportation Committee, to be provided by Ottawa Public Health)
6. Leading a culture change at City Hall so that all staff understand their responsibility to transform public streets into healthy and equitable places (not to defend the status quo)

We cannot continue watching while other cities lead. I am counting on you to act with the urgency this issue deserves.

Sincerely,

Paul Johanis

Chair, Greenspace Alliance of Canada’s Capital