

Federation of Citizens' Associations of Ottawa-Carleton (FCA) Summary of Recommendations on City of Ottawa Official Plan, Transportation Master Plan and Infrastructure Master Plan

The following Summary of Recommendations of Federation of Citizens Associations (FCA) results from extensive, City-wide consultation and research.

Key elements of this summary were presented to the City's Consultative Community and Industry Advisory Panel on June 6, 2013. Hundreds of additional pages of advice were also sent directly by FCA on all the major headings of the Official Plan. These have been tested at several publicized interactive public workshops at the following locations: Overbrook, Kanata, City Hall, Barrhaven-South Nepean, Orleans.

FCA consulted through 2013 across the City with hundreds of residents and groups in substantial, interactive workshops and other dialogue on the Official Plan Review including the Transportation Master Plan and Infrastructure Master Plan. Led by Sheila Perry, Bob Brocklebank, Neil Thomson and Gary Sealey with key support from Faith Blacquiere and others FCA organized a suite of public meetings across the City. In addition FCA supplied and supported expert and well-networked civic leaders to a City Advisory Panel.

Key Findings: A fundamental truth of the City: The City of Ottawa consists of a City Centre and three Town Centres beyond the Greenbelt. The Plan must link and guide decisions on these four Centres with their encircling valued employment lands, commercial services and old and new residential settlements, all surrounded by sensitive watersheds, working quarries, trans-city rail lines and rights of way, farms and forest lands, designated natural sites and two dozen heritage villages contemporary with the beginnings of Bytown. The Plan must comprehensively nourish this entire Urban, New Town, Suburban, Rural, and Green platform which supports the character and dynamic of the City and its potential for protection and enjoyment to 2031 and beyond.

At the outset, FCA consultations on Ottawa's Official Plan had to overcome a public skepticism and disappointment in Ottawa Planning, arising chiefly from a spate of 'random spot rezoning' and a general perception in the Press and among many public of disregard by the City and its Planning Committee for public input to the planning process with respect to Development proposals. FCA looked for ways of working constructively and reached out, in private discussions with local leaders and with the Greater Ottawa Homebuilders Association to search for useful paths forward.

Summary of our recommendations: these emerged from those consultations and workshops. These are key principles and practices which must guide the OPR, TMP and IMP. The Plan and decisions on the Plan should be guided by them.

- 1) **Terminate and put a moratorium on the practice of routine random spot rezoning** which has enraged and harmed neighbourhoods, reduced the credibility of civic leaders and debased the existing Official Plan and Zoning By-Law. Two-thirds of community leaders contacted have reported serious concerns with this practice.
- 2) **Install Transport-Oriented Development as a key principle of Ottawa's Official Plan** so as to prepare for a city of live, work & play destinations served by public transit. Public concerns collected by FCA indicate that the intended designation of over a hundred such destinations poses a new challenge: too many. Such a number would greatly slow public transit and smear intensification all over the City in an unregulated, unfocused way. There would not be the opportunity to scale up intensification at selected, strategic economic sites, to support economical mass transit. This number of stations and destinations must be reduced.
- 3) **Place the emphasis for designation of Mainstreets on established commercial centres and major activity areas** – set measurable redevelopment goals for mixed use at established centres such as Ottawa's major shopping centres and Ottawa's Town Centres. Here, we note some agreement with a latest presentation on the Official Plan under the theme, Strengthen Suburbs. However, the term "Suburbs" is not helpful, and for understanding must be replaced by "Ottawa's Town Centres".
- 4) **Protect Community Character. Plan for Ottawa as a City of Communities and Neighbourhoods.** Community Character is an intangible heritage, subjectively perceived. For that reason we recommend the installation of this principle in the Official Plan followed by provision of citizen-led processes to identify,

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define, describe and assess Community Character for each of Ottawa's neighbourhoods. Moreover, future development in established communities be required to be compatible with established Community Character. Moreover, compatibility with Community Character be determined by judgement of informed citizens following a due process.

- 5) **Conserve, Avoid Sprawl – conserve resources, stabilize residential neighbourhoods.** To achieve this principle Ottawa must take a “complete communities” approach to the growth and management of the City. Every community, in particular its nearest Town Centre and Employment Lands must include essential urban and commercial services and jobs.
- 6) **Protect Nature and Infrastructure – guarantee protection of natural and infrastructural systems.** The City must arrange itself to ensure the sustainability of the natural systems on which life depends here in Ottawa as elsewhere. The City must use a watersheds management approach, including groundwater management, recognizing that these resources can be bounties if development is designed with nature and expensive disasters if not. The City's map of Infrastructure indicates large area populations dependent on water wells and local sewage field disposals. These are fragile systems and the consequences of damage are significantly expensive. Rather than invest unending amounts of resources into making water and sewer lines longer and longer and higher pressure, Ottawa must shape localization of some parts of its water and sewer systems; going beyond the storm-water ponds to other types of local supply, storage and local treatment; and as well recognize the safe and economic limits of its long-distance, centralized, aging systems.
- 7) **Provide for Town Centres – set measurable goals and direction for the provision of live, work and play opportunities both in the three Towns outside the Greenbelt and within City Town Centre.** The Plan must distinguish, protect and encourage the huge and valuable success of Kanata employment lands through appropriate Plan measures; and at the same time, recognize and correct the failings of Orleans, especially, and to a lesser extent Barrhaven-South Nepean to lift off. These towns and their centres outside the Greenbelt, one-third of the population of the entire City must be set out distinctly in the Official Plan as mature and settled residential areas served by the commercial sector and nourished by employment lands (in the case of Kanata by hugely valuable r&d/manufacturing activities). Each must be furnished with an array of parks, educational, cultural, medical and administrative services and facilities and guarantees for their natural and heritage environments.
- 8) **Leave no one behind – position Ottawa as a place for all, including long-time & new populations, the working poor, elderly & infirm.** Balance Employment and Development – address massive imbalances in employment in particular areas, fostering employment. The Plan must guide development appropriate for all levels of employees with accessible, affordable and nearby housing, and transit. There must be an emphasis to ensure against ghettoizing of the poor and new populations, and a fostering of community-building through appropriate design, structural and transportation innovations welcoming and serving all. Ottawa must Plan and place facilities and homes for poor people at locations where they can access transportation to their jobs and receive services which they require and to which they are entitled
- 9) **Enhance the Beauty of the City-** cherish and protect heritage and the richness of culture; build on achievements in settlements and technologies. In some ways this principle relates strongly to Principle 4, above, understanding that architectural forms and urban-designs interpreting community character must represent the truth of the City and its beauty. It must direct urban evolution which builds on the City's achievements in successful neighbourhood settlement, buildings, technologies. As well, Ottawa's planning must avoid lack of coordination of scale of development with need. The public is suffering from lacks and overages in schools availability, incomplete streets, broken linkages and deterioration in pathways and many decades of missing transit facilities.
- 10) **Be clear and authoritative – set standards for a culture of consultation, evaluation criteria and updates.** The Plan must be authorized as the lead document in a set of authoritative, appeal-able direction, linking the Plan with manuals, directives, standards and other guide documents. During the drafting of the new Official Plan the City of Ottawa did a consultation on Consultation. The working definition of “Consultation” which must be used in the new Official Plan, is that of exchanging cogent information among parties prior to a decision so that the decision is fact-based, sound, and sensitive to the parties served by the decision. Ottawa's Official Plan must contextualize City decision-making, so that it well serves neighbourhoods and communities along with, say, developers and staff.

04.1.2015