



DEVELOPMENT FOR WHO?
THE COMMUNITY'S
VISION FOR
LEBRETON
FLATS

613-746-5999 ext. 2
ottawa@acorncanada.org
www.acorncanada.org

Ottawa ACORN
404 McArthur Ave
Ottawa, ON K1K 1G8



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WHAT IS ACORN?



ACORN Canada or Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, Canada is an independent national organization of low- and moderate-income families. We have over 140,000 members organized into twenty-four neighborhood chapters in nine cities across Canada. Ottawa and Gatineau ACORN has over 32,000 members committed to fighting for change.

Our members advocate on a variety of issues that affect them directly, such as affordable and liveable housing, disability rights, fair banking, living wages and more. It is ACORN's belief that social and economic justice can best be achieved with a national active membership who are invested in

their organization and focused on building power for change.

ACORN organizers, leaders, and members go door to door in low and moderate income neighbourhoods to identify issues and ask people to commit to being a part of the change they want to see!

ACORN has a grassroots structure where our elected members sit on our boards, run community meetings, speak to press, lead direct actions and lobby politicians. It is through this unique model of community engagement that we have been able to work for and with people to achieve social justice.

INTRODUCTION



At 29 hectares big, LeBreton Flats is the largest piece of undeveloped land in the city's downtown core. It is currently owned by the federal government and falls under the administration of the National Capital Commission (NCC). However, it is the NCC's intention to sell the land.

Given LeBreton Flats' torrid past as unceded Algonquin Territory and a once working class neighbourhood of over 2,800 residents before they were mass evicted, the NCC has a responsibility to these communities. It is their job to ensure the future development of LeBreton Flats is for THEIR benefit, not developers.

As a community union of low income and working class people,

ACORN is working to bring the vision for LeBreton Flats of our members living in the surrounding neighbourhoods to decision makers. This includes community demands for:

- Affordable Housing
- Good jobs
- Food Security
- Childcare Services
- AND MORE!

ACORN's Central Ottawa chapter is working with other groups such as the LeBreton Flats CBA Coalition to have these demands enforced through a legally binding Community Benefits Agreement (CBA).

WHAT IS A CBA?



Community benefit agreements (CBAs) are a legally enforceable contract signed by community groups and by a private developer or government agency that results from negotiations to garner community support for the project. These negotiations can lead to a range of benefits for community members, including jobs and training, social enterprises, daycares, and affordable housing provisions.

ACORN Canada's sister organization began organizing CBA campaigns in the United States decades ago when large infrastructure and development projects would happen in our members' neighbourhoods. Our membership identified CBAs as a way to ensure those developments actually benefited the people who lived there. ACORN was successful in winning legally binding CBAs with community signatories across the USA, most notably in New York City with the Atlantic Yards CBA.

In Canada, ACORN members across Ontario (ex. Hergonate ACORN's fight for NO displacement & repairs,

Toronto's Woodbine Casino and Hamilton's Metrolinx development) have been central in community benefits campaigns, particularly as it relates to securing tenants' right to housing. In recent years, housing has increasingly become commodified. Huge real estate investment trusts (REITs), such as Timbercreek, Akelius, and CAPREIT are buying up properties where they believe land values are under-realized.

These companies effectively displace low and moderate income tenants, replacing them with people who can afford higher rents. An important component of realizing the right to housing is to involve tenants in the solution. Deep community engagement is essential during all phases of the CBA implementation. The Toronto Community Benefits Network describes community involvement as "going beyond public consultation and into direct engagement on a development project".

METHODOLOGY



In order to understand the priorities of low income and working class households residing in neighbourhoods like Mechanicsville, Chinatown, Little Italy and Centretown surrounding LeBreton Flats, Ottawa ACORN conducted a community survey. We reached out to community members directly through door knocking back in late 2019/early 2020 while some people filled the survey out online and over the phone.

A total of 302 people responded to the survey. Just under 80% were renters, 17% were homeowners and

the remaining 3% preferred not to say. The primary question that we set out to ask was: “What do you think should be included in the development of LeBreton Flats?”

We provided options for people to choose from. The options included affordable housing, child care space, local job hiring, community centre, accessible transit, social enterprise/local businesses and a category “other”. People had the choice of picking more than one option. Respondents could also leave further comments if they wished.



SURVEY RESULTS

Here are the community benefits priorities from our survey in order:

93%

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

281 Responses

92%

CHILDCARE SPACE AND LOCAL JOB HIRING

278 Responses

26%

COMMUNITY AMENITIES SUCH AS A COMMUNITY CENTRE, LIBRARY AND PUBLIC SPACE

79 Responses

19%

FOOD SECURITY/CREATION OF A GROCERY STORE

57 Responses

19%

GREEN SPACE

56 Responses

11%

SMALL, LOCAL BUSINESSES/ SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

33 Responses

07%

ACCESSIBLE, PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY TRANSIT

21 Responses

Honorable mentions: public art or art studios, public access to the waterfront, safe injection site, school, sports field, land for Algonquin use

COMMUNITY VISION



Through a collaborative process including multiple meetings and hundreds of phone calls with ACORN members living in the neighbourhoods surrounding LeBreton Flats from our Central Ottawa Chapter, and the cumulative results from the Community Benefits Survey, ACORN has developed a list of key elements of a community vision for the LeBreton Flats development.

ACORN COMMUNITY DEMANDS: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

1.

35% AFFORDABLE HOUSING

This is 10% more than the 25% affordable housing proposed by the NCC. The NCC is proposing that of the affordable housing 1/3 be for non-profit providers, 1/3 be for community land trusts or social housing, and 1/3 be for below market rent. ACORN is demanding that "below market rent" be removed from the affordable housing provisions as the market has failed to offer affordable housing solutions. Affordable should be defined as 30% of one's income. The NCC has still provided no clear definition of what affordable housing will mean at LeBreton.

2.

IN PERPETUITY

We are in a housing and homelessness crisis. We need housing that is affordable forever!

3.

FULL RANGE OF HOUSING OPTIONS

The affordable housing needs to include a full range of housing options: wheelchair accessible ground floor housing, 3-4 bedroom homes for families, one-bedroom apartments for single adults. The NCC has so far committed to this.

4.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN EACH PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT

The NCC is proposing that each phase of development include 15% affordable housing, however, the housing and homelessness crisis we are in now is urgent and growing. We need to prioritize the construction of affordable housing in the early phases of development and have a minimum of 25% of affordable housing in each stage.

5.

INTEGRATED HOUSING

Individual housing developments should have a mix of units affordable to different income brackets.

ACORN COMMUNITY DEMANDS: INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

6.

COMMUNITY HUB

The future LeBreton Flats should include a community hub with a publicly accessible computer lab, free recreation space, green space and community gardens.

7.

CHILDCARE SERVICES

To support working class families the development needs to include affordable childcare spaces with hours that accommodate shift workers. Right now the NCC has proposed a childcare centre OR a school, however, these are not synonymous and neglects the needs of parents who work outside of school hours.

8.

PUBLIC WIFI

Internet is an essential service. LeBreton Flats must have free and accessible public wifi in every public space from community hubs and libraries to parks and bus shelters.

9.

HEALTH SERVICES

LeBreton Flats needs to provide a range of community health services including health and dental services that accept patients that are ODSP recipients and mental health supports.

10.

ACCESSIBLE TRANSIT

The LeBreton Flats development should include multiple modes of transportation including OC Transpo bus services, bike paths and pedestrian walkways. Transportation routes should be physically accessible for all.

11.

GROCERY STORE

With food prices on the rise, LeBreton Flats will need a grocery store that is affordable for low income households and have culturally diverse food options.

ACORN COMMUNITY DEMANDS: GOOD JOBS & LOCAL BUSINESSES

12.

JOBS FOR EQUITY SEEKING GROUPS

Both during and post-construction, there needs to be a range of employment opportunities, including training and apprenticeships for historically disadvantaged communities. ACORN members want to see 40% of job hires be from equity seeking groups similar to the community benefits plan for the Woodbine Casino thanks to the efforts of the Toronto Community Benefits Network and Toronto ACORN.

13.

LOCAL HIRING

A percentage of hiring both during and post-construction should be of job seekers living in neighbourhoods surrounding LeBreton Flats.

14.

GOOD JOBS WITH FAIR WAGES

The NCC must work with local unions and the Ottawa District Labour Council to ensure companies hired for the development of LeBreton Flats have good labour practices and treat/pay their workers fairly.

15.

AFFORDABLE RETAIL

To encourage social enterprises and small businesses, LeBreton Flats should include a minimum of 20% affordable rental options for commercial spaces. LeBreton Flats should also include the provision of goods and services from local supplies and enterprises.

ACORN MEMBER'S TESTIMONY



63-year-old Michel Bigras remembers his family's painful expropriation from Duke Street in LeBreton Flats all those years ago, "LeBreton Flats was promised to the people who lived there in the past... now I would like to see mixed communities, working class people living alongside people from every walk of life. To do that, we need to see the NCC commit to more affordable housing."

Edward Roue, the elected Secretary of the Central Ottawa ACORN Chapter and tenant renting in Centretown, says "I have lived in Ottawa my whole life, and I know how much potential LeBreton Flats has, and I want to make sure we do it right, in a way that will help poor and working class people in this city. We want a decent standard of affordable housing so it is a development that is accessible to people of all income brackets, not just luxury condo owners"

ACORN MEMBER'S TESTIMONY PT II.



Geri Stevens is an ODSP recipient and has been a member of ACORN since 2011. She's also the elected Co-Chair of the Central Ottawa ACORN Chapter. She wants to see LeBreton Flats developed into an inclusive community, "We can't continue to demolish low income and working class neighbourhoods like Manor Village or Herongate and then exclude low income people from their futures. Many people know about these two stories of mass evictions but it's easy to forget that that's what happened to the people of LeBreton Flats 60 years ago. I want to see Ottawa continue to reflect our nation as a whole - a vibrant community - diversity of race, ethnicity, ability and economic background. LeBreton Flats is smack dab in the middle of a vibrant part of Ottawa - I would like it if I could one day live there, and it would really be great if my income didn't bar me from being able to live in a future LeBreton Flats."

CONCLUSION



So what's next? The NCC is finalizing their Master Concept Plan this winter 2021 and has already launched a call for proposals to develop the section of LeBreton Flats adjacent to the future Ottawa Public Library and Archives Canada joint facility. Join ACORN to continue to push to ensure the development is for the community, NOT developers!