

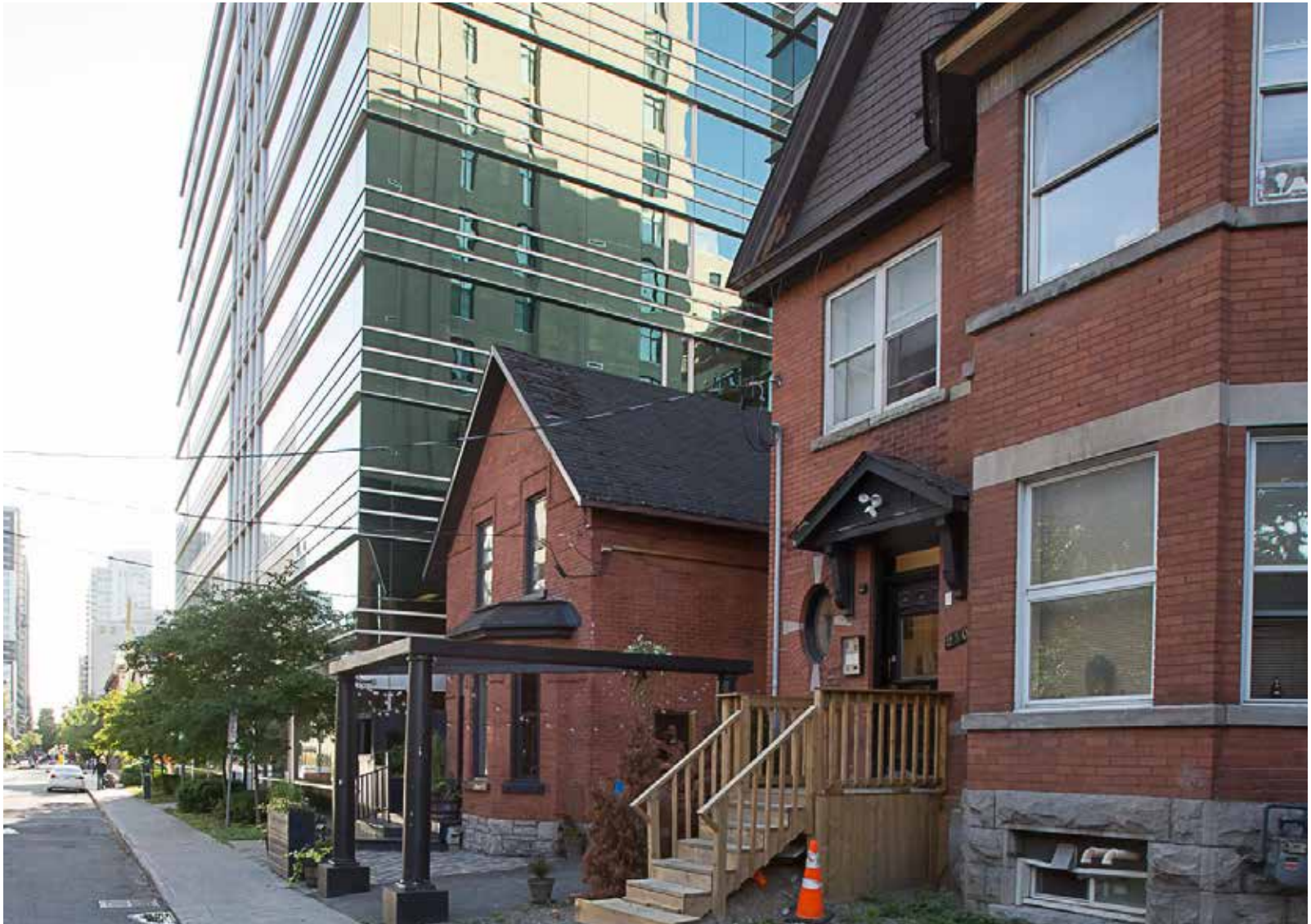


ACORN pushes affordable city Internet, 4



Finding space for parks downtown, 11

THE CENTRETOWN BUZZ



Many Centretown streets support low-rise older houses cheek by jowl with high rises giving a mix of housing choices for families and singles. Under the proposed new Official Plan policies, how much denser and higher will Centretown become? BRETT DELMAGE/THE BUZZ

# Five problems with the new Official Plan

Alayne McGregor

The City of Ottawa released an “As We Heard It” report last week, summarizing residents’ extensive, often critical responses to the city’s draft Official Plan (OP).

The draft OP is a highly complex and major rewrite of the city’s primary planning document. For at least the next 10 years, it will control how our city will build out and up and what types of buildings, streets, parks, and city facilities we see in our neighbourhoods.

It has attracted a lot of attention and concern across the city and from Somerset Ward. In fact, the number of responses from the residents in the K2P and K1R postal codes covering Somerset Ward – 716 – was the third highest in the city, after the Glebe and Hintonburg.

Under the new OP, Ottawa will require more intense development to make more efficient use of land; promote sustainable travel modes like walking, cycling, and transit over cars; and aspire to

15-minute neighbourhoods where one can meet one’s basic needs nearby. The OP also includes policies to reduce energy use and the impact of climate change, and to increase Ottawa’s greenspace.

Community associations, while supporting many of these goals, have raised serious concerns about the details. *The BUZZ* reviewed the submissions from several associations, including the Centretown Community Association (CCA), the Hintonburg Community Association (HCA), and the city-wide Federation of Citizens’ Associations of Ottawa (FCA).

The “As We Heard It” report, while responding to some of these concerns, has not addressed others, and raised further concerns. The city will also release ward-specific reports this month, including one covering responses from Somerset Ward.

**1. The timing - too fast?**

The draft OP was released on November 20. The deadline for public comments was March 12. The final draft is

scheduled to be released in late summer, and City Council will discuss and vote on that draft this fall, possibly as early as September.

In February, the FCA requested the city delay finalizing the plan until 2023, in order to give residents more time “to digest and reflect on the implications.” Its community associations had

Even as she’s leaving the Somerset Street Chinatown BIA, Grace Xin remains a champion of the area, not just locally but internationally.

“As a capital city of Canada, I think we should recognize the importance Chinatown can play in strengthening the relationship between Chinatown and the Asia-Pacific area. Chinatown has strategic importance for the city. I don’t think we’ve recognized that importance enough,” Xin told *The BUZZ*.

On May 31, Xin stepped down after 13 years as execu-

found the city timeline “woefully inadequate,” especially in the context of the pandemic, it said.

“The draft OP document is large and complex – 275 pages plus maps and annexes – with significant policy changes that will impact neighbourhoods, written in language that makes interpretation difficult to

Grace Xin (provided by Xin)

tive director of the Somerset Street Chinatown BIA. She begins a new job this month at the Ottawa Community Foundation as vice-president of Philanthropic Services and Community Building.

determine, and without the metrics to measure how quality of life that we value in our neighbourhoods will be maintained under this draft plan.”

The CCA also noted that the full effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are still unknown, including any permanent switch in work

Chinatown is a very rich community on many fronts, she said. “China, for example is Canada’s second-largest trading partner and Japan is the fourth-largest. Asia is also a very important source of international students coming to Canada. So Chinatown is a material expression of the growing connection between East and West. It is also a local focal point for people of Asian backgrounds.”

Chinatown is facing much the same challenges as other downtown commercial districts as a result of the pandemic, Xin said. She pointed to a recent study by

## Grace Xin: a champion of Chinatown

Alayne McGregor



Grace Xin (provided by Xin)

cont on p 3 “Official Plan”

cont on p 10 “Grace Xin”



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# THE CENTRETOWN BUZZ

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## The Lighter Side of the Pandemic, by Karen Munro-Caple



## The Good, the Bad, and the Bumpy: E-scooters are hazardous to PWDs

Ryan Lythall

E-scooters are back on the streets in Centretown. Soon after seeing them around, I've been reading complaints once again about poorly parked e-scooters.

An e-scooter parked in the middle of a sidewalk can quickly become a barrier for people with disabilities (PWD), especially those with visual disabilities. Imagine for a moment that you're visually impaired and on a busy street like Bank Street. Sounds of cars and other vehicles are all around you. Along with all those loud sounds, you suddenly faintly hear a much quieter ding-ding. You're trying to figure out where it's coming from, wondering if it's directed at you, or more importantly, trying to avoid getting hit by an irresponsible e-scooter rider on the sidewalk.

When the city agreed to allow e-scooters again, local accessibility advocates quickly pointed out their dangers. Along with them blocking access to sidewalks, concerns were also raised that e-scooters weren't equipped with proper alarms to alert visually impaired people.

In response to these concerns, the city has agreed to make safety the main focus this year and to pilot new technologies and parking locations to address these issues. One of the new technologies will have the scooters emit a constant sound to alert pedestrians of an oncoming scooter.

In 2020, when e-scooters

were approved in Ottawa, a big media campaign took place to announce their arrival, which included information on how to properly park once the rental period was up. In the weeks and months that followed, it became quite apparent to me that people weren't getting the message and that the three rental companies weren't doing enough.

On several occasions last summer, I came across e-scooters parked in the middle of the sidewalk, or worse, users riding on sidewalks, nearly running into me. As a reminder, e-scooters aren't permitted on sidewalks but little was done to prevent this from happening again.

Most sidewalks in Centretown are pretty narrow. Between people walking and others in wheelchairs, there's very little room for a person to pass. This is especially true on some side streets. Ottawa should not be adding anything else on wheels to sidewalks.

People with disabilities in Ottawa have been vocal for many years regarding the lack of wheelchair accessibility in general. To me, this is further proof of the city ignoring our concerns.

Ottawa should be doing what Toronto did. In May of this year, Toronto City Council voted unanimously to opt out of the electric scooter pilot program. Part of the reason for this was... wait for it... concerns raised by accessibility advocates and people with disabilities regarding safety and accessibility. Clearly, Toronto is a much larger city and there-



Safety information tags are now installed on e-scooters in Ottawa this year. *BRETT DELMAGE/THE BUZZ*

fore has a much bigger PWD community. However, the message is still the same.

Electric scooters present several issues when it comes to accessibility for PWD, as well as safety. If the provincial capital can listen to people with disabilities, why can't the capital of Canada do the same?

To anyone planning to use e-scooters this summer, please stay off the sidewalks. When parking, please don't leave the e-scooter in the middle of the sidewalk.

And to our city council members and Mayor Watson, stop ignoring people with disabilities. Many of us already face several obstacles when it comes to being

independent and active in the community.

We don't need to have another thing rolling in our way.

Follow Ryan on Twitter: [@rolling\\_enigma](https://twitter.com/rolling_enigma)

See letters to the editor on page 4

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# Knox gives free meals & friendship to keep people out of the cold

Patricia Marsden-Dole

If you walk past Knox Presbyterian Church at Elgin and Lisgar on Saturday evenings this spring, you'll notice many people pulling a full meal out of big brown paper bags. Here's where that food came from.

Knox's regular winter Saturday meal program closed last year with the COVID-19 restrictions. But its congregation made the decision that their regular guests still needed some place to go for a free meal and friendship, and ran the program as take-out.

The volunteer masterminds/coordinators at Knox are Samantha O'Grady and Siggy Pantazis. They were recruited in March 2020 by Knox's Pastor Jim Pot to

replace in-house meals with hot take-out meals and to add a spring program as resources permitted.

Their challenge was to create low-cost, nutritious, tasty, packed meals for 125-150 guests, plus additional bagged meals for guests to take to hungry family and friends. Any left-over meals go to nearby rooming houses. Unlike food banks, this food service is provided without registration and includes a wide variety of guests – some in need of free food while some come to share a free meal with others. The city health restrictions are observed and supervised fully with masks, social distancing and a code-compliant industrial kitchen in the church basement.

The budget for food is calculated based on three meals



Out of the Cold volunteers put together take-out meals in the industrial kitchen in the church basement (l-r: Pastor Jim Pot, Peggy Malcolm, Pat Grainger, Sig Pantazis.)

PATRICIA MARSDEN-DOLE/THE BUZZ



A group of guests doing their best to physical distance while enjoying their meal together.

PATRICIA MARSDEN-DOLE/THE BUZZ

for \$10, which means that food costs each Saturday add up to approximately \$450. The meals are prepared by volunteers who cook, pack, clean up and manage the take-away desk on Lisgar. While the winter take-away menu consisted of traditional church supper dishes such as lasagna or chili, the spring menu switched to deli-style sandwiches and taco salads along with fruit, a sweet and

a drink. Food items are generously provided by local businesses such as Massine's on Bank Street and Johnny Farina's on Elgin Street. The Centretown Community Association has helped Knox recruit community volunteers. Now the financial and volunteer challenge for our community is to continue this program through the summer months. But do-

nations are needed now to ensure this neighbourhood service continues while the COVID-19 restrictions are in place. Your generosity will be greatly appreciated by the people you see sitting on the Elgin/Lisgar corner on Saturday evenings. One frequent winter and spring guest is Paul, living on a modest disability income. He likes to tell people how much he enjoys the

good food, the good company, the generous donors and the wonderful work of the hospitable volunteers. And Pastor Jim Pot is often stopped on the sidewalk by guests who thank him for the warm welcome and a good meal. Interested in volunteering or making a financial donation? Email the Knox Out of the Cold program at [knoxottawa@rogers.com](mailto:knoxottawa@rogers.com)

## Official Plan: How many units is too dense for a neighbourhood?

cont from p 1

venues, choices in transit, housing size and location preferences, and even potential adjustment of building standards and design measures for better health protection. City staff have delayed the Transportation Master Plan to 2023 because of the pandemic, but not the OP itself.

The FCA request was denied by Mayor Watson and the chairs of the city Planning Committee and Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, without ever coming to a vote.

### 2. Not only jargon, but new jargon

As the HCA noted: "The draft OP is written in jargon that is new to most readers outside of the urban planning field, which makes the OP quite inaccessible to the general public. Understanding the meaning and the implication of concepts such as: "transects", "overlays", "hubs", "compatibility" and "15-minute neighbourhoods" is challenging.

"Without clearer definitions, the City leaves itself and neighbourhoods open to too many interpretations. Neighbourhoods have been asking for clarity for years. The new OP was supposed to address this issue. This is particularly important for those terms that will be cited in decisions about individual planning applications."

There will be one improvement in the final draft of the OP. The confusing term "regeneration" will be replaced by the former term "intensification."

### 3. Too dense downtown?

Somerset Ward is in the Downtown transect, along with Lowertown and Sandy Hill. In that area, the draft OP calls for a minimum density of dwelling units (apartments, houses) of 80 units per hectare overall. Along all of the ward's major streets (like Somerset, Gladstone, Kent, Lyon, Booth, Bronson, and Preston), the minimum density is set at 80 to 160 units per hectare. And then in "Hub" areas – almost all of the ward north of Somerset and east of Bronson, most of Little Italy, and a large swath of LeBreton Flats – the minimum density is set at 100 to 200 units per hectare.

The CCA pointed out that the densest prefecture in Tokyo, Toshima, has an estimated density of 114 dwellings per hectare. It asked that the minimum densities be lowered and that

a maximum be included.

The FCA was concerned that the plan contained no apparent limits to intensification. "How many units is too much for a neighbourhood? Converting ground-oriented housing to tall buildings can change radically the characteristics of established neighbourhoods." It recommends establishing trigger points for each neighbourhood after which the densities would be reviewed.

And, as existing neighbourhoods become more dense, the CCA said, they must get more infrastructure and services. "Guidelines ought to ensure that new development at least supports and optimally enhances the character of established neighbourhoods such as Centretown, without compromising or displacing local residents, business, and activity."

The "As We Heard It" report said that the OP would be rewritten so that minimum density requirements will only apply to Hubs and Mainstreets (still a very large portion of Centretown). In other areas, there would be more flexible "targets" expressed as a range. But Downtown will still have the highest density of any transect.

### 4. Fifteen-minute neighbourhoods - achievable?

The draft OP envisions neighbourhoods redeveloping into places where "daily and weekly needs can be accessed within a 15-minute walk" – including schools, community centres, recreational facilities, libraries, smaller retail stores, restaurants, and personal service businesses.

"While we support the concept of 15-minute neighbourhoods, we are too painfully aware that many of our communities do not meet that standard, and fail to see policies that would, first, identify where these 15-minute neighbourhoods are and, second, provide a path to bring others to this standard," said the FCA brief.

It asked that the city a) identify and map which communities already fit this concept, and which do not; b) more clearly define what services and amenities need to be in these neighbourhoods; and c) ensure they include a range of housing affordability and family size.

The city also needs a strategy to fix deficiencies in current neighbourhoods that do not meet the 15-minute standard, it said: for example, access to parks.

### 5. A skimpy canopy of trees

The OP identified shade trees as an important way to reduce extreme heat caused by climate change, but several community associations questioned how trees would be preserved and increased.

"How is the desirable green infrastructure to be maintained, enhanced and protected in the face of such pressure to increase density when the design for infill buildings walls the trees to be planted into a tiny area of soil (the space of a car) that is often surrounded by three or more storeys of buildings which deprives the trees of the very things that it needs to grow: sunlight, land (space) and good soil?" the HCA asked.

It pointed out that developers were not required to replace larger trees that are cut down "with tree species that will provide shade canopy at maturity. Often, the tree species that are approved for replacement are small tree species and bushes that will never provide adequate shade, if they survive at all."

The CCA argued that the city's proposed target of having the tree canopy cover 40 percent of the urban surface area citywide should instead be applied per neighbourhood. It suggested using a 2019 study to identify areas without enough trees.

It emphasized the importance of preserving existing mature trees: if intensification means "backyards become expendable, half the existing mature urban canopy in Centretown may be destroyed inadvertently despite good intentions." It was also concerned at the proposed reduction in site plan control for low-rise housing, because this might remove requirements for trees.

The associations also identified many other issues, including affordable housing, housing for families, and how the plan's success could be regularly and transparently monitored.

### You can still comment

See [centretownbuzz.com/OP2021](https://centretownbuzz.com/OP2021) to learn where to submit your comments, and to read the entire draft OP, its associated maps, the "As We Heard It" report, and the full community association briefs.

The city will also [hold an online meeting](#) responding to Downtown comments on June 24 at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom, along with meetings for other transects from June 22 to 28.



# Stability, community, connection for 28 women at new supportive residence on Lisgar Street

Alayne McGregor

Twenty-eight women will get permanent homes in Centretown starting next March.

The John Howard Society (JHS) is currently building a new residence at 500 Lisgar Street. It will provide supportive housing for adult women who have been experiencing homelessness, with a focus on Indigenous women but open to women of all ages and cultures.

The women will live in their own bachelor apartments on the top three floors of the four-storey building, with JHS staff offices and a mix of communal and programming spaces on the main floor, and 10 parking spaces in the basement.

Eva Davis, the JHS residential coordinator for the building, said the building will give the women “stability, community, and connection. They’re probably experiencing so much trauma, so much disconnection,

so much instability in their life.”

She said the women may need some help to build life skills, but are not high need.

The city requires at least 30 percent Indigenous women in supportive living residences, “but we’re aiming to do a bit more.” Indigenous women are “hugely over-represented” in Ottawa’s homeless shelters, she said. “The need is incredible.”

JHS will provide a cultural support worker for the Indigenous women, as well as involving elders, she said. Women can take part in sewing and beading, or communal feasts, and celebrate each others’ birthdays. Women will also be helped to upgrade their education or to get work. The building will be staffed 24/7.

“We want to strengthen the identity of each woman which may have been lost through trauma.”

The City of Ottawa will recommend women from its list of people suffering chronic homelessness. Davis

will meet with each of them to determine if they are a good fit for the building. While there will inevitably be some turnover (e.g., when women want to start a family), Davis said they’re expecting many tenants, especially older women, to want to stay longterm. She also expected the type of tenants to remain consistent.

JHS will also partner with Indigenous organizations like Minwaashin Lodge and Tungasuvvingat Inuit, and local community health centres, she said.

The building is being funded through the federal government’s recent Rapid Housing Initiative, which requires buildings to be ready within a year of receiving funding. The City of Ottawa submitted an application for the grant last fall. The JHS has a 20-year contract with the city to develop and run the project.

Davis explained that meant the building is being constructed using rapid modular systems. Once the concrete

foundation is laid, the building will be constructed floor by floor, with the wall panels being pre-made off-site and then attached together.

The previous four houses on the site were recently demolished, and the new building is almost completely designed, she said, with only the interior design left to complete. JHS is now waiting for a building permit from the city, and aiming to break ground in late June or early July. The building is expected to be ready by March 2022.

Davis said she has made a priority of consulting neighbours and the community association about the project. She’s currently running biweekly online drop-in



The architect’s initial design concept of the new building.

CSV ARCHITECTS/JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY

sessions to answer questions. Once construction begins, she plans to send out weekly updates. She said JHS had considered neighbours’ concerns about colour and design elements, noise, landscaping, and preserving trees as they designed the building – and are currently looking at how to preserve privacy.

JHS currently has 11 other residences in Ottawa, providing supportive living to people with different types and levels of needs. JHS has been operating in Ottawa for 60 years; the Ottawa branch is its largest in Canada. Davis emphasized that its clients include many who are *not* exiting incarceration.

## French track rejected for Cambridge PS

A motion to introduce a French immersion program at Cambridge Street Public School was defeated by the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board last month.

Local trustee Justine Bell proposed starting the program in September 2022 as a second track along with the current English program. She said it would increase enrolment and supplemental programming at the school.

At the meeting May 11, five parents and former students of the elementary school spoke in support, citing the importance of the school to its neighbourhood and of being able to walk to school, and the need to support the marginalized community that Cambridge serves. Christopher Paine said the school’s parent council supported the motion, and argued that the school was not sustainable as English-only. Cambridge PS can hold 323 students, but currently only has 54 in person, and another 18 virtually.

Normally, adding a French program would only be done after an “accommodation review”

examining schools in a general area. However, the province has had a moratorium on these reviews for seven years, with no end in sight.

Board staff said it would be difficult to determine without a review how many students would enrol in the French program at Cambridge, and that students already in immersion at another school might not want to transfer out to Cambridge. About 166 elementary students in the school’s catchment area have left to attend other schools.

According to the board minutes, Director of Education Camille Williams-Taylor argued that a broader area analysis was needed before introducing French immersion at Cambridge, and that it would be challenging to undertake the complex review requested in the motion. She said it would take possibly two years to examine adding the program because of other priorities and uncertainties. Staff will also develop a plan to review the use of school sites, she said, “in a reasonable scaled timeframe.”

## Letter: What if the police had intervened?

Re: “MPP Report: The opioid crisis is a public health, not a criminal justice, issue” by Joel Harden (May 2021 BUZZ)

Joel Harden conveys many unexplained conclusions and recommendations in this article.

First, he provides no information about the person charged with Reinboth’s murder: not his name, lifestyle, health status or any information about his motivations. Yet the heading and the article itself imply that the killing is the result of opioid addiction. Harden merely states: “the death appears to be random.”

Second, he states: “Some have called for an increased police presence in Cen-

tretown West,” though he provides no specifics on this either. However, the reader is assured that “we know [the victim] could not have been saved by an increased police presence.”

A very similar article was published in the *Ottawa Citizen* recently. But the authors (mental health workers) attributed the cause of the killing to mental illness and concluded that “the solution to our mental health crises is not simply more police; in fact, it may not be more police at all.”

These conclusions are highly ironic in the circumstances: the facts reported publicly are that the alleged assailant was the subject of a police call when, after he

had stabbed Carl Reinboth, he ventured over to a nearby dog park and attempted three times to steal a puppy, even trying to grab it from the owner’s arms in front of numerous witnesses, who called police.

Yet the police, who attended, let him go (perhaps fearing reprisals of “racism”), whereupon he went on to stab an 84-year-old man in a nearby gas station.

I don’t see that victim being considered here. Yet, if the police had intervened after the dog incident on that day, the attempted murder of the 84-year-old victim likely would not have happened.

J. Francis  
Ottawa

## Can Ottawa follow Toronto in creating a city broadband Internet network?



ACORN members offer wi-fi and activism at City Hall.

ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

Alayne McGregor

ACORN Ottawa turned the front plaza of Ottawa City Hall into an Internet hub on May 27 to demonstrate the lack of access to stable and sufficient Internet faced by many Ottawa residents.

The group’s “Internet 4 All” campaign calls on the city to establish a municipal broadband network that would be community controlled, and would offer \$10/month home Internet for low-income and \$30/month for moderate-income people at the CRTC’s recommended speed of 50/10 Mbps.

The City of Toronto recently approved a pilot project for a similar city network.

ACORN also called for public wi-fi in all public spaces including bus shelters, LRT, parks, and community centres; and the expansion of programs that offer free or subsidized de-

vices for low-income people.

At the event, the organization for low- to moderate-income families displayed prop laptops showing essential tasks that require Internet access, and provided a free wi-fi station for those needing access or wanting to sign their online petition.

ACORN members already had difficulty affording Internet on limited incomes, said organizer Caroline Zhang, and the pandemic lockdown made that worse by cutting off access to alternatives like the library or cafés. At the same time, “everything we do is now online. We need the Internet for work, school, doctors appointments, keeping in touch with loved ones.”

Ottawa Community Housing tenants are offered Internet at \$10/month. However, Pascal Kukule, an ACORN member from Sandy Hill, said he and his wife and five children found the bandwidth offered was insufficient for their

work and school needs. He had to change to a commercial service at \$45.80/month so everyone could get online, which he said cut into their food budget.

In a 2019 survey, a quarter of respondents told ACORN they had sacrificed food in order to pay for Internet services and almost one third had made multiple sacrifices.

ACORN member Ray Noyes said that ACORN has been talking to Councillors Jeff Leiper and Theresa Kavanagh, the chair and vice-chair of the City’s Information Technology Subcommittee, about the possibility of a city broadband network. He said both were supportive, although there’s no timeline for such a project.

In early February, the City of Toronto approved [ConnectTO, a city-provided Internet broadband network](#), starting with pilots in three low-income areas of that city.

The pilots are expected to go live later this year, followed by a city-wide launch in 2022. Chattanooga, Tennessee and other American cities support similar municipal networks.

The City of Toronto said the program’s goal is to provide it with a direct voice where broadband Internet is delivered and to reduce Internet costs for vulnerable residents.

The network will use city assets such as fibre, buildings, and rights-of-way in order to lower costs, creating a backbone to which private partners can attach last-mile connections. Any revenue is to be reinvested in the community, such as enabling lower-priced Internet for vulnerable Torontonians.



# Immersing yourself in a state of flow day to day

Elaine MacDonald

My family says that my daily mantra has forever been: drink water, get out in nature and find something to get you into a state of flow. Water and nature are straightforward enough. But what is a state of flow?

During the challenging times of this pandemic, many of us are dealing with feelings of boredom, loneliness and, sometimes, loss of hope. For the first time in our lives, we can't escape, as this is a worldwide crisis. We are being stretched to explore new ways to find happiness.

Luckily, there are several positive tools that we can call on to sweeten our days, even if just a little. One of these tools is finding our state of "flow."

What is the meaning of flow? Psychologist Mihály Csíkszentmihályi describes "flow" as a state of complete immersion in an activity. While in this mental state, people are completely involved and focused on what they are doing. One sign that you have achieved true flow is when you lose all track of time while doing your activity. The best part of getting into a state of flow is that

you feel as though you are far from any troubles and concerns.

Getting into a state of flow these days rarely happens as our usual routines and safety zones have been disrupted. Technology and social media are often our go-to relief.

However, with a little planning and by intentionally choosing an activity that turns our crank, we can achieve flow and find some well-deserved peace. Flow is just one self-care tool that we can call on to bring more positive energy into our days, while working from home, home schooling our children, or while in lockdown.

We start by brainstorming a list of activities we would like to do. The activity has to stretch us a bit but can be anything such as sewing new curtains, drafting the subject of your new book, re-designing your garden, or learning to play a musical instrument. If you have older children, getting the children involved in creating their own lists can also bring new energy to the home.

Everyone can benefit from carving out some time for an activity that leads to a state of flow. What we can achieve when in flow can be very satisfying and soothing.

We also benefit from natural pleasure-inducing and performance-enhancing chemicals that make the brain happy and make us feel more in Zen.

The key steps to achieve and benefit from flow:

1. Determine several hours before that you are going to do this.
2. Choose a task or activity

you like and that you feel is important and of value.

3. Make sure it's challenging, but not too hard, and that it requires your undivided attention.

4. Clear away distractions so that you are completely free (put phones and computers away).

5. Tell your partner, spouse and child that you

will be unavailable for this entire time.

6. Learn to focus on that task for as long as possible. Being immersed for a minimum of 30 minutes is recommended, with only five-minute breaks between 30-minute blocks to keep you in flow. Use a timer.

7. Enjoy yourself.
8. Keep practicing.

Following your first intentional attempt at achieving flow, notice how you feel. If you feel good and uplifted, commit to making this a regular practice. You will be grateful that you did.

Elaine MacDonald is a health and life coach at Finding Your Zen Coaching.

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# Planet of the Scapes: Each first taste is the banquet



Pearl Pirie

### Picnic Petits

Summer can bring lighter appetites and more grazing. Summer eating is simple, fresh, and colourful in its variety.

### Side Dish: Veggie Kebabs

I suppose you could serve these kebabs on couscous or rice, made ahead. We ate them straight with grilled corn on the cob.

The marinade was a mixture of samosa chutney (tamarind and date) and (commercial) mole sauce from a jar.

I left the tofu overnight to marinate, with the sauce poured over the veggies before they went on the grill.

### Skewer:

- Vidalia onions (a sweet onion)
- a few colours of sweet bell pepper
- white or cremini mushrooms
- firm tofu marinated in a mixture of mole sauce and tamarind

### Side Dish: Canapés

Inspired by *The Nancy Drew Cookbook* (1973) and *Family Circle's Soup and Sandwiches* (1972), little sandwiches give a breezy tapas feel.

Some are on mini arepas (see [the recipe in the April BUZZ](#)), dense pumpernickel triangles, Paris toasts, and Triscuits.

### Toppings include:

- blue cheese mixed 2:1 with butter, topped with radicchio or walnut
- cream cheese topped with a broccoli floret, drizzled with a mix of 2:1 vinegar to honey with smoked chipotle or hot pepper flakes



Some examples of canapés: cream cheese topped with a broccoli floret, egg salad with diced radishes, topped with capers, blue cheese topped with radicchio.

PEARL PIRIE/THE BUZZ

- egg salad with diced radishes topped with capers
- hummus with diced olives or red pepper
- herbed goat cheese topped with cucumber
- tofu spread with zucchini (or other) relish
- dates and walnut chopped into cream cheese

The strongest-flavoured toppings go on the strongest-flavoured bread and vice versa.

At our house, the broccoli and blue cheese ones were the biggest hits.

### Dessert: Fruit Salad

Hone up your knife skills and make a cantaloupe the serving bowl.

I did star shape, but you could just take off the lid, take out the seeds, and fill with what looks good at the store this week.

- cantaloupe
- kiwi
- strawberries
- blueberries

- pears
- citrus
- mint

As a liquid, I use apple or pear juice and a drizzle of maple syrup.

Pearl Pirie's fourth poetry collection, *footlights is getting good reviews!* Get your copy at [Perfect Books](#). Check out her author site at: [www.pearlpirie.com](#)

Keep washing your hands, phones and masks to protect your neighbours.



## Your local Ottawa Markets are beginning to reopen!

Marchés d'Ottawa Markets is proud to announce the return of our ByWard and Parkdale Public Markets for the 2021 season. Representing the two oldest and most historic markets in Ottawa, vendors offer fresh produce, flowers, plants and a variety of locally produced goods for residents and visitors alike - 9AM-5PM, 7 days a week!

Join in the fun and be a part of Marchés d'Ottawa Markets' 2021 season.

## Vos marchés locaux d'Ottawa ouvrent, pour la nouvelle saison!

Marchés d'Ottawa Markets est fier d'annoncer le retour de nos Marchés Publics ByWard et Parkdale pour la saison 2021. Installés dans les deux marchés historiques les plus anciens d'Ottawa, les vendeurs vous offriront des produits frais, des fleurs, des plantes et une variété de produits locaux - de 9 h à 17 h, sept jours par semaine!

Profitez de la saison 2021 des Marchés d'Ottawa Markets pour faire de nouvelles trouvailles.



# Somerset Ward: The long road for electric buses



A Toronto Transit Commission electric bus.

Derek Stryland/Toronto Transit Commission

Catherine McKenney

Ottawa’s diesel bus fleet has a lot of problems. They’re noisy, heavy, expensive to repair and they’re our city’s single biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions. Overall, they’re an outdated technology. You’d think this would be enough reason to replace them. In February 2019, I met with the Electric Vehicle Council of Ottawa (EVCO). The meeting led to an inquiry to the Transit Commission asking if the city would consider electric buses as an alternative. Staff claimed

that electric buses are incapable of handling the long routes that OC Transpo uses, they’re more expensive than diesel, they can’t handle our winters, and staff were simply too busy with other things (e.g., the LRT) to look at alternatives. In short, the answer was “no.” This was a surprising answer. It was also incorrect. E-bus technology has advanced by leaps and bounds over the past decade. In fact, several Canadian cities with climates similar to ours—Montreal, Edmonton, Gatineau—have committed to making the change to electric. An E-bus can travel without recharging for as long

as our routes require. And because they don’t have a drive-train like diesel buses—something that needs expensive routine replacement—they are actually cheaper to service. They’re also lighter, which means less noise and vibration for people who live along bus routes. This is what I told the Transit Commission in a June 2019 report that I tabled in response to the staff’s answer. I also provided links to several funding sources which are explicitly helping cities make the change to electric. A lot of the information in that report was provided by the EVCO, which I continued to work closely

with on the issue. The Transit Commission agreed to purchase two or three electric buses as part of a pilot project. Unfortunately, we still don’t use those buses on our routes. Staff informed us that the pandemic had delayed the tendering process for the pilot project. It wasn’t until December 2020 that the buses were finally procured for testing. In the meantime, old diesel buses were routinely replaced with new diesel buses. But there’s good news. A memo from the city Transportation Department on June 7 informed us that the city has negotiated “an

agreement with the Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB) [to] seek funding from Infrastructure Canada that could result in 450 ZEBs phased into OC Transpo’s bus fleet by 2027.” Furthermore, the memo said, “OC Transpo is recommending all future bus purchases be zero-emission buses, based on the availability of suitable buses for service in Ottawa and on the availability of funding to ensure the conversion remains affordable. With the gradual phaseout of diesel buses as they reach their end of life, OC Transpo could achieve a fully zero-emission bus fleet by 2036. The electrification of vehicles is a key initiative to help meet the City of Ottawa’s goal of reducing GHG emissions from city operations by 100 percent by 2040 and demonstrates the city’s commitment to lead by example.” This is wonderful news and I am grateful to MP

Catherine McKenna for her strong support in negotiating this important funding agreement. I have to say that the timeline of 15 years is longer than I had hoped. I understand the efficiency of waiting to replace a bus until after it reaches its end of use. But I can’t help thinking that, if we had seen less resistance to change and more priority given to the critical issue of climate change, we could be looking at a complete fleet changeover in 10 years, or even less. I want to see more positive change like this at City Hall. We need to adopt new technologies and thinking from e-buses to e-garbage trucks to better active transportation facilities. Thanks to the forward-thinking work of groups like EVCO, Ecology Ottawa and others, we’ll do our part to save the planet, save your taxes and make a better city. I love a win-win-win!



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613-858-2275



## Catherine McKenney • City Councillor for Somerset Ward

# Keep up to date on Ottawa's COVID-19 vaccination plan

For updates on COVID-19 vaccinations in Ottawa, please visit: [www.ottawapublichealth.ca](http://www.ottawapublichealth.ca). Until vaccines are widely available, please take steps to protect yourself, your loved ones and our community.



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### Keep in touch!

For the latest news on Somerset Ward, sign up for my newsletter at [catherinemckenney.ca](http://catherinemckenney.ca) and follow me on social media:

 [mckenneycatherine](#)  [cmckenney](#)  [cmckenney14](#)

### Questions? We can help!

613-580-2484  
[catherine.mckenney@ottawa.ca](mailto:catherine.mckenney@ottawa.ca)





# What's on(line) this month in Ottawa and beyond

Tony Wohlfarth

The Canadian Museum of History reopened on June 2 with a new exhibition: *The Queens of Egypt*. A major fund-raising effort on GoFundMe raised more than \$20,000 to help save the iconic Mayfair Theatre. And the JUNOs, celebrating the best in Canadian music, went online in early June.



The Egyptian goddess Mut ("Mother"), wife of the Sun god Amun-Ra. A queen featured in the exhibit, Nefertari, was called the "beloved of Mut." CANADIAN MUSEUM OF HISTORY

## The Queens of Egypt

The Canadian Museum of History in downtown Gatineau is welcoming visitors for an exhibition of art and archaeology from the Luxor (Thebes) region of Egypt. Three thousand years of Egyptian civilization is captured in amulets, stone artifacts and tombs.

Do not miss Nefertari's tomb, a multimedia presentation of the journey to the afterlife. For younger visitors, the exhibition has games, using smartphones, to scan and search for clues.

BUZZ readers can watch a 20-minute virtual tour of the exhibition at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUQAJEtDz9A>

The exhibit will run until August 22, Wednesday to Sunday, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and until 7 p.m. on Thursdays.

## The Tribeca Film Festival

Tribeca is an historic district of lower Manhattan. When New York City was crippled by 9/11, residents rallied, and the Tribeca Film Festival was born. This year, Tribeca screenings were available online and *The BUZZ* was there.

## The Neutral Ground

*The Neutral Ground* had its world premiere at Tribeca. The film is set in New Orleans. In 2015, Mayor Mitch Landrieu took up a challenge from his friend, jazz legend Wynton Marsalis, to remove four local statues of leaders of the Confederate Army, ahead of the city's 300th anniversary.

The statues celebrate white supremacy and Landrieu pro-

posed removing them. This seemed simple. But the debate at New Orleans City Council was contentious, revealing racial divisions. The resolution passed 6-1 but it took two more years before the city finally removed the statues, after overcoming injunctions, court challenges and pro-Confederate protests reminiscent of the Jim Crow era.

The filmmaker, CJ Hunt, is a field producer for Trevor Noah's "The Daily Show." A highlight of this film for me was his discussions with his father, which begin with why marking Martin Luther King Day matters. We see the filmmaker come to terms with the history of the monuments, what replaces them and his own personal journey. Hunt participates in a re-enactment of a Civil War battle, engaging the participants in its significance. Hunt also goes to Charlottesville, VA, where violence in 2017 led to the death of Heather Heyer.

I watched *The Neutral Ground* reflecting on the legacy of Sir John A. Macdonald in Canada. The difference is, of course, leadership to overcome the legacy of racism.

*The Neutral Ground* screens on PBS on July 5. Viewers can also watch the film (one hour and 25 minutes in duration) via [pbs.org](https://pbs.org).

## Encore Ottawa

Starting June 18, the Shenkman Arts Centre is offering Encore Ottawa, a series of online concerts of talented local musicians in genres ranging from jazz to rock to blues to rap to R&B to singer-songwriter. The concerts are free online and on Rogers TV. A highlight for me is Ottawa's own Lynne Hanson on September 3.

See: [shenkmanarts.ca/en/shenkman-arts-centre-presents](https://shenkmanarts.ca/en/shenkman-arts-centre-presents). The centre will also offer an online ticketed concert with Toronto jazz vocalist Molly Johnson on July 17.



A still from *Sisters & Brothers*.

NATIONAL FILM BOARD

## National Film Board of Canada (NFB)

Canadians were shocked this month to learn about the many legacies of Indian residential schools. I reached out to the NFB, who recommended two films to watch:

- *Sisters & Brothers* (2015): a three-minute film which compares the IRCs with the destruction of the buffalo: [https://www.nfb.ca/film/sisters\\_brothers/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/sisters_brothers/). An image from the NFB's film is captured here.

- *Christmas at Moose Factory*: In 1971, Alanis Obomsawin directed her first film, a short, depicting a Cree family celebrating in the remote northern village: [www.nfb.ca/film/christmas\\_at\\_moose\\_factory/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/christmas_at_moose_factory/)

## The Bicycle Film Festival

The Bicycle Film Festival goes online from June 11 to 20 with many new films of interest to outdoor enthusiasts. Tick-

ets and more info is available at: <https://btt.boldtypetickets.com/events/111878904/bicycle-film-festival-ottawa-3>

## Musicians support the Mayfair Theatre

In mid-May, folkie Chris White brought together Ottawa Songwriters Uplifting the Mayfair for two online fundraising concerts and an auction. The Mayfair Theatre says this raised more than \$20,000 to sustain the independent cinema in Ottawa South, which has been closed for nine of the last 12 months due to the pandemic. It promises to reopen soon.

The fundraising page is still active at: [www.gofundme.com/f/ottawa-songwriters-uplifting-the-mayfair](https://www.gofundme.com/f/ottawa-songwriters-uplifting-the-mayfair)



Rob Baker of the Tragically Hip performing at the online 50th anniversary JUNO Awards ceremony.

CARAS/IPHOTO

## The 50th Anniversary of the JUNOs

On June 4 to 6, the best musicians in Canada in 2020 were recognized. PEI's Rose Cousins won a JUNO for contemporary roots album of the year for *Bravado*. Interviewed after the show, Cousins introduced us to her pandemic puppy Harrington. You can see Cousins perform "I Can't With You" along with John Paul White, in support of Folk Alliance International (FAI) at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mUuzZKZuiJU> Leela Gilday won a JUNO for best indigenous artist of the year.

The JUNOs wrapped up on June 6 with a televised award ceremony. A highlight was seeing the Tragically Hip, on stage at the renovated Massey Hall, performing with Leslie Feist singing the vocals.

All the Sunday award winners and performances can be seen at: [www.cbc.ca/music/junos/watch/watch-the-2021-juno-awards-1.6026088](https://www.cbc.ca/music/junos/watch/watch-the-2021-juno-awards-1.6026088) The Friday award show is at <https://junoawards.ca/events/opening-night-awards/>

For 2022, the JUNOs will return to Toronto, adding three new award categories, including for traditional indigenous artist of the year.

Tony Wohlfarth is an Ottawa-based freelance film and entertainment writer. He participated in JUNO Week and Tribeca online.

Please wear a mask and stay safe!

**Joel Harden**

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# CENTRETOWN

## COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

### CCA report

Jack Hanna

ing for a vacant homes tax and recommend-  
ing monies raised be used to create additional  
affordable housing.

**Farmers market launches in Centretown**  
The planned launch date for the new Elgin Street Farmers Market is Sunday, July 11, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The market will be held in Boushey’s Square at Elgin and Waverley and will open every Sunday until October.

The market will offer vegetables (organic and not), honey, apples, free-roam eggs and bread, all from local growers and producers. Vendors will also sell local beer, whiskey, gin and vodka; and artisan pottery and soaps.

“Centretowners can stock up on fresh fruit and vegetables, bakery bread and craft beer,” says Shawn Barber, chair of the CCA’s farmers market group, which launched the project. “Support local growers and artisans. Make the market part of your Sunday morning routine.”

**Vacant homes tax**  
The city plans to introduce a tax on homes that sit vacant for lengthy periods. City staff estimate that thousands of residential properties in Ottawa, being held as investments, are left empty. This exacerbates the housing crisis. Staff have recommended a tax of one percent of the assessed value of a property. A \$400,000 house would be levied an annual tax of \$4,000.

The CCA wrote to the city last year call-

**500 Lisgar Street**  
The John Howard Society hopes to break ground this summer on a building with 28 apartments for women who have experienced long-term housing difficulties, with a focus on indigenous women. The facility would have 24/7 staffing to provide support.

Several information sessions will be held on the new supportive housing development at 500 Lisgar Street. The link for the Zoom information meeting Thursday, June 17 from 3 to 4 p.m. is: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85804670138> Additional info meetings are planned for late June and July. Contact Eva at the JHS at [edavis@jhsottawa.ca](mailto:edavis@jhsottawa.ca)

**Somerset and O’Connor**  
The CCA has concerns about the 16-storey apartment tower proposed for the corner of Somerset and O’Connor. The proposed development would exceed the nine storeys that zoning regulations allow on Somerset.

In a letter to the city, the CCA said the height and massive appearance of the building are “too much.” As well, if the 16-storey building goes ahead, it would set a precedent for tall towers all along Somerset. The CCA says the new development should respect the wealth of heritage buildings on Somerset and its character as a traditional main street.

## Meals on Wheels volunteers fight pandemic isolation



Larry standing by the horseshoe pit in his backyard.

MEALS ON WHEELS

Michael Girgis

Larry likes to keep busy throughout the day. As a former carpenter, he has built several projects around his home. He renovated the flooring and the walls of his house and has built the fencing, the roof and an addition to the garage. “I’ve just always had a knack for handiwork.” At 83, he remains an avid horseshoe and dart player.

As a Meals on Wheels/La Popote roulante client since 2014, he enjoys the quality of the food that he gets every weekday. “The meals are handy all around . . . I can do just about everything else, but when it comes to cooking,

I just can’t do it.” His favourite part about the meals was enjoying them with his loving wife of 40 years. “We did absolutely everything together. Gosh! I really miss her.”

Meals on Wheels, a registered charity founded in 1968, offers the lowest price-point for delivered complete hot meals in the city. Its role as a partner in the health care system has been underscored by the critical function it has served during the pandemic. Its service observed a 25 percent increase in demand for meals during 2020 for a total of 120,123 meals delivered to 1,647 seniors and adults with disabilities, over 40 of whom reside in Centretown.

Larry is quite lonesome with the passing of his wife.

COVID-19 has exacerbated the issue as he rarely leaves his home. Often, his only point of contact is the caring check-in of the Meals on Wheels volunteers.

“They’re great. I appreciate what they’re doing. I just think they’re doing a heck of a job—these volunteers.” The meal program goes a long way in making sure he can continue to do all the activities he loves and where he loves to do them—in his own home. “I’ve been in my house for 50 years. It’s in a beautiful locale. I can’t see myself living anywhere else.”

When asked what he would say to someone thinking of getting Meals on Wheels, Larry replied: “It’s pretty easygoing. Great for older people! It grants me flexibility. I only occasionally go out for groceries now.”

For more information 613-233-2424 or [www.mealsonwheels-ottawa.org](http://www.mealsonwheels-ottawa.org)

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## Dalhousie Community Assn report

Ed McKenna, VP

**Safety Concerns in Dalhousie**  
The DCA is re-establishing its neighbourhood safety committee to work on short-term solutions to the increasing concern about public safety in Dalhousie.

More than 75 residents, including nine members of the DCA board, attended a community meeting on this on May 19, convened by Councillor Catherine McKenney. While expressing support and understanding for individuals in distress in the community, several residents spoke eloquently about why they and their families feel threatened. Everyone wants to stay in the neighbourhood they love. But leaving Dalhousie for a safer location is an option some are considering.

Representatives from the Somerset West Community Health Centre (SWCHC), the Salvation Army’s Outreach and Housing Services and the Ottawa Police Service’s new Neighbourhood Resource Team for Centretown attended and described their responses to the safety issue.

Each stressed the importance of immediately reporting any incident, which will trigger a response from its resource team.

The SWCHC has prepared a Who to Call list, and the DCA is arranging for its distribution throughout Dalhousie. Dial 911 for the OPS Neighbourhood Resource Team.

**Shaded Outdoor Space for Seniors at Plant Recreation Centre**

The Plant Pool Recreation Association proposal to expand its programming for seniors, who make up 30 percent of the Centre’s membership, has been funded.

Suzanne Nash, PPRA president and DCA board member, said the \$74,000 federal government grant is the outcome of “dreaming big” about what can be done to support seniors during the pandemic. “We are looking

forward to welcoming more seniors in Plouffe Park this summer where they can enjoy activities designed to comply with the current COVID-19 guidelines,” she said.

The PPRA will create a shaded outdoor recreation area behind the centre for the use of seniors, with new recreation equipment and protection from the sun provided by large fabric shade sails. The PPRA will also hire a facilitator this summer to help with a new seniors’ drop-in activity and exercise program.

**What We’re Watching: Development in Dalhousie**

At the request of the DCA, Councillor McKenney organized a public information session April 20 to discuss the reactivation of the Site Plan Control application for 93 Norman. Remember the Save Little Italy campaign? The appeal by the DCA to the Ontario Municipal Board in 2016?

Five years later this nine-storey residential tower is scheduled for construction. The DCA is pushing for improvements to landscaping (more trees), a better pedestrian experience, improved connections to the Trillium multi-use pathway and the effective management of parking and traffic on Norman east of Preston.

The DCA, along with the PPRA, have lobbied vigorously for the extension of Plouffe Park westward to the O-Train Trillium Line. The city’s recent decision to purchase 1010 Somerset from



the federal government now makes the extension possible. An ongoing DCA priority is the development of a major community park as a first step in the implementation of the Corso Italia Station District Secondary Plan.

The DCA, PPRA, the Mechanicsville Community Association and the Hintonburg Community Association sent a joint letter to city General Manager Steve Willis on May 24 “to request that you use your office to establish from the outset a consultation process for decisions taken on developments of 1010 Somerset.”

We continue to call for improvements to our streets. The relentless truck traffic on Booth and delays in the redevelopment of Albert between Bronson and City Centre are major concerns.

**Get Involved**

The DCA is strengthening its committees to help with current community issues: development, streets, greenspace, communications and safety.

If you’d like to become a member and join a committee, or simply attend a regular meeting of the board (first Wednesday of the month), please contact us: [president@ottawadalhousie.ca](mailto:president@ottawadalhousie.ca)



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In May, outgoing Dalhousie Community Association president Mike Powell was presented with this print by Colin White of the Preston Food Market (the “Kit-Kat” store), in honour of his nine years of service to the association. Mike lives just around the corner from the store. CATHERINE BOUCHER/THE BUZZ

## Odyssey Theatre offers youth apprenticeships

Matteo Cimellaro

**D**o you know a youth who has an interest in theatre? For the month of August, Odyssey Theatre will host 15 youth for a memorable online theatre experience. Apprentices spend a month being mentored by professional theatre artists about roles and techniques before staging their own production in front of Odyssey artists, friends and family.

“The youth apprenticeship program is so important for students to develop their creative skills and explore their interest in theatre alongside professional artists. They will learn everything about creating live theatre through fun, engaging workshops,” said Odyssey’s Artistic Director Laurie Steven.

Odyssey Theatre is Ottawa’s professional summer theatre renowned for its productions featuring masks, physical theatre, clowns and puppetry. Their Theatre Under the Stars beside the Rideau River in Strathcona Park has run for 35 years.

The program allows youth to express their creativity and develop the skills needed to explore their theatrical talents. Youth will receive this mentorship under the guidance of theatre professionals. Workshops will be conducted on Zoom.

Over the course of the four-week program, youth will learn how a theatre production is run from inception to performance. The apprentices undertake 12 workshops across different areas of the theatre (performance, directing, writing, design) and receive feedback from professional artists. At the end of these sessions, they will present their own theatre creation and receive feedback from Odyssey’s professional actors and theatre director.

To finish the program, apprentices will have a talk-back session with Odyssey professionals for advice on school and careers. They are encouraged to maintain connections with the local theatre community following the program.

Previous apprentices have gone on to study and work in performance, production, sound or running a theatre. “It is so worth it [...] You really learn so much and make friendships that will last a lifetime. There is no experience like it,” said a 2019 youth apprentice.

The program is free and Odyssey offers community volunteer hours, complimentary tickets to next summer’s production and a letter of reference.

Applications are due June 30. Applications and info at [www.odysseytheatre.ca](http://www.odysseytheatre.ca)

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## MPP report: It’s time for justice in long-term care

Joel Harden

**E**very morning I walked into work the first week of May, I thought of a personal support worker (PSW) coming off a night shift somewhere at a long-term care (LTC) home.

Why? Because the report from Ontario’s Long-Term Care Commission had just dropped. The report is the third document in recent months that is damning of the Ford government’s handling of COVID-19 in LTC homes, notably in for-profit homes.

As one report noted: “We know the first cases of COVID-19 were found in four LTC homes on March 17 of last year. From March 2020 to the end of the year, 76 percent of LTC homes in Ontario reported cases of COVID-19 among residents

and staff. As of today, 3,918 residents and 11 long-term care staff have died with the illness in Ontario, according to provincial data.”

What was the Ford government’s response? Merilee Fullerton, the Health and LTC minister, spent most of the week blaming others. “We were overdue for a pandemic,” she said. “Government coordination takes time,” she continued, “and it just wasn’t a match for the speed of COVID-19. There are many lessons learned from wave one, wave two and there will be lessons learned from wave three.”

That’s nonsense from start to finish. The governments of BC and Quebec took a different approach as one wave of COVID-19 led to the next. They were able to protect PSWs, LTC residents and other care workers. But in Ontario, the inter-

ests of for-profit LTC homes came first.

A *Toronto Star* analysis noted “the financial statements of Extencicare, Sienna Senior Living and Chartwell Retirement Residences show that in the first three quarters of 2020 (ending Sept. 30), these for-profit companies collectively paid out nearly \$171 million to shareholders at the same time they received \$138.5 million through provincial pandemic pay for front-line workers, the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) program or other pandemic funding.”

As David Milstead of the *Globe and Mail* reported, Chartwell, which operates 23 LTC homes in Ontario, paid out more in executive bonuses in 2020, the year COVID-19 came to Ontario, than it had the year before.

It’s time to implement the recommendations of the

Long-Term Care Commission, including raising wages and benefits for PSWs so their compensation is comparable to the hospital sector. We also need a four-hour minimum daily care standard so every resident gets the quality care they need.

Finally, we need to take profit out of long-term care, so every dollar invested in the system goes toward care, not paid out in dividends or executive bonuses.

What happened in long-term care homes last year can never be allowed to happen again. Let’s overhaul the system to put the well-being of residents and workers before profits.

Not one private LTC home has lost their license and they are all fully funded until the end of August 2021. We can and must do better than this.

## Grace Xin remains a champion of Chinatown

cont from p 1

the Canadian Urban Institute of small businesses in seven Canadian cities. It concluded that, besides the downturn in foot traffic and revenues, these mainstreet businesses are struggling with issues related to the worsened housing and addiction crisis. Business owners in the study reported that vandalism, street activity, and crime were on the rise.

“That epitomizes the challenge all downtown businesses are facing.”

She said that she personally had not seen a rise in anti-Asian racism in the area during the pandemic, and had not had this reported by businesses. There was one incident where someone yelled racial slurs on the street at Asian shoppers, she said.

On April 26, Xin spoke at the Ottawa Police Services Board asking for increased police presence in the area.

She said the BIA’s businesses had been traumatized by the stabbing death of Carl Reinboth, as well as recent fires, vandalism, and drug use.

In response, she said, the BIA has been meeting with local partners like Councillor Catherine McKenney and the Somerset West Community Health Centre to create a task force on Chinatown Community Wellbeing.

The task force’s goal is to

“be a world-class example of the co-existence of a vibrant business community and social inclusion. We recognize there are issues. We recognize we have a population with high needs. And we also recognize we need a safe environment for the businesses to survive and thrive.”

“But the partners are committed to work out a solution to deal with any challenges and we want to be able to realize our goal.”

Xin originally came to Ottawa in 1999 as an international student from Hong Kong. She picked the Telfer School of Management at the University of Ottawa as her first (and only) choice to get her MBA. She joined the BIA after working as executive director of the Hong Kong-Canada Business Association, and working as a consultant to the Tourism Industry Association of Canada.

She described working for the BIA as being “the advocate for the interests of our businesses. You have to be a PR person – you’re the spokesperson for the area as well. And then you have to promote the area, beautifying it. I think the job in a way is endless.”

Her initial goal was to increase Chinatown’s profile, starting in 2009 with events like Chinatown Remixed and an Asian Festival – and then

in 2010 building the Chinatown Royal Arch. The arch is a colourful landmark in Ottawa. Pre-pandemic, it would attract busloads of tourists.

The nine-roofed arch, which provides a highly visible gateway to the community, was built on time and within budget. “For a small BIA, it’s quite an accomplishment.” It cost about \$1.2 million, not including in-kind contributions from the city of Beijing, the city of Ottawa, and other partners.

Xin was particularly proud of the work she has done to promote Chinatown as a tourist destination. “So it’s not just about food in Chinatown. It’s not just about events. When you come you can experience a lot of cultural elements in the area.”

“When you come you have fun. You don’t just buy stuff or eat a meal, and leave. You can also be immersed in the culture.”

The BIA installed bright red street furniture and street light posts designed specifically for the area, and zodiac inserts embedded in the sidewalks along Somerset Street West.

“Even the electrical boxes in Chinatown, they are wrapped with unique Asian designs. In the parking lot next to the arch, you can see five lucky signs installed there. They have five characters that summarize all the good luck in life that people would want. If you touch one, that will bring that luck to you in the year you touch it.”

She emphasized that the BIA saw the area as a “multicultural village, with an Asian flavour.”

Over the years, she said, she has visited many Chinatowns in other cities, and

always has taken back good ideas from those cities. “I would take pictures and see if we could do the same thing.”

It was not necessarily easy to try to make the new buildings sprouting up in Chinatown fit in with its current aesthetic, she said, other than talking with building developers and “letting them know about our hopes and our desires.” The BIA has also worked with architecture students from Carleton University to create ideas for building designs, but it can only hope that developers will incorporate cultural elements into their designs.

Xin was also enthusiastic about new businesses in the neighbourhood: the Corner Peach restaurant, the Spark Beer brewery (which has teamed up with a tour company for a mystery tour in the area), and the Birling skateboard shop, which she said has attracted younger visitors into the area. These stores complement the traditional Chinese and Vietnamese businesses: “I think they inject so much new energy into Chinatown.”

The BIA has been working to find a new executive director for the last month. Xin hoped her successor would be announced soon.

She wasn’t overly worked up about competitors opening in Ottawa’s suburbs.

“For us, Chinatown is not one grocery store, one restaurant. It’s a village with different services, different businesses, and different social organizations like churches. I think, because of the richness in our composition, I think we can weather the storms created by competition.”

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# Finding space for parks & greenspace downtown

Stephen Thirlwall

**P**arks, greenspace, and recreation facilities: where do they fit into a vision of Ottawa as the “most liveable mid-sized city in North America?”

That’s what a city master plan is supposed to answer – and it could have major implications for the livability of Centretown.

The Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan is a subplan of the city’s draft Official Plan (OP). It adds specifics to the OP’s general vision of the city 25 years from now. Both this plan and the new OP are scheduled to be approved this fall. The city is also working on master plans for Urban Forest and Greenspace, Climate Change and Heritage.

The plan catalogues the city’s current parks and recreation facilities, and envisions what residents will need by 2031.

It is the first such plan in Ottawa and aims “to make green spaces accessible to all residents to improve quality of life.”

It promises “adequate supply, accessibility, connectivity [of parks and with community], quality and sustainability ... to ensure an adequate supply of green spaces to meet growing community need while maintaining natural systems.”

The first draft was released in January 2021, followed by consultations with stakeholders, target groups and the general public. Over 1800 citizens responded to a public survey. The new draft was released mid-May.

## Only a partial vision

After reading the beautiful introduction to the plan, the reader is faced with a large “But” – a list of provincial and municipal regulations and bylaws that basically tie the city’s hands to carry out any plan of significance.

It appears impossible to assemble any large park spaces if a maximum of only two percent of the development area is permitted for parks in industrial commercial areas and a five percent maximum for residential areas, and it is preferred when less than the maximum is achieved. The limitations clearly favour extensive building construction and intensification over green infrastructure.

The plan (following the OP) divides Ottawa into five transects (geographic policy areas), each of which has different needs, wants and challenges for parks and recreation. Centretown is in the Downtown Core transect and next to the Inner Urban transect.

At present, the Downtown, Inner and, perhaps, even Outer Urban neighbourhoods are becoming more alike; they are all undergoing very aggressive urbanization, with numerous large and tall towers along or near primary and secondary mainstreets and the LRT line.

Residential neighbourhoods within these areas are under pressure to intensify. These developments are endangering the tree cover, parks and greenspaces, and population increases are already overloading recreational facilities and parks.

## An Inventory for Somerset Ward

According to Map 20 of the plan, parks are numerous but mostly small to medium and widely spread out across the city. How does Somerset Ward compare to other parts of the city?

The parks here are few and very small. Our largest park is not much more than 1 hectare. Inner Urban parks range from 1 to 2 ha.

In Downtown, and increasingly in the Inner Urban transect, there is essentially no available space to create new parks, and the vertical dimension created by many mid- and high rises needs consideration.

Each high rise should mean another small park or parkette is needed. Where will they go? Should there be another large recreational centre built here instead?

Centretown’s city-owned parks comprise the City Hall greenspace; McNabb, Dundonald, Minto, St. Luke’s and Jack Purcell parks; and a few very small parkettes. All of these together might come to almost the same size as just one of the Glebe’s several parks (e.g., Central Park).

Only McNabb rates as a community level park. The others are classed as parkettes. Fortunately, there are the federally-owned destination level parks: Confederation Park, parkland along the Rideau Canal and Ottawa River, and Parliament Hill greenspaces. Centretown relies on these for extra park space and festival sites.

Dalhousie’s city-owned parks are the beautiful Primrose Park and Chaudière Park in Lebreton Flats, Plouffe Park (beside the Plant Recreation Centre), Daniel McCann Park on Norman Street, and Piazza Dante off Gladstone in Little Italy. The large federally owned Dow’s Lake Park has to make up for the lack of municipal parks.

Currently, the city provides “municipal active parkland” at a level of 2.31 ha per 1,000 residents. This really appears far too small. It’s



On a warm June afternoon, Minto Park off Elgin Street attracted a wide range of users, who were walking dogs, pushing strollers, having picnics, sitting on benches, and simply strolling through the park. The Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan defines it as a parkette, along with most of the other parks in Centretown. Note the Adopt-A-Park sign. *BRETT DELMAGE/THE BUZZ*

also not evenly spread across the city, with areas like Centretown at a lower rate.

The plan proposes that each transect have a minimum of 2.0 ha/1000 rate, giving priority to acquiring new parkland in transects and neighbourhoods that do not meet this target. But that means the rate of new park development will be lower than the city’s already low current rate!

The city projects a 2031 population of 1,219,000 for all of Ottawa (an increase of 155,000). The Downtown transect population is expected to rise from 80,290 to 91,688 by 2031. Does that mean Downtown should expect to have 2 ha of new parkspace for each 1,000 new people (i.e., 11.4 ha)? Where could that possibly be found?

## Recreational facilities

City staff have also made a comprehensive list of recreational facility types. The larger facility types are multi-sport complexes, community centres, field houses and arenas. These facilities may include parking areas, pools, fitness facilities, storage, canteens, arenas, gymnasiums, and multi-purpose rooms.

Other smaller recreational facilities are mostly outdoors: swimming pools, wading pools and splash pads; sports fields (baseball, football, soccer, multi-use); courts (basketball, tennis and pickleball, volleyball), children’s playgrounds, ice rinks, cricket pitches, lawn bowling, skateboarding, boat docks, bike parks, and off-leash fenced dog parks.

In Somerset Ward, there

are three recreational centres – the Plant and McNabb Recreation Centres and the Jack Purcell Community Centre – with park space around them. McNabb is the largest park, subdivided into many activity areas. St. Luke’s Park, while small and designated a parkette, actually has various activities like a neighbourhood park.

## Critical concerns

Park funding is essentially dependent on (and therefore, secondary to) “hard” urban development through the collection of development charges. So funding is very tight, matching the limited amount of parkland permitted. Developers can get away from providing for an actual park space by making a payment “in-lieu.” Only 60 percent of this collected money is spent on parks in the ward where the urban development occurs.

The City of Ottawa has no holistic or coherent view of parks, greenspaces and recreation. Different aspects are segmented under different plans managed by different city staff.

## Acquisition, not operation

The Parks and Recreation Plan only concerns acquiring new park space, revamping existing parks, closing nonfunctional parks, and building new sports and recreational facilities. Not included are such important things as park and facility management, maintenance and operations; community gardens (like Nanny Goat Hill); multi-use pathways (which contribute to recreation); school playgrounds (very important for all ar-

eas); greenspaces on private land; and seniors’ recreation centres. Urban trees (many outside parks) have their own plan.

As well, the city expects individual residents to do much of the park care through such things as Adopt-a-Park program.

It takes a larger team of people to do so, as in Dundonald Park. Care of parks has to be more closely linked to acquisition of new parks if they are to function well.

The city’s process of decision making for major projects is limited because it is not very open.

Administrators write up draft plans as a beginning point. No doubt a lot of good hard work goes into the preparation. However, in past experience, the draft plan often ends up the final plan with little alteration.

## Is the public listened to?

Public input can be very important. But is it listened to? One former city councillor told me it never is. Some city staff are trying their best to listen and incorporate ideas from the public, but rigid regulations and fixed modes of operation don’t allow change. This engenders a lack of trust in city decisions from a public it supposedly wants to engage.

This plan’s public survey asked some good questions. But it included no place whatsoever to expand on answers or raise different questions.

It asked about personal recreational priorities but only in terms of the overall city and not in neighbourhoods. For some questions, our priorities might be “All of the above” or “None of the

above” but those responses were not allowed so one is forced to enter misinformation to complete the survey.

The city says that priorities must be set. But how will these be equitably established so that each part of the city gains something? It seems assessment of human needs is replaced in the process by mathematical formulae.

Also, since amalgamation, the suburban and outer city wards greatly outnumber the inner city wards on City Council. Past experience has, thus, shown that many council decisions pay little attention to the needs and impacts on downtown and inner urban communities.

## Where there’s a will, there’s sometimes a way

If there was a vision to establish a landmark destination park or elaborate botanical garden, would the city be able to do it?

A “will to do” needs to be supported by an adaptable process to carry it through and a deeper relationship with the residents. The Lebreton Flats Project, which would have provided much needed downtown park space and recreational facilities, failed. Some of the city’s old processes need to be replaced by more flexible ones. The city must negotiate with the Ontario government for more flexibility.

There is a need to engage with the complexity and diversity of Ottawa instead of trying to avoid it and oversimplify. The Ottawa public is largely highly skilled and educated. Not to listen to them means missed opportunities both for the city and for its residents.





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