

MPCA Presidents Column – March 2020

The City is pursuing densification to reduce urban sprawl, reduce car use in favor of public transit and to create “complete communities” where residents can easily walk to amenities such as grocery stores, restaurants and recreation. More people living in less space makes the provision of services more affordable and decreases our collective environmental footprint.

The mission of the MPCA is *to create a healthy, inclusive and safe environment in which to work and live by giving voice to all community members*. Densification must be values-driven. We take seriously our obligation to work cooperatively with other civic and public organizations to ensure responsible community planning and development. We are guided by our mission.

R4 Zoning Review: MPCA Contribution

MPCA welcomed the City’s effort to update and simplify the zoning regulations in R4 zones to stay current with the actual housing needs of Ottawa’s residents. We recognize that housing affordability has decreased, and that densification of the urban space is required.

But at the present time, we do not see sufficient evidence that the proposed R4 Zoning amendments will increase affordable housing close to transport hubs.

We are concerned that green space is not sufficiently protected/provided for in the proposed amendments, and finally, that the small size of the typical apartments (66m²), in conjunction with reduced greenspace protections, could significantly degrade the quality the life for residents, both short and long-term.

We do support some of the amendments to increase density near transport hubs and close to the city center, improve building façades, reduce parking in favour of green space and to protect green spaces from parking.

Manor Park Estates

I recently met with Councillor Rawlson King, and Anand Aggarwal and Lalit Aggarwal, the owners of Manor Park Estates. Many residents were concerned about the surveying taking place around the Estates. The Aggrawal family explained that plan of survey showing the property limits and topographic details has never been prepared for their 35-acre property. A plan of survey is required before any pre-planning analysis of the neighbourhood can proceed.

The Aggarwal Family has assured the MPCA that we will be kept informed of the evolution of the Agarwal's plans for this property.

They explained that any new project will likely have a 25-year span. The Aggarwals want to ensure broad community participation and are preparing to meet with our community in late spring. I hope we have a good turnout.

January Ward Council Meeting: Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Once every three months, Councillor Rawlson King invites community associations and organizations in Ward 13 to discuss in-depth a particular item of wide interest.

Rawlson made the case for a city-wide poverty strategy to reduce the high and growing levels of poverty in Ottawa. Ottawa has not had a poverty strategy for over 10 years. Meanwhile cities like Hamilton have reduced poverty by over 20%!

Senior levels of government can exert the greatest impact on reducing poverty. Rawlson's goal is to tackle federal and provincial government funding formulas and to shift the City's focus from funding through short term individual grants to funding organizations over a longer period in return for greater accountability for achieving real change in people's lives. He wants to target the chronic under-funding of existing providers and create new streams targeted on food security, youth development, affordable housing and economic development.

The Community Collective of seven community associations, including Vanier, has worked hard over the last two years to encourage the three levels of government to collaborate on a cost effective Ward 13 and Vanier poverty reduction strategy.

At the Ward Council, eight Community Association Presidents stressed the need for the City to have an overall outcomes-based strategy, within which our community strategy could nest. We want to be able to see accountability in City services for reducing poverty across city interventions from social services, transit, housing economic development and how policing is done.

We are working with the Councillor's office to contribute a report on poverty that he will send to City Council in April. Meanwhile the Community Collective, the Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Association and Vanier Community Service Centre will continue to forge a systemic attack on poverty from the "Bottom up"!