

QTN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

QUEENSWAY TERRACE NORTH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Neighbourhoods at the Center of the New Official Plan

Submission by Queensway Terrace North Community Association

Recommendations to Revise Preliminary November 2020 Draft

Introduction

Ottawa's success in becoming "the most livable mid-sized city," the vision in the new Official Plan (OP), will depend on the vitality of its diverse, connected neighborhoods. The draft plan recognizes the importance of neighborhoods in some high-level general statements, but that focus gets lost in the policies and tools that will drive future development in practice.

A stronger focus on the neighborhood level requires the inclusion of more specific policies on the components of a healthy neighborhood and planning tools that are binding – as mandatory as the more technical rules and policies that will drive increased density.

Queensway Terrace North, one of the communities in transition from a suburban to an urban designation, suggests refining the OP in the following directions.

I. Local Character and Context: From High-level Statement to Policy and Practice

Recommendation: Adopt a socio-ecological approach to planning in the new OP, based on understanding neighborhoods as integrated systems rather than extensions of previous eras of city planning.

The use of transects allows a bit more differentiation than the previous Official Plan; but it still relies on applying the same generic policies to all neighborhoods within the transects, based primarily on age of development and broad categorization as urban or suburban. This approach does not provide enough attention to unique differences between neighborhoods of a similar age. It fails to adequately foster integrated planning at the neighborhood level to connect all the factors that lead to a healthy community. It fails to adequately consider organic connections across transects. We note that the word transect itself refers to what divides rather than what connects.

If neighborhoods are considered important as the City grows in population and density, the new OP needs to use a socio-ecological approach to planning that builds neighborhoods as integrated systems, similar to ecosystem planning. A socio-ecological approach to QTN, for example, might give priority to easier access to Britannia Beach for active park uses; better access to services across the Queensway and even College Square; and a high priority to easy access to LRT stations that could connect QTN residents to services in other transects. Using a systems approach to planning for QTN is the best way to develop a healthy, attractive, livable neighborhood.



QUEENSWAY TERRACE NORTH
OTTAWA, ON



QTN.CA



QTNCOMMUNITY@GMAIL.COM

QTN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

QUEENSWAY TERRACE NORTH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Local context and character are recognized in general statements about regeneration and we appreciate the shift to form and function as the basis for determining appropriate forms of intensification within existing neighborhoods. At the same time, specific, prescriptive rules, such as density targets and increased as-of-right permissions for developers, apply in the same way across all areas within a transect. These are not consistent with giving priority to local context and could undermine the goal of livable neighborhoods in practice.

Giving greater weight to context and valued characteristics of each neighborhood requires a rebalance of specific policies, different planning tools, and enhancement of the community's role in planning processes, as suggested below.

I.A. More Flexibility in Density Targets

Recommendation: QTN recommends that the Official Plan allow more flexibility in the density target of 80 units per hectare for evolving neighborhoods in the inner urban transect and permit neighborhoods to identify other ways to achieve the overall intensification objectives through secondary plans.

Some flexibility is needed to ensure that added density enhances rather than undermines what makes a particular neighborhood healthy.

I.B. Stronger Focus on Neighborhood Character in Planning Decisions

Recommendation I.B.1: Add more specific policies on neighborhood character to provide as much grounding in the OP for subsequent decisions on that basis as on the technical rules, and reduce the number of specific, “one-size-fits-all” technical policies that will undermine the ability to consider unique factors.

The policy mix needs a re-balance to ensure that intensification will enhance rather than detract from the diverse character of neighborhoods that makes Ottawa a desirable place to live. Without a re-balance, the new term, “regeneration,” is likely to repeat the problems with intensification under the old plan. For example, the mandatory two-story minimum height and as-of-right three-story height on all average-size lots in QTN will lead to similar problems as we experience with current intensification projects.

Recommendation I.B.2: Greater clarity about the status and weight of secondary plans and the role of the evolving overlay would help to strengthen the focus on local context and character.



QTN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

QUEENSWAY TERRACE NORTH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Recommendation I.B.3: Greater use of additional planning tools, such as mapping and modelling, need to have status in the OP to ensure they have equal weight in specific planning decisions as more technical rules.

A socio-ecological mapping for QTN, for example, as a basis for specific planning decisions, would focus on missing connections and find ways to create necessary connections. It would also identify streets that play a significant role in the daily life of the neighborhood and therefore need different approaches to intensification.

I.C. Stronger Role for Communities in Planning Processes

Recommendation 1.C.1: Review and revise current planning processes to better recognize the essential role of existing communities to achieve the goal of livable neighbourhoods with higher densities

Context and less-tangible factors are essential for social cohesion in neighborhoods undergoing transitions. Local knowledge in communities is essential but plays almost no role in the planning processes that will decide future development in practice. There are two main problems: the community role is reactive and mostly at near-final stages; and there is a huge power imbalance between proponents of development projects and community voices. Enshrining improved processes in the OP is necessary to give them legal status and prevent marginalization through appeals to OP policies like density targets and intensification goals.

Recommendation I.C.2: Add a mandated requirement for substantive engagement with the community in early stages of intensification projects, to be documented in the application process - more than a simple check-off that the proponent has contacted the neighbors.

Recommendation I.C.3: Add a mandated requirement for planning staff to include community impacts in the analysis of proposed redevelopment projects.

Right now, communities provide input to planners in the name of consultation, but it is not included in the planning assessments that go to decision-makers, which are limited to the technical, quantifiable aspects. This marginalizes the social and less-tangible elements in the decision-making processes.

Unless impacts identified by the community are recognized in official planning reports they are automatically discounted by decision-makers in the formal decision making processes. Rebalancing the factors that get attention in the decision-making process is essential to achieve the OP goals; an explicit mandate for City planning staff to include these elements in their planning reports is essential and needs OP status to have equal legal grounds and weight.



QTN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

QUEENSWAY TERRACE NORTH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Some level of technical planning support is needed to enable communities to translate their local knowledge into quantitative analysis that can get equal attention to the highly technical reports prepared by the development industry. Time and again the kind of community input that is essential for livable neighborhoods is dismissed in the decision-making processes, from application reviews to committee of adjustment hearings to planning committee consideration of redevelopment proposals.

Stronger OP-sanctioned measures are needed to ensure that intensification truly makes streets and neighborhoods more livable, not just more dense. The negative consequences of failing to give adequate weight to the contextual and social factors, compared to the more technical elements, will add long-term costs for the City. It will also continue to lead to the resistance to higher density that has been identified as a problem in Ottawa in the early stages of the OP process.

II. Early Planning for Life between Two Transit Hubs, Queensview and Lincoln Fields

QTN finds itself between two new LRT stations, with both the positive and potentially negative impacts of plans for greatly increased density close to the stations. This highlights the importance of requiring consideration of community concerns in the two upcoming secondary plans.

II.A. Secondary Plans: A Priority

Recommendation II.A: Give higher priority to the Lincoln Fields and Queensview/Pinecrest Secondary Plans so they can be completed in time to guide development rather than react to private development proposals.

By size and location, the Lincoln Fields area has high potential to be a significant, attractive center in the west end, and Queensview/Pinecrest is strategically located along the major highway into Ottawa from the west. Both of these secondary plans have been repeatedly delayed, in spite of their strategic importance and strong community interest. If they are delayed further, in practice they will only be able to react to private development proposals and mitigate the worst negative impacts instead of providing direction that will benefit the larger community as well. QTN has identified issues to be addressed in each of these processes in separate reports.

II.B. Complete Street for Queensview Drive

Recommendation II.B. Ensure Queensview is designed as a complete street, to serve the neighboring community as well as future tenants on the street.

We appreciate that both Carling and Richmond Road are designated Main Streets. We understand why a Minor Corridor designation is proposed for Queensview Drive. We want to



QUEENSWAY TERRACE NORTH
OTTAWA, ON



QTN.CA



QTNCOMMUNITY@GMAIL.COM

QTN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

QUEENSWAY TERRACE NORTH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

emphasize the importance of designing it as a complete street, given the higher density, and the objective of having safer, livable streets with a majority of trips made by sustainable transportation by 2046.

Private developers must be required to give a high priority to creating an integrated public space that is safe for transit users and inviting for neighboring residents as well as future tower residents. Early planning for higher towers along Queensview Drive should be required to consider impacts for surrounding residents, such as shadowing.

Focused attention is also needed to ensure access to usable green space and public services for future residents in housing units provided through inclusionary zoning.

II.C. Easy-to-use Connection between Queensview Station and QTN

Recommendation II.C: Require and ensure funding for an essential, easy-to-use connection to the Queensview Station for residents on the west side of QTN.

Connectivity for residents to the Queensview station area remains a major issue and should be mandated in the OP to give it added legal grounding. We appreciate the addition of policy 4.1.1.7 to support the acquisition of property for essential connections. We note the use of the word “may” while other policies use the stronger “shall;” we suggest the OP recognize the City’s responsibility to ensure residents can reasonably access LRT stations, such as Queensview Station. It is an essential element that must accompany the mandatory higher densities, which use the term “shall.” Without it we are concerned essential connections will be delayed again.

The OP also needs to mandate creation of a program to pay for these missing pieces. There is wide public recognition that it is simply illogical to have a major transit station with no useable connection to a significant part of an adjacent neighborhood; and yet correcting that has a low level status in City priorities. Naming it as an OP priority is warranted to raise it as a higher priority in funding allocations.

II.D. Noise Mitigation

Recommendation II.D: Integrate noise control and mitigation into all planning and design for buildings along Queensview Drive, and work with the province to explore a variety of measures to mitigate noise from Highway 417 through this area.

Noise levels in the adjacent residential area are already above what is considered healthy, before the addition of LRT and increased population and activity on the edge of QTN.



QTN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

QUEENSWAY TERRACE NORTH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

II.E. Better Use of City-owned Land along Queensview Drive

Recommendation II.E: Mandate a review and consideration of alternative uses for City-owned lands along Queensview Drive to achieve OP goals

QTN recommends that relocation of the OC Transpo Bus Facility, for example, be identified as a future objective. Relocation is essential to achieve the goals for Queensview Drive and maximize use of the new Queensview LRT Station. We recommend that planning begin soon to allow broad-based participation in a process to identify and assess the best possible uses for this space and how it will be integrated with the community.

Other City-owned land in this area could also be re-purposed for uses more appropriate for the high-level goals of the new OP.

II.F. Community Benefit Plans

Recommendation: Consider ways to expand the scope of Community Benefit Plans, to be negotiated during redevelopment proposals close to the new LRT stations, and find ways to use tools within the City's jurisdiction to go beyond what is specified in provincial policies

Taxpayer-funded investments in the LRT system provide an unearned potential return on investment for owners of properties that happen to be adjacent to stations. Added density requires additional soft infrastructure in neighboring communities, such as public meeting places and human services, as well as parkland. Adding density without community improvements is a recipe for increased social tensions and costly opposition to redevelopment. On the other hand, early investments can have long-term mutual benefits and avoid past negative community impacts from the lag time between intensification and service provision. Perhaps shared funding arrangements for supporting infrastructure are necessary to make them feasible.

In addition, QTN recommends exploration of ways that the City could attach some funding for community benefits to smaller, in-fill projects. Piece-meal approaches to redevelopment in neighborhoods like QTN create a need for local improvements of physical and social infrastructure but do not bring with them funding mechanisms like large-scale developments provide.

III. Connectivity: Higher Priority in City Planning

Recommendation: Mandate detailed attention to physical and social connectivity as a high priority; explore creative, interim solutions; integrate planning and funding at the local level, as well as through city-wide Master Plans; and include Carling, Richmond Road, and Pinecrest in Schedule C, to be part of the Active Transportation Network.



QTN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

QUEENSWAY TERRACE NORTH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Physical Connections: Planning for healthy 15-minute neighborhoods requires a stronger focus on various forms of connectivity. As an example, improving QTN as it grows requires more attention to connecting physical infrastructure, such as sidewalks, bike paths, and easy access to services, the elements that facilitate daily living. QTN appreciates the increased focus on pedestrian and biking infrastructure in the OP. At the same time we are aware that the backlog and limited funding for sidewalks and pathways means development of these will lag far behind added density. We recommend that the OP include creative, interim solutions to designate protected, safe spaces for pedestrians on streets where sidewalks are missing and not likely to be built soon.

The draft Official Plan recognizes the need for retrofitting existing streets with permanent measures and using temporary measures in the meantime. QTN suggests more specific plans and commitments by the City to improve streets such as Queensview Drive soon, to provide safe pedestrian and cycling routes, in anticipation of higher future densities. The Official Plan also states that arterial roads in urban areas, such as Carling, Richmond Road, and Pinecrest, shall include sidewalks on both sides and cycling facilities. If streets such as Pinecrest are not scheduled for road renewal in the near future, we suggest temporary measures to ensure safe connectivity now. We suggest that these streets be included in Schedule C-3, to be part of the Active Transportation Network. This would help to ensure that the positive principles outlined in the general policies for 15-minute neighborhoods are implemented in practice.

Spaces for Social Connections and Group Activities: The OP should strengthen the focus on neighborhood social connectivity through more specific policies that would support and encourage local initiatives by diverse groups to promote social cohesion, such as local parenting groups, local recreation and social activities, local service clubs, and local business/community connections. One essential policy would be to ensure there is at least one public meeting place that can be used for various purposes by various groups within the neighborhood, before there are major increases in the number of residents.

Local Integration of Master Plans: The current approach to master plans may integrate transportation, parks, and human services with the OP at a city-wide level. But they do a poor job of integrating these at the local level. Integration at the micro level can make a big difference for livability.

There seems to be no existing mechanism to integrate these at the local level, resulting in gaps, delays, and barriers that seriously impede the capacity to achieve the desired vision of a livable city. QTN, for example, has identified fairly simple issues, such as the lack of an accessible entrance to its only child-friendly park, on the south side, and we wait years for what seems a fairly simple problem to solve. These are not addressed unless they are included in the various master plans, which is unlikely because of their local nature, and the master plans dictate funding priorities for the whole city. Master plans are updated infrequently so neighborhoods left out wait for many years to get essential improvements. Unless this pattern is dramatically changed to provide much greater connectivity between these elements at a neighborhood level, the goal of a



QUEENSWAY TERRACE NORTH
OTTAWA, ON



QTN.CA



QTNCOMMUNITY@GMAIL.COM

QTN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

QUEENSWAY TERRACE NORTH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

livable city will be sabotaged by missing essential elements, with resulting frustrations for new and existing residents.

IV. Neighborhood Improvement Plans: Social Infrastructure and Density

Recommendation: Include targets and metrics for measuring progress on essential amenities, as well as density targets, with effective monitoring mechanisms; develop neighborhood improvement plans with communities undergoing transition in the inner urban city transect.

Social Targets and Metrics: We appreciate the high-level recognition of the importance of public health, access to amenities, equity, child-friendly spaces, and other factors for healthy neighborhoods. They get lost in specific policies that focus on density. There needs to be the same level of attention and accountability for those essential components or the general, nice-sounding statements will not become reality.

This is necessary in the OP to avoid the prevalent problem of delayed development of the social infrastructure required to accommodate added density. In QTN, for example, much needed improvements for Frank Ryan Park are continually delayed, in spite of intensification. As the density of QTN continues to increase, shared public spaces need early investment.

Neighborhood Improvement Plans: We suggest that the OP include a commitment to the development of neighborhood improvement plans in the inner urban transect. It is an important planning tool to unite residents and improve social cohesion in transition areas. Such plans would focus on what could be improved immediately to support the transition inherent in being part of the inner-urban transect, as well as longer term plans. Including a definition and timelines for completing such plans in the OP could go a long way to bridge the big gap between the high-level, general statements about integrated planning and the specific policies in the plan that will dictate development in practice.

V. Mixed Housing, Affordability, and Density

Recommendation: Review assumptions that the proposed specific policies will lead to affordable housing; consider the use of more specific, targeted strategies; and count the full cost of the pre-mature loss of good housing stock, including units for families, that will result from incentives embedded in the proposed specific policies in the new OP.

Improving the mix of housing types and increased affordability are stated as the rationale for density targets and increased as-of-right permissions and flexibility for developers of in-fill housing, but there is no clarity about what needs addressing in neighborhoods like QTN, which



QTN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

QUEENSWAY TERRACE NORTH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

has a fairly healthy mix of housing types. Meanwhile, there are serious questions about whether the proposed policies actually lead to more affordable housing. The experience of QTN shows that the current approach to in-fill development does not lead to more affordable housing; in fact, it makes existing housing less affordable for families, one of the specified targets in the OP, and the replacement units are also more expensive.

The policy tools are too blunt to achieve the desired goals and have many unintended consequences for neighborhoods like QTN. In place of such tools, more integrated and targeted strategies would have a greater chance of success. An example for QTN might be a strategy to provide more flexible options for seniors that could free up some of the smaller size single family homes in QTN to provide good housing for families, to maintain a healthy population balance and social cohesion through the transition years. The proposed “one-size-fits-all” policies in the OP are likely to encourage the continued destruction of many well-built, smaller-sized, single family homes that still have years of potential use and replacement with multiple units that are often sold at higher prices than the average house in Ottawa.

QTN also wonders if the City is including the cost of the waste of prematurely destroyed single family homes in its calculations for carbon reduction/climate change. Sustainability is used to justify intensification; it should also take into account the full costs of the proposed hastened transitions.

Finally, QTN questions the validity of the assumption that adopting the same policies to encourage increased density across all neighborhoods in the inner urban transect will spread the pace and impacts of redevelopment equally and slowly across all neighborhoods. We think that is a naïve assumption, supported by macro level analysis, but not by the reality of how intensification actually works in practice. In practice, some neighborhoods become targets because of a combination of factors. Drawing on informal dialogue with real estate industry members, architects, and others, we suggest that more analysis of the evidence may not support the assumption that lies at the heart of the draft OP. If it is true that some neighborhoods are more likely to experience rapid redevelopment than others, then the rules need to be modified in advance to anticipate and plan for such patterns. Otherwise Ottawa will repeat past patterns of realizing the negative impacts when it is too late to do anything but try to mitigate the worst effects.

VI. Green Spaces, Trees, and Climate Change

Tree-canopied streets, treed areas, and access to green spaces are among the most valued features of life in QTN. We appreciate the stronger focus on protecting green spaces in the draft OP, but the language in the commitments is too vague to ensure it will happen. To address this, we recommend more specific policies such as directive targets, enforcement mechanisms, and clarity in the OP about how such policies will be implemented and monitored. To ensure implementation, these measures require equal specificity and enforcement as density targets.



QUEENSWAY TERRACE NORTH
OTTAWA, ON



QTN.CA



QTNCOMMUNITY@GMAIL.COM

QTN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

QUEENSWAY TERRACE NORTH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

VI.A. Tree Canopy and Tree Policies

Recommendation: Include more specific direction to protect and enhance the tree canopy on a local level, as well as a city-wide level; and make the specific rules for intensification consistent with the stated objective of protecting mature trees.

Tree Canopy: One example is the lack of specificity for the stated goal of achieving 40% canopy coverage. Greater clarity about baselines, neighborhood level commitments as well as city-wide commitments, and stronger implementation mechanisms could turn a vague goal into directions that will actually influence redevelopment.

Trees on Private Lots: A revised OP should resolve the inconsistency between the policies designed to achieve density targets in regeneration zones and protection of green spaces. Greatly reduced front and side yards in practice mean there is no room for retaining mature trees or growing healthy, large trees. In addition, in the case of site plans, which many intensification projects are, policy 11.1.2 (a) states that:

Development proposals for low-rise residential or mixed-use buildings that fulfill the regeneration objectives of the Growth Management Strategy shall have reduced requirements in order to streamline the process for, and lower the costs of, regeneration.

The experience of QTN shows that, in practice, this will almost certainly mean increased loss of mature trees, either because it is deemed necessary to achieve density targets or because supposedly protected trees are soon deemed unhealthy because of damage during construction or constraints on their capacity to thrive.

VI.B. Flooding and Heat Islands

Recommendation: Include more detailed measures to ensure that the specific policies for intensification are consistent with the general statements about climate change, including mandated assessment of the impacts of proposed projects and measures that tilt the balance toward environmentally sensitive design instead of a lowest-common denominator approach to in-fill.

We appreciate the general statements about environmental health but they are not translated into the specific policies that will shape zoning laws and drive development. There is also a lack of consistency between specific policies designed to increase density and the general policy commitments to prevent local flooding in storms and local heat islands as we experience greater impacts of climate change. Already QTN residents are dealing with more frequent and more severe basement flooding because intensification has reduced green spaces to absorb rain water during storms. New proposed policies will greatly increase the amount of space covered with



QTN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

QUEENSWAY TERRACE NORTH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

cement and pavement, increasing the risk of both local flooding and less cool, shady places throughout the neighborhood.

One solution is more detailed planning, but the increased as-of-right permissions for developers will not allow for such planning and competitive market forces will work against better-designed proposals. To achieve its goals, the revised OP must include more specific requirements for assessing the impacts of specific proposals against the OP's general policy statements about climate change and tilt the balance in favour of better-designed proposals instead of policies that incentivize a lowest-common-denominator approach to in-fill.

QTN also recommends greater clarity in the allocation of development fees to ensure that improvements are made in areas surrounding the developments, rather than being used to replace funding for city-wide infrastructure that should be funded through broad-based mechanisms. Greater transparency and public engagement would contribute to increased public trust and confidence that the benefits of redevelopments are shared equitably.

VI.C. Pinecrest Creek: a Unique Natural Feature

Recommendation: Designate Pinecrest Creek as a unique natural heritage in the OP and include it in one of the schedules for protection of green spaces; mandate the development of more detailed plans for the portion in QTN as part of the secondary plan; and work with the National Capital Commission to protect and enhance the area around Pinecrest Creek before intensification happens.

Pinecrest Creek is a unique natural feature. QTN appreciates the focus on Natural Heritage Systems and the protection of unique natural features within the city. Pinecrest Creek should be designated as a unique natural feature in the schedules for Natural Heritage Systems or Protected Urban Green Spaces. It warrants and needs protection as an oasis area that will see increased usage resulting from a substantial population inflow due to redevelopment along Queensview Drive.

Following designation in the OP, more detailed plans should be developed through cooperation between the community, the City, and the National Capital Commission, as part of the Secondary Plan process. Such a plan should also include consideration of noise mitigation along this area, fitting with noise mitigation strategies for plans along Queensview Drive.

For more information, please contact:

Kathy Vandergrift, Chair of the Planning Committee
Queensway Terrace North Community Association
qtncommunity@gmail.com



QUEENSWAY TERRACE NORTH
OTTAWA, ON



QTN.CA



QTNCOMMUNITY@GMAIL.COM