

QTN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

QUEENSWAY TERRACE NORTH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Submission for Hearings on New Official Plan
October 14, 2021

Making Intensification Work for Neighborhoods

Queensway Terrace North Community Association understands the need for intensification; we are proposing specific changes to help ensure that it is done in ways that enhance rather than erode strong neighborhoods. Queensway Terrace North (QTN) is a transition neighborhood, sandwiched between Lincoln Fields and Queensview LRT stations. We have direct experience of both the benefits and negative impacts of existing approaches to intensification; we see opportunity and concern in the revised Official Plan. The purpose of this submission is to propose amendments to strengthen HOW intensification is implemented and reduce negative impacts that could erode public support for the plan's goals.

I. Mixed housing, flexibility, and unintended consequences of proposed density rules

QTN includes a broad mix of housing types and socio-economic groups. We appreciate the shift to density targets in the revised plan, to allow greater flexibility in how density will be increased at the neighborhood level. Policy 5.2.4.1.c is inconsistent with that flexibility in that it will “*require a minimum built form of two stories while permitting as-of-right three stories, with a maximum of four stories*” throughout the inner urban transect. There are locations in neighborhoods like QTN where 3-story apartments would be suitable, but also locations where that building form would have a negative impact for a livable neighborhood. Overly rigid rules and as-of-right permissions have the following negative impacts:

1. They lead to increased land prices and the pre-mature destruction of good, affordable housing stock for families. We have seen that happen under current in-fill policies; the result is not more affordable housing. There is also a negative environmental impact from the waste involved and the removal of trees that will be an inevitable consequence of forcing this approach to redevelopment for every lot in our neighborhood.
2. These rules will result in loss of useful green space throughout the neighborhood, fewer trees, and the creation of heat islands, contrary to climate change goals, as well as the waste involved.



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3. This policy leads to a new conformity, rather than diversity; it repeats the conformity that resulted from in-fill I and II, only at the level of 3-story buildings instead of rows of overbuilt 4 unit buildings. This approach does not lead to context-sensitive design and is likely to do more damage to valued neighborhoods than solve the intensification challenge.
4. It excludes any smaller homes on small lots, one element of a healthy mix of housing that contributes to the attractiveness of a neighborhood like QTN.

Recommendation:

QTN recommends that policy 5.2.4.1.c be amended to allow more flexibility by deleting the prescribed minimum of two-stories and changing the “as-of-right” permission for three stories to “permitting three stories where appropriate.”

II. Neighborhoods in the Planning Process

QTN understands the rationale for the use of transects in the new Official Plan, but it is inadequate to achieve the desired goal of intensification that enhances strong neighborhoods, a goal that the Plan itself recognizes as critical to make Ottawa a desirable place to live. That requires greater attention to planning at the neighborhood level, a major gap in this plan. Applying the same rules to all neighborhoods in the Inner Urban Transect, for example, ignores the great diversity between them and the differing development pressures in the transition process.

The commitment to more consideration of context in planning decisions is welcome, but it cannot be achieved only by better technical analysis by staff reviewing development applications. It can only be achieved by taking more seriously the input of residents who know the context well. The increased use of “as-of-right” permissions for developers, done to streamline the individual development application process, increases the need for earlier neighborhood level planning to guide those applications.

We understand the fear of NIMBYism; it will not be reduced by resisting or reducing local engagement in the planning process. It will only be reduced by more meaningful engagement earlier in planning processes. We hear an argument that local planning costs too much; on the contrary, we suggest that a full cost/benefit analysis would show that more up-front, careful attention to local planning is more cost-effective than the prolonged and



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complicated conflicts that result from decision-making processes that ignore input from neighborhood residents.

Section 11 of the revised plan, the section on implementation, provides detailed prescriptions on notification, but says nothing about how input received will be considered. QTN, like many other neighborhoods, has had repeated experiences of providing input, as requested, only to have it completely ignored, in processes that give an unfair advantage to proponents of development projects. If the City wants success in the drive for intensification, it needs to strengthen planning tools that give more weight to the information that can only come from the neighborhood level.

Recommendations:

- 1. QTN recommends amending policy 11.4 to provide clarity about how input from affected neighborhoods will be considered in on-going planning processes, by adding the following policy:**
Input from neighborhoods affected by development proposals will be considered as evidence of context, along with technical analysis, and fully and accurately included in reports to decision-makers, such as committees, council, and Committee of Adjustment.
- 2. QTN recommends adding to Section 11.4 a provision to ensure that on-going planning processes serve neighborhoods as much as developers by adding the following policy:**
The City mandates its planning department to assist neighborhoods in the same way they now assist developers to give all perspectives adequate weight, as a way to ensure intensification actually enhances neighborhoods.
- 3. QTN recommends that Section 11 be amended to make a clear commitment to strengthen the early role of neighborhoods in city planning processes, by adding a the following policy commitment:**
The City commits to develop a mechanism for earlier, agile neighborhood-level planning processes, including a broad range of stakeholders, to ensure that intensification enhances local quality-of-life and to prevent or mitigate potential negative impacts.



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III. Integration at the Neighborhood Level

QTN appreciates the increased focus on integrating land use planning with planning for transportation, parks, green space, social services, etc. However, currently the integration is only at the city-wide level and there are no mechanisms included in the Official Plan to pursue integration at other levels. Where integration matters is at the neighborhood level, if the goal is to achieve more livable neighborhoods.

The experience of QTN, as well as other neighborhoods, is frustration over major gaps and lag times between in-fill development and necessary improvements in infrastructure and services to accommodate those changes. While we support the goal of preserving tree cover, for example, the 40% target needs to be translated into neighborhood level targets and plans to be effective. Increased use of community improvement plans might help, but those are limited to problem areas in the current plan, while integration is also preventative and needs to happen before there are major problems.

Recommendations:

- 1. QTN recommends that Implementation section 11 be amended to add a new policy:**

The City of Ottawa commits to creating a framework and mechanism to improve integration of the various city-wide plans at the neighborhood level, as well as the city-wide level, to ensure that intensification achieves the objective of livable neighborhoods.
- 2. QTN recommends that policy 11.3 be amended to expand the use of Community Improvement plans by neighborhoods undergoing transition, by adding the following clause to the policy:**

The City may prepare, adopt and implement a community improvement plan within a designated community improvement project area(s), pursuant to the Planning Act and the community improvement policies set out in this Plan; or in cooperation with a neighborhood undergoing transition to identify gaps and improve integration of all the elements needed to ensure intensification enhances local quality-of-life.



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Summary

We know that QTN will undergo significant changes within the time frame of this plan. We are eager to engage in the development of secondary plans for both the Lincoln Fields and Queensview/Pinecrest Station areas. How intensification is managed will determine if QTN becomes the back-side of two major redevelopment areas or remains the kind of neighborhood that makes Ottawa an attractive city.

For further information or discussion, please contact:
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