

The importance of “Holding the Line”, Proper Intensification and Affordable Housing Near Rapid Transit

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As has been mentioned throughout the day the Official Plan directly impacts housing, the transportation system, and all matters that affect the quality of living in Ottawa. With the recent **Housing** and **Climate** Emergencies being declared, we want the City to commit to addressing them as the **emergencies** that they are with concrete actions and policies reflected in this Official Plan.

Earlier, we spoke a bit about the urban sprawl, and the need to Hold the Line on the expansion. Here are many reasons why urban sprawl is a bad idea for communities and the environment: it eradicates forests (and the biodiversity in it), it increases water and air pollution, it increases chances of flooding, it takes away agricultural capacity, it increases car dependency, traffic and road fatalities, it's bad for local businesses, and ultimately it has harmful effects on human health—mental health included. Lastly, and because cost is everything—unfortunately—urban sprawl is not financially sustainable. It costs a lot of money to provide water services to low-density suburban communities, and to create and maintain roads. With all these negative consequences, it should be a no-brainer to eliminate this option. With proper intensification, we can maximise the capacity for a growing population, by using infrastructure already in place as well as underdeveloped spaces within the city limits (in both suburban and urban areas of Ottawa). Proper intensification will help neighbourhood services and local businesses to thrive.

We also know that there is an urgent need for affordable housing. The City should implement inclusionary zoning policies, to ensure that private market constructions have to include a certain percentage of their units to be affordable to low- and moderate-income households. This is the best way to keep high-opportunity areas affordable and to maintain neighborhood diversity. Proper intensification means building more mid-rise and missing middle housing, as well as coach homes that can fit in larger backyards, to create thousands of units. It also means that the City needs to prioritize people over cars—to have more autonomy, to access our daily destinations, at walking, cycling or short commute distance. There needs to be pedestrian-only streets, more bus-only lanes, no on-street parking, wider sidewalks, and more of what is considered Healthy streets.

Furthermore, we want to see deeply Affordable and Accessible Housing built along the City's rapid transit network – so surrounding LRTt and Bus Rapid Transit stations. With the 15 Millions\$ allocated to affordable housing, in Budget 2020, we want the municipal government to create a land trust to secure the 20 parcels of available land that are near these important transit stations and rapid bus routes, because it's important that people who have no other transportation

option, be able to get around and participate in society. Great cities are **inclusive**, and that means having **equal access and opportunities, regardless of income level, or disability**.

I can honestly say, from my own personal experience that bad transit negatively affected my mental health and kept me feeling isolated. As someone living on a low income, public transit IS my only option. AND IN THE PAST, the daily frustrations of dealing with unreliable transit, long commutes with multiple transfers to travel across the city, drained me and significantly slowed my recovery from major depression. Being closer to rapid transit would have alleviated the burden... but after struggling for many years—7 to be exact—I knew that my only solution would be to move somewhere near downtown where I could walk to most of my destinations. I currently live in Lowertown, and the difference is remarkable. I feel so lucky that I no longer have to depend on bad transit and deal with the daily frustrations it caused me. I think everyone should benefit from the freedom of being close to everything... and that is exactly what well-designed intensification within the current boundaries can do. We just have to make sure that we hold City council accountable for making the right decision and raising the bar for Ottawa.

Now is the time to organize and act quickly, if we want to have a say in those critical long-term decisions being made at City Hall, in 2020.