

Queensway Terrace North Planning Committee
Queensway Terrace North Community Association

October 26, 2020

Queensview Drive and Queensway Terrace North: Good Neighbors?

Considerations for inclusion in the draft Official Plan for Ottawa

Prepared by the QTN Planning Committee

Introduction

Queensway Terrace North (QTN) views the proposed redevelopment of Queensview Drive as an opportunity, as well as a concern. The future of QTN will be greatly influenced by Queensview and Lincoln Fields LRT hubs on the north and south sides of a small neighborhood, along with the changes in Connaught Park as a result of LRT turning greenspace into a transportation corridor.

In anticipation of changes, the planning committee and residents have been engaged in exploring the issues and options. While we appreciate the information provided by city planning staff, we are disappointed about the postponement of the Queensview/Pinecrest Station Study, which included the promise of consultation with the community and with stakeholders along Queensview Drive.

We are concerned that the major decisions will be made through the Official Plan process before consultation with the community, reducing our options to dealing with impacts of decisions rather than having meaningful input into those decisions. We encourage the City of Ottawa to change its approach to planning in favour of early engagement with communities, rather than treating them as secondary casualties of major development decisions, and thereby limiting secondary plans to mitigating negative consequences of development patterns driven by other factors.

Since the draft Official Plan will have significant impact on our community, we ask that the following factors be given careful consideration at this stage in the process, before it is too late. These directions reflect two informal community surveys that were done during the summer months, after we realized there would be no proper consultation process or structured opportunity for community dialogue.

I. Community-oriented Approach to Development of Queensview Drive

QTN residents recognize that Queensview Drive, an LRT hub, is likely to become a mixed-use district with increased density. While there is significant concern about the level of density and height of buildings, we would like to put a priority on the design of the whole street to have the character of a Main Street, with an intentional focus on including services for the community and development of friendly spaces that welcome neighboring residents to come as pedestrians and bikers, such as coffee shops, recreational spaces, public services,

and attractive outdoor spaces. In addition, we support the concept of staggering the height of new buildings, higher on the south side and lower on the north side, to provide visual transition to the neighborhood, along with the inclusion of treed areas in the transition space. This direction was supported by a large majority of respondents in the community surveys.

We note that Carling Avenue, on the north side of QTN, will likely always be a busy traffic corridor; while we hope proposed improvements to cross Carling are made, we see potential for Queensview Drive to become a desirable destination for QTN residents and a vital component for becoming a successful 15-minute neighborhood. Achieving that goal requires early attention in the planning process.

We also recognize that the City of Ottawa plans to use the new Ontario inclusionary zoning provisions to include community housing without any appeal process. As a diverse, mixed demographic neighborhood, QTN residents understand the need for affordable housing and support the development of housing projects that include a wide range of income groups. We are concerned, however, about the possibility of the inclusion of community housing without access to the necessary support services, recreational/green spaces, and noise mitigation from the excessive noise levels created by the combination of the Queensway and the buses using the OC Transpo Bus Depot at the end of Queensview Drive.

It is not acceptable to develop the higher-density housing now and wait for years for the services to follow. We suggest that early plans for Queensview Drive include a community services package that is developed up-front, as an integral part of the project, rather than a decade later, after issues of social cohesion develop. QTN places a high value on being a supportive, friendly neighborhood for residents from diverse income groups and backgrounds. Maintaining a high level of social cohesion requires attention early in the planning process, as our neighborhood transitions from a more suburban to a more urban context.

The need for and priority of community-oriented services in any plan for Queensview Drive was expressed by a high majority of respondents in both community surveys.

II. Connections between Queensview Drive and QTN

We appreciate that our long-standing call for greater connectivity is receiving some attention. We are concerned that it be addressed early, not years after all the major redevelopment happens. Residents of QTN, which has a higher than average level of transit use, should be able to easily access the new Queensview Station from more than one point, without having to go around to either Pinecrest or Connaught to get there.

Connectivity between Queensview Drive and QTN was identified as a top priority by a high majority of respondents in both community surveys.

While we hope that improvements in access to the Lincoln Fields Station are included in the revised Connectivity plans, access to Queensview Station and Queensview Drive are high priorities for a significant portion of QTN residents.

In addition, we propose early meetings with the stakeholders on Queensview Drive to discuss mutual benefits of other forms of connection between the interests of QTN residents and those who will determine the future of Queensview Drive. The potential for mutual benefit, as well as avoidance of conflicts, is best served by early engagement, rather than a reactive process after the major decisions have been made through dialogue between City planners and major developers first and then appeasement of the community later.

III. Character of QTN and impacts for the residential area

QTN residents understand that changes are underway and that the direction is greater intensification, as a result of population growth and proximity to LRT. At the same time, we know first-hand the negative impacts of the R-1 replacement strategy for intensification. We have addressed those issues through on-going engagement in the monitoring phase of the in-fill development strategy and we do not see any potential for acceptable, long-term, sustainable solutions through that strategy. The R-1 replacement strategy for intensification needs to be replaced with strategies that give more consideration to the character of each neighborhood.

We are concerned about the negative impacts of the proposals to replace the existing R1 zoning for areas of QTN with a more flexible approach to zoning along the lines of the current in-fill strategy approach. Our experience shows that it erodes the essential qualities of what makes QTN a successful mixed neighborhood and it does not provide affordable housing. Promoting intensification one lot at a time fails to adequately consider cumulative impacts for the streetscapes that give a community character and for the social cohesion that comes from safe, friendly streets that people want to walk down and that encourage community connections.

We propose that the character of QTN and other individual neighborhoods be given more weight in the planning process, rather than relying on a set of technical zoning rules designed to apply in a generic way to all older neighborhoods of the same vintage. The experience of In-fill I and II shows that this approach has led to sterile streetscapes rather than in-fill that “enhances” the neighborhood.

The approach taken in the current Official Plan and subsequent zoning rules has not worked and should not be replicated in the new Official Plan and subsequent secondary plans.

This requires changes in the planning process as well as in the technical specifics of the zoning bylaw. Giving greater weight to the character of QTN, and other local neighborhoods, will also serve current objectives related to climate change. The tree canopy, treed areas, and integrated green spaces throughout the community are among the highest valued features in the character of QTN.

QTN may take on the character of an “oasis” in the middle of two redeveloped transit hubs, but it can only fulfill that critical function if steps are taken now to preserve, rather than allow further erosion of what makes up that character.

IV. Noise mitigation for residents on the south side of QTN

Existing noise levels on the south side of QTN are already above what is considered healthy. One impact is that residents are unable to open windows for proper ventilation and enjoy outside activities which contribute to healthy living. The addition of the LRT will add to those noise levels.

We propose that noise mitigation be built into the planning for the redevelopment of Queensview Drive. We understand that noise barriers along the Queensway might be part of a future solution, but the cancellation of the previous renewal project and the slim prospects for its revival suggest giving priority to other solutions at this time.

Noise mitigation should be an integral part of the Official Plan for this area, to help ensure that it is integrated into all planning decisions.

V. Relocation of the OC Transpo Bus Barns on Queensview Drive and Replacement with Affordable Housing.

The existing location of the bus barns on Queensview Drive does not make sense for the future public transit system. Further west seems more logical after LRT is operational in this area. Traffic to and from the bus barns is a major contribution to the higher-than-healthy noise levels in this area. Bus traffic associated with the bus barns is a negative impediment for the redevelopment of Queensview Drive, which only has one point of entry/exit.

Bus barns at this location is a major under-utilization of property owned by the City. It should be used for more appropriate uses. This would be an excellent location for affordable housing, close to transit, with enough space to include the required ancillary services.

Making better use of under-utilized land is a smarter approach to intensification than overcrowding every lot and street within existing neighborhoods. In our area alone, housing development on the bus barns and the overly –large parking lot at Lincoln Fields Shopping Center could provide more than the required level of intensification.

We recognize that relocation of the bus barns is a medium-term goal, but we think it should be included in the Official Plan and incorporated into the visioning for the future of Queensview Drive now, so that its future use can be integrated into the plan.