

Old Ottawa East Community Association

Community Input on Graystone Village Urban Space Design - Forecourt and Grande Allée

Residents of Old Ottawa East will soon have an opportunity to review concepts for the design of new public areas within the Greystone Village development at 175 Main Street. The City of Ottawa is seeking community input on design concepts that will be presented at an open house at Lady Evelyn Alternative School on June 2 from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. These concepts will focus on the area including the Grande Allée, the Forecourt and the heritage Deschatelets building.

Over a period of many months, the City of Ottawa has welcomed input from the community on the design and use of the Oblate Lands as the area transitions to Greystone Village. Considerable consultation has already occurred involving community residents, the Community Association, the Regional Group developing the project including building and landscape architects, and planners from the City of Ottawa. Councillor Chernishenko has also been actively involved in the project since its inception.

Over the course of open houses and community association meetings, residents have commented on plans for the development, and numerous residents have communicated directly with the City planners to make their views known. There is a wonderful diversity of opinion in the community and while there is no overwhelming consensus regarding the preferred design concept for the Grande Allée/Forecourt area, a few themes and recurring suggestions have emerged over recent months.

- Many community members feel that the Deschatelets building, together with the Grande Allée and Forecourt represent a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a truly special urban space unlike any other in the city of Ottawa.
- Many residents have expressed a desire to see a contemporary civic square with a European feel exemplified by the heritage Deschatelets building, and complemented by amenities that will encourage people of all ages to gather for the sense of community that such spaces engender.
- Residents are pleased to see the efforts by all involved to preserve the historical significance of the site, and to incorporate elements of the past into the future development.
- Many in the community have talked about a space for performances, whether it be musical, theatrical or other cultural exhibits and celebrations.
- Integration of the Deschatelets building as a home for a community centre, and possibly as a staging area for events in the Forecourt and Grande Allée has also been of keen interest.
- There have been a range of opinions expressed regarding furniture and similar amenities. Some advocate for the use of traditional materials for substantial, permanent benches along the Grande Allée. Others suggest flexible, modular furniture that encourages users to create their own space. Still others suggest that tiered semi-circular seating in the Forecourt would serve the community's needs well, especially for performances and other entertainment.
- Tasteful public lighting of the heritage building and the pathways has been suggested to give the space added life at night time. High quality fixtures and signage are recommended to compliment the heritage site.

- Residents have expressed a desire to see natural elements integrated with man-made elements so that there can be a variety of experiences within the same area (ie. a picnic on the grass or a coffee on a patio).
- Safeguarding the beautiful trees lining the area is a high priority, as is providing natural habitat, interest and beauty.
- There is significant support for Low Impact Development in the area, especially as it relates to water absorption and permeable surfaces.
- There is broad support for the Farmers Market staying in the area, with most opinion favouring a placement along the Grande Allée.
- Community members have suggested that there should be a seamless transition between retail spaces and the Grande Allée walkway.
- Residents have suggested that a water feature would be an attractive amenity, as would a gazebo.
- Elements such as path connections, visual cues or wayfinding signage to foster a connection between the Deschatelets area and the linear park at the Rideau River have been suggested.
- Overall, residents have expressed a desire to see a well-thought out connection between the residential, commercial, natural and urban areas of the development.
- Provision for water, electricity and public washrooms has been raised frequently and could be considered essential to a vision of the area as a gathering place for neighbours and citizens from across the city.
- There was considerable consensus that the community is already well-served in terms of suitable play areas for children in nearby Springhurst Park and none would be required in the area under consideration.
- In discussing the possible design concepts for the Forecourt and Grande Allée with City planners, it was recognized that the Greystone project is entirely unlike suburban developments both in size and purpose.
- While many of the planning principles articulated by the City planning staff are relevant to Greystone, care should be taken to distinguish this project from standard suburban park planning exercises, especially in the area of amenities. Chosen amenities should contribute to an overall theme, taking into account the urban setting, the importance of natural habitat, and the goal of creating an inviting focal point for the community.

All residents are welcomed and encouraged to come out to the open house on June 2 so that community residents can have the greatest possible input into this new landmark development.

May19, 2015

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