

Lansdowne Park Committee Chair Report - March 21 2023

1. Update on request from community groups for meaningful consultation on Lansdowne Park

- **Letter and List of practices that should inform meaningful public consultation**
 - In its February 14 2023 Meeting, OOECA passed the following motion:
MOTION: Be it resolved that the OOE endorse the letter, Community Expectations of Lansdowne Consultations.
By way of update: A letter was sent to the Mayor and councillors requesting that further decisions not be taken on Lansdowne until meaningful consultations have taken place; this letter was supported by of a list of actions that should form the basis for future consultation.
 - Both the letter and the final draft of “Key elements of meaningful consultation for the future of Lansdowne Park” are attached below.

- **A press release was issued on February 28 2023 (attached) in support of letter, that called for meaningful consultation, and directed attention to the “Key elements” action plan**
 - The Glebe Report published a report on the call for consultation:
<http://glebereport.ca/articles/lansdowne-park-2-0-mayor-sutcliffe-and-new-council-facing-hard-decisions/>

- **The City has launched its public consultation process with a survey on Engage Ottawa**
 - The survey can be found on this site <https://engage.ottawa.ca/lansdowne-2-0> . According to City staff this survey is the first step in a public education campaign on Lansdowne.
 - We passed on the following specific observations on omissions/misrepresentations in the survey to Engage Ottawa staff during a March 9th, Community Consultation Group Meeting (more on the meeting below):
 - The Lansdowne 2.0 List of Definitions sheet omits to define “Property Tax Uplift” one of the main features of the proposed financial strategy (and a term that is found a dozen times in the Lansdowne 2.0 staff report to FEDCO/Council). Staff undertook to take the comment back and ensure that a definition for Property Tax Uplift is added to the defined terms document (as of March 15 2023 the definition was still missing)
 - The FAQ supporting document contains the following:
Q: What does the proposed plan mean for the current berm?
A: *The berm will be re-built around the new event centre, allowing a gathering space for visitors and residents of the site. The park will continue to serve the needs of the growing community, and visitors to the site.*
We pointed out that the response omits to inform the public of the loss of 58,000 sq. ft. of public green space on the berm that would result from proposed non-accessible event centre green roof.
Again, staff were responsive to the feedback and said that the omission would be addressed. As of March 14, 2023 the omission had not been corrected. At this point several hundred people have already filled out the survey without the benefit of these two key pieces of information.
 - A member of the Lansdowne committee wrote to City staff in regard to a misleading question on the survey:

Question 13 asks:

On a scale of 1 to 5, how aware are you that the arena and North Stand at Lansdowne are at the end of their life cycle and in need of significant upgrades or replacement?

This question feeds into a misleading narrative that has been circulating in the media and public that the event centre and stadium are “crumbling” or “unsafe” and therefore need replacing.

In reality, the Lansdowne 2.0 staff report makes clear that the North Side Stands and Civic Centre “remain structurally sound” (p.33, 77 of Lansdowne 2.0 report to FEDCO/Council). Rebuilding the North Side Stands, and the Event Centre, more accurately should be seen as a “nice to have” but not as a “need to have project.”

The response from staff was quite defensive, and there was no undertaking to add the information that the event centre and stands are structurally sound so that the misleading nature of this question would be addressed.

2. Finance and Corporate Services Committee Members One-on-Ones

- Members of the Lansdowne community consultation group have been arranging meetings with councillors on the Finance and Corporate Services Committee (formerly FEDCO) to discuss the need for meaningful consultation on Lansdowne before any future decisions are made. Meetings have emphasized that Lansdowne 2.0 would be the City’s largest project after the LRT, yet transparency on the needed financial information has been lacking, also lacking has been a recognition of the financial risks underlying the assumptions of the business plan.
 - One key point in discussions with councillors is that the financial projections contained in the staff report approved in June 2022 are out of date. With increased interest rates and construction costs, the total project would undoubtedly cost significantly more than the initially forecast \$332.6 million; updated projections are needed
 - Given the size of the project, we have asked for greater access to the financials for Lansdowne to allow for an independent due diligence process
 - Also stressed was the point that decisions should not be made until consultations have been completed and the results of the consultations incorporated into a revised proposal: a semblance of consultation that would essentially be limited to “peripheral” items such as “colour of benches” or “number of trees” would be a breach of public trust

3. Community Consultation Group Meeting

- The first Community Consultation Group meeting since April 2022 was held on March 9 2023 by zoom. Participants included Councillor Menard, representatives from OSEG, city staff from the parks department and those with the Lansdowne Engage Ottawa initiative, and neighbouring community association representatives.
 - The City has allocated \$6.0m for needed improvements at Aberdeen. Repairs and renovation of the Pavilion (floor, ceiling etc.): a request for tender is being drawn up. The expectation is that construction would start May-June 2024 “difficult to say how long construction would take.”
 - Shade and seating for Aberdeen square is still being considered: no definite timeline. The features need to be accessible and moveable, so pose a challenge. Any proposed design will be run by Councillor Menard’s office.
 - OSEG was too late last year in sending out a tender request for the pilot project that will see a number of trees planted above ground across from Goodlife and on Marché Way;

these were to have been planted last year, and now the expectation is that they will be planted this Spring.

- To the question of how are the trees that were planted in 2021 faring, the answer was that any trees that are not viable will be replaced.
- There will be a number of events taking place at Lansdowne this summer – especially May, June
- All participants expressed optimism for a more collaborative relationship going forward: everyone wants to see Lansdowne succeed.

Alexandra Gruca-Macaulay
Attachments

Mayor Mark Sutcliffe
City of Ottawa
110 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa ON K1P1J1

19 February 2023

Re: Key elements of meaningful consultations for the future of Lansdowne Park

Dear Mayor Sutcliffe

We are writing as concerned community organizations regarding the future of Lansdowne Park.

Lansdowne revitalization will be one of the largest projects considered in this term of Council. We believe that **no further decisions should be taken until there has been meaningful consultation with the community.**

The attached document, *Key elements of meaningful consultations for the future of Lansdowne Park*, lays out our views of what constitutes meaningful consultation. **We ask for your assurance that the City approaches this consultation with the intention to fully engage, and not simply inform, citizens and that the information requested in this note is made available to the public,** in line with your commitment to greater transparency and to restoring public trust in decision-making.

Everyone in Ottawa should have an opportunity to weigh in on the proposal. Ottawa residents should have a chance to understand all of the complexity of the proposal and the track record so far. The process should allow for everyone involved to share and discuss their ideas given how important Lansdowne is to Ottawa. We should be deliberate about community benefits and engage in extensive public consultations, as agreed to by the previous Council, before any new construction takes place.

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The LRT inquiry has taught us what happens when items are rushed through Council with selective sharing of information, lack of community scrutiny and insufficient accountability. With meaningful community consultation, this Council can avoid repeating the mistake of its predecessor. We are ready to serve as engaged community partners in advancing the revitalization of Lansdowne and look forward to working with Council and staff in an open, collaborative and constructive manner.

Yours sincerely,

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cc: Councillor Shawn Menard and other Ottawa City Councillors
Sean Moore, Director, Lansdowne Park Redevelopment Project

Key elements of meaningful consultations for the future of Lansdowne Park

Community representatives stand firm in the belief that no further decisions on Lansdowne Park be taken before there has been **meaningful consultation** with the Ottawa community.

Lansdowne revitalization will be one of the largest projects considered in this term of Council, and involve significant additional borrowing during a time when the City is under financial strain. Transparency and a process that builds public trust in decision-making is essential. Based upon best practices seen elsewhere, meaningful consultations should include (albeit not be limited to) the following key elements:

Process

- A **clear timeline** of all decisions and specific consultations leading to those decisions is published in advance of the process starting
- Consultations take place with **Indigenous communities**
- Consultation materials are made available at least 7 days **in advance** of meetings
- The **comment period** following the circulation of documents should be at least 21 days; and a minimum of 14 days following presentation by staff at a public Open House (or equivalent)
- City **staff are available** at all consultations to provide information only
- During online discussions, **community members are able to “cross-talk”** – i.e., to see who is in attendance, to read the chat comments of others, and to ask questions and offer comments themselves rather than have remarks filtered through a moderator
- Financial data is provided in spreadsheet format**, allowing community members and stakeholders to undertake their own financial due diligence
- A Staff Report following consultation that takes into consideration all feedback received (verbal, emails, letters, webforms, etc) **provides a clear explanation of how public input influenced the final outcomes** of the decision-making process and an **explanation for comments not incorporated**

Information-sharing and Communications

- A **clear description, including a map**, is provided of all significant current and proposed roles and responsibilities, as well as **ownership stakes**, of partners (including the City) in Lansdowne
- Design concepts are provided as 3D models**, and not simply architectural drawings; **clearly indicating the scale and dimensions** of proposed elements to support informed feedback
- A commitment is provided that the **names of companies bidding** on the residential units is publicly disclosed and an outline of what steps the City will take to insure that the construction companies owned by OSEG members are not the only companies to own and build the proposed units

Financial Information

- Financial data since 2014** is made available, including City investment levels in the full Lansdowne site and in the partnership, and financial performance compared to baseline projections
- Audited financial statements of the Lansdowne partnership four sub-components** (retail, stadium, Redblacks, Ottawa 67s) are shared
- The **City staff report of the OSEG proposal is updated** in light of new financial data, such as expected sources of funds, current interest rate expectations, construction inflation, and expected ownership structure of the proposed apartment buildings
- Assumptions of the financial model are explained**, such as projected rental rates including those proposed as affordable, and the justification that 90% of property tax revenue would not be needed to fund services provided to residents
- The Lansdowne 2.0 proposal **risk matrix and variability analysis** is provided, including the year-by-year spreadsheet analysis showing discounted cash flows

Finally, we are of the view that meaningful consultation involves engaging the community at the earliest stage possible, including prior to the release of an initial proposal. Meaningful engagement takes place when the proposal can be modified and when it is cost effective to do so. It requires clarity regarding what is fixed, and what is up for debate. The process should allow for residents to have an informed discussion of ideas given how important Lansdowne Park is to Ottawa.

PRESS RELEASE

February 28, 2023

Lansdowne Park 2.0: Community Stakeholders call for informed and meaningful Public Consultations before new Council makes any further decisions

Mayor Sutcliffe and his new Council are facing hard decisions over the future of Lansdowne Park.

OSEG (Ottawa Sports & Entertainment Group) wants a new deal with the city. The City is being asked to spend another \$332M of taxpayer dollars. OSEG claims that it is not in its financial interest to continue to operate under the original agreement.

But is the proposed deal in the public interest?

Community Associations in the Glebe, Old Ottawa South, and Old Ottawa East, as well as the Federation of Citizens Associations, Synapcity, and Parkways for People think that informed and meaningful consultations are needed to give citizens and taxpayers, as well as Council, greater understanding and input to what is being proposed.

Lansdowne 2.0 would be one of the largest projects considered in this Council's term, second only in investments made in the LRT. The city would spend roughly \$150M on a brand new arena/performance venue, removing existing green space from the urban park roughly the size of a football field. Most of the remaining budget would be spent tearing down the north side stands, as well as the Civic Centre arena and surrounding retail space, just 10 years after the City invested \$120M in this same facility. The north side stands would then be rebuilt along with building additional retail, and three very tall towers (we know, after pressing City staff, that they will be 46/40/34 storeys high) overlooking the football field, along with some improvements to the urban park.

OSEG claims that this could be a real opportunity to reset and put Lansdowne Park on the solid footing it deserves, in order to serve the greater Ottawa community.

But there is a decided lack of transparency regarding tower heights, real loss of green park space, and the financial track record of Lansdowne in what has been presented to date. Are assumptions made in the Financial model still valid given interest rates, construction cost inflation, etc? The idea that the Financial Strategy with its ongoing tax diversion is "revenue neutral" to taxpayers is highly debatable and requires greater scrutiny. Should taxpayer dollars be allocated to this project without consideration for other budget priorities such as social services, housing, climate mitigation, etc.

And where does Lansdowne Park 2.0 fit in the larger picture, given the NCC's proposed LeBreton Flats Development? Does it support or leverage huge investments in the LRT, or double down on a site that is significantly challenged by transportation links?