



HINTONBURG COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION INC.
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January 19, 2021

**Re: Withdrawal of Applications D01-01-19-001 and D02-02-19-0072
Rezoning of open greenspace for 6 Diplomatic Offices with 6 parking lots in
Kitchissippi Ward**

Mr. Tobi Nussbaum,

This letter is a request for the NCC to withdraw the above application to develop embassies on public greenspace along the Ottawa river. The applicant is seeking a site specific exception to be made to lands zoned as Open Greenspace and R5 Residential lands to allow the development of six (6) embassy office buildings with six (6) parking lots. The Hintonburg Community Association (HCA) is opposed to this development, and sees it as strikingly inconsistent with the messaging of the federal and municipal governments surrounding the global climate crisis.

Development of embassies on this land would result in the destruction of habitats of many wildlife species. The 3.7 hectare property contains approximately 130 trees, of which 66 are slated for removal, according to the Tree Assessment and Conservation Report (D02-02-20-0072). There are 28 different tree species, along with a variety of grasses and wildflowers that provide shelter and food for a wide range of birds, insects and small mammals. One local resident, Gordon Johnston, has documented a total of 63 species of birds either residing on or migrating through the property in a year. The recent removal of mature trees at Remic Rapids and along the SJAM parkway to accommodate the LRT expansion combined with this proposed project would result in three sites of major habitat loss along the western Ottawa River. This is alarming considering the NCC has deemed this part of the river to be an “important birding area”, and the city has declared tree conservation a priority in the face of the “climate emergency” it declared last year. The loss of 66 mature trees takes Ottawa a step further back from reaching the tree canopy goal of 40%, which is required to combat climate change.

In addition to this greenspace being needed to flight a climate emergency, we are also in a pandemic. The need for urban greenspace has not been emphasized as much historically than in the last year. Greenspace is required to protect both physical and mental health. The lands provide stunning views of the Ottawa River from the hilltop, bringing joy to the public. We need to maintain our urban greenspace, especially in Mechanicsville and Hintonburg, where we are undergoing significant intensification in the coming years.

The proposed embassies will remove a significant piece of the limited greenspace we have in our community. Not only would we lose the greenspace, but as the embassies will build

fences, we would lose a natural connection to the SJAM and Ottawa River, which should be shared by all.

The Right Honorable Julie Payette declared in her recent throne speech that “the government will work with municipalities as part of a new commitment to expand urban parks, so that everyone has access to green space”. Kitchissippi ward is slated to see intensification of up to 400% in the coming years through planned development of residential properties. Community associations in our ward met with Minister McKenna in November 2020 to discuss strategies for increasing urban greenspace to accommodate this intensification. At the meeting, we identified the land in question as an excellent spot to create more public urban greenspace. This seems to be the perfect opportunity for both the Federal government and the City to make good on their promises to look out for the interests of Canadian citizens. The HCA is disappointed to find that the governments have seemingly forgotten those responsibilities and their constituents in their eagerness to accommodate foreign diplomats.

The proposed development will be more costly and disruptive to city residents than if it were built elsewhere. The soil beneath the land is contaminated and will need to be remediated before development. This process is not only costly, but also hazardous to the residents who use nearby Laroche Park, the SJAM bike path, and Lemieux Island. In addition, the lack of proximity to the LRT will require parking lots to be built on the property. Sparks Street, Tunney’s Pasture and the Byward Market are all appropriately zoned areas with many vacant buildings available for occupancy. Their proximity to the LRT means that they will not require expansive parking lots to be built. Development of embassies on appropriately zoned properties would not require the destruction of any natural habitat or soil remediation and would be more consistent with the city’s stance on the climate crisis.

The HCA strongly urges the NCC to withdraw the above-mentioned application given the irreplaceable loss of public greenspace and natural habitat it would cost. We urge the NCC to act in accordance with its values and to protect Canadian public lands so that they can be enjoyed by generations of Canadians to come. In the face of this global climate crisis we all need to do our part to protect natural resources. If the public loses this land, we will never get it back.

Sincerely,

Linda Brown
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Hintonburg Community Association

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