



## MEDIA RELEASE

# Groups urge NCC to withdraw plan for “Embassy Row”

**OTTAWA February 7, 2021** – The Mechanicsville Community Association (MCA) and BIG TREES of Kitchissippi are calling on the National Capital Commission (NCC) to withdraw its plans to give an untouched piece of greenspace near the Ottawa River to foreign countries for their exclusive use as a high-security, diplomatic precinct with over 200 parking spots.



“We plan to listen and ask lots of questions, but more importantly, we’ll be asking the NCC to withdraw its application at the online Open House hosted by Councillor Leiper on Wednesday, February 10<sup>th</sup> 2021” said Lorrie Marlow, president of the Mechanicsville Community Association.

“This green space is beloved in our community. Building a diplomatic precinct that leaves Mechanicsville residents with only a view of high security fencing and parking lots that will resemble a prison along Burnside Avenue. It contributes nothing positive to our community’s quality of life and robs us of beautiful greenspace and trees.”

MCA and BIG TREES would like to work with the NCC in preserving this 3.7 hectare greenspace for use as a passive open greenspace for all Canadians to enjoy the trees and preserve the habitat for wildlife that live there.

“The NCC has undertaken a significant amount of tree removal on its lands in past years, as has the City, seriously affecting the City’s tree canopy” said Marlow. “By preserving this greenspace, the NCC can pivot from a bricks and mortar project to one that retains existing trees, open greenspace and protects habitat for wildlife.

“The NCC also have vacant, remediated land in Lebreton and appropriately-zoned property in the Byward Market and Sparks Street. Those commercial districts would probably benefit from the increased pedestrian traffic from six diplomatic buildings,” Marlow states.”

## NCC plan would remove 73% of existing trees

The NCC rezoning application filed with the City of Ottawa shows that 73% of existing trees on the site are slated for destruction. The NCC's tree inventory, conducted by a contractor in May 2018, identified 75 single trees on the site and 37 clusters of smaller trees.



"It was shocking to learn that the NCC's tree assessment report says site construction will result in 55 of those 75 trees being cut down," said Debra Huron of BIG TREES of Kitchissippi, a coalition of community associations founded in 2014 to fight tree loss in Kitchissippi Ward.

"I walked through the area last spring, long before any plans for Embassy Row were public, and I was gob-smacked by a beautiful tamarack tree on site that stands tall and strong," said Huron. The tree's diameter is 46 cm at breast height, a large trunk size for that kind of conifer.

The NCC's tree inventory also notes a massive Sugar Maple (95 cm diameter) and a Red Oak (75 cm diameter). Many of the largest trees on the site are slated to be removed. "We'll be losing not only their beauty but also their biodiversity, which creates habitat for many creatures, too."

In April 2018, City of Ottawa politicians unanimously declared that Ottawa is facing a Climate Emergency. "I don't know that the NCC is bound by the city's proclamation, but I do

know it has a long history of protecting green spaces in this city. That's why it would make sense for the NCC to preserve this piece of land and its greenery because, as it exists right now, it's a carbon sink."

"The land's location is another reason to keep it as green space," said Huron. "Why destroy a place where people can run, walk, play, pause under the shade of big trees in summer, and bask in the beauty of the Ottawa River all year round?"

The City of Ottawa's tree conservation by-law applies to trees more than 30 cm in diameter. But Huron says the tree bylaw does not apply to large trees on NCC lands. "So, it is really up to the NCC to demonstrate that it cares about maintaining a green space for future generations to enjoy," said Huron.

Kitchissippi Ward Councillor Jeff Leiper has convened an [online forum for Wednesday February 10, 2021](#) at 7 pm where community groups and activists can comment on the NCC's zoning and official plan applications. MCA and BIG TREES of Kitchissippi will be attending the Open House on February 10, 2021 at 7pm and Zoom details are:

**Wednesday, February 10 at 7:00pm**

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81658872211>

**Password: 946427**

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