

NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CAPITALE NATIONALE

Review of the National Capital Core Area Plan

Public consultation summary report

2021-2025

Canada

Background

Context

The National Capital Commission (NCC) performed a comprehensive review of the National Capital Core Area Plan (the Plan), which is the principal long-term planning document for the development and management of federal lands within the downtown cores of Ottawa and Gatineau. Originally approved by the NCC Board of Directors as Canada's Capital Core Area Sector Plan in 2005, the renewed Plan establishes a unified vision to guide future planning and management efforts in the core area.

In this review process, the NCC engaged with the public and various stakeholders to gather their insights on the Plan's priorities and to enhance awareness of its objectives.

About the Plan

The Core Area Plan was developed through a design-led process based around three key stages. Beginning with an initial stage of evaluation of the context and pending projects, future phases beginning in 2022 involved more stakeholder engagement and public participation to help shape the Plan.



In May 2025, the NCC completed a fourth and final phase of public participation, which offered an opportunity to members of the public to comment on the final draft version of the Plan. The final draft was informed by two previous rounds of public consultation, along with an initial round of stakeholder evaluation of existing conditions.

Public participation process

Since the start of public participation on the National Capital Core Area plan began in 2022, multiple phases of engagement have taken place with stakeholders and the public.

Phase 1: 2022 (internal and partner engagement)

Technical-level engagement with partner agencies

April–August 2023



Phase 2: 2023 (public participation on early draft plan)

Public advisory committee meeting

November 2023



14 participants

Online public survey

October-December 2023



2,600 views
344 comments received

Pop-up kiosks

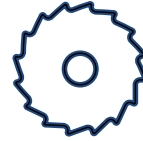
September-October 2023



445 participants

Public workshops

November 2023



76 participants

More information is available in the [Phase 2 Public Consultation Report](#).

Phase 3: 2024–2025 (public and stakeholder participation on draft plan)

Public advisory committee meeting

May 2024



9 participants

Stakeholder meetings

February 2025



7 meetings

Public workshops

January 2025



41 participants

Online public survey

January–February 2025



1,696 views
200 responses received

More information is available in the [Phase 3 Public Consultation Report](#).

Phase 4: 2025 (review of final draft plan)

Public advisory committee meeting

May 2025



7 participants

Online public consultation

May 2025



2,458 views
66 comments received

Submissions by email

May 2025



24 submissions received

Social media reactions

May 2025



5 comments

During Phase 4, members of the public had a final opportunity to comment on key aspects of the Plan, suggest ways to improve the proposals, and add anything that might have been overlooked. Feedback received during previous rounds of public consultation were incorporated into the draft version of the Plan presented to the public during this phase.

Overview of Phase 4 public participation activities

Engagement activities included as part of Phase 4 included:

- **Public Advisory Committee:** Members of the PAC met on May 14, 2025, to discuss and provide comments on the final draft.
- **Online comment box:** Open from May 1 to May 15, a total of 66 comments were received from members of the public.
- **Feedback via email:** 24 emails were received from members of the public via the consultations inbox.
- **Letters from stakeholders:** Interested groups, including the Lowertown Community Association, the Federation of Citizens Association, and the New Edinburgh Community Alliance, provided feedback via email. Copies of these submissions are available in Appendix 1.

As part of a separate engagement process, the NCC also engaged with Indigenous communities. On May 15, the project team provided a presentation to six elders of the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg community.

More information on the updated Plan can be [found here](#).

What we heard

This section summarizes key findings across all engagement activities during Phase 4. Based on the comments received, the following themes were identified:

Transportation and accessibility

Transportation was a major focus, with strong support for improved transit and active transportation to help connect Ottawa, Gatineau and nearby suburbs. There were also strong calls for safer bike lanes and better sidewalks. Some respondents were also concerned about the closure of roads to cars and accessibility for seniors, while others called for a balanced approach that supports all users.

Comments representing participant feedback on this issue included:

- “Ensure that all sites have good transit access, with emphasis on expanding more efficient train/tram dedicated infrastructure...”
- “The pedestrian access in front of the NAC should also include improved bicycle access along the canal.”

Housing and development

Housing and development generated a wide range of opinions, reflecting both support for increased density and opposition to certain proposed developments. Supporters of densification emphasized the need for more affordable, multi-bedroom units, especially for working families who are being priced out of the urban core. They advocated for high-density, mixed-income developments that could reduce urban sprawl and car dependency.

However, others expressed concern about the location and nature of proposed developments. Residents of New Edinburgh and Rockcliffe Park expressed concerns about the proposed development on Sussex Drive, specifically about traffic congestion, perceived loss of green space, and the importance of the area's heritage character.

The Ruisseau de la Brasserie (Brewery Creek) was another point of interest. Numerous comments opposed development along its banks, arguing that the area should be preserved as a public green space. These respondents emphasized the importance of equitable access to nature, especially for residents of Hull who already face a shortage of parks and recreational areas.

Comments representing participant feedback on this issue included:

- "I support the proposals to activate and develop the lands near (sic) Sussex...they could easily become a place where people live, work, gather, or simply experience something memorable. We're sitting on potential and doing nothing with it."
- "The Ruisseau de la Brasserie has immense potential for becoming a jewel for residents and visitors..."
- "As a resident of New Edinburgh...the development of this area will reduce the already limited green space in the area, especially along Sussex Drive itself..."

Parks and green spaces

There was a strong desire to protect and enhance public access to green and waterfront areas. Suggestions included creating swimmable zones, building boardwalks, and improving maintenance of existing parks. Respondents emphasized the importance of these spaces for recreation, climate resilience and community well-being.

Comments representing participant feedback on this issue included:

- "As for the Queen's Wharf, make sure there is good bike parking and also a swimming station (at own risk or find a way to cost recover lifeguards)."
- "Let these 'vacant' areas beyond the mowed edges be wildflower meadows—free decorative flowers!"

Waterfront activation

The city's waterfront areas were seen as a big opportunity. Many people said these spaces could be much better used, with amenities like boardwalks, places to swim, and better walking and biking paths. They want these areas to be designed for people, not just cars or private buildings. Some specific areas mentioned for improvement were the locks near the Château Laurier and Lemieux Island.

Comments representing participant feedback on this issue included:

- “The NCC should work to make sure that the canal is swimmable again. There should be one to two dates a year or month, in a certain two-hour window, where swimming is a priority over boats.”
- “Explore opportunities for activating waterfronts (Canal, Rideau, Ottawa) through active and passive spaces in these areas.”

Additional public feedback

In addition to these themes, participants also had several suggestions for additional elements to incorporate in the Plan. These included:

- installing more public amenities such as **public washrooms, water fountains, and shade structures** in high-traffic areas;
- ensuring updated plans and policies are **inclusive of seniors** and accessible for **people with mobility challenges**;
- designing **temporary infrastructure** on NCC lands (e.g. bike parking plazas) for large events like Canada Day and Bluesfest;
- creation of more opportunities for reflection and recognition of **Algonquin culture and traditions**; and
- improving **wayfinding and signage** for landmarks, transit stops and public amenities to make navigation easier for residents and tourists.

The feedback from Phase 4 of public participation highlights the importance of the core area, and that the community remains deeply invested in plans for its future.

Response to themes

Following public consultation and comments received during Phase 4, the project team has accounted for the feedback received according to the themes identified.

In the final version of the plan, the project team responded to the feedback on transportation and accessibility by highlighting the need for improvement of wayfinding and mobility services, while also improving accessibility and walkability. This also included improvements to streetscape elements regardless of mode of transportation, including active mobility.

On housing and development, the project team heard the comments opposed to development in areas of significant heritage character. The redevelopment proposals in the updated Core Area Plan are designed to match the style of the community while respecting its heritage. It is recognized that bringing the project to reality would need a specific development plan, including further public participation.

On parks and green spaces, primarily highlighted in the “Capital Open Space” concept of the Plan, the team prioritized comments for the creation of new zones and activation of existing park spaces by introducing new elements of play and discovery.

The “Capital Waterfront” concept was reorganized to prioritize the need for access to the water; this was identified as a high priority by participants in the public engagement. The concept acknowledges the public desire for additional waterfront infrastructure (e.g. docks and boardwalks) that facilitate water-specific activities.

The project team thanks those who took the time to share their thoughts, insights, and valuable feedback during the numerous rounds of public consultation on the National Capital Core Area Plan.

Next steps

Comments from Phase 4 of public consultation were integrated into the final plan, which was submitted for approval by the NCC Board of Directors in June 2025.

Appendix 1: Letters from stakeholders



172 Guigues Ave.,
Ottawa, ON K1N 7H5
info@lowertown-basseville.ca
May 15, 2025

Tobi Nussbaum
Chief Executive Officer
National Capital Commission
Sent via email: exec@ncc-ccn.ca
Copy to : Mona Fortier, mona@monafortier.ca
Lucille Collard, LCollard.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org
Stephanie Plante, stephanie.plante@ottawa.ca
consultations@ncc-ccn.ca

Subject: Comments on the Final Draft National Capital Core Area Plan

Dear Mr. Nussbaum,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft National Capital Core Area Plan. The Lowertown Community Association, representing the residents of Ottawa's oldest neighbourhood, acknowledges the NCC's objective to create a capital core that is aesthetically pleasing, accessible, sustainable, and meaningful to all Canadians. We recognize the valuable role the NCC plays in managing federal lands, improving the public realm, and promoting design excellence. We appreciate that the draft Plan includes positive elements such as infill opportunities along Sussex Drive, enhanced waterfront access, and improvements to the Ottawa River Pathway and Lady Grey Drive.

We view this Plan as a significant opportunity to further enhance heritage preservation, livability, and the protection of Canada's historic capital neighbourhoods. Our comments focus on areas where we believe a deeper commitment or a more balanced approach could strengthen the Plan.

ByWard Market and Sussex Drive

The ByWard Market is a vital part of the capital's core. We note that the current economic activity in the Market is significantly influenced by its evening and nightlife functions. This concentration has unfortunately been associated with increased crime and undesirable behaviour, and has contributed to a decline in the diversity of retail and the traditional farmers' market presence, particularly impacting daytime activity outside the peak season. While we understand the interest in enhancing vibrancy and animation (as outlined in Section 4.4 of the Core Area Plan), we suggest a more balanced approach that actively supports and encourages

diverse daytime retail businesses to ensure a more secure and welcoming environment throughout the day and year. We encourage the NCC to continue prioritizing small Canadian retailers in their rental decisions along Sussex Drive to promote commercial diversity and showcase Canadian products.

Regarding the courtyards, while the Plan suggests encouraging commercial activity at grade, we recommend careful consideration of the potential impacts, such as noise levels, on adjacent residential units. Ensuring that any commercial frontages in these areas are appropriate for a mixed-use context with residential components is crucial. We also observe that municipal design standards for patios, signage, and lighting in the Market appear to impact the area's appeal. We suggest the NCC could potentially collaborate with the City of Ottawa to encourage the adoption of design standards that would enhance the Market's aesthetic and functionality. We urge the NCC to reaffirm a commitment at the federal level to the revitalization of the ByWard Market.

Balancing Intensification and Livability in Lowertown

Lowertown has experienced significant intensification over several decades and currently exhibits a high density compared to many other residential areas in Ottawa. The neighbourhood accommodates a diverse range of uses, including residential units, embassies, shelters, short-term rentals, nightlife venues, and major infrastructure. We believe that future development in Lowertown should prioritize a balance between growth and care, focusing on infrastructure repair, investment in public spaces, and development that values preservation and improved livability. We encourage the NCC to lead in advocating for a capital core where existing neighbourhoods are recognized for their current contributions and supported in enhancing their livability. The Core Area Plan acknowledges the importance of supporting a diverse employment base and promoting mixed-use employment areas that provide commercial and community services for residents and employees. We believe this principle can be applied to support the balanced growth of Lowertown.

Alexandra Bridge and King Edward Avenue

The Alexandra Bridge, while owned by PSPC, falls within the NCC's visual and civic mandate. We maintain our position that the Plan should include a firm commitment to the preservation and restoration of this vital connection between two historic neighbourhoods: Vieux-Hull and the ByWard Market. Its potential to accommodate light rail or active transportation aligns with federal objectives related to climate and mobility. We respectfully request the NCC's support for the restoration and preservation of the Alexandra Bridge.

Regarding King Edward Avenue, although it is municipally owned, it functions as a part of Canada's National Highway System. The LCA supports the Core Area Plan's recommendation to address dangerous and polluting truck traffic on King Edward Avenue. The volume of truck traffic negatively impacts the livability of the capital core, compromises pedestrian safety, and contradicts the Plan's themes of beauty, health, and history. We agree that the NCC, given its standing and responsibility, should advocate for a federally coordinated solution to re-route this

traffic away from the downtown core, as suggested in the Plan.

Beautification and Illumination

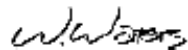
As the historic heart of the nation's capital, Lowertown and the ByWard Market would benefit significantly from enhanced beautification and illumination. Drawing inspiration from other world capitals where historic quarters are enhanced with greenery, lighting, and public amenities, we believe the NCC has the resources and the mandate to collaborate with the LCA, the ByWard Market District Authority, and the City of Ottawa to implement a comprehensive plan for beautifying the entire district. Enhancing the aesthetic appeal of a space contributes to a greater sense of safety and security. The Core Area Plan's themes of Beauty and Majesty (Section 4.2) and Vibrancy and Animation (Section 4.4), particularly the emphasis on high-quality public realm design, lighting strategies, and public art, support these objectives.

Major's Hill Park is a small gem that is a popular destination in all seasons. It is one of few downtown parks. It has the advantage of offering fantastic views of the parliament, the river, the canal and major institutions. The NCC should avoid closing the park for major events that require a fee and leave the park in disrepair. Other parks better suited for events such as LeBreton Flats should be used instead.

In conclusion, Lowertown plays a significant role in the cultural and civic identity of Canada's capital core. We recognize the meaningful work undertaken by the NCC and see further opportunities for collaboration. We ask that the Core Area Plan continue to position the NCC not only as a planner and property owner but also as a steward of national memory and a partner in enhancing urban livability.

Thank you for considering our comments. We look forward to continued dialogue on the implementation of the Core Area Plan.

Your sincerely,



Warren H. Waters, Vice President

Lowertown Community Association - Association communautaire de la Basse-Ville

LOWERTOWN BASSEVILLE
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION ASSOCIATION COMMUNAUTAIRE

Federation
of Citizens'
Associations
of Ottawa

fca-fac

Fédération
des associations
civiques
d'Ottawa

May 15, 2025

Tobi Nussbaum
Chief Executive Officer
National Capital Commission
Sent via email: exec@ncc-ccn.ca
cc: consultations@ncc-ccn.ca

Subject: National Capital Commission (NCC) Core Area Plan Final Draft

Dear Mr. Nussbaum,

The Federation of Citizens' Associations of Ottawa (FCA) thanks the NCC for the opportunity to review the final draft of the Core Area Plan. Our members participated in the consultation session at the Urbanism Lab and have submitted comments on the preceding 60% draft of the Plan.

The FCA has reviewed the final draft of the Plan, and is generally pleased with the overall approach, scope and overarching themes that provide a policy framework that helps shape the future of our National Capital core.

While we acknowledge that the Capital core has a primary function as the Seat of National Government, and that the core area has traditionally been the administrative focus of federal functions, serving as the principal location for federal workplaces and national institutions, we wish to emphasize that it is also a collective of communities and businesses, and spaces that have significance to local neighbourhoods. Collaborative planning is in our opinion of paramount importance, with the aim of stabilizing and transforming the core into "downtown" places where residents, workers, and visitors wish to spend time and enjoy. We urge the NCC not to forget that the public realm goes beyond manicured landscaping, sculptured plazas, and high-quality design principles, and must include a safe and pleasing ambiance for civic life and community purposes.

We commend the stated intent to accommodate a diversity of mixed uses that can support a growing population and economy. We support the goal of a balanced mix of housing and commercial accommodation that can sustain more residents living and working in the core area, with housing options that include a substantial proportion of affordable housing. It is in that spirit that we also support the potential conversion of underutilized or surplus office spaces into mixed-use housing and commercial uses.

We applaud the intent of the NCC to continue to work with its partners and other stakeholders toward enhancing interprovincial goods transport in ways that minimize and possibly avoid impacts on the core area and other urban communities. While we recognize the significance and need for efficient and sustainable goods movement for the regional economy, we urge the NCC and other levels of government to work collaboratively to find viable and sustainable strategies that will avoid and mitigate adverse impacts of heavy truck transport on local

communities. Encouraging the use of smaller electrical vehicles for deliveries will reduce the adverse effects of noise and air pollution on the adjacent communities.


The economic and socio-cultural vibrancy of our core area will in many instances be affected by enhancements to the constituent spaces themselves. We all wish to avoid a continued backslide due to the obstacles of reduced attractiveness for commercial and housing opportunities. We laud the NCC intention of placing importance to the space itself.

By reinforcing the placemaking perspective, the most important resource in any vital core area will be attracted - people. Green space and urban forest canopy are significant catalysts in this regard. Together with high quality designs of the built environment, the preservation and enhancement of green spaces in the core area can help accomplish the goals of rejuvenated housing, commercial, and retail activity. We strongly believe that innovative green infrastructure solutions are a fundamental component of helping bring the core area vision to reality. We therefore strongly urge the NCC to continue to work closely with the City of Ottawa and communities to conserve and augment the network of urban green spaces that weave the core area with the broader network of urban natural lands and ecological spaces.

We note the limited recognition by the Core Area Plan of the ongoing dominance and impact of the automobile. While mobility and transportation challenges are different in complexity and intensity for different urban, suburban and rural communities, there is no question the automobile continues to transform cities and directly shapes the Capital's landscape. While the prominence of the automobile may be in conflict with and challenge some of the key Core Area Plan "Capital Realm" policy directions and the principal catalytic strategies, the Plan in our opinion should be more precise on effective transportation demand management strategies that will mitigate congestion, lower emissions, and improve overall mobility and quality of life. A concerted effort among partners is required to ensure effective demand management since transportation challenges do not respect core area or interprovincial boundaries and require a broader integrated approach that transcends the core area. The NCC can and should demonstrate greater leadership in more effectively managing demand, by helping improve and shift the balance to greater transit, walking and cycling in the core area.

How our communities safely and easily access and use the core, their "downtown", is very important. A successful downtown is a key element of the Capital communities. A successful core area will be defined as a place that attracts and maintains people, including families, that sustains a vibrant and diverse local economy, that uses the public realm and urban spaces efficiently, and gives priority to transit, walking and cycling, and supports other more broad community sustainability goals. We look forward to the tangible strategies and actions that will emanate from the Core Area Plan that align with and espouse the aforementioned.

Sincerely,



Warren H. Waters, Chair
FCA Planning & Zoning Committee



May 23, 2025

To: The National Capital Commission

Attention: Tobi Nussbaum, Chief Executive Officer

Alain Miguelez, Vice-President, Capital Planning and Chief Planner

Via email: tobi.nussbaum@ncc-ccn.ca, alain.miguelez@ncc-ccn.ca,
consultations@ncc-ccn.ca

Subject: Comments by the New Edinburgh Community Alliance (NECA) on the National Capital Commission's update to the Core Area Plan with respect to the proposed Sussex Blocks development

1. Introduction – Community awareness and views
2. Ceremonial route
3. Public interest
4. Housing needs
5. Previous comments

1. Introduction – Community awareness and views

Since the New Edinburgh Community Alliance (NECA) submitted its preliminary comments to the National Capital Commission (NCC) in February 2025, several steps have taken place to increase the limited awareness of the Sussex Blocks proposal and have assisted in further informing the comments of community members and NECA on the proposal. We thank the NCC for granting us an extension to the comment deadline to provide this collective response.

As a result, NECA is pleased to provide these additional comments specifically regarding the Sussex Blocks development proposal in the Core Area Plan. You already have the community's input from the workshop hosted by the NCC in New Edinburgh on March 6. More recently, we heard more views and concerns exchanged at a very well-attended public meeting of the NECA board on May 20. The community is deeply concerned with the proposal.

Overall, this submission serves to convey the prevailing concerns from the community regarding the wisdom of the NCC's proposed plan to build major apartment buildings along Sussex Drive, across from the Prime Minister's official residence and very close to Rideau Hall, at the tail-end of the ceremonial route connecting to Parliament Hill.

The Sussex Blocks development would possibly be the largest residential project in New Edinburgh, and within its historic conservation district. In the new Core Area Plan under review, the Sussex Blocks project is described as “mid-rise, mixed-use buildings in traditional architectural style faithful to the New Edinburgh style, and a new urban park...”

Many comments focussed on the inappropriateness of building an apartment complex on that portion of the ceremonial route known as Confederation Boulevard.

2. Ceremonial route

“Confederation Boulevard is the NCC’s flagship ceremonial boulevard,” states the NCC on its website. “It is a key feature of the National Capital Region’s core area.”

The significance of the Sussex Drive portion of the ceremonial boulevard is elaborated in the NCC’s Confederation Boulevard Guidelines - Management and Stewardship of our Capital Legacy (currently under review):

Sussex Drive north from the Peacekeeping Monument to Rideau Hall is a broad, large-scaled avenue with buildings usually set back from the road...

Sussex Drive is renowned for the number of civic and diplomatic institutions along its length, and for Rideau Hall in particular, which terminates Confederation Boulevard at the north end gateway. Sussex Avenue (sic) is famous for the ceremonial procession that occurs between Rideau Hall and Parliament Hill during both the opening of Parliament and its dissolution.

The Boulevard streetscape along Sussex is simple, clean and dignified...The large scale and geometry of Sussex Drive offer a special kind of experience not found elsewhere on Confederation Boulevard. [emphasis added]

The existing simplicity and grandeur of the three blocks under consideration was noted by community members as a rationale for not pursuing a residential or commercial development on the lands.

There appears to be a contradiction between historical symbolism of the ceremonial route and now the NCC’s proposal for a high-end apartment building complex at a key portion of that route.

3. Public interest

The public interest perspective is especially germane to a proposed development that would be located in a significant location in a historic district of the nation’s capital – namely steps from Rideau Hall and the Prime Minister’s official residence.

When viewing the Sussex Blocks proposal in the context of our capital city, and considering it on behalf of all Canadians, the question is whether apartment buildings are the most inspired and appropriate use of these lands in this location.

Some residents expressed the opinion that, in Canadians' best interests, the wiser choice for this special area of the nation's capital would be to maintain the current landscape and use of these blocks in its context.

4. Housing rationale

Similar to Canadians across the country, residents in the community are aware and concerned about the lack of affordable housing and the need for additions to the housing supply. Equally, however, there is a prevailing awareness that the NCC is the custodian of many other federal lands which are suitable for housing developments, and indeed may be more suitable for the kind of affordable housing that is sorely lacking in the city.

Several community members expressed concern that the NCC may be **misguided in considering adding to housing supply at the high-end of the market**, rather than supporting the addition of affordable housing elsewhere in keeping with the City's and the country's needs in this critical period. (In this regard, we note the NCC's collaboration on the Federal Lands Initiative for the goal of stimulating housing developments on federal lands.)

It is also disquieting and disappointing that the NCC is **admittedly seeking the rezoning of the blocks for residential and/or commercial development in an effort to generate revenues from new buildings on these lands**. This motivation does not seem in keeping with the capital stewardship role imparted to the NCC – particularly when one considers the ceremonial importance of the proposed Sussex Blocks.

4. Other concerns

Other concerns we heard, and which seemed to be widely shared, were regarding the process that would be followed. It was not clear whether the normal municipal rezoning process would be followed. Concerns were also expressed around the possibility that the NCC would contract with a private developer and in so doing lose control over what is built.

5. Previous comments are still pertinent

NECA's [preliminary comments](#) on the Core Area Plan in February 2025 regarding the Sussex Blocks proposal are still pertinent for the NCC's consideration. In particular, the community continues to raise concerns about these topics, among others (as they appear in the February comments):

- Heritage
- Parking and traffic congestion
- Flood plain
- Trees and parkland

NECA appreciates this opportunity to provide these comments with the extension of the NCC's deadline to accommodate our public meeting.

Please note that these views are shared both in the current context and while contemplating the future impacts of the NCC's decisions on the urban environment that constitutes the nation's capital region.

Yours truly,

Sarah Anson-Cartwright

On behalf of the NECA board

Sarah Anson-Cartwright
Board member, NECA

cc. The Hon. Mona Fortier, MP (Ottawa-Vanier-Gloucester) mona.fortier@parl.gc.ca

Mayor Mark Sutcliffe mark.sutcliffe@ottawa.ca

Councillor Rawlson King (Rideau-Rockcliffe) rawlson.king@ottawa.ca

Appendix 2: NCC Responses

OTTAWA CITIZEN

Opinion

Migueluez: The right kind of housing could enhance Sussex Drive

Alain Migueluez

Fri, May 30, 2025 at 4:30 a.m. EDT · 3 min read



NCC renderings showcase plans for a two-block area on Sussex Drive that include buildings, townhomes and, in place of the current grass field, a landscaped garden. (Credit: NCC)

This article was written in response to “Sussex Drive deserves better from the NCC,” May 27:

The NCC is in the process of updating its [2005 Core Area Plan](#), a strategic planning document intended to guide the future evolution of the nine square kilometres at the centre of the nation’s capital for the decades to come. The proposed three big moves — turn towards the water, make great spaces and create connections — are already evident in new NCC projects such as River House, Kīwekī Point and the soon-to-be-opened Westboro Beach pavilion.

In order to respond to the directive of our shareholder, the Government of Canada, to contribute to solving the housing crisis, we are also re-examining how NCC lands in the core of the capital can be used for housing — an approach that has the added advantage of increasing the resident population and dynamism of our downtown. One of many such sites, two blocks on Sussex Drive across the street from the Royal Canadian Geographical Society and the French Embassy, is currently zoned in our 2005 plan for institutional use, with the intention that those sites be developed for diplomatic or other public buildings.

NCC staff are proposing that these sites could instead be imagined in the revised 2025 plan for a wider variety of building uses, including housing, but also commercial and retail. Such buildings, with a height of no greater than five storeys, reflective of the New Edinburgh Heritage Conservation District and the dignity of our ceremonial route, could serve a variety of functions including residential apartments or town homes, offices and ground-level services such as cafés and restaurants that integrate to the surrounding neighbourhood and workplaces. Our proposed idea would be consistent with the city’s [Official Plan](#), which permits housing in these blocks as part of the Parliament and Confederation Boulevard Special District.

Interestingly, although the blocks in question are now vacant, as recently as the late 1960s they housed apartment houses, a fire station, a hotel and various shops. In hindsight, we know that the demolition of these places, like at LeBreton Flats, was a mistake that led to too many decades of vacant lands that deprived the capital of housing, energy and built heritage.

As part of its visioning, the NCC offered hypothetical renderings of tastefully designed beautiful new buildings, townhomes and, in place of the current grass field, a manicured, formal landscaped garden, to match the dignity and gravitas of this highly symbolic location. The vision of the Core Area Plan is, however, only directional. To bring such an idea to reality, a specific development plan would need to be created, complete with future public consultation.

At a time of a critical housing shortage, shared efforts to revitalize our downtown cores and the need for boldness in building the infrastructure our country needs, the revised Core Area Plan offers a key opportunity for the NCC to contribute to the public interest while building a beautiful, dignified and inspiring capital for all Canadians

***Alain Miguez** is vice-president, Capital Planning, at the National Capital Commission.*