



Nov. 22, 2023

The Editor
(Letters to the Editor)
Ottawa Citizen

Dear Editor:

Last year Ottawa City Council took enormous pains to engage the public in developing Ottawa's Official Plan - the document that is to guide Ottawa's growth for the next 25 years. The issues were significant - should Ottawa intensify to meet housing demand, or expand outwards. Council, after much public input and debate, adopted a hybrid approach - supporting intensification established neighbourhoods (example: raising height limits in minor corridors to 4 storeys) and designating new land outside the urban boundary for development.

There was much consternation when, last November, the Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing Stephen Clark unilaterally modified the City's Official Plan by adding additional lands for urban expansion, as well as raising height limits from 4 to 9 storeys in minor corridors to allow for more intensification. Turns out Ottawa was not the only city where Minister Clark made such modifications beyond what the local Councils had approved. Following the provincial Auditor-General's report showing undue developer influence guided these modifications, Minister Clark resigned and the new Minister Paul Callandra brought in legislation to walk back these imposed modifications to Official Plans, including Ottawa's.

Imagine, then, our surprise and disappointment to see Ottawa City Council walk-on and approve a motion at its meeting today (November 22) asking the Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing to re-instate the higher height limits of up to 9 storeys that Minister Clark imposed over what Council had approved last year, without any attempt at public consultation! The FCA (a federation of 71 community groups in Ottawa) had participated in the City's Official Plan process in good faith. When we saw this walk-on motion regarding higher height limits we wrote to City Council immediately asking that the motion be referred to the City's Planning & Housing Committee for public input. The issue of height limits and intensification in established neighbourhoods is a major issue to residents and this motion a significant departure from what Council agreed to last year. We were ignored.

It appears that the City engages in public consultation when it is convenient. We expected better.

Yours truly,

Robert Brinker
President
Federation of Citizens Associations