

Westboro Central[®]

A Vision Statement for Sustainable and Collaborative Development in Westboro Beach Community

**Prepared by
Westboro Beach Community Association**

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Executive Summary

A well-situated vacant two hectare property between Lanark Avenue and Scott Street in the heart of the Westboro Beach community (see figure below) presents a prime opportunity to serve as a model of urban development. Based on blending economic, social and environmental viability, such a model of site planning and development can produce multiple benefits for the local community, for Ottawa, and for developers in ways which are not typically realized in most current developments. This Vision Statement proposes a development process that is proactive, collaborative, balanced, and transparent. The Statement provides the site context, outlines the elements of the Vision, makes recommendations, proposes next steps to achieve the Vision, and concludes with a call for cooperative action.

The Westboro Beach Community Association (WBCA) believes that realizing this Vision would make *Westboro Central* * a model of progressive urban planning and development for and beyond Ottawa. The key to realizing the Vision is deliberate pro-action by key stakeholders before commitments and approvals take place regarding re-zoning, site planning, and project design. These stakeholders include the City of Ottawa, Public Works and Government Services Canada (the site's current owner), Canada Lands Company (CLC - the federal Crown corporation that will dispose of the site), residents of Westboro Beach as represented by WBCA, adjacent communities, and in due course the future developer(s) and other partners yet to be identified. The time to start is now.

* the name *Westboro Central*, conceived by WBCA, refers conceptually to the future of the site and the associated development path that would lead to that future.

Inspiration for *Westboro Central*

The Capital should, through its natural setting, monuments and architecture, communicate to Canadians and to the world our values, our achievements and our pride as citizens. The Capital must do much to meet my dreams of what it should be. It cries out for much more inspiring architecture, for a greater sense of grandeur, a more positive affirmation of pride. Thomas d'Aquino, "Horizon 2067: The Plan for Canada's Capital". September 27, 2011
www.horizon2067.ca

The Capital should reflect the reality that our home is the biosphere — the zone of air, water and land where all life exists.
David Suzuki, "Horizon 2067: The Plan for Canada's Capital". September 27, 2011
www.horizon2067.ca

We have to move to a clean and creative capitalism ... and this region could stand to the world as an example of a clean and creative capital.
Richard Florida, "Horizon 2067: The Plan for Canada's Capital". September 27, 2011
www.horizon2067.ca

The development of Ottawa-Gatineau should be driven by community-based grassroots activity.
Stephen Lewis, "Horizon 2067: The Plan for Canada's Capital". September 27, 2011
www.horizon2067.ca

Our planning process is not working the way we need it to work. Nobody is happy with the situation.
Mayor Jim Watson, 2012 Budget Address. October 26, 2011, www.ottawa.ca

But it is the citizens who hold the greatest expertise when it comes to thinking, talking and planning for healthier and more people friendly spaces in the communities where they live. Councillor Katherine Hobbs, "Kitchissippi News", January 12, 2012, page 17

"We're re-doing our official community plan Sustainability is the blanket that overlays all of it". Dockside Green "is the way for cities to step into the next urban century." Dean Fortin – Mayor, City of Victoria. Source: <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/08/is-this-the-worlds-greenest-neighborhood/244121/>

Specific projects: Windmill's Domtar Lands Re-development (Ottawa), Dockside Green (Victoria), Acqua+Venta (Calgary)

Background and Introduction

It is expected that in the not distant future a high profile and valuable vacant site in the Westboro Beach area will become available for sale and development. Located at 250 Lanark Avenue, the site comprises two hectares (approximately five acres) and is zoned Institutional. Currently owned by Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC), the property was the location of the now demolished CBC production studios and is currently fenced green space inaccessible to the public. A study commissioned by PWGSC several years ago recommended that the site be re-zoned, severed, and sold for high density residential use. If the adjacent federally owned Graham Spry site is also put up for sale this would effectively double the size of the property as well as the impact and potential of associated new development for the surrounding community.

The site represents a prime opportunity to demonstrate what can and should be Ottawa's urban future through progressive urban planning and design. It offers the potential to achieve innovative and progressive urban re-development through a deliberative, collaborative, and proactive approach. Realizing the *Westboro Central Vision* can inspire and inform urban development in Ottawa while providing an appropriate mix of community uses and enhancements for the Westboro Beach community for Ottawans generally.

This Vision Statement is intended to set the stage for collaboration among known and potential stakeholders. WBCA's hope is to maximize the potential of the site to serve not just the investment objectives of future owner/developers but also the quality of life in the Westboro Beach community and the surrounding area. Development of the site will directly impact – positively or negatively – the adjacent neighbourhoods of Westboro, Champlain Park, McKellar Park, Hampton- Iona, and West Wellington.

Westboro Central Location

The site is located in the central area of the Westboro Beach community, a small, residential neighbourhood bounded by the Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway to the north and west, Island Park Drive to the east, and Scott Street and the Transitway to the south. Originally a working class community, Westboro Beach is experiencing a high degree of intensification and infill in what was for many years an area predominantly of single family homes. Cut through-traffic volumes underlie significant and longstanding traffic concerns in this established residential area which is served only by neighbourhood-scale streets.

The site has many attributes which make it ideal for mixed use development. It is adjacent to Scott Street and the Westboro Transitway Station. A block to the south is a thriving commercial district on Richmond Road. To the north is the Westboro Beach natural area and the multi-use pathways along the Ottawa River, all only a short walk away. There are,

however, limited recreational facilities in the area. The small Roy Duncan Park is situated in the rent-g geared-to-income Van Lang Housing Development and primarily serves Van Lang tenants. The aging Mahoney Park on Lanark Avenue is a “mom and tots” park with small play structures and sand play areas.

The site is adjacent to the six storey Graham Spry office building to the east. It is across Lanark Avenue from the Centre Jules-Leger, a residential school for hearing impaired francophone students. To the west is a City of Ottawa maintenance yard which may in the future offer additional opportunity for development. The Van Lang residential community on the southwest side provides housing in two mid-rise apartment buildings and twenty-five townhouses. Elsewhere in the Westboro Beach community housing density is increasing and is becoming increasingly expensive with fewer and fewer housing options of average affordability.



Figure 2: Westboro Central site looking south towards Scott St. from Lanark Avenue. Westboro Transit Station is on the upper left. Van Lang buildings are on upper right.



Figure 3: Westboro Central site looking north towards Lanark Avenue. from Scott Street. Graham Spry Federal Government building is on the upper right. Public path is along the left side.

Vision for Westboro Central

The name *Westboro Central* reflects the site's prominence in Westboro because of its prime location and rare size.

WBCA envisages *Westboro Central* as a focal point for on-going urban development in the area with its emphasis on mixed residential, social, health and recreation uses to complement Richmond Road's commercial focus and on-going primarily residential development in the surrounding area. The *Westboro Central* concept includes a "green" pedestrian linkage (e.g. McRae Avenue) connecting the Richmond Road commercial district with the Westboro Transitway Station and *Westboro Central*. It includes a "green" pedestrian link from *Westboro Central* through the residential neighbourhood to Westboro Beach natural area, the pathways along the Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway, and the anticipated Chief William Commanda Peace Park. To the east and west, the concept would connect directly with the Scott Street pedestrian path and cycling lanes.

A potential opportunity that would fit perfectly with the mixed use concept for *Westboro Central* is a new YM/YWCA facility. The National Capital Region YM/YWCA has been actively looking for a location for a new permanent facility to serve the Carlingwood-Nepean area since the closure of the Carlingwood "Y". Based on exploratory discussions between WBCA and the YM/YWCA at the Vice-Presidential level prior to the opening of the Carlingwood Shopping Center "Y" (in rental space), the YM/YWCA has considered such a new fitness and health facility to be a priority in its strategic plan and has expressed potential interest in becoming a partner in *Westboro Central*. Its national business model for building new "Y" facilities is to do so in partnership with other developments (e.g. office tower, municipal facility, library, etc.). A new "Y" facility in *Westboro Central* would not only provide needed recreational opportunities for the Westboro Beach community but would also serve the wider fitness, health and service needs of the Carlingwood-Nepean area and indeed the city, particularly in view of its excellent public transit accessibility. Such a new "Y" facility is projected to be in the range of 4180 square meters (45,000 square feet) on two floors plus parking.

Elements of WBCA's *Westboro Central* Vision include:

- (a) Recognition of the *Westboro Central* Vision Statement in the City of Ottawa's formal planning documentation prior to pre-development decisions that could affect the future development and use of the site.
- (b) Inclusion of mixed uses – potentially mixed affordability residential, commercial, social service facilities, and health and recreation opportunities. This could feature for example a new Ottawa Public Library branch, a recreation center and recreation fields, a seniors' residence, a health services center, and other small employment nodes.

- (c) Respect for the predominant character of the Westboro Beach community as a traditional low rise residential neighborhood through including appropriate transition measures and architecture taking into account scale and massing, preserving access to sunlight, minimizing shadowing, measures to minimize traffic and parking impacts on local streets, etc..
- (d) Use of a collaborative and open planning and design process oriented to a collectively-defined vision of the future of the site. The process would ensure that the range of interests, values, perspectives, and issues are identified, balanced, and incorporated in a meaningful way. The goal is to focus on creating synergy and finding agreement rather than on creating conflict and resolving disagreement. Recent Ottawa precedents of such collaborative approaches include the Preston-Carling Station Area Design charrette and the process used for the *Mid-Centretown Tomorrow CDP*. (general reference on design charrettes: *Sustainable Community Planning and Development: Design Charrette Planning Guide*, CMHC, November 2001)
- (e) Incorporation of the best national and international architectural and urban planning and design solutions reflecting the statements in the *Inspirations* section above.
- (f) Implementation of greening approaches representing the most progressive approaches to environmental sustainability, climate change, and energy use as are encompassed in the LEED standard.
- (g) Maximization of the use of non-vehicular transportation through the promotion of public transportation and the use of bicycles and walking.
- (h) Minimization of negative impact on the existing residential streets of Westboro Beach by only allowing direct vehicle access to/from the *Westboro Central* site via Scott Street as provided in the Community Design Plan, and provision of sufficient on-site parking.
- (i) Landscape planning and design which emphasize the use of indigenous species, xeriscaping and sustainable water use.

The Development Process – Doing Better

Given many recent examples of the protracted and costly disputes that have accompanied new development proposals in Ottawa, the "system" seems to be broken. If recent history is a guide, the *Westboro Central* site could be expected to be the subject of a request by a developer for re-zoning or site planning adjustment to maximize density and height for a private development possibly without regard to existing contextual factors including traffic

conditions and the need for architectural integration into the existing neighbourhood. Kitchen-table based local community associations funded by neighbourhood tree sales and community barbeque donations have had to fight well-funded developers and their professional advisers for local impact concerns. The result has been excessive expenditure of time, money and effort particularly by resident volunteers; frustration, acrimony and bitterness; an unnecessarily prolonged approval process; and occasionally costly or unaffordable referral to OMB. These are not positive indicators of successful urban development.

As is the case with other community associations, WBCA does not wish to be perpetually in a reactive mode and girded for conflict on re-zoning and development applications including for *Westboro Central*. WBCA's approach for *Westboro Central* seeks to turn this page ... to preclude conflict and realize a win-win-win result for the City, local residents, and developer(s). WBCA envisages a more progressive approach to the development approvals process. Through constructively and efficiently balancing the needs and goals of community, the city, the developer(s), and the ultimate property owners, WBCA foresees *Westboro Central* as a clear demonstration of balanced, collaborative, and positive urban development that fully realizes the potential of the site.

"Ontario residents should have more of a say on all intensification projects in their communities before developers even think about talking to municipalities, Ottawa Centre MPP Yasir Naqvi said Tuesday." He added: "We want to make sure the community gets involved from the get-go, because if you get these decisions right in the first instance, you will have fewer appeals later on." Source: *Ottawa Metro*, May 21, 2014 – page 2.

WBCA has developed this Vision Statement to help guide the design and development of whatever becomes the on-the-ground reality of *Westboro Central*. It hopes that such an approach will ultimately serve as a model to help make the developer/City/community dialogue more constructive, more trusting, more efficient, and mutually beneficial.

WBCA's Vision encompasses a development process based on the following:

1. WBCA wishes to play an active and cooperative role in advancing the development and use of the *Westboro Central* site in a manner that is most beneficial to the Westboro Beach community, the surrounding area, the city, and the environment.
2. WBCA seeks collaboration on achieving its Vision for *Westboro Central* with our City Councillor, our MPP, our MP, city officials and staff, other community associations and groups in the surrounding area,
3. Dialogue with other partners is necessary to advance WBCA's *Westboro Central* vision. Other partners would or could include providers of recreational, social and

health facilities such as the YM-YWCA, the Carlington Community Health Centre, PWGSC, Canada Lands Company, and at some point, implicated developers. It is relevant to note that the mandate of Canada Lands Company encompasses the following (source: *CLC.ca*):

Canada Lands Company Limited (CLC) manages, redevelops and/or sells strategic Government of Canada properties across Canada that are no longer required for program purposes. The Company's core values are Innovation, Value, Legacy; the Company continually strives to create projects that reflect these values. CLC respects the past and embraces the future by promoting innovative approaches to stakeholder relations and real estate challenges. CLC conducts business in the communities in which it operates so that the company honours the past, while creating developments that will be enjoyed by future generations across Canada.

Recommendations

This Vision Statement recommends that:

1. The City and other key stakeholders implicated in the development of *Westboro Central* recognize *Westboro Central* as a significant, unique and needed opportunity to demonstrate progressive, innovative and balanced urban design and development in Ottawa and beyond.
2. The City integrate this Vision Statement into its current planning processes and documentation.
3. The City sponsor and host a design charrette or competition to collaboratively develop and prescribe design principles and guidelines and a design concept for *Westboro Central* for formal adoption by the City.
4. If the City acquires the property for re-development, it will undertake an RFP soliciting development proposals based on the design parameters resulting from Recommendation #3.
5. If the City does not acquire the property, it will use the design parameters resulting from Recommendation #3 as a guide in assessing current and forthcoming development proposals and applications for the *Westboro Beach* area including for the *Westboro Central* site.

Next Steps

1. WBCA discuss the *Westboro Central* concept and approach with political representatives and adjacent community associations including the Federation of Citizen Associations (FCA).

2. The City determine what role it wishes to play in furthering the *Westboro Central* Vision including the role(s) of elected officials and staff.
3. The City and WBCA meet with PWGSC and CLC to clarify the schedule and process for disposing of the site (and whether the Graham Spry Building will be included), to present to them the *Westboro Central* Vision Statement, to advise them of the possibility of related City-prescribed requirements respecting the future development of the site, and to discuss future collaboration and community consultation.
4. The City and WBCA clarify and confirm the interest and potential involvement of the YM/YWCA including roles and responsibilities as well as budgetary and timing factors.
5. The City and WBCA set the stage for a design charrette or design competition for the site taking into account the WBCA Vision Statement and output from the above steps.
6. The City and WBCA consolidate output from the above steps into an official development concept to be used to guide site planning, design and development including consideration of re-zoning applications.
7. As the future of the site become clearer engage new stakeholders, such as potential developers, in this process.

Conclusion

As the *Westboro Central* site has not yet come on the market, a unique opportunity exists for the City, WBCA and others to initiate and demonstrate a proactive, sustainable, and innovative urban planning, design and development approach which will ensure that site development, when it comes, will optimize the goals of the City, the Westboro Beach community, the developer(s), and future owners and users of the *Westboro Central* development. This is a prime opportunity to be seized for what is a very attractive and high profile site.

The path to realizing *Westboro Central's* potential is through proactive engagement, collaboration, and vision. WBCA is asking this of the key players implicated in the future development of the site. The time to start is now.