

**A Vision Statement for
the Development of
Two Exceptional Properties
in Westboro Beach Community**

Westboro Beach Community Association

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Executive Summary

The long-established, stable and relatively healthy community of Westboro Beach will be dramatically impacted by the re-development of two exceptional properties in the core of the community if and when they come up for sale. WBCA refers to these properties together as *Westboro Central* due to their centrality to the future of the community and the surrounding area.

The properties are:

1. the 3 hectare (7.4 acres) site of the former CBC television studios and the adjacent Graham Spry Building on Lanark and adjacent to the Westboro Transitway Station. This property is referred to as “250 Lanark”.
2. the current 5.75 hectare (14 acres) site of the Centre Jules-Leger across Lanark Avenue at 281 Lanark and adjacent to the Sir John A. MacDonald Parkway and the Ottawa River. This property is referred to as the “Jules-Leger” site.

The re-development of these properties presents an excellent opportunity to serve as a model of urban design, of the associated development process, thereby effectively demonstrating the principles and guidelines of Ottawa’s Official Plan. Based on blending economic, social and environmental goals, the resultant development(s) can realize multiple benefits for the local community, for Ottawa, and for developers in ways which are not typical of many developments. This Vision Statement proposes a development process that is anticipatory, proactive, collaborative, balanced, and transparent. The Statement provides the site context, outlines the elements of the Vision, and makes recommendations to achieve the Vision. It concludes with a call for cooperative action.

WBCA’s Vision calls for the planning and development of the properties to be based on:

1. the Design Objectives (Section 2.5 “Building Liveable Communities”) and Design Framework (Annex 3) of the Official Plan, notably with respect to promoting community health through sustainability and compatibility; mixed residential, community and other uses; emphasis on non-vehicular transportation and effective traffic management planning; and appropriate integration and transitions into the existing community fabric.
2. pre-identification and recognition of design and development guidelines and conditions rather than reaction to developer requests for re-zoning and site plan adjustments.

3. timely and effective collaboration among the key stakeholders including the community association and community members.

The time to advance this Vision is now.

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

It (the Plan) proposes to manage growth in ways that enhance the liveability of Ottawa's existing communities while creating exciting new areas for housing, work, shopping, and recreation. City of Ottawa Official Plan. Source: <http://ottawa.ca/en/official-plan-0/volume-1-official-plan/prologue>

Background and Introduction

At any time two large and high potential properties in the Westboro Beach area may become available for sale and re-development. Together they have the potential to double the population of the Westboro Beach community.

Located on Lanark Avenue, the sites are currently owned by Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) and by the Province of Ontario. The 250 Lanark property comprises the federally owned and occupied six storey Graham Spry Building and fenced and publicly inaccessible green-space being the location of the now demolished CBC production studios. The Jules-Leger property currently serves as a provincial school for children with hearing impairment or severe learning disabilities.

Both properties represent a prime opportunity to demonstrate what can and should be Ottawa's urban future through progressive urban planning and design in full reflection of Ottawa's Official Plan. They offer the potential to realize innovative and progressive urban re-development through a deliberative, collaborative, and proactive approach which closely corresponds to the principles and processes of the Official Plan. Realization of the *Westboro Central Vision* will inspire and inform urban development in Ottawa while providing an appropriate mix of urban 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 which will include the City, PWGSC, Canada Lands Company, the Province of Ontario, WBCA and community members, potential developers, and others such as the YM-YWCA National Capital Region and other community service organizations. Maximizing the potential of the sites must go well beyond satisfying the investment objectives of future owners/developers. It must serve at least equally well the objectives of other stakeholders including the Westboro Beach community, the surrounding area, and Ottawas more generally. 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 sites are located in the core area of 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, often inter-provincial in origin, underlie significant, longstanding and growing traffic issues in this established residential area which is served only by neighbourhood-scale streets.

The sites have many attributes which make them ideal for mixed use development. They are just north of Scott Street and the Westboro Transitway Station. To the south is a thriving commercial district on Richmond Road. To the north is the Westboro Beach nature area and the year-round multi-use pathways along the Ottawa River, all only a short walk away. The Westboro Beach natural area is the focus of a re-forestation project led by WBCA in cooperation with the National Capital Commission. Despite the non-structured outdoor recreation opportunities in the area there is need for built recreational facilities particularly for youth.

The sites themselves are adjacent to each other across Lanark Avenue which, if developed conjointly, may present the opportunity to physically link them to each other, to the Transitway, to Scott Street, and to the Ottawa River corridor.

To the west of 250 Lanark the Van Lang residential community on the southwest side provides housing in two mid-rise apartment buildings and twenty-five townhouses. Throughout the Westboro Beach community housing density is intensifying and is becoming increasingly expensive with fewer and fewer housing options of average affordability.



Figure 2: The former CBC studio 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: The former CBC studio site and the federal Graham Spry Building looking north towards Lanark Avenue from Scott Street.

Vision for Westboro Central

The name *Westboro Central*, created by WBCA, reflects the sites' prominence and their potential in Westboro because of their 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.

To the north WBCA envisages 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 Westboro Beach Nature Area. To the east and west, the concept would connect directly with

the Scott Street pedestrian path and cycling lanes. To the south existing streets and sidewalks would provide connections with the Richmond Road commercial district.

A potential opportunity that would fit perfectly with the mixed use concept for *Westboro Central* is a new YM/YWCA facility. Based on exploratory discussions between WBCA and the YM/YWCA National Capital Region at the Vice-Presidential level the YM/YWCA 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 may be 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 and affordable residential, commercial, social service facilities, and health and recreation opportunities. This could feature for example 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 natural light, minimizing shadowing, measures to minimize traffic and parking impacts on local streets, etc..
- (d) Use of a proactive, collaborative and open planning and design process oriented to a collectively defined on-the-ground 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.

- (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, walking, and cross-country skiing.
- (h) Minimization of negative impact on the existing residential streets of Westboro Beach by only allowing direct vehicle access to/from the *Westboro Central* sites via Scott Street and provision of sufficient on-site parking. Creative traffic management solutions will be required.
- (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* sites could be foreseen to be the subject of developer submissions for re-zoning or site planning adjustments to maximize density and height for a private development possibly with insufficient regard for existing contextual factors including traffic conditions and the need for architectural integration into the existing neighbourhood.

Kitchen-table based local community associations such as WBCA which is funded by bake sales, tree sales, and community beach barbeque donations, have had to fight for local impact concerns against well-funded developers and their professional advisers. 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, residents, and developer(s). WBCA's Vision includes a more progressive

approach to the development approvals process in line with the Official Plan. 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 sites.

“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*. WBCA hopes that such an approach will ultimately serve as a model to help make the developer/City/community dialogue more constructive, more positive, more efficient, and mutually beneficial for all.

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* sites in a manner that is most beneficial to the Westboro Beach community, the surrounding area, the city, and the environment.
2. WBCA foresees collaboration on achieving its Vision for *Westboro Central* with our MP, our MPP, City elected officials and staff, and 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 could include providers of recreational, social and health facilities such as the YM-YWCA, the Carlington Community Health Centre, PWGSC, Canada Lands Company (with respect to the disposal of 250 Lanark), the Province, and at some point, implicated developers.

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, in short to demonstrate the goals, principles and processes of the Official Plan.
2. The City formally recognize and integrate this Vision Statement into its planning processes and documentation associated with the re-development of the properties whether or not it acquires the ownership of the properties.
 5. Commencing before the properties are sold, the City - both elected officials and staff - play a leadership role in ensuring that the potential of these properties is realized through pro-action, collaboration, consultation, and a balancing of the needs of the community, community service stakeholders, the environment as well as developers.

Conclusion

As the *Westboro Central* properties have not yet come on the market, a unique opportunity exists for the City, WBCA and others to initiate and demonstrate a proactive and innovative urban planning, design and development approach which will ensure that 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 are two very attractive and high profile sites.

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.

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