**Applications for Rezoning and for Site Plan Control**

**for**

**101 & 105 Champagne Avenue South**

Comments from the Civic Hospital Neighbourhood Association (CHNA)

**Summary of Comments:**

It is understandable that the documents related to these applications look at the development from the perspective of the high-rise building and its residents rather than the perspective of the adjacent park and its users. The Civic Hospital Neighbourhood Association (CHNA) asks that the city review the development from a broader perspective.

CHNA summarizes its comments on the above applications below:

* This site plan encroaches on the small, busy urban park (Ev Tremblay Park) to the north of the site. CHNA does not support the reduced off-sets and set-backs as these concessions negatively affect the appearance, safety and enjoyment of the park for users (both adults and children);
* CHNA supports the intention of reduced parking supply for developments within the Preston-Carling district. However, we do not support city streets being used inappropriately to supply most of the short-term parking spots for these developments. The parking provided for visitors to 101 & 105 Champagne is inadequate, both in the number of spaces provided and the design of those spaces;
* CHNA would like construction techniques for this site to employ methods that significantly reduce noise and vibration, which would likely damage the older buildings in the neighbourhood; and,
* It is time that the city provided resources for an area-wide traffic management plan (ATM) to look for methods to protect the small, local, residential streets from future, excessive traffic.

**Detailed Comments:**

*Official Plan Ignored When Humane Society Site Sold; Caution in Moving Forward*

The Civic Hospital Neighbourhood Association (CHNA) is on record for not supporting development on this site. As we have pointed out in previous submissions, at the time of the sale of the Humane Society property, City Officials ignored the directions in the Preston-Champagne Secondary Plan that stated: “*Ev Tremblay Park will be expanded through the provisions of the Parklands By-law should the Humane Society decide to vacate their building*”.

CHNA submitted an ATIP request looking for any discussion within the city of the Official Plan direction re: the Humane Society property. No record of a discussion was found, which means that no one reviewed the plan or, if it was reviewed, it was ignored.

CHNA finds the Official Plan direction compellingly straightforward as to the city’s intention regarding the future of the Humane Society site in the event that the site was to come onto the market. CHNA also assumes that City Planners, the Humane Society and Ashcroft would have done due diligence and have been aware about this official instruction. We still find it hard to understand how this land sale could have occurred. At the time of the sale of this property, the community was not advised of any change in policy and still considers the lack of transparency around the sale of the Humane Society site very unsettling.

CHNA recognizes that is impossible to undo planning mistakes of the past. However, it is possible to mitigate these mistakes going forward. Because Ev Tremblay Park has not been expanded, and is too small for both the number and variety of current users, the negative impact of this high-rise development (safety concerns, shade, wind, encroachment) is much greater on this small park than it would be on a larger park. Therefore, CHNA is requesting that city officials and the City’s Planning Committee do all they can it can to lessen the impact of this enormous development on Ev Tremblay Park.

*Sensitivity to its Surroundings: One of the Busiest City Parks in Ottawa*

CHNA’s overall impression in reading the various documents related to this submission is that the application does not provide a good understanding of the context of the development. As we will illustrate in this submission, this site plan is neither sensitive to the adjacent park nor does it understand the context of the existing community. These high-rise towers are situated to the south of one of the most used city parks in Ottawa. (We would be remiss if we did not mention that this Park is also one of the most neglected and dilapidated parks in the City.)

The description of Ev Tremblay Park on Waymarking.com is as follows: *“Despite its small size, Ev Tremblay Park contains a variety of facilities that make it a valuable, heavily used, addition to the neighbourhood. The park contains an asphalt basketball court contiguous with an area used for both road hockey and bike polo, with the park serving as the official home of the “Mallets of Mayhem" bike polo club. The park includes a wading pool that is open in the summer, with changing rooms available next to it in the park’s utility building. In the winter, there is an ice rink suitable for hockey. Ev Tremblay Park also has a separate picnic area, as well as a bocce pit, though the pit has not been well maintained. Smaller children enjoy the park’s play structure and its swing set. The portion of the park not devoted to specific recreation facilities is maintained as a mowed lawn.”*

Parks also need to be attractive spaces. According to Jane Jacobs’ criteria, Ev Tremblay Park is currently a “good”, if poorly maintained park. It has a diversity of users of different backgrounds and ages (bike polo players, young children, professionals who eat Di Rienzo sandwiches at lunch, etc.). It offers a variety of uses (bike polo, basketball, ball hockey, swings, wading pool). Unfortunately, one of Jacob’s key ingredients for a successful park, sun, will be permanently affected by the placement of the towers to the south.

The City must ensure that the integrity of this small, vital public space is maintained by ensuring that the developments to the south do not irreversibly damage the ingredients that make this park a successful space, so mitigating the impact of the high rise buildings on this park is essential to its success.

*Safety*

CHNA finds it shocking that Ashcroft is using the fact that this development is next to Ev Tremblay Park to justify not meeting setback, off-sets and ramp length requirements. In CHNA’s opinion, being next to a heavily-used Park demands that these requirements be exceeded for safety reasons. These requirements are in place for a reason, and the city must demand that they be met. Otherwise the city is sending a clear signal that the safety of small children in the community and the importance of city parks as community benefits are not priorities.

The following summarizes the applicant’s requests:

1. The Applicant is requesting a reduced driveway off-set on the north side property line adjacent to the City of Ottawa Ev Tremblay Park.  The Applicant is requesting an off-set of .85 metres rather than the required 3 metres.
2. The Applicant is requesting a reduced driveway off-set on the south side of the property adjacent to 111 Champagne Ave.  The Applicant is requesting an off-set of .45 metres rather than the required 3 metres.
3. The applicant is requesting a ramp length of only 2/3 the required length (6 metres rather than the required 9 metres). The application states: “*The proposal is for a 6.0m ramp, whereas the Private Approaches By-law requires a 9.0m ramp length at 2% grade from the property line back to the beginning of the ramp.*”
4. Vehicular access and egress to both buildings (which will house approximately 1,000 residents) is located between the two buildings in the interior of the site.  Access is to be provided by way off a reduced width drive aisle (6 metres rather than 6.7 metres).  The Parking Requirement Study submitted to the City indicates that a tight 3-point turn manoeuvre will be required to reverse direction in order to exit the interior of the site.
5. The only short-term surface parking for the two buildings is located in the interior of the site.  The surface parking provides only 4 spots, one of which is designated for handicapped use.

CNNA’s comments on these requests:

1. The requested reduced driveway off-set adjacent to Ev Tremblay Park does not respect this vital community asset and adds to safety concerns. Vehicles accessing the interior of the site will be extremely close to children playing in the park and using the wading pool.  This encroachment represents a loss of privacy and enjoyment for users of the Park (noise and emissions from vehicles, among other things).
2. The requested reduced driveway off-set on the south side of the property places the vehicular traffic at even a greater proximity to the entrance/exit of the underground garage of the adjacent 20-storey building.  It also places the driveway closer to the entrance/exit of the underground garage of the 12-storey 100 Champagne Ave building across the street.   This will result in traffic congestion as vehicles entering/exiting from all three buildings will be converging on to the same area of Champagne Ave.
3. The parking ramp length proposed is only 2/3rd the required length (6 metres when 9 metres is required) and this means that drivers have a shorter breaking distance. Drivers will also likely have to navigate up a steeper incline and will therefore have to accelerate more than they would in a less steep incline. In slippery conditions (snow, freezing rain or rain) this will pose a danger to pedestrians, cyclists or motorists who are passing by.
4. The reduced drive aisle width requested by the Applicant, along with the design of the access and egress to the interior of the site, are problematic. It will be difficult for vehicles to access the buildings for unloading, deliveries, drop-offs and pickups.  It will be particularly difficult for larger vehicles (e.g. courier trucks) to enter and exit the interior of the site. Therefore, vehicles requiring short-term access to the buildings will, by necessity or convenience, park illegally immediately in front of the buildings on the east side of Champagne Avenue where no parking is permitted.  As a consequence, with legally parked vehicles on the west side of Champagne Avenue, only one narrow lane remains to vehicles driving on Champagne Avenue.
5. There is already an ongoing parking problem on Champagne Avenue causing congestion and making it impossible at times for vehicles to proceed. The parking study notes: *“As the handicapped space will likely be unoccupied the majority of the time, it can also be used for vehicles to turn around*.” This seems to be a very cavalier approach to the importance of parking spaces for people with disabilities. CHNA wonders if the use of this parking space is a good assumption? How does the study’s author know that the space will be unoccupied? What happens if the spot is frequently occupied? Is it possible that, because of the lack of above ground parking, the one handicapped space will be frequently occupied by unauthorized vehicles? CHNA therefore wonders how vehicles will turn around should the space be frequently occupied.

*Shade and Wind*

CHNA is stating the obvious when it points out that three tall buildings situated to the south and in close proximity to a small, busy City Park that is used year round are problematic. The micro-climatic effects on the park will be significant and will definitely affect the enjoyment of the park for its users.

As mentioned at the beginning of this document, it is unfortunate that Ev Tremblay Park will be overwhelmed by the two high-rise developments. And, the placement of these two towers with the Soho Tower further to the south situated along the gap between the Ashcroft towers, means portions of Ev Tremblay Park will be in the shadow of a wall of high rises for most of the year. This will have a very negative impact on the Park’s ambiance.

The park’s wading pool is very close to the high rise building. Though poorly maintained, this wading pool is a community treasure, as many neighbourhood children use it, with the parents or caregivers sitting on the grass surrounding the pool as they watch the children play.

It is clear from the studies that wind will be a new issue for users of this park. It also appears that the parents sitting on the grass had better hold onto their sun hats as they watch their children at play. And, we expect that the overall effect will be fewer park users – in particular on marginal days when the wind would make the park feel cooler than the air temperature.

There are two less than ideal choices for the park – leave the wading pool where it is and cope with the wind, or move it farther from the high rises, closer to the intersection of Beech and Champagne. In either case, the comfort and usability of the wading pool is undermined by the high rise buildings. This points, once again, to the missed opportunity to expand this park. The city should ensure that the developer pays for any adjustments to the park and wading pool.

*Historical Context*

In describing the park, the application refers to “*an unused and overgrown sand area*” within the park. This description shows neither an understanding of the history of this park and its role in Little Italy, nor an understanding of the features within the park.

The *sand area* is a dilapidated bocce pit, which was once a well-used, important part of Ev Tremblay Park. The reason this bocce pit is not currently used (and has not been used for years) is that the surface of the pit is uneven because of the weeds and neglect. And the protective wood around cement bocce playing area has rotted away. Residents can no longer use it for fear that their bocce balls will be damaged if they hit the cement. A number of CHNA residents have been lobbying the city for years to repair the bocce area. For a few years, they weeded and tried to level the playing field during the city’s annual “Clean Up the Park” event. However, they are now saving their energy to lobby for new bocce pits if and when the city gets around to renewing this park.

*Draft Survey Plan*

CHNA does not have the expertise to assess the implications of the findings from the Draft Survey Plan. However, we do note that during the assessment of groundwater levels, some pieces of equipment (Piezometers) were not functioning properly due to disturbance by construction equipment. CHNA assumes City engineers can assess whether this compromises the validity of the results of the assessment.

*Geotechnical Investigation Report*

CHNA notes that the recommendations provided in this report related to geotechnical issues were prepared before the architectural drawings and specifications were completed and the engineers requested permission to review these recommendations “when the drawings and specifications are completed”. CHNA wonders whether this second review has been undertaken.

*Controlled blasting*

The population density surrounding this proposed high-rise building continues to increase, and any construction activities must limit the disruption to residents in neighbouring low-rise and high-rise buildings.

The study points out that blasting and construction operations (such as piling rigs, hoe rams, compactors, dozers, cranes and truck traffic, can cause detrimental vibrations on adjoining buildings and structures) are a “*nuisance*” to most residents of the community and can be very disturbing to some residents.

In addition, the study notes that there are several old and/or sensitive buildings in the neighbourhood and the guidelines for current construction vibration are too high for these older structures and should be lowered in this vicinity.

CHNA is reassured that the study recommended that a pre-construction survey be completed to minimize the risks of claims during or following the construction of the proposed building and also recommends that “*means to reduce the vibration levels as much as possible should be incorporated in the construction operations to maintain, as much as possible, a cooperative environment with the residents*”, as noted in the section of the study on controlled blasting. CHNA looks forward to reviewing Ashcroft’s plan to minimize the vibration levels and manage the timing of construction vibrations to reduce the impact on neighbourhood residents.

The report also notes that four geophones were not in operation during the testing and, as with the improperly functioning piezometers used during the groundwater testing, CHNA assumes that City Engineers can assess whether this compromises the validity of the testing.

*Parking Requirements Study*

CHNA has been reviewing and challenging Parking/Traffic Studies on individual developments, such as this one, for many years. Each study has minimized the impact on our community, and each study has proven to be inaccurate and misleading. Therefore, CHNA has come to view these developer-funded studies with increased scepticism.

CHNA supports the intention of reduced parking supply for developments within the Preston-Carling district. We do not support city streets being used inappropriately to supply parking spots for these developments.

It is imperative that the Applicant clearly demonstrates the availability of sufficient easily accessible and clearly designated short-term visitor parking to minimize the spillover of vehicles onto the street and neighbouring areas.

CHNA appreciates and supports our retailers such as Di Rienzo’s . They have an important and unique role to play in our community and they also provide a service the broader Ottawa community. Short-term customers of Di Rienzo’s use Beech, Railway and Champagne for short-term parking when shopping there, in particular in late morning to early afternoon. The proposal notes that parking for the customers of any new retail business to be located at 105 Champagne will not have access to parking in the parking garage. CHNA wonders if Ashcroft has or will request an assessment of the added congestion on local streets of customer parking at any new retail business.

Since Ev Tremblay Park is used by residents from across the city, CHNA does not want to see a situation when individuals or families wanting to bring equipment (hockey equipment, for example) to use the facilities in Ev Tremblay Park are confronted with a shortage of on-street parking in the neighbourhood.

**Cumulative Impact of Parking and Traffic:**

For the Preston-Carling District, it is imperative that the Parking and Traffic Studies take a comprehensive look at the cumulative impact of current and anticipated parking needs and traffic patterns. Preston Street attracts increasing numbers of visitors to its restaurants and pubs, and the residential neighbourhoods are seeing a proliferation of cars wandering onto our small streets in search of parking. With each new high rise building and the concurrent demand for visitor parking, the impact on the residents of the community is amplified. This must be anticipated and planned for.

It is also time for the city to look at putting in place measures to ensure that traffic originating from the developments in the Preston-Carling district is streamed away from the surrounding residential streets. For example, Hickory Street residents have been reporting a significant increase in cars speeding from stop sign to stop sign on their street. For many years, CHNA has been requesting that the city consider blocking Hickory Street at Champagne so cars exiting Champagne will be encouraged to use underutilized Carling Avenue to move across the city rather than cutting through the small local streets.

The response from the city to any of CHNA’s traffic mitigation suggestions has always been the same: that an Area-Wide Traffic Management Plan (ATM) is required to make these changes and the city does not have sufficient funds to conduct an ATM. Residents of the Civic Hospital Neighbourhood and the CHNA have made several requests for ATM studies. However, these requests languish in a queue, with no evidence that the City intends to address intensification-related traffic pressures. Approvals for applications such as those for 101 and 105 Champagne will drive additional traffic onto residential streets. This is of great concern particularly when decisions are made without the necessary data to properly plan for and manage traffic loads resulting from applications such as these.

The City must invest in measures to maintain or increase the liveability of traditional neighbourhoods in the urban core that are under increasing pressure from intensification. Without mitigation strategies to protect our streets, each new development diminishes the liveability and safety of our neighbourhood.

**Importance of self-sufficient neighbourhoods:**

We continue to point out that intensification districts such as Preston-Carling can only function as the city envisions (residents using transit, walking and cycling to services), if these neighbourhoods are self sufficient. It is not enough to add a small convenience store at the ground level of one of these student residences. The district needs a grocery store and a drug store, among other services for the city’s vision of a transit-oriented, walk-able and cycling district to be realized.

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