

## As We Heard It Report

### Centretown Heritage Study Public Engagement Sessions

April 23 and 27, 2019

153 participants attended the public engagement sessions on April 23 and 27 to hear about the Centretown Heritage Inventory and Study and to discuss and provide feedback about Centretown's heritage characteristics, landmarks and special places.

The meeting was hosted by the Heritage Services Section of the City's Planning Infrastructure and Economic Development Department. City's Planning and Growth Management Department with Councillor. The following outlines discussion feedback provided during the meeting and all written comments.

Note: \* Denotes a point that was emphasized by multiple participants

#### Question 1: What are the characteristics and qualities of Centretown?

The answers provided in this section have been consolidated to highlight the emphasis placed on various characteristics of the area.

Parks (26 occurrences)	Walkable (16 occurrences)
Trees (14 occurrences)	Canal (14 occurrences)
Heritage (12 occurrences)	Community (12 occurrences)
Diverse (11 occurrences)	Architecture (10 occurrences)
Buildings (10 occurrences)	Family(ies) (10 occurrences)
Proximity to downtown (9 occurrences)	Red Brick(s) (9 occurrences)
Shops (9 occurrences)	Services (9 occurrences)
Income diversity (9 occurrences)	Houses (9 occurrences)
Apartments (9 occurrences)	Green (8 occurrences)
Setback from sidewalk (8 occurrences)	Museum(s) (8 occurrences)
Neighbourhood (8 occurrences)	Accessible (8 occurrences)
Age diversity (8 occurrences)	Churches (7 occurrences)
Building diversity (7 occurrences)	Streetscape (7 occurrences)

Dilapidated housing (7 occurrences)

Bike-friendly (6 occurrences)

Old homes (6 occurrences)

Schools (6 occurrences)

Character (6 occurrences)

History(ic) (5 occurrences)

Dundonald Park (5 occurrences)

Elgin Street (5 occurrences)

Dogs (5 occurrences)

Nice (6 occurrences)

Central (6 occurrences)

Pedestrian-friendly (6 occurrences)

Activities (6 occurrences)

Gardens (6 occurrences)

Restaurants (5 occurrences)

Unique (5 occurrences)

Minto Park (5 occurrences)

Beautiful (5 occurrences)

**Other comments related to this question include:**

- It is home – the heart of Canada’s capital
- Bank Street is very practical, many useful services (hardware store, grocery)
- Small town feeling in a big city
- Safe - but some social issues/concerns
  - o Dundonald Park is nice park but close to methadone clinic, unsafe at night
- Unsafe at night
  - o Graffiti
  - o Homelessness
  - o Drug issues
- Narrow streets
  - o Challenging to accommodate bikes and cars
- Walkability
  - o Services accessible via walking – car not needed
- Pockets of parks
  - o Mature trees/Canopy
  - o Trees are disappearing and parking lots are taking the place of green
  - o Not enough parks for a downtown area (parks to population ratio)
  - o Residential growth not equal to growth of parks and rec spaces
- Derelict, dilapidated, housing needs improving
  - o Tax increases affect the ability to invest in property
  - o Owners need \$\$ to invest in heritage buildings
  - o Rents are low and not enough to pay property taxes
  - o Some properties have high-quality architecture and are well maintained but not everyone follows rules
- People take pride in properties
- Outdoor facilities - NCC facilities are good, City facilities are not
- Lots of heritage (heritage main-streets)

- Historical significance of development
- Architecturally- 2 ½ storeys, red brick defines Centretown
- James Street Art Deco buildings
- Contemporary buildings need to reflect heritage character
- Golden Triangle/east of Kent
  - 1970s not in keeping with neighbourhood, but some nice homes
- Busy, yet quiet
  - Surprisingly quiet residential streets
  - Good level of density, not crowded
- One stop shop
  - Working
  - Shopping
  - Residential
- Elgin Street is fun, but not the neighbourhood mix it used to be
- Too many bars and restaurants
  - Loss of essential services
  - Not enough parking for residents/visitors
- Intergenerational
  - All represented and mingled
  - Kids, Students, Elderly
- Diverse Population
  - Economic status
  - Culture
  - Ages
  - Inclusive
- Mixed density
  - Mix of single homes, apartments and parks
- Diverse Residential
  - Income/Socio-Economic
  - New condos
  - Single detached
  - Rental/Owners
  - Renters make it unique!
  - Brick low-rise apartments (allows for natural light)
- Easy access to Queensway
- Bad roads and construction
  - Lots of construction and potholes
  - Heavy trucks – roads becoming rough as a result
- All schools in neighbourhood are overcrowded
- Small businesses
  - We are not dependent on big box stores
- The HCDs are in fact the most disturbed areas (e.g. surface parking lots)
- Public art is very important – like the teapot
- Concern over increasing density and being packed

- Maintaining character and being respectful
- Character is really important to residents
- Building in neighbourhood should respect this otherwise character will be lost
- Support the protection of the residential areas to either side

#### Things that were liked:

- o Minto Park monument for women
- o Movies at Dundonald Park
- o Events at Bank/Argyle
- o Chinatown Gate
- o Centretown Garage Sale (Minto Park)
- o City Hall activities and festivals
- o Murals
- o Art Café under Queensway (but need better lighting)
- o The Merit is a nice new building

#### High-rises that are good:

- o Hudson Park
- o Merit
- o Use of stone, green
- o Engaged an architect

#### Changing Patterns:

- o People came in their 20s – apartments, restaurants, bars
- o Left for detached homes
- o Pattern repeats itself
- o Same people in 20s are now staying in neighbourhood
- o New pattern – People choose to have kids, settle down and stay

#### Pros of living in Centretown:

- o Diversity – residents from different social and economic backgrounds
- o Convenience and ease of access to parks
- o Proximity to services, city hall, university, Queensway and the LRT
- o The Canal is central to the community
- o Families and students (this is both a pro and a con)
- o Trees

#### Cons (Issues) identified:

- o Front yard maintenance, garbage
- o Not picking up after pets, especially near buildings that are mainly rentals or community housing
- o Sidewalk clean-up and general upkeep
- o Poorly placed/cheap apartments
- o Traffic from Queen Elizabeth Driveway

- Increase of Airbnb's (residents prefer families living in the area rather than temporary habitants)
- High Crime
  - Car theft
  - B&E
  - Muggings

## Question 2: What are some distinct areas in Centretown?

- Bank Street/midtown ----- (7 occurrences)
- Golden Triangle ----- (5 occurrences)
- Canal/Driveway ----- (4 occurrences)
- Elgin Street ----- (4 occurrences)
  - Includes note on Jack Purcell CC
- Between Bank and Elgin ----- (2 occurrences)
  - Metcalfe Street Apartments
  - Mixed residential/commercial space
- West of Kent Street ----- (2 occurrences)
  - More families, community gardens, family housing
- West of Bank Street ----- (1 occurrence)
  - Residential area
- Preston/Bronson ----- (1 occurrence)
  - North of Gladstone
  - Older area
- Catherine Street ----- (1 occurrence)
  - The neighbourhood's "edge"
- Somerset Street ----- (1 occurrence)

## Question 3: Why does the area matter and to whom?

The area matters to:

- The whole city – 1<sup>st</sup> residential part of city
- The residents!
  - The people who live there, live there 24/7
    - Live, work, shop
    - Not a bedroom community
    - Sense of community
    - Knowing your neighbours
- People who want to walk everywhere
- Tourists

- People who visit bars, restaurants
  - Ideal urban situation Elgin Street
  - Largest bar area outside Byward Market
- Small/independent businesses/owners
- Civil servants at lunchtime

The area matters because:

- History
- Green spaces
- Canal
- Museum of Nature
- Top schools – Lisgar Collegiate
- Festivals
- Proximity to work, shops, recreation, services etc.
- Liveability/Walkability
- Knowing your neighbours
- Everyone passes through it
- It has character, unique recognizable streets
- Variety of housing types, inclusive

#### **Question 4: What patterns and activities have shaped Centretown over the past 20 years?**

##### **Patterns**

- Intensification/Development (heavily emphasized by participants including some of the comments below)
  - Ugly new buildings, just boxes
  - Density pressure
  - Increased desire to live centrally
  - How to balance heritage with interest in density?
  - Best way is for Official Plan to exempt HCDs from intensification
  - Gentrification – both good and bad
  - In favour, but needs better management
  - Max Heights; Zoning is overruled by Council
    - 12 storeys becomes 18; 30 storeys becomes 60
    - 2 storey homes demolished to build four storeys
    - The urban planning is not respected
- Trees unlawfully cut down
  - Trees are cut which should not be cut
  - Fine for doing so is not a deterrent

- Dundonald kiddie park renovations
  - o Renovated several times in 20 years – a costly endeavour
  - o Perhaps there is undue influence in the matter?
- Poorly thought-out Bike Paths
  - o Created by people who do not bike and it appears, do not respect cyclists
- Increased Connectivity
  - o Corkstown Bridge
  - o More students can lead to poor upkeep and noise issues (Lewis/Robert)
- More families have moved in
- Outdoor cats on Flora Street
- Elgin Street has lost “useful” daily function
- Gladstone garages

### Activities

- Dundonald Park activities\*\*\*
  - o Summer activities draw many people of all ages
  - o Movie Nights a success
- Canada Day festivities\*
  - o Community parties and at the Hill
- Winterlude\*
  - o Skating and festivals along the Canal
- Sens Mile (when they are good!)
- Golden Triangle Park (Minto)
  - o Tennis Courts
  - o People-watching
- McNabb Park\*\*
  - o Vegetable Garden
  - o Skateboard park for older kids
- Local Cafés with outdoor seating areas for conversation
- ‘Buy Nothing’ Ottawa in Centretown and Golden Triangle
- Street Parties\*
- St. Luke’s wading pool for younger kids\*
- Jack Purcell Park (Tennis Courts)

### Question 5: How is Centretown Used?

- Walkable – walking is very important\*\*\*
  - o Convenient neighbourhood
  - o Accessible to and from lots of things; connected
- People-watching, good\*
  - o Parks, Minto and Dundonald

- Benches, new style?
- Events and Festivals\*\*\*\*\*
  - Ottawa Race Weekend
  - Winterlude
  - Parades, Pride
  - Tulip Festival
  - Don't want festivals or services moving away
- Distinct urban living
  - Beautiful architecture
  - Heritage area around Dundonald Park
  - Quiet, but vibrant (keep this way)
  - Golden Triangle\*\*
    - Quietness highly valued
    - Distinct character from west
  - Low-rise good, high-rise bad\*\*
- Preserve heritage\*\*
  - New buildings must be high-quality modern design like the NAC reno, Shaw Centre and Museum of Nature reno
- Pubs, Bars, Restaurants\*\*
  - Clusters are important
  - The Manx
  - Deacon Brodies
- Somerset Village
  - New business life
- Gladstone Avenue
  - Quirky, bakery
- Bank Street businesses, shopping
  - Small, independent businesses
    - Herb & Spice
- A Hub for the City
  - Well connected to transit
  - Central to everything
  - Universities, downtown, shopping, eating, parks, canal
- Community Gardens
  - Trees and gardens are very important

**The following concerns were noted by participants :**

- Ugly high-rises\*\*\*\*\*
  - Who is looking at the design?
  - Terrible architecture
  - Heritage being lost
  - Natural sunlight being lost



- Does not fit in with neighbourhood character
- SOHO Lisgar and SOBA examples of ugliness
- Metal siding is ugly\*\*\*
- Don't want high-rises in the first place
  - Nervous about new condos, like on Rideau
- Losing walkability\*
  - Elgin Street has lost 2 grocery stores
  - Lost Boushey's, E.R. Fischers, Nelms
  - Lost hardware stores
  - Losing doctor's offices
  - Lost theatres/cinemas
  - Being replaced by restaurants and bars
- Inappropriate replacement (Gilmour Fire)
  - Replaced with a grey brick box with corrugated metal siding
  - All details have been lost
  - Finished product not what was put forward
- Liveability of buildings
  - Don't believe new buildings (specifically high-rises) are liveable
- Inappropriate alterations to heritage buildings
  - Painting brick is ugly
- Urban vs Rural representation at City Hall
  - Concerned that urban Councillors have less representation than suburban/rural Councillors, therefore rural Councillors are making the decisions and aren't focussed on downtown
- Building heights and scale
  - Must preserve the character defining scale of neighbourhood
- Losing setbacks and greenery/courtyards
  - There was a time buildings had more space around them
  - Lots should require a percentage of green areas/courtyards
- Parking pressure increasing
  - Negative impacts of intensification, cars everywhere
  - Pollution
  - Loss of front yard parking
  - Effects on landscaping
- Losing more trees
  - In fact we need more trees
- Development along Elgin
  - Rising rent prices for business in this area
  - Decline of main-street stores
  - Can there be any incentives such as rent deductions, attraction to heritage neighborhoods, creating smaller spaces/stores for lower rent?

- How easy it is to change the zoning
  - o Why have rules if they can just be broken?
  - o Waste of time
  - o A lot of work that won't stop problems
- Not picking up after pets
  - o Dogs soiling parks previously frequented by young families, seniors, children, local residents
- Buildings are allowed to deplete
  - o Saving Somerset House!
  - o School Board building on Gilmour
  - o Syrian Embassy on Cartier and Somerset
- Proliferation of bars and convenience stores
- No enough green space
- Traffic congestion results in high noise levels and poor air quality
- Lack of affordable housing
- Retention of Schools (public schools) is important

#### **Additional notes/ideas**

- o North of Centretown, area north of Gloucester, is not necessarily a different area to the residents then the study area
- o Beautification of Centretown is important- plants/trees on Elgin streets to be increased, streetscape of Elgin and Bank to follow the patterns of the rest of the neighbourhood, art incentives for education of children and adults
- Canal taxi would be great with more landings on canal
  - o People need to use the canal
- Chateau Laurier
  - o Ugly addition
  - o Wrong architect
  - o Not the right style
- Need Incentive Program
  - o Tax rebate
  - o Help with grants
  - o Make available to a broader range of buildings