

# 1.0 THE STUDY

| **1.0**  
The Study

| **2.0**  
Centretown  
Today:  
Analysis

| **3.0**  
Centretown  
Tomorrow:  
The Vision

| **4.0**  
Moving Around  
Centretown:  
Mobility

| **5.0**  
Greening  
Centretown:  
Parks & Open Space

| **6.0**  
Building  
Centretown:  
Built Form

| **7.0**  
Delivering  
Change:  
Implementation

# 1.1 Planning the Future of Centretown

## This project is not just about intensification.

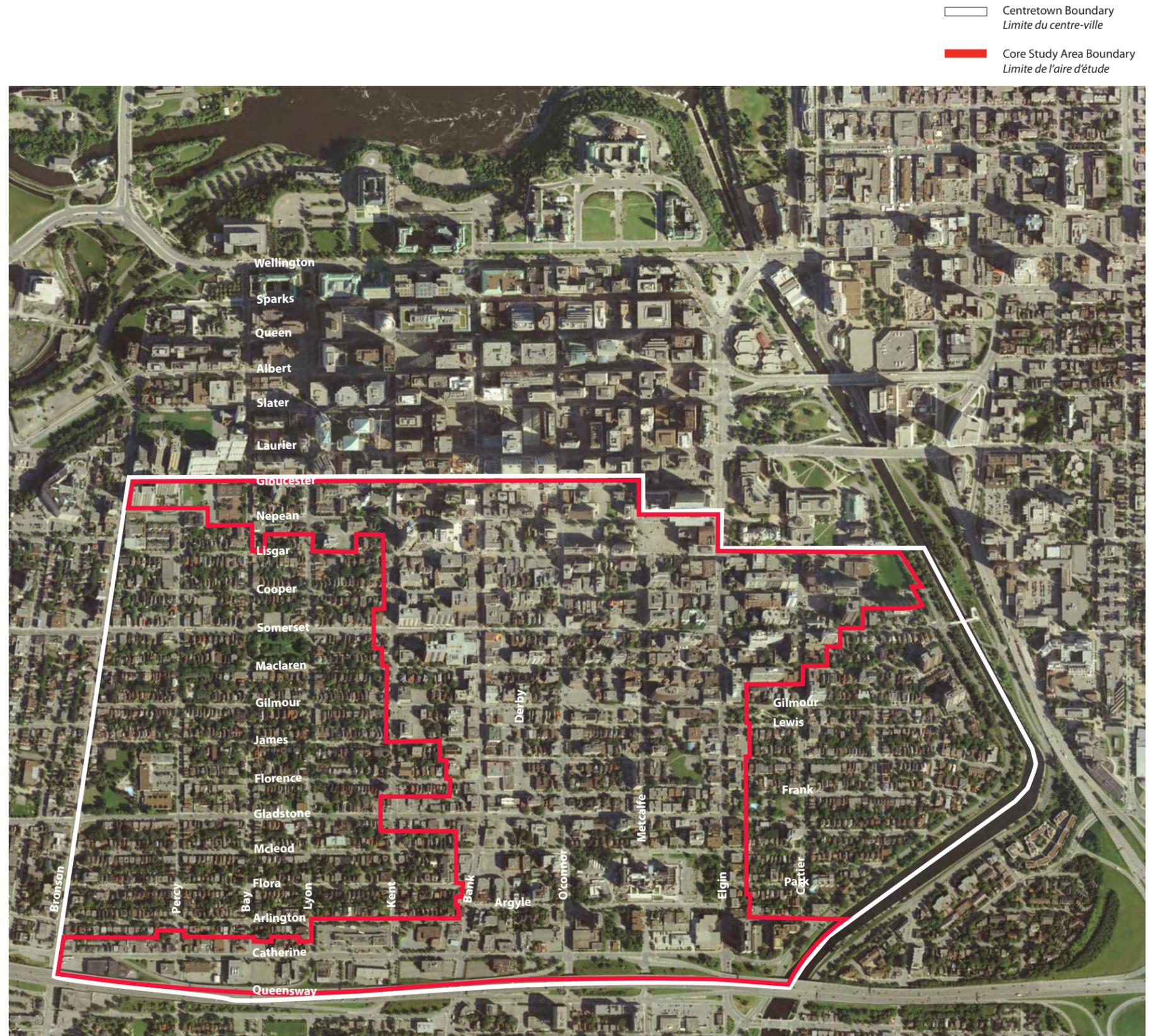
This project is about creating a comprehensive community design plan (CDP) for Centretown. As a design plan for managing growth, it must consider much more than just where new buildings should be located and what they should look like. It must also explore how Centretown can become the best possible place to live and work by exploring such issues as:

- How can we ensure compatible infill development in the different neighbourhoods of Centretown?
- How can different types of households be attracted to the area?
- What is the condition of existing community facilities and services? What new facilities or services might be required?
- What is the quality of existing open spaces and where are new parks needed? How can existing parks be improved?
- How are the streets used and how they can be made better for all types of users?
- Where should cycling routes and pedestrian priority streets be located?
- How can heritage assets be better protected?
- Is more employment needed in the neighbourhood? If so, where and what type?

## The Study Area

This study was originally titled 'A Community Design Plan for Mid-Centretown'. However, through the consultation process it was widely recognized that 'Mid-Centretown' was an artificial construct and not a recognized community in the City of Ottawa. 'Mid-Centretown' is actually part of the well-established Centretown community and the systems that comprise this community. As such, 'Mid-Centretown' cannot be isolated as its own place and a more responsive plan would result from an examination of Centretown as a whole.

The Core Study Area is generally square in shape and is bounded by Elgin Street to the east and Kent Street to the west, with Highway 417 marking the southern edge and Gloucester Street acting as the northern boundary. The Centretown Heritage Conservation District covers much of the Core Study Area. Situated between the Queensway and Ottawa's traditional downtown area (the Central Area), the Core Study Area is dissected by several major arterial commercial streets including Bank Street, Elgin Street and Somerset Street.





Urban Living at its Finest  
CONDOMINIUM RESIDENCES

claridgehomes.com • 613-234-  
TRIBECA CONDOMINIUMS CLARIDGE HOMES



## 1.2 Creating a Contemporary Vision

The Urban Strategies' Team was retained by the City of Ottawa to develop a Community Design Plan (CDP) through a collaborative process with stakeholders and the Centretown community. The Plan will provide a broad and integrated twenty-year vision and guidance for the growth of the area.

The goal of this planning process is to prepare a vision that is focused on enhancing the overall experience of Centretown that will form the foundation for a new Secondary Plan. The process will result in a series of recommendations (presented in Chapters 4 through 7) that respond to current planning and community issues.

The study objectives are:

1. Prepare a community vision for Centretown.
2. To identify and protect the characteristics that make Centretown successful and special in the City of Ottawa.
3. To identify potential areas for redevelopment, including what type of uses are most appropriate and what buildings should look like.
4. To prepare recommendations for the form and quality of new buildings.
5. To identify improvements for, and guide future design of, parks and streets.
6. To provide a strategy to preserve and protect the best of Centretown's heritage assets.
7. To provide directions for creating a more walkable and cycleable neighbourhood that reinforces the importance of active transportation.
8. To identify priority 'city building' initiatives and actions that will make Centretown an even stronger and more sustainable urban community.



Photo Courtesy of: Charles Akben-Marchand

## 1.3 What We Heard

Ottawa is growing – we need to embrace the opportunities that this provides us Centretown has a big role to play in the economy of Ottawa A shared vision is important. There are too many conflicting visions of what Ottawa is City Council is not into Smart Growth - we are applying suburban standard in the downtown We have to start thinking like a big city Why don't we just make development rules that make sense in the first place? There are too many hurdles to get good buildings built Well designed taller buildings don't block views, they create views Pedestrian should come first The relationship between vehicles, cycling and pedestrians is very confusing We need to create more civilized streets – not highways through our neighbourhood Metcalfe, Kent and O'Connor need to be civilized – they are scary places today If all north-south arterials turn to into two way streets, traffic will go to other places in neighbourhood Kent and Lyon should be two way streets Community uses need to be the predominant focus of this Plan People like the diversity of Centretown We need more families living back in Centretown Parks play a big role in allowing intensification and right now we don't have enough of them Don't close schools – so many schools have disappeared We need to ensure Centretown still offers mixed housing and affordable housing There is too much low quality, low rent housing concentrated in Centretown Rental housing protection in Ottawa is weak. It needs to be strengthened We need to encourage property owners to maintain and enhance their properties We need better looking streets No more front yard parking! We need more parks The Museum of Nature Park needs to be more accessible We need to encourage a pedestrian friendly neighborhood Retail everywhere does not necessarily work Bank Street is on the cusp of becoming a very vibrant place – but it has taken a long time! Elgin should have a BIA Any new projects need a capital budget or they will never happen Centretown needs infill, not demolition Some of the heritage should be saved and some should go. In some places in Centretown you can have way more than 12 storeys, in other places 12 storeys is way too much I worry that high density will increase land prices We need to keep Centretown affordable. This is not just about 'intensification' for Centretown, but is about creating a 'Growth Plan' for Centretown – much more than just buildings!

## 1.4 The Regeneration Opportunity

### Build on Your Successes

At the heart of a Community Design Plan is the ambition to create a sustainable and successful community. Such communities offer a high quality of life for residents and are those neighbourhoods where people choose to live, work and have fun. Sustainable communities allow people to reside in a fashion that minimizes impacts on the environment, retains social balance, maximizes cultural richness and protects diversity.

In so many ways, Centretown is already a model of a successful and sustainable community.

More and more people are choosing to make this inner city community their home. Residents find accommodation in a variety of housing types – ranging from affordable rental through to grand single detached homes. High-rise apartments, mid-rise heritage walk ups, row houses and single detached homes create an enviable mix of housing types and tenures across Centretown. This diversity of housing has helped to attract an equally diverse population to the neighbourhood, all of whom are searching for an urban lifestyle in an exciting downtown community.

In addition to people, all types of businesses choose to make Centretown home. With more jobs than residents, Centretown has become an important employment destination in Ottawa. Those businesses choosing to locate in Centretown include a broad mix of shopping, office uses, services and other commercial users. Many of Centretown's residents now have the pleasure of walking to work at jobs either within Centretown itself or in the adjacent Central Area - a joy experienced by very few in the City of Ottawa!

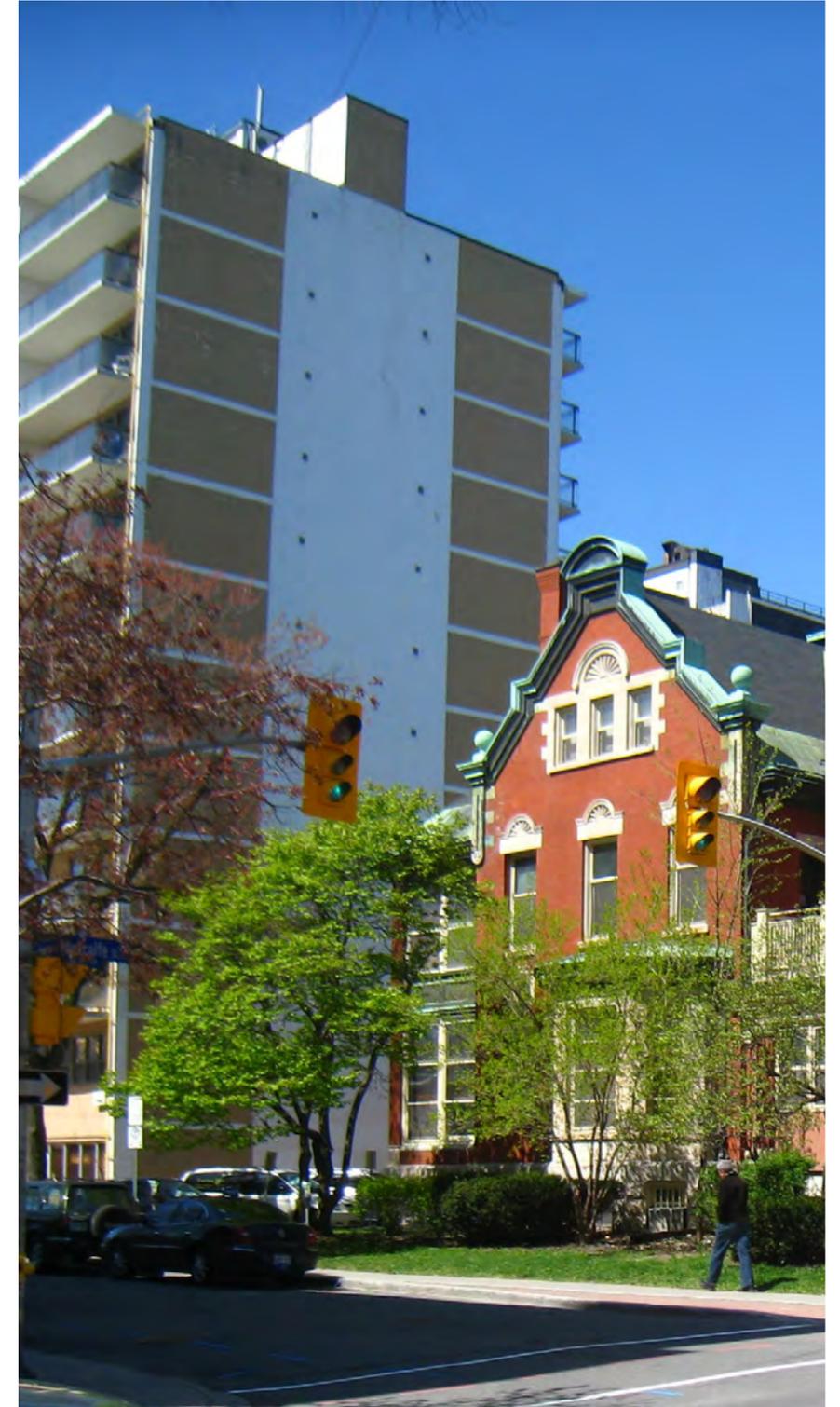
Centretown is a genuinely mixed-use community. Its walkable streets are well connected to the rest of the city and the vibrancy of its mainstreets make it an active and safe destination. Elgin Street, Somerset Street and Bank Street offer some of the city's best shopping and cultural activities, making these important commercial streets both a neighbourhood service hub as well as a regional destination. In fact, Centretown's central location affords it an abundance of amenities and services – many of which are utilized by those who live far beyond the boundaries of the neighbourhood. These important community amenities are a cornerstone of Centretown, reinforcing its appeal and helping to attract and retain the wide diversity of residents that make Centretown home.

Although Centretown has many of the hallmarks of a successful and sustainable community, there are many areas which could be improved. Some key challenges include: the underprovision of parks to serve the community; streets that act as highway on-ramps as opposed to neighbourhood streets; architecture that creates poor pedestrian conditions; increasing pressure on community services and amenities; and, limited choice of affordable housing stock.

Fundamental to the long-term health of Centretown is the provision of a suitable mix of uses that creates sufficient density to make a vibrant, safe and active environment. The Community Design Plan process provides the opportunity to highlight key neighbourhood issues hindering the success of Centretown as a sustainable community and begins to address these concerns. The CDP also provides the opportunity to focus efforts on regeneration ambitions that will make Centretown an even better destination for living, playing and working in Ottawa.

Key areas that the CDP can help address in Centretown include:

- > providing a balanced transportation system
- > creating opportunities for more green spaces
- > improving and repairing existing park spaces
- > highlighting the need for additional community facilities
- > protecting existing and encouraging new rental and affordable housing
- > accommodating growth in a sustainable fashion
- > providing a clear direction for future planning policy



# 1.5 What is a Community Design Plan?

Community Design Plans help shape the evolution of neighbourhoods by directing future growth and guiding development across areas facing significant change and growth pressures. The Community Design Plan process is intended to result in an up-to-date and contemporary plan that responds to current planning and community issues facing a neighbourhood.

CDPs provide guidelines for decision-making on land use planning and help to implement the City's Official Plan at the neighbourhood level by:

1. Translating the principles and policies of the Official Plan to a community scale;
2. Providing more detailed direction on what future developments in the area should look like; and
3. Providing locally responsive solutions to key challenges in the neighbourhood, while respecting the policy goals of the City's Official Plan.

The Community Design Plan process is also the tool for updating the Zoning By-law and the Secondary Plan to reflect current community aspirations while creating future opportunities for contemporary urban living and working in Centretown. CDPs are action-oriented plans that are intended to deliver a clear understanding of what the collective future of a neighbourhood will look like.

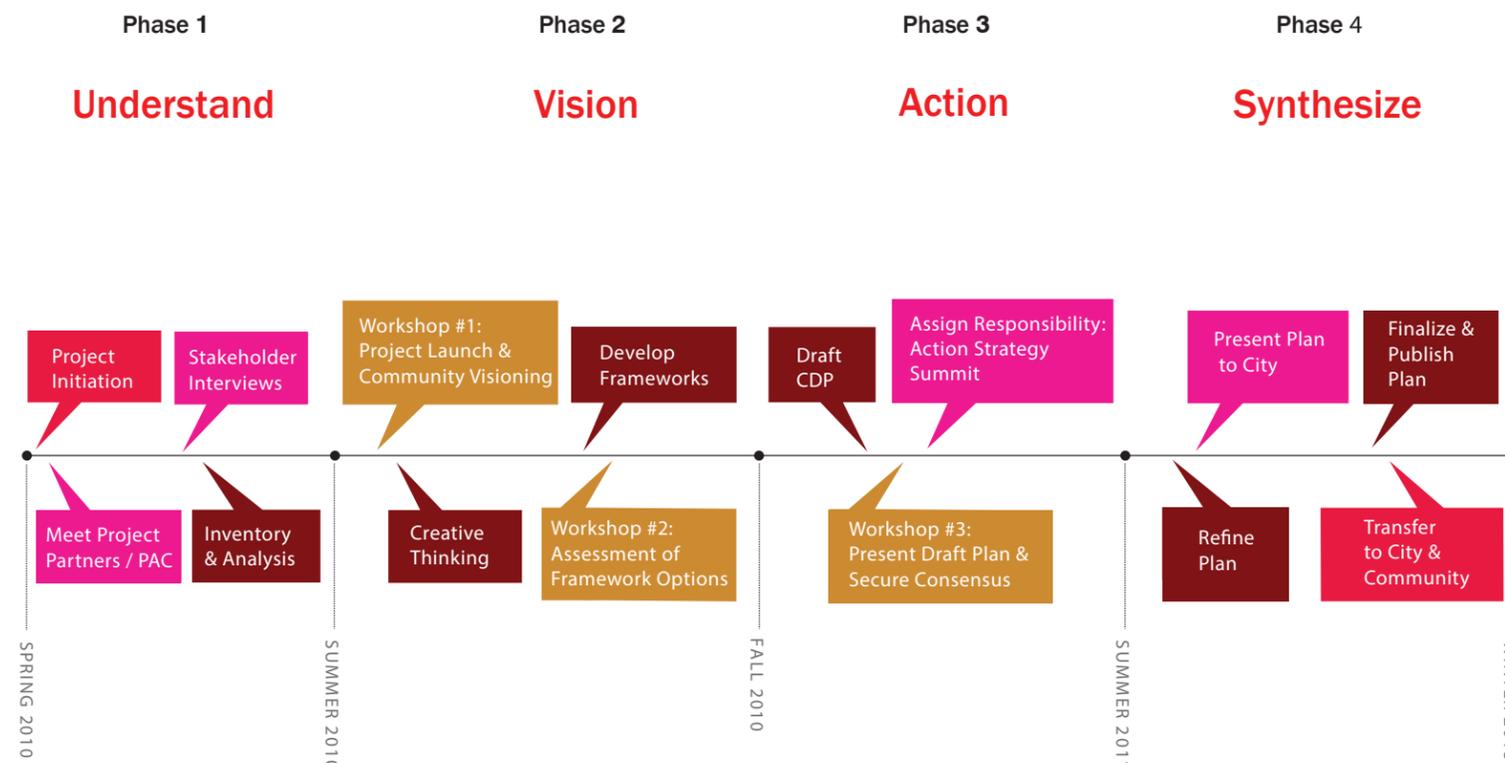
# 1.6 The Study Process

The Centretown Community Design Plan was completed over a 32 month period, split over 4 phases. Phase 1 was initiated in May 2010, with the final Community Design Plan was completed in February 2013.

This project was a collaborative partnership between the Centretown community, local stakeholders, the City of Ottawa and the project team. Across the project's four phases, there were several opportunities for the community to be actively involved in the project and to share their concerns and views.

Key opportunities for involvement included:

- 9 scheduled client / team working sessions
- 8 scheduled Public Consultation Group meetings
- 5 days of stakeholder interviews and focus group sessions
- 3 major community events – Community Workshops & Open Houses
- An Implementation Action Strategy Summit



## 1.7 Where Did This Study Come From?

### From Centretown Concept Plan to Centretown Secondary Plan

A Secondary Plan implements the City's broader Official Plan at a local level and is one of the most important policy documents directing change and growth in a neighbourhood. As such, the existing Centretown Secondary Plan, originally approved in 1976, forms the starting point for the Centretown Community Design Plan study.

In the mid-seventies, the Centretown Citizens Community Association (CCCA) Planning Committee worked with the City of Ottawa and a consultant team to develop a plan for Centretown. This action was in response to on-going redevelopment of the area throughout the 1960s that had eroded the low-rise character of the community, encouraged the out-migration of families, demolished a number of older structures and brought significant levels of traffic to and through Centretown.

This important initiative resulted in the creation of the document, "A Concept Plan for Centretown" and its subsequent "Centretown Neighbourhood Development Plan", which outlined a vision for Centretown of a thriving inner-city neighbourhood. Approved in principle in 1974 and formally approved two years later, the *Centretown Neighbourhood Development Plan* became the template used for the area's Secondary Plan (originally adopted in 1976 and continuing as a Secondary Plan in the current City of Ottawa Official Plan).

The goal of the Centretown Secondary Plan is to "guide future growth and change" in Centretown. To do so, the Plan provides the official policies that direct land uses, site development, heritage preservation, transportation, community facilities development, open space and community service provision. This document presents a set of goals and objectives around enhancing the character of the area and protecting the quality of life for residents while accommodating an increase in population by all age groups, income levels, cultural backgrounds, lifestyles and household sizes.

The City recognizes the importance of the Secondary Plan to Centretown's residents. However, the City also recognizes that the existing Centretown Secondary Plan is built on policy directions first formed almost 35 years ago. Today, Ottawa as a city - and Centretown as a neighbourhood - are facing new planning and community development challenges than those experienced three decades ago. As such, the City is looking to create a new Secondary Plan to create a policy document that can better respond to some of the most pressing urban issues while delivering the ambitions of the City's Official Plan and the priorities of the existing neighbourhood.

Our goal is to create a new Centretown Secondary Plan which will focus on enhancing an already authentic urban character and unrivalled quality of life.

The process will result in a contemporary plan that is able to respond to current planning and community issues facing Centretown.

## Downtown Ottawa Urban Design Strategy 20/20

Another important planning document directing growth in Ottawa is the Downtown Ottawa Urban Design Strategy 20/20 (DOUDS). The overarching aim of the Downtown Ottawa Urban Design Strategy was to improve the urban experience of the downtown through a series of projects and actions to enhance the quality of the public realm and urban environment. To realize this aim, DOUDS provides both area-wide strategies and more specific design guidance, including built form guidelines and a series of targeted improvement projects. One of its most important goals was to provide an agreed list of investment priorities across the downtown, including the Centretown area.

DOUDS was bold in its ambition to expand the traditional definition of what and where Downtown Ottawa was located. The study recognized that Downtown Ottawa was in fact much larger than its traditional boundary around the Core and the historic By-Ward Market area. Embracing other important urban areas, such as Bank Street, Elgin Street and LeBreton Flats, the study expanded the boundaries of what was traditionally considered to be 'the downtown' - effectively doubling its geography.

This expanded approach allowed a more responsive plan to be prepared that included design guidelines for a larger area and the inclusion of targeted investments for areas outside the downtown core, including several projects specific to the Centretown area. Key strategic interventions presented in DOUDS and brought forward through this Community Design Plan include:

1. Street Beautification and Streetscaping for the following Centretown streets:
  - Elgin Street
  - O'Connor Street
  - Somerset Street
  - Metcalfe Street
  - Bank Street
2. Conversion of one-way street system to two-way street systems for the following Centretown streets:
  - O'Connor Street
  - Metcalfe Street

3. Metcalfe Gateway and Canadian Museum of Nature Block Restoration:
  - elimination of the Metcalfe Street continuation between McLeod Street and Argyle Avenue to create a single expanded park space;
  - re-landscaping the park;
  - create a public gathering space at the front entrance to the museum;
  - reconstruction of Metcalfe Street as a civic boulevard.
4. Open Space Expansion Program to provide new open spaces and parks that are accessible to the public. Priority sites in Centretown were identified at:
  - corner locations along Metcalfe Street at Somerset and Lisgar, along O'Connor Street at Gilmour, Lisgar and Nepean,
  - corner lots along Kent Street, and along Bank Street,
  - intersection of Bank and McLeod Streets.
5. Bank Street Corridor Intensification Program in blocks between Kent and O'Connor Streets that:
  - preserves the Bank Street frontage as a main street;
  - transitions into the residential area west of Kent Street;
  - focuses the majority of intensification mid-block on the east-west streets
  - protects heritage sites.

In March of 2004, City Council approved the Plan and began incorporating its key recommendations into the City's policy framework through an amendment to the Official Plan.



*Downtown Ottawa Urban Design Strategy 20/20, identifying Centretown area.*

