

# 3.0 CENTRETOWN TOMORROW

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## 3.1 The Vision for Centretown Tomorrow

**Centretown is the envy of Ottawa's urban neighbourhoods.**

Centretown's authentic urban character, unbeatable location, unrivalled quality of life and impressive mix of uses has attracted a growing number of residents year on year. Halting population decline, this growth has brought renewed life to the community – politically, socially and culturally. Today the voice for Centretown is diverse, yet strong, at City Hall.

**Centretown continues to be Ottawa's best mixed use downtown neighbourhood. As diverse as its land uses, the residents of Centretown are an inclusive mix of ages, income levels, cultural backgrounds and lifestyles.**

No longer home to architectural blandness, innovative and beautiful design are championed in Centretown. New buildings are responsive to their community context and have set the standard for creative design in Ottawa.

**More balanced streets that are shared between users have replaced the busy arterials that once dissected the community. A radical program of conversion has helped calm these busy roads and stitched the community back together. With slower traffic, these residential streets are now home to cyclists, transit users, pedestrians and even trees!**

Metcalfe Street has been reinvented as an elegant green boulevard that gracefully connects the Civic and Federal realms. The Museum of Nature continues to be the pride of Centretown and a true gateway statement for the neighbourhood. Its expanded green lawns play host to countless community events throughout the year.

Centretown's revitalized urban parks are abuzz with energy from the growing numbers of children and families that use these fun and safe spaces. Two new parks have been carved out of Centretown's urban fabric to meet the growing demand for quality outdoor space.

Leaving the car at home, residents choose to walk to work and to play. Advantaged by their central location and improved pedestrian connections and conditions, nothing is further than a half-hour stroll away. All the demands of urban living can be met locally.

As advocates for 'shop local, eat local, act local' the growing number of residents choosing to make Centretown their home have reinvigorated many of the shops and businesses on Bank and Elgin and have extended the charming Somerset Village. Fueled by the conversion of garage spaces into studios, gallery space and commercial uses, Gladstone Avenue has begun a gradual transformation into a destination for creativity and innovation.

Respectful of the past, many of Centretown's best heritage assets have been carefully preserved and are now celebrated features of the community. A new appreciation has been given to maintaining the community's heritage streetscape as a whole, as opposed to simply its individual components. Heritage buildings of all types are finding new life through creative re-use and sensitive integration with new buildings.

Ushering in Section 37, an innovative partnership has been established between the Centretown community, the City of Ottawa and the development industry, resulting in impressive community improvements, including the proposed full renovation of the Jack Purcell Community Centre.

### 3.1.1 The Northern Character Area Tomorrow

The movement towards a higher density environment has already started in this area. The availability of underutilized land (large surface parking lots) coupled with the demand for downtown living has fueled this urban redevelopment. In the future, the proposed investment in Ottawa’s extensive new public transit system immediately adjacent to the northern portion of Centretown will support further residential and commercial intensification.

#### Land Use

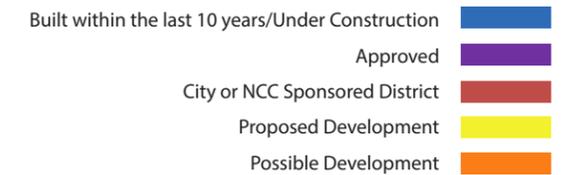
- Mixed-use commercial, retail, residential is appropriate.
- Retail at grade is required along Mainstreets, like Bank and Elgin Streets.
- Continue to promote conversion of under-utilized space above the ground floor along Bank and Elgin Streets. Commercial and residential uses are suitable.

#### Buildings

- Considering the availability of underutilized sites and the context of the area, this area is appropriate for higher density.
- To avoid overshadowing and unpleasant pedestrian conditions, taller building must be built with podiums, stepbacks, minimum lot sizes and maximum tower floorplate sizes. Blank walls are not permitted.
- The height of any new development along Bank and Elgin must respect existing Mainstreet standards. Transition in scale and form of buildings is required between these commercial corridors and the established neighbourhood areas.
- Existing heritage buildings must be protected (with a priority on Group 1 and Group 2). Depending on the site context and the characteristic of the existing heritage building, these buildings could also be integrated into new proposals on a case-by-case basis. As per City of Ottawa’s Official Plan policies, it should be noted that demolition of cultural heritage resources and the rebuilding on a facsimile of all or part of the building is not considered to be heritage conservation.
- Safeguard existing rental and affordable housing stock more strongly (see Chapter 7).

#### The Public Realm

- Continue to pursue enhancements along Metcalfe, Somerset and Elgin Streets (see Chapter 4 and Chapter 5).
- This area requires more park spaces to serve needs of residents, visitors and workers. Additional park spaces can be in form of community parks, parkettes, linear parks or plazas associated with new development (see Chapter 5).
- Remove parking encroachments from the pedestrian right-of-way. Require surface parking lots and servicing areas to be screened.



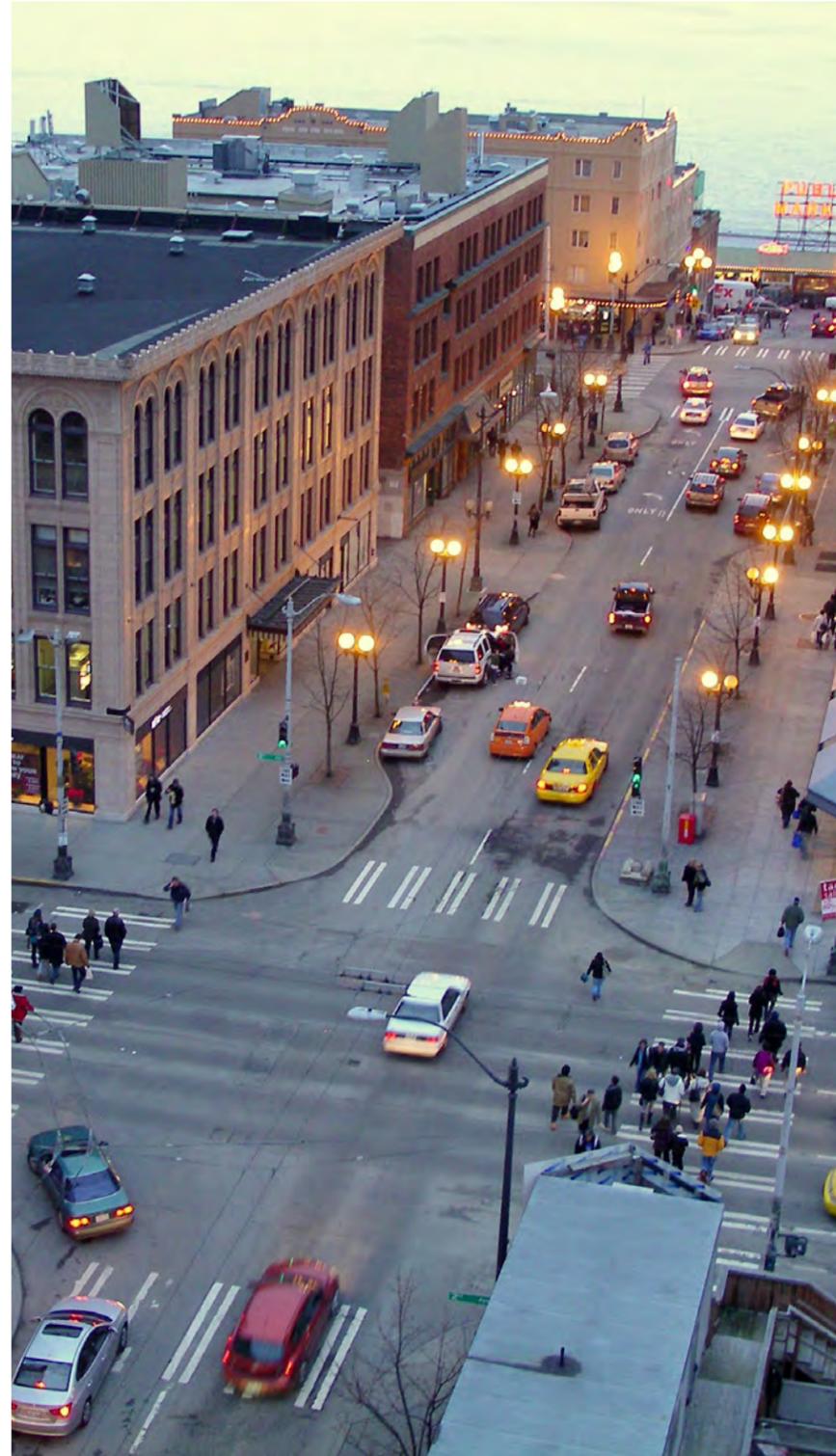
The Northern Character Area



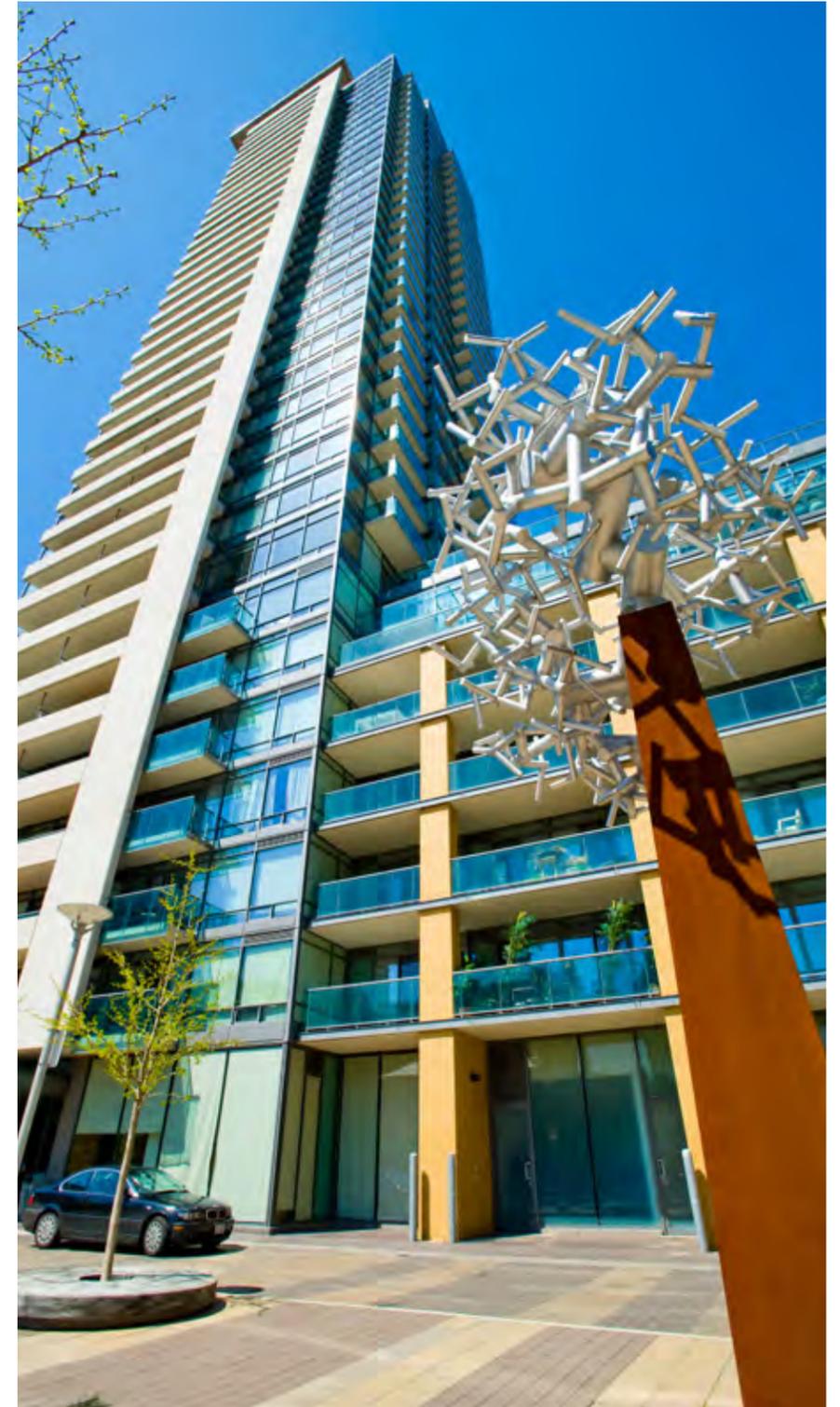
Vancouver



Seattle



Toronto



### 3.1.2 The Central Character Area Tomorrow

The future of this district will be as a renewed low-to-mid rise mixed-use neighbourhood dominated by residential uses, book-ended by two important mainstreets and reinforced by a system of east-west residential streets. A broad mix of building types, ranging from house form to mid-rise buildings will provide various types of accommodation. Although residential uses will dominate this area, limited commercial as well as institutional clusters may also be accommodated (refer to Section 6.1 - Residential Mixed Use areas).

Within the heart of the area, change will likely occur slowly and incrementally. Although much of this area will remain stable, sensitive infill is encouraged in selected locations. Opportunities for renewal and redevelopment may be more immediate along the more significant streets, such as Bank, Elgin and portions of Gladstone, Somerset and O'Connor. Bank Street offers the greatest opportunity for redevelopment. Infill along this route will strengthen Bank Street's mainstreet function and serve both local and regional needs. Any new developments proposed across this area must be built in a manner that is compatible with adjacent developments.

The parks and open spaces that support this area will be improved. Expanded open space areas should be created around the Museum of Nature. The high speed, high traffic condition of the north south arterials that cross the area will need to be addressed prior to any significant streetscape improvements.

The Central Character Area



#### Land Use

- Residential uses are predominant.
- Commercial uses including office and retail should be directed towards Mainstreets. Professional services, small scale office, small scale institutional and limited retail should be permissible within certain internal locations (refer to Section 6.1 - Residential Mixed Use areas).
- Retail at grade is required along Mainstreets, like Bank and Elgin Streets.
- Promote conversion of underused space above ground floor retail uses on Bank and Elgin Streets to commercial and residential uses.

#### Buildings

- Considering the context and the size of available sites, this area is suitable for low- to mid-rise infill, generally not taller than nine storeys in height.
- Smaller sites are only appropriate for low-rise infill (4 storeys or less).
- Height of new developments along Bank and Elgin must respect existing Mainstreet standards and be built in a manner that is compatible with adjacent developments.
- Transition in scale and form of building is required between Elgin and Bank Streets and the established neighbourhood areas.
- Stepbacks in mid-rise buildings are encouraged to avoid overshadowing and unpleasant pedestrian corridors.
- Existing heritage buildings must be protected (with a priority on Group 1 and Group 2). Depending on the site context and the characteristic of the existing heritage buildings, these buildings could also be integrated into new proposals on a case-by-case basis. As per City of Ottawa's Official Plan policies, it should be noted that demolition of cultural heritage resources and the rebuilding on a facsimile of all or part of the building is not considered to be heritage conservation.
- Safeguard existing rental and affordable housing stock more strongly (see Chapter 7).

#### The Public Realm

- Convert Metcalfe to a two-way street and reinvent as a green boulevard that links the Civic and Capital realms.
- Upgrade Jack Purcell Park as a priority. Work with the Museum of Nature to ensure that both the West and the East Lawn vision is realized (refer to section 5.1.1).
- Pursue public realm improvements along Elgin Street to bring it up to same standard as Bank Street.
- Undertake street tree planting along Metcalfe Street and Gladstone Avenue.
- Introduce signalized pedestrian crossings at key intersections along all arterial routes (refer to Section 4.7).
- When new development is proposed, there may be an opportunity for a community green space to be included in the development proposal (depending on size of site).
- Introduce new on-street bicycle facilities along Gladstone Avenue and Metcalfe Street that connect into existing networks.

Denver



Sudbury



Calgary



### 3.1.3 The Southern Character Area Tomorrow

The large parcels and availability of land offers the opportunity to create a higher density zone in Centretown able to act as a buffer between the highway conditions of the 417 and the established lower-rise neighbourhood of the Central Zone.

On a fully-rebuilt Catherine Street streetscape, this area could support a mix of mid-to-high rise development. New residential uses could complement the existing employment focus of this zone and bring new residents and activity to the corridor. The presence of larger buildings on podiums in this location would help mitigate noise issues for the wider community. On the north side of Catherine Street, appropriate building transition would be required into the existing community.

Development opportunity in this area could result in a new public park being created. In addition, to help green Centretown, some of the existing 'left over' open spaces along Catherine Street by the 417 should be retreated to create more usable open space areas and provide a green link to the Rideau Canal.

The Southern Character Area



#### Land Use

- Retain existing employment uses.
- New commercial uses should be permitted as well as additional residential uses.
- Commercial uses at grade along Catherine Street will be supportive of creating a more mixed-use area.

#### Buildings

- This area is suitable for high-rise buildings, built on low or mid-rise podiums.
- To avoid overshadowing and unpleasant pedestrian conditions, taller buildings require podiums, setbacks, minimum lot sizes and maximum tower floorplate sizes. Blank walls are not permitted.
- Existing buildings and uses can be integrated into the new developments.
- New developments along Catherine Street should function as a buffer between the lower-rise neighbourhood and the highway noise.
- Demand gateway buildings and architecture on corner sites fronting major arterials.
- Appropriate building height transition is required on the north side of Catherine Street into existing community.

#### The Public Realm

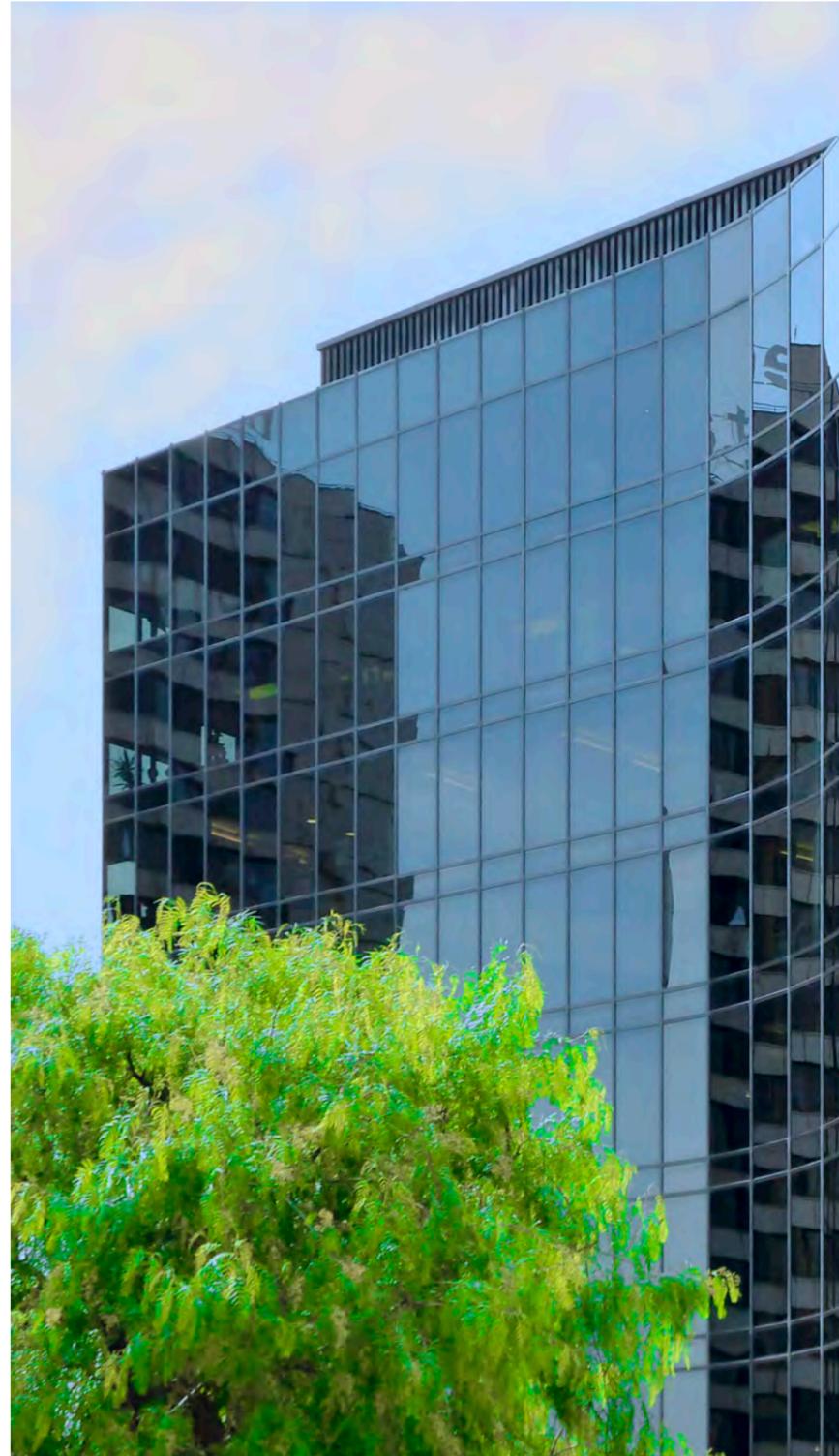
- A better streetscape is needed along all routes, especially Catherine Street. This will require significant tree planting as well as the relocation and/or camouflaging of surface parking lots.
- When development is brought forward, a new public park opportunity should be pursued.
- Create better connections between the green spaces present in this area and other major open spaces, such as the Rideau Canal.

- Built within the last 10 years/Under Construction
- Approved
- City or NCC Sponsored District
- Proposed Development
- Possible Development

Toronto



Winnipeg



Vancouver



## 3.2 Meeting Targets

### 3.2.1 Directing Growth

By 2031, it is estimated that the City of Ottawa will support 30% more jobs, 30% more residents and 40% more households than today. This equates to approximately 170,000 more jobs, 265,000 more residents and 145,000 new homes (as presented in the Official Plan). Where will these new people live and where will these new jobs be located?

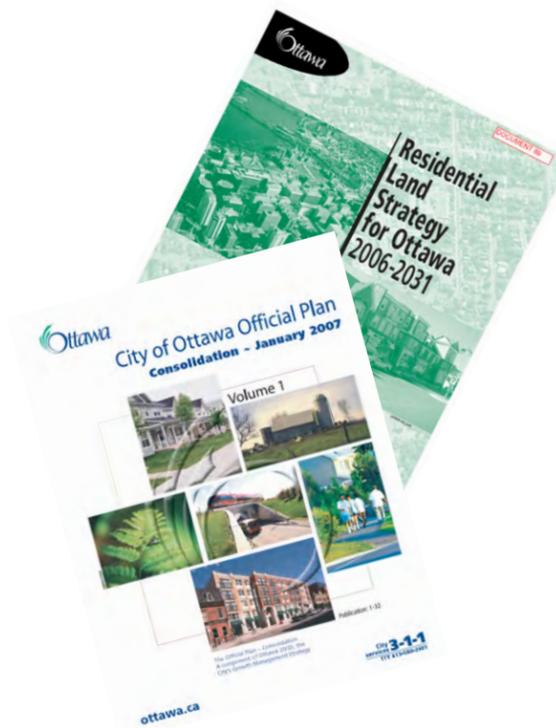
The policy directions of the City of Ottawa's Official Plan promote a model of sustainable growth through the creation of an efficient land use pattern that utilizes existing infrastructure and intensifies development on appropriate sites within the built up area. To deliver this model of sustainable growth, the Official Plan has set a target requiring at least 40% of new residential growth to occur through 'intensification'. This target equates to a minimum of 53,700 new homes be built in the Urban Area on vacant or underutilized lots or through building conversions.

These progressive policies on housing intensification are changing not only where housing can be built, but also what new housing will look like. The City is demanding that a more compact form of development be introduced on those areas subject to intensification. In these locations, a target has been set requiring more than 70% of residential units be in the form of apartments. In contrast, only 6% of new housing is to be in the form of single detached homes and almost 20% will be townhouses (from Residential Land Strategy, 2006).

Centretown it is clearly a destination for urban residential intensification and, according to City policies and targets, intensification will most likely continue in the form of apartment style buildings (which include condominiums).



City of Ottawa, Urban Boundary showing Built Up Area (contained within orange boundary line)



### The Importance of Growth

In 2011, the population of Centretown was approximately 21,500 residents. Surprisingly, and in contrast to the view that the area is besieged with new condominium developments, the residential population of Centretown has remained mostly unchanged since the early 1980s. The reality is that since 1951, almost one in four residents has chosen to move away from Centretown. In addition, household size has decreased.

Communities that are not growing, risk facing decline in the future. Decline can come in the form of school closures as the population ages, retail decline or stagnation due to limited demand, degradation of public spaces through lack of use and the emergence of a poor neighbourhood image as those outside choose not to invest in your community. However, growth needs to be managed to ensure it contributes to creating a better community.

A growing community is a healthy community and should be an aspiration for all neighbourhoods. Population growth brings new life and energy to neighbourhoods, creates new markets for interesting shops and services, helps to create safer communities by bringing more activity to its streets, contributes to a louder voice at City Hall, delivers a more robust local tax base, builds neighbourhood diversity and helps build a more sustainable community model through the efficient use of existing services and facilities. Well-managed growth is critical for the long term success of any community, but it does require good planning so that the benefits of growth can be enjoyed and shared by all.

## 3.2.2 Growth Targets

### The Official Plan

As a mature, inner-city neighbourhood, all future residential growth within Centretown will be realized through intensification. This is Centretown's only option. This means that all future growth in Centretown will contribute to the City achieving its intensification targets and growing in a more sustainable fashion. What remains unresolved is what an appropriate target is for intensification that is specific to Centretown.

In 2011, Centretown\* supported a density of just over 200 jobs and residents/ha. This was comprised of 21,500 residents and 22,200 jobs (approximately 43,700 total) over 210 hectares. At a minimum, as a mixed-use inner city neighbourhood adjacent to the many services offered in the Central Area, it would not be unreasonable to expect a density of 250 jobs and residents/ha (representing the higher target for a Mixed Use Centre in the City of Ottawa). Retaining the current resident:job ratio, achieving this target of 250 jobs and/or residents per hectare would equate to approximately 25,200 residents and 27,300 jobs (52,500 total).

If Centretown does not wish to grow further as an employment destination, the ratio would be slightly modified to retain its current level of employment (22,200 job), but would be supplemented by an addition 5,100 more residents, for a total target residential population of approximately 30,300. Thus, a residential population of 30,300 plus an employment population of 22,200 achieves the targeted density of 250 jobs and residents per hectare. Achieving this target would require an increase of just over 10,000 residents from today's population.

### Centretown Secondary Plan

The issue of residential intensification is not a new issue for Centretown and dates back to the *Centretown Neighbourhood Development Plan of 1976*. Centretown's current Secondary Plan continues to emphasize the importance of residential intensification, highlighting that residential growth will only be achieved through smaller scale, site specific intensification, as opposed to large scale redevelopment of the community.

Section 3.4.1 of the Secondary Plan discusses the future constitution of the area and states that a population increase *will support the residential character of the area and will benefit the retail commercial enterprises within Centretown and the adjacent Central Area. An increase in population in Centretown will also benefit the City-wide distribution of population and result in a more efficient use of existing public services and facilities."*

This CDP supports the Official Plan intensification goal of 10,000 new residents. This target should not be considered a maximum. Inevitably, many sites across the community will come up for redevelopment in the future that have not been considered as potential development sites today. Consequently, this urban community could potentially support an even greater population increase, if realized through sensitive residential infill on appropriate sites. Building design and community context will become the most important factors for assessing where growth should be directed to and what form of growth is most appropriate.

The following chapters detail *where* intensification should happen in Centretown over the coming years and *how* intensification can best be accommodated in a way that is compatible with the current character and design of the community.

\* Statistics provided by the City of Ottawa and reflect 2006 data from Statistics Canada. Employment data is based on North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). For this study, 'Centretown' is considered to be comprised of Census Tracts 37.00, 38.00, 39.00, 40.00 and 49.00. Census Tract 37.00 includes Place Bell which is located just outside the Centretown study area boundary. Place Bell has approximately 5000 employees.

