

# NECA's Committee on Beechwood Development

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The Committee on Beechwood Development has continued to monitor potential as well as actual projects on Beechwood corridor. This activity is an initiative with other Community Associations in the area through the Beechwood Village Alliance (BVA). The BVA is dedicated to promoting community interests in relation to the revitalization of Beechwood as well as to advocate community concerns, needs, and goals. The BVA also proposes solutions to developers and city officials, in order to usher in a vibrant Mainstreet corridor as well as to ensure that each project on Beechwood strives to meet the requirements of Mainstreet designations, as well as the requisites of a "15 Minute Neighbourhood", which is a declared goal of the City of Ottawa, and community associations across the city.

In the past year 2 major projects have been announced and are taking shape on Beechwood. They are:

- 1) Minto's development at 78-90 Beechwood Avenue and 69-93 Barrette Street
- 2) Claridge Homes' development at 89-97 Beechwood Avenue

There are substantive concerns which have been voiced in meetings with each developer, councillors and city officials. Some of the issues which have been raised by the BVA are loosely outlined in Appendix A and B, respectively. In addition to being an advocate for the community, the BVA has provided solid critiques and proposals to developers, including a preferred list of specialty retailers that would meet community needs.

Toward this end we will continue to engage on these and other projects throughout the coming year, including the introduction of a community benefits agreement for developers to bind them to commitments that have proposed during community consultations.

# Appendix A

## Beachwood Village Alliance

October 16, 2020

Mr. Mathieu Fleury, Councillor Ward 12 Rideau-Vanier

Mr. Rawson King, Councillor Ward 13 Rideau-Rockcliffe

Ann O'Connor, Planning Department, City of Ottawa

(ann.o'connor@ottawa.ca)

Re: Minto Communities – Canada

78-90 Beechwood Avenue and 69-93 Barrette Street

Dear Councillors,

The Beechwood Village Alliance includes representatives from five adjacent neighborhood Community Associations with common goals and challenges, namely Lindenlea, Manor Park, New Edinburgh, Rockcliffe and Vanier.

Given that BVA supports the Vanier Community Association's detailed submission regarding Minto's proposed development on the Beechwood-Barrette site, we do not need to itemize the specific points requiring ongoing consideration and review. We wish to note that Minto has been accessible and cooperative during the past several months and some of the improvements to the design reflect the input from the public and particularly from BVA members.

BVA's overarching point is to advocate a holistic approach to planning the future of the Beechwood-Hemlock corridor. Fifteen years ago, a great deal of effort was expended by an amazing group of mainly volunteers who produced the *Beechwood Community Development Plan* in 2005-06. It is not too late to work collaboratively to identify those parts which remain relevant and could be brought forward to become the Traditional Mainstreet that the City has long supported – on paper. The vision statement underlying the recent Montreal Road Revitalization project serves as an example of what could be achieved.

Indications are that main street shopping is enjoying a come-back according to a Toronto June 2019 study and a leading commercial realtor in Ottawa even in mid-covid. People want to support local businesses and are turning away from large malls.

In light of the steadily growing intensification along Beechwood, soon to become critical once Wateridge is connected along Hemlock, it is imperative to examine the impacts of greatly increased traffic, affordable housing – particularly for families, services and shopping. There is an opportunity to realize the City's 15-minute neighborhood goal along Beechwood if we plan for it.

Minto has both an opportunity and a responsibility to advance the livability, walkability and workability of our community. A good place to start is to learn from Minto's completed development at Beechwood and MacKay whose setbacks are small, whose retail has been disappointingly scarce (although not for lack of trying), and whose massing resembles a wall instead of a vibrant and attractive local shopping district with street art and foliage.

We remain vigilant these design flaws will not be repeated elsewhere along the street. BVA has proposed to work with Minto to kick-start a process to develop a binding MOU dedicating the ground floor space to retail.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Stikeman

On behalf of Beechwood Village Alliance

c.c. BVA members

## Appendix B

### **Claridge Homes' Development at 89-97 Beechwood Avenue**

On October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Councillor Rawlson King facilitated the last meeting between Claridge Homes, the Vanier Business Improvement Area (BIA), the Beechwood Village Alliance (BVA) and the Lindenlea Community Association (LCA). While the discussion did not bear fruit from the community standpoint, it certainly did not break the resolve to collectively hold Claridge Homes to account.

There have been many changes to the proposed development since the original plans were submitted in 2014. By 2020 changes included:

- the increase from 67 units to 95 unites;
- bringing the amenity space and gym to the front of the building; and most concerning
- the elimination of retail space from the original 12,000+ square feet, and a new proposal of 1,000 square foot spaces “that could be used as live/work or if someone was interested, retail.” From an architectural point of view, these live/work units may be deemed to be two-bedroom units with an outside door into one of the bedrooms—and not commercial specialty retail, as befits a Mainstreet, and a feature requested by the community

At the present the BVA and other community associations in the area, are not satisfied with the lack of a binding commitment from the developer, and are reaching out for support in its attempt to ensure street-oriented retail is reinstated along Beechwood Ave.

In light of the changes identified above, the BVA is suggesting that the revised proposal warrants a full review by the UDRP (Urban Design Review Panel) at the city of Ottawa, for the following reasons.

- First – as outlined above, the increase to the number of units itself constitutes a significant change, as does the de-facto elimination of retail space. Claridge has reduced the original floor to ceiling height in the 2014 elevation plan from 4.55 meters for the retail space to 4.53 meters in December 2015 to 3.1 meters today. This drop in height would curtail the retail uses of the space and is in fact practically the same height as the residential units. It is noted that Main Street and in Hintonburg have retail ceiling heights well in excess of what is now being proposed for the ground floor of this building.

- Second, it is suggested that the three live/work units be converted to retail space and the floor-to-floor height for the ground floor be increased to a minimum of 4 m. What would amount to some 2800 sq. m. of retail space, is a significant compromise over what was originally proposed by Claridge. Such retail is not only crucial to future vitality of Beechwood Ave. but is entirely in line with the City's support of the "15-minute neighborhood."