



ORSA 100 YEARS OTTAWA REGIONAL SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTS

"Anyone can draw a pretty picture on a piece of toilet paper and submit it" - Mayor Larry O'Brien

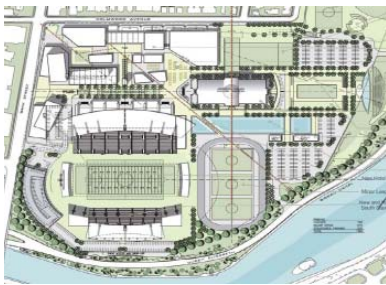
Lansdowne Park: Design Matters

29 October 2009

17 Months & the Three Strike Rule:



Consortium 1st proposal June 2008 - Condo Towers in the Park - attractive enough for City Staff to have the Council-approved Rights to Develop Competition terminated



Consortium 2nd proposal October 2008 - Soccer Fields and Parking in the Park - attractive enough for City Council to want to negotiate a deal



Consortium 3rd proposal September 2009 - City/OSEG want to be Partners

Why Good Design Matters

Great architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design have the ability to transform and enhance people's quality of life. It is about more than just beauty - it matters at all levels of human life. Well-designed Buildings, Spaces and Places will:

- have a positive influence on every person every day
- promote civic pride and foster a sense of identity
- support sustainable living
- improve physical and mental health
- diminish opportunities for crime
- help deliver better public services
- promote equality and community cohesion
- add physical capital and value
- reverse economic and social decline
- generate financial value and wealth
- prevent the long-term costs of bad design

Regardless of who pays for, or profits from, development, everyone has the right to live, work, and relax in well-designed Buildings, Places, and Spaces that inspire and lift the spirits as well as being functional and fit for their purpose. Good design is in the public interest of both current and future generations. Given its prominent location on a World Heritage Site and National Historic Site of Canada, the Lansdowne Park redevelopment is of both international and national importance.

Bad Design and Lansdowne Live

The redevelopment of Lansdowne Park, Ottawa's most promising civic opportunity, will have enduring effects for generations. Good design is not just an add-on, a dressing-up of a planning exercise, or a wrapping around an economic model. Rather good design must be at the heart of the endeavour.

Good design has four key aspects by which this third version of Lansdowne Live can be assessed.

People Places – To be loved, Places must be safe, comfortable, varied, and attractive. They also need to be distinctive and support a range of activities in all seasons. Vibrant Places provide opportunities to both socialize and watch the world go by. Lansdowne Live simply provides several disparate mono-environments. The Stadium and Civic Centre house infrequent events and crowds, but most of the time these facilities sit idle, vacant, and dark. The retail, office space, and hotel are single-purpose destination uses that concentrate people on one section of the site. The Front Lawn will only be truly active during infrequent festivals. Despite the highly populated renderings produced by Lansdowne Live, the development is unlikely to become a beloved People Place.



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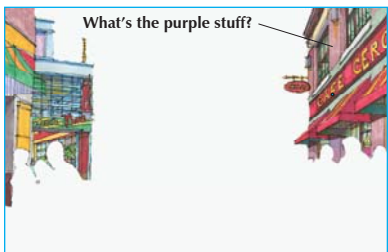
Only limited information has been made publicly available to understand and evaluate what is being proposed. The information appears largely focused on “selling” rather than “informing”. The information provided is far less that one would receive in a competitive process.

Critical information to fully explain the design and the City’s investment is missing, such as scaled floor plans, building sections and elevations. Important features of the site plan, such as the location of parking garage entrances, loading areas, and tractor trailer staging areas are not shown. The Phase 1 design is not illustrated. There is no layout of the parking garage. Important perspective views, such as the view to the corner of Bank Street and Holmwood, are not shown. Indeed, if we remove the Aberdeen Pavilion and Stadium from each perspective there is little to describe the scheme other than hopeful images of people enjoying themselves.

How can the Public and Council know what exactly is being approved?”



Lansdowne Live - before and after removal of the entourage - what exactly is proposed?



Enrich the Existing – Design should enrich the qualities and heritage of existing Places. Whatever the scale, new developments should respond to and complement their settings. Lansdowne Park sits at the crook of the Rideau Canal, at the nexus of Old Ottawa South and the Glebe, and just across from Rideau Gardens. The street patterns, lot sizes, scale of development, and buildings are typically of fine scale, the result of decades of incremental development. Lansdowne Live fails to take design clues from, or enrich and propagate, the existing context. The pattern of streets, width of streets, predilection for axial views, relationship of parking to destinations, volume, and height of buildings are all at odds with the existing context. The historical context of the open spaces and buildings and their patterns of use is disregarded. Major compromises to the heritage characteristics of the Aberdeen Pavilion and Horticultural Building are not acceptable. The filling of the interior volume of the Aberdeen Pavilion with enclosed retail boxes and the arbitrary relocation of the Horticultural Building for simple planning convenience do not enrich their heritage value.

Make Connections – Places must be easy to get to and well integrated both physically and visually with their surroundings so people can move around without effort. With Lansdowne Live, the connections are poorly organized. For pedestrians coming from the north and west population centers there are essentially three bottleneck access points. Pedestrians walking along the Canal need to make their way across the busy Queen Elizabeth Driveway at two points. Those arriving by car typically enter an underground parking garage and then must navigate to their destination. The circulation does not work.

Work with the Landscape – Places should use the site’s intrinsic resources – climate, landform, landscape, and ecology – to enrich the landscape. Lansdowne Live utterly fails to engage in any meaningful way with the Rideau Canal, a National Historic Site of Canada, a Canadian Heritage River, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The site could have ambitiously recreated the original canal inlet, similar to Patterson’s Creek or Brown’s Inlet, or re-aligned Queen Elizabeth Driveway to provide more green space between it and the Canal. A token pond and two possible boat piers are a meagre gesture. The citizens of Ottawa are the custodians of this part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site and all development must enhance, not ignore, this treasure.

To the trained eye of an architect, the OSEG Lansdowne Live proposal does not impress. At best Lansdowne Live is just a list of uses without any meaningful resolution or significant integration. It is about providing things that attract consumers. Lansdowne Live, while certainly an improvement when compared to the atrocious existing circumstances, is inferior compared to most contemporary, similar sized civic projects in major cities. ORSA believes the City, as the capital of Canada, should have a higher standard given the local, national and international importance of this site.

Addressing the Stadium Conundrum

When Frank Clair Stadium and the Civic Centre were designed 40 years ago there was an entirely different attitude to compatibility with context and a fondness for civic mega projects. By today’s design standards it would be unthinkable to place such a large scale structure so close to both the Canal and Bank Street. Its position crowds and dominates the landscape of the Canal. Its location makes it very difficult to establish a traditional commercial development along Bank Street and to use it to improve the linkage between the Glebe and Old Ottawa South.

Today’s good planning principles would have a facility like Frank Clair Stadium and the Civic Centre located on a major public transportation node. The public transportation infrastructure is clearly insufficient to move large crowds to major events and there appears to be no means to effect significant improvement. Stop-gap measures should not be employed.



OSEG partner Shenkman Corporation's Gloucester City Centre superimposed over Lansdowne Park.

"I think we should be examining [the developers'] proposal and going into and looking at the proposal very thoroughly before we open up a \$300,000 boondoggle — what I call an international design competition that is complete and total waste of taxpayers money," - Mayor Larry O'Brien

"Tart it up any way you want. It's still a mall." - Councillor Clive Doucet

"I am ecstatic that the Lansdowne and CFL are one step closer to becoming a reality!" - Councillor Bob Monette

*"Are we building a modern city? Can we plan ahead," ...
"Or are we so tempted by a sports franchise that we'll give away a city jewel for that sports franchise." - Councillor Alex Cullen*

Frank Clair Stadium and the Civic Centre are clearly at the end of their expected service life and are in need of major capital investment that would only extend the service life by two or three decades. The cost of creating a new stadium and hockey arena elsewhere will be moderately higher than the cost of upgrading the aged facilities. New facilities would not be compromised by the need to work around existing undesirable elements. They could be well adapted to soccer, football, lacrosse, track and field, and other sporting events as well as outdoor concerts. The service life of a new facility will be much greater than that of a renovated 42 year old facility and this yields better value for money.

ORSA has no position either in support of, or opposition to, re-establishing a CFL team. It is a business affair that will either succeed or fail based upon public attendance and any subsidies the team may receive.

ORSA does believe that the time has come to plan the decommissioning of Frank Clair Stadium and the Civic Centre. They should be retained for a bit longer to make full use of their remaining service life. Ultimately, they should be removed from Lansdowne Park. Should the City decide that it wants to provide a major stadium and ice hockey facility, then planning should start to establish them in more suitable locations. Any long-term master plan for Lansdowne Park should allow for the eventual demolition of Frank Clair Stadium and the Civic Centre and redevelopment of those lands for better uses.

What the Public Should Expect

The public should have high expectations for the redevelopment of Lansdowne Park. It should be recreated with pride, embody excellence, and be mindful that it is our legacy to succeeding generations.

It should be expected that redevelopment will be a long process, with ongoing debate, and entail a significant investment. Haste in action, avoidance of controversy, and parsimony will undermine a great redevelopment.

Lansdowne Park should largely remain as a civic asset for public use by citizens of the entire City. While some portions might logically be sold or leased, such as a strip of commercial land along Bank Street to propagate the vibrant commercial life of the Glebe, the vast bulk of the site should become an engaging public Space that values its heritage and context while boldly providing for the future.

Lansdowne Park should open to, and be integrated with the Rideau Canal. An easy movement of pedestrians between the Canal and Park is essential and must have priority over vehicular traffic. The original inlet from the Canal into the Park should be re-established. The Queen Elizabeth Driveway should be repositioned. A pedestrian bridge to Rideau Gardens should be constructed. The City, NCC, and Parks Canada should enter into a partnership for a comprehensive world-class redevelopment.

A Better Path to Success

The redevelopment of Lansdowne Park has seized the public interest and brought many issues into vivid focus. There is overwhelming support to transform and improve Lansdowne Park and a strong sentiment that it should continue as a proud civic asset. There is significant mistrust of the process, and no clearly articulated consensus on what should be done. Shrill and misleading commentary from all sides is a direct result of a failed consultation and redevelopment process. The public is justifiably very uneasy about the whole affair. There are alternative processes that could be utilized. The following is one such process that ORSA endorses.

There are only six deliberate steps: **Vision, Master Concept, Master Plan, Implementation Strategy, Business Plan, Development Competitions.**



OSEG partner Trinity Development Group's Chapman Mill's Market Place superimposed over Lansdowne Park.

About ORSA

The Ottawa Regional Society of Architects (ORSA) is a non-profit, volunteer organization, and a Society of the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA), the self-regulating professional body of architects. For more than a century, ORSA has provided a forum for free discussion of professional matters, a focus in the community for activities involving architects, and a centre for educational, community, and social activities of its members. As a point of contact between the public and the architectural profession, ORSA is actively involved in programs that enhance the general level of understanding of architecture and the architectural profession. ORSA is committed to presenting informed opinion on issues affecting architecture in the National Capital Region, as well as increasing public awareness of the social importance of architectural design. This is ORSA's 4th Position Paper on Lansdowne Park.

- 1. VISION:** Re-establish and complete a full public consultation process to establish a Vision. Utilize the material from the Design Lansdowne consultation and Lansdowne Live information sessions, but also hold new, properly facilitated, and highly focused consultation sessions. As part of the process decide on Frank Clair Stadium and the Civic Centres's fate. Gather the views, preferences, and concerns of all stakeholders. Distinguish between "must have" and "nice to have" elements. Do not proceed until a clear, generally supported, Vision is established.
- 2. MASTER CONCEPT:** Conduct an urban design competition on the Master Concept for Lansdowne Park. Engage an external professional adviser to manage the process. The process should be fair and transparent with established evaluation criteria. Call for an expression of interest by potential competitors from across the country and then prepare a shortlist of the most highly qualified teams and invite them to prepare submissions within a set timeframe. Publicly display and debate the submissions. Hold public discussions to determine which ideas are favoured. Have a jury of highly-regarded urban designers, architects and landscape architects along with citizens and stakeholders identify submissions with the greatest merit. Build consensus for a course of action. Select the favoured Master Concept.
- 3. MASTER PLAN:** Engage the author of the favoured Master Concept to assemble a comprehensive design team and develop the design into a detailed long-term Master Plan. Involve the community in an ongoing review process. Continue with a public dialogue and seek to improve the concept. Develop a set of detailed design guidelines and a demonstration Master Plan. Undertake this in parallel with the Implementation Strategy and Business Plan.
- 4. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY:** Devise an integrated Implementation Strategy. Develop a sequence of key projects. Allow for flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances and opportunities. Establish phasing strategies and a sensible timeframe that allows the development to unfold as the City's resources permit. Undertake this in parallel with the Master Plan and Business Plan.
- 5. BUSINESS PLAN:** Devise a Business Plan to ensure the implementation of the Master Plan makes financial sense. Determine sources of revenue through the sale or lease of lands. Evaluate the property taxes generated by redevelopment. Consider the public cost of infrastructure improvements and development of City retained portions of the site. Seek cost sharing by the Federal and Provincial Governments. Pay as you go. Undertake this in parallel with the Master Plan and Implementation Strategy.
- 6. DEVELOPMENT COMPETITIONS:** Provide for Development Competitions to build portions of the Master Plan in accordance with the Implementation Strategy and Business Plan. Those parts that are well-suited to the development community could be implemented through a competitive Rights to Develop Process, similar to that approved by Council for Design Lansdowne. They would submit detailed design and financial proposals, that comply with the established design guidelines, for evaluation by the public and an expert jury. The intent is to allow for multiple developments by a variety of developers. Portions of the Master Plan that are best kept as public assets would be developed by the City, via juried Design Competitions, with profits gained by the sale or lease of parcels of land to developers.

Conclusion

ORSA does not support Lansdowne Live and considers it irredeemably flawed and incapable of being improved in any satisfactory or coherent manner. Attempts to fix the defective Lansdowne Live design concept will be a waste of time and resources.

ORSA is committed to the success of the redevelopment of Lansdowne Park. Our members have a wealth of experience and insight and a willingness to share them with the City. We are prepared to work with the City to see our recommendations implemented. ORSA looks forward to working with the City on this important initiative.