



April 28, 2013

Mrs. Edwards,

You will find below the comments from Action Sandy Hill on the proposed development at 560 Rideau Street and the various applications that have been made by Richcraft. ASH reserves the right to send additional comments at any stage of the process.

- **Overall**, we welcome the development of Rideau Street, which had long suffered from the presence of vacant lots, abandoned or neglected buildings, and low density in both residents and visitors. The following comments are geared towards ensuring that this Richcraft project will in fact contribute to the revitalisation of the Street and businesses, and will do so to the largest extent possible.
- **Front Plaza:** We appreciate the proposed front plaza, and although in some respects it breaks the rhythm of the traditional mainstreet, we believe that it could be made into an inviting space that residents, customers and passers-by could use. However, we believe that some elements are necessary to avoid creating an empty and unused space, particularly in winter when people have less of a tendency to linger outside. We encourage the developer to provide some sophisticated landscaping for the plaza, perhaps with a few clusters of trees, some seating, and plenty of lighting that fits with the proposed lighting for Rideau Street in the context of the renewal project. We appreciate that the plaza will be made of pavers to give it more character. Finally, we strongly urge the developer to create a focal point on the plaza with a central element, such as a fountain or some art – such as a sculpture or an installation. All of these elements should be explicitly included in the site and landscaping plans.
- **Height, massing and density:**
 - Overall: We appreciate the effort to provide a diversity of buildings and heights in the project. We believe that the choice of a four storey building for the Besserer lot is appropriate and will suit the street scape, especially if the proposed landscaping is tastefully done (trees, a wide walkway) and the architecture reflects the heritage character of existing houses on Besserer Street. We also like the difference in height between the two larger buildings, and find the slim tower on the corner and the lower profile in the middle of the block to be a welcome contrast.
 - Podiums: We are of the view that the five storey podium (especially since the first storey will contain retail and will likely be higher than a regular storey) on the two Rideau street buildings is too massive and therefore inappropriate for a traditional main street context and would suggest

reducing the bulk of the podium to more of a human scale. We like the one storey podium that would link all buildings, as it provides interior space to walk around and provides some filler between the buildings, thereby avoiding deserted alleys or wind tunnels. It also limits the size of the plaza, which should be focussed and “cozy” (as opposed to big and empty). Perhaps the roof of that one storey podium could have a rooftop garden or be built as a green roof.

- Height: We also believe that 18 storeys is grossly excessive for the corner tower and believe that the height of the tower should significantly be brought down. The context is not conducive to such height. The block of Rideau where the development will be is not a gateway into the neighbourhood or a focus point for the street, the surrounding buildings are mainly low rise, with some medium rise (and with only one very unfortunate high rise building across the street – which would never have been approved under recent planning guidelines) and does not offer the space for a transition into a largely low-rise residential portion of Sandy Hill. In addition, the fairly recent Uptown Rideau Community Design Plan indicates that the appropriate number of storeys for Rideau as a traditional main street is 4-6, and in 2004, both the City and the OMB opined that 9 storeys would be appropriate for a portion of the property. Therefore, we submit that the height of the tower should be much lower than 18 storeys, and while its height should be determined by planning experts based on character of the street and neighbourhood, context, impact, human scale, and aesthetics, and not on the margin of profit for the developer (see annex for additional analysis on this point), we contend that the chosen height should respect the analysis previously done of the context and property by the City, community and OMB and should not be far off the mark previously established for height, to a maximum of mid-rise. As such, we do not support the application for rezoning part of the corner lot to 18 storeys/58 metres.
- Density: We agree that some intensification is appropriate for Rideau Street and desirable for the wellbeing of the neighbourhood and businesses on the Street. However, intensification should not be achieved at all costs and with a disregard for everything and everyone. For each context and property there is an appropriate density which should be determined based on a number of factors, including the well being of the new residents of the property and the existing residents of the neighbourhood. The property at hand is not close to a transit hub (or future LRT station) and is served by a 4 lane traditional mainstreet and non-transitway bus routes; it is right next to a low rise neighbourhood; and it is served by amenities that are sparse, modest in scale and conceived for low-rise, quieter urban communities. Notably, there is already a shortage of parks and green spaces in Sandy Hill and Lowertown and virtually no spaces for dog-owners to walk their dogs or allow them to run off-leash, and garbage and noise are already issues in Sandy Hill due to increased density and no corresponding increase in amenities, services and infrastructure. The

addition of 226 units would result in a density that is too high and too concentrated on one block in the context of the Sandy Hill and Lowertown neighbourhoods – especially in light of the fact that the same developer and many other developers are planning other projects along Rideau Street that are in the same range in terms of scale. Allowing such density would alter the character of Rideau Street and surrounding neighbourhood, and would add some stress on the community and available amenities. We argue that density should be allowed in equal but lesser measures all along Rideau Street, as various lots are developed, to balance out the demand on services and space, while maintaining the character of the street.

- **Building architecture and materials:**

- Windows: We appreciate the large windows that will appear on the front of the buildings along the sidewalk. It is very important to us that these windows not be obstructed from the inside or the outside once retail businesses move into the premises.
- Façades: The Official Plan describes traditional main streets as small scale buildings with narrow frontages. In light of the fact that this proposal is quite the opposite of small scale and narrow, we would like to see the façade replicate such a pattern. We insist that outside doors to each individual business be added on Rideau Street so that they can be accessed directly from the street. Even if the retail businesses are larger in scale, we would like to see doors that open up unto Rideau Street at short intervals. We observe that the façades are lacking in periodic breaks and variances in their setbacks. We would like to see the façades be articulated in a way that suggests the smaller businesses of a traditional main street and makes the façades more interesting.
- Building materials: We also would suggest that the building materials do not currently reflect the character of Rideau Street. The proposed materials are modern and sleek, but in a way that will date them rapidly. Indeed, they are reminiscent of many Richcraft buildings elsewhere in the city, and they are typical of a very large number of generic condominium towers built in the last five years. We anticipate that this style will be known quickly as representing the late 2010s and its massive condo boom. We see many benefits in making this building higher in quality and unique to Rideau Street, which would make it attractive to buyers, existing residents, as well as passers-by. We suggest using brick or stone on the podiums, or at least the first 2-3 floors of the podiums. Brick in particular would reflect the style of architecture still widely featured in some parts of Rideau Street and all over Sandy Hill. Brick alternating with glass would constitute a classy contrast for the first floor of the two buildings on Rideau. We think that a cornice line at the 2nd or 3rd storey level would add texture and style to the buildings and reflect the height of most buildings traditionally situated along Rideau Street. Please refer to the row of businesses on the North side of Rideau Street between Sussex and

Dalhousie as an example of both a textured and red brick façade. Finally, we believe that a uniform design and the same material, font (for lettering) and colours should be developed for all signs, including business signs that will go up on or around the buildings and that this design should be compatible with the architecture, style and building materials of the buildings, as well as the traditional main street context. We believe that it is possible to give several nods to the heritage and historical characteristics of the neighbourhood while still building a modern and cutting edge development.

- **Balconies:** We note that balconies will grace the façades of the buildings. We do not believe that it is appropriate to have balconies looking down on the residential streets of Sandy Hill if the residents of the new development will be able to make out human activities going on in more private areas, such as backyards, and urge the architect to take into account the privacy of SH residents when placing the balconies.
- **Sidewalks and pedestrian zones:** It is important to the community to have wide and attractive sidewalks on Rideau Street and we appreciate the fact that the setbacks for the two main buildings will provide more space for pedestrians. The gains made in sidewalk width due to the burial of power lines as part of the Rideau Street Redevelopment should not be encroached by the developer. We also very much like the idea of providing space for little patios on the street or plaza. All pedestrian areas should be very well lit and inviting. Finally, we are of the opinion that all entrances to the buildings and stores should be at grade, with no stairs or ramps impeding the access to the buildings and obstructing the windows or doors.
- **Parking and garage:** We like the fact that parking will be below ground, and appreciate that there will be enough parking to accommodate the residents, their visitors and outside patrons of the businesses. The number of bicycle parking spots is also a positive feature. We agree that the entrance to the parking should be on Cobourg. However, we query whether it needs to be so close to the lot on the South-West corner of the block (at Cobourg and Besserer), and wonder whether it if it would be possible to place it slightly closer to Rideau, to preserve the tranquility of the residents on Besserer and Cobourg. In addition, the community is extremely worried about the impact of excavating such a large hole on the block, in light of the nature of the soil (clay) and the proximity of many heritage foundations. We insist that all necessary studies be completed to ensure that no damage results from the construction on neighbouring properties and that no permanent alteration of the soil or water table is allowed to occur.
- **Application to amend the Sandy Hill Secondary Plan:** We oppose the application to amend the SHSP to insert an allowance for a high-rise building. As you know, the SHSP, although dated, was the result of a highly collaborative, highly successful process in which the community was involved and engaged, and represents both the community vision and the policy vision for the Sandy Hill

neighbourhood. Sandy Hill, in light of its historic, heritage, low-rise residential character is not an appropriate neighbourhood for high rise buildings. Should the City be of the opinion that the SHSP no longer reflects the reality or vision for Sandy Hill, it should propose the renewal of it through a full, thoughtful and collaborative process with the community before any building contrary to the plan is approved. Sound planning cannot be done through a patchwork of amendments to suit the immediate needs and desires of one and every developer. We are of the firm view that a proper planning process must occur (with consultations, studies, planning rationales, and a coherent approach and vision for the entire neighbourhood) before the Secondary Plan can be amended, especially in such a fundamental manner and radically opposite way to what it indicates currently.

- **Application to amend the Uptown Rideau Community Design Plan:** The URCDP is fairly recent (2004) and was also the result of extensive consultations and a lengthy and detailed planning process. Both the City Planning department and the community stand behind it as laying out the appropriate features for Rideau Street between the Rideau River and King Edward Avenue. The URCDP is clear in its statement that the height of buildings on Rideau should be between 4-6 storeys in order to preserve and perpetuate the character of the Street, as well as create that character where it is currently lacking. Amending this Plan to allow for high rise buildings in some areas would completely negate the overall objective of the Plan and be contrary to what is intended and desirable in order to maintain the traditional main street character of the street. Again, we argue that allowing the application to amend the URCDP would make a mockery of the expertise of city and other involved planners, of the involvement of the community, and of the planning process as a whole. Should the URCDP need to be changed, it should only be changed after a full review of the Plan and consultations with the community are carried out, and only if it can be demonstrated that the circumstances have changed radically since 2005 and that there is a strong planning rationale behind the proposed changes.

We would be happy to discuss the above comments with you and would like to receive feedback on our comments from the City Planning Department. This development is key to setting the tone for the revitalization and re-development of Rideau Street, and we urge the City to be ambitious in raising the bar for developers so that we can all benefit from superior planning and architecture on Rideau Street and make Uptown Rideau into a cutting edge area and a prime destination.

Sincerely,

Sophie Beecher
Planning Co-Chair, Action Sandy Hill

cc Christopher Collmorgen, Mathieu Fleury, Urban Design Review Panel