



June 2, 2019

Andrew McCreight
Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development
110 Laurier Ave West
Ottawa, ON K1P 1J1

ROBINSON VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS - ACTION SANDY HILL (ASH) RESPONSE

#134 Robinson Avenue D07-12-18-0172

#19 Robinson Avenue D07-12-18-0174

#29 Robinson Avenue D07-12-18-0164

#36 Robinson Avenue D07-12-19-0044

Dear Mr. McCreight:

ASH has reviewed the subject proposals and offers the following comments and suggestions.

Introduction

The four subject developments would occupy almost all of the remaining under-developed land in the Robinson Village neighbourhood of Sandy Hill and are all proposed by the same developer; for this reason the applications are commented on as a group with address-specific comments included where appropriate.

The applications comprise:

- 4 developments having ~350 rental units in total:
 - Three 3 story buildings (~50 units each, 6 stories permitted for each site) with a request to waive all requirements for tenant car parking.
 - One 9 story building (~190 units, 8 stories permitted per City solicitor, letter 12-Aug-2015) with a request to reduce tenant parking to ~50% of the zoning bylaw requirement.

ASH and current Robinson Village residents are not against development in the neighbourhood, but insist that it is done in accordance with the Sandy Hill Secondary Plan (SHSP), or with intensification in accordance with the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Plan. However, a large number of existing residents have expressed major concerns about the four proposed developments, believe in some areas they do not comply with the policies in the SHSP, and strongly oppose the applications being approved in their present form.

Unit mix & the “Missing Middle”

ASH believes that Sandy Hill in general suffers from *The Missing Middle* – i.e. a lack of the kind of not-single-family, not-condo-tower-apartment style of housing that provides enough room for a couple of parents and kids, or young professionals, or seniors, has some kind of ground-level space outside, and



doesn't cost a fortune. The current imbalance in missing middle housing supply has been caused by inappropriate intensification through development that does not serve the full range of potential Sandy Hill residents.

ASH insists that the aims of the SHSP, especially those policy aims listed in section 5 of the Plan, are respected:

1. *To preserve and enhance Sandy Hill as an attractive residential neighbourhood, especially for family living.*
2. *To provide for a broad range of socio-economic groups.*
3. *To accept a modest increase in population, primarily as a way of housing some of the growth in the Central Area labour force.*
4. *To distinguish among types of new housing on the basis of scale, and to locate the different types in areas appropriate to them.*
5. *To provide a wide variety of housing, including accommodation for low-income people, the elderly, the handicapped and others with special needs.*

The subject applications threaten to exacerbate the Missing Middle problem in Sandy Hill generally, and more significantly within Robinson Village because of a unit mix that is predominantly small bachelor and 1-bedroom rental apartments¹. The existing residents of Robinson Village are very sensitive to this issue and it was one of the top two concerns raised in comments on the applications copied to ASH.

In addition, all of the buildings lack the level of tenant parking that the applicable bylaw requires: three of the buildings have no tenant parking, and the fourth (#36) has only ~50% of the zoning bylaw requirement. While ASH supports increased use of transit and active transportation, the lack of amenities close to Robinson Village (especially grocery stores and other retail) means that a vehicle is a necessity for many professional couples, young families and seniors who might want to live in the neighbourhood. The lack of tenant parking is not even minimally compensated for by provision of any vehicle-sharing spaces or additional bicycle parking. Furthermore, the bicycle parking proposed for #19, 29 & 134 is in an unsecured outside area that will discourage its use.

The unit mix seems in reality to be mostly aimed at University of Ottawa students who would be expected to walk (not use transit) to either the principal or Lees campuses; not professional couples, families and seniors. In this way, the development will not “fill the missing middle” and risks producing a demographic monoculture in Robinson Village - not the diversity sought by ASH, existing residents and the SHSP.

ASH has collated information from building permits for Sandy Hill since 2012, and can see that since that time, 158 bachelor units have been proposed/approved. This means that almost 80% of the units being proposed for the whole of Sandy Hill are concentrated in the Robinson Village neighbourhood.

ASH contends that the applications fail to meet policy aims 1, 2 and 3 of the SHSP listed above, in that they are not designed to be attractive for *family living*, do not *provide for a broad range of socio-*

¹ E.g. the proposals for #134 Robinson Avenue (D07-12-18-0172), #19 Robinson Avenue (D07-12-18-0174) & #29 Robinson Avenue (D07-12-18-0164) add ~150 units to Robinson Village, and once built would probably add 50-75% more residents to the neighbourhood. The floor plans show relatively small units, ~80% bachelors (~370sq ft), 15% 1BR (~470sq ft) and ~5% 2BR. No floor plans or unit descriptions were provided for #36 but given the density of units, it can be assumed that the mix will be mostly small bachelor and 1BR.



economic groups and (despite at least doubling the existing neighbourhood population) do not *provide a wide variety of housing*.

ASH requests that the unit mix be revised to appeal to a broader demographic by:

- **Revising the unit mix to include more and larger 2-3 BR units.**
- **Complying with the zoning bylaw parking requirements fully or substituting some of the bylaw mandated parking with vehicle share spaces and a higher number of secure bicycle parking spaces.**
- **Adding tenant storage lockers, either on-site or in-unit laundry, and easy access to the exterior amenity spaces for all tenants.**
- **Considering adding small scale food retail (convenience store/dairy) to the application (Robinson Village suffers from a lack of the type of local retail that supports; adding some would increase the neighbourhood appeal for those looking for Missing Middle accommodation). Note: ASH and Robinson Village residents *do not* feel that fast-food chain outlets such as are seen incorporated into other student-oriented housing projects in Sandy Hill are appropriate additions to the neighbourhood.**

#36: Scale, design

The design for a 9-storey building at #36 immediately next to 2/3 storey homes makes no attempt at a transition between the low- and high-rise buildings. The building mass is further emphasised by the minimal and visually ineffective stepback of the higher floors². The 2015 decision to allow 8 stories on the site was in the context of a condominium building design that had only 8 stories in total (not 9) and with a significant stepback for stories 7-8 as well as a footprint that did not go right to the limit in the way the proposed design does.

The height and design of the building and its close proximity to existing homes will rob them of substantial amounts of sunshine as shown in the sun shadow study in the application.

ASH contends that the application for #36 fails to meet policy aims 5 because its inappropriate scale and massing does not *distinguish among types of new housing on the basis of scale, and to locate the different types in areas appropriate to them*.

ASH requests that the design of #36 be revised to reduce the overwhelming and out of place visual effect of its height and adverse shadowing effects on neighbouring homes.

Robinson Village Community Building Plan

The applicants included in the applications for #134, #19 & #29 Robinson Avenue a “Robinson Village Community Building Plan”. The stated purpose of this plan is: “...to provide direction and guidance for

² Despite a claim of stepbacks in the planning rationale document, it is clear from the elevations provided that they are not present at all on the east side and are minimal in visual effect on the N, S, & W sides. Any visual effect of the minimal stepback to reduce the apparent bulk of the building relative to its neighbours (and in fact the entire surrounding area) is mostly negated by the protruding features on the N, S, & E sides from stories 3-7, and the extended roof which appears to extend out even beyond the footprint of the lower stories.



the future development of Robinson Village, including improved connections to the rest of the city and the intensification of Robinson Village West...”.

- ASH & Robinson Village residents feel that this Plan should have been developed in consultation with the City and existing residents, rather than by consultants also acting for the proponents.
- Much of the Plan is a restatement of existing City of Ottawa documents. To the extent that the Plan includes new policies or objectives specific to Robinson Village, the proposed developments run counter to those objectives in some cases:
 - 4.3.1 Objectives “To establish a range of residential densities and foster a mix of unit types.”. The proposed developments – as detailed above – do not include a wide range of unit types, being predominantly bachelor or 1-bedroom designs. Given that the proposed developments would largely complete the near-term development of Robinson Village West, they would obviously prevent this objective from being achieved.
 - Plan 4.3.2 e) “Achieve compatibility with existing residential uses by ensuring an appropriate transition in use and built form as set out in Section 4.11 of the Official Plan.” The proposal for #36 clearly does not attempt “an appropriate transition in use and built form”.
 - Plan 4.3.2 f) “Development with less dependence on private automobiles while considering the introduction of car sharing services and enhanced supply of bicycle parking and associated facilities.”. None of the proposed designs provides for car sharing or “enhanced supply of bicycle parking and associated facilities”.

Thank you for taking into account these comments, and we look forward to seeing the next iteration of the development application, and plans.

Please do not hesitate to contact ASH with any questions you may have.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Susan Young'.

Susan Young
President, Action Sandy Hill