

November 18, 2019

Andrew McCreight
Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development
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ROBINSON VILLAGE APPLICATIONS FOR REZONING - ACTION SANDY HILL (ASH) RESPONSE

17, 19, 23 Robinson – D02-02-19-0105

Requested amendments

1. Reduce the required residential parking from 17 spaces to 3 spaces
2. Increase the maximum walkway width from 1.25 metres to 3.15 metres.

27, 29, 31 Robinson – D02-02-19-0103

Requested amendments

1. Reduce the required residential parking from 17 spaces to 3 spaces
2. Reduce the minimum landscape area from 30% required to 26%.

130, 134, 138 Robinson – D02-02-19-0100

Requested amendments

1. Reduce the required residential parking from 17 spaces to 3 spaces
2. Reduce the minimum landscape area from 30% required to 28.9%.

36 Robinson – D02-02-19-0101

Requested amendments

1. Reduce the required residential parking from 81 spaces to 53 spaces
2. Allow the front ground floor decks to project 3.0 metres up to the lot line whereas a 2.0 metre projection no closer than 1.0 metres to the lot line is permitted
3. Increase the maximum walkway width from 1.25 metres to 4.5 metres.

Dear Mr. McCreight,

ASH has reviewed again the subject applications for rezoning and following attendance at the second public meeting on these developments, offers the following comments and suggestions. We would like to reiterate that considerable changes to the proposals will still need to be made, in order to make them acceptable. We are dismayed at the lack of compromise the developer appears willing to undertake when faced with the clear opposition from neighbours in Robinson Village.

The under-provision of parking and the less-than-generous unit sizes suggest that the proponent will target University of Ottawa students (who would be expected to walk, not use transit, to either the main or Lees campuses), rather than professional couples, families and seniors. As staff is aware, Sandy Hill's "missing middle" is not the student demographic, which is already well-served by our neighbourhood (albeit not adequately served in the City-wide context). By not catering to diverse demographics, and not providing adequate parking, the project risks producing a demographic monoculture in Robinson Village - not the diversity sought by ASH, existing residents, the Sandy Hill Secondary Plan (SHSP), and the City according to #4 of its 5 Big Moves, which calls for "inclusive, all-age communities".

Notwithstanding the outsize scale of #36 Robinson, ASH also requests that the City apply its inclusionary zoning policy to this development. Even with the reduced number of units as requested by ASH and neighbours to allow the building to fit the scale of its environs, the City needs to facilitate that a percentage of the units be made affordable for low-income residents, as a contribution to the rental housing crisis for this portion of Ottawa's population.

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.

ASH has previously commented on these development proposals (ASH RESPONSE - ROBINSON VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS_190528 clean.pdf) but notes that your email subject "Heads-up: Robinson Avenue – 4 Rezoning applications and Site Plan updates" of 6/9/19 includes the following summary of changes as well as notice of the rezoning applications:

17, 19, 23 Robinson

- *46 dwelling units with 11 bachelor, 14 one bedroom, and 21 two-bedroom units.*
- *Parking increased to 6 parking spaces (3 visitor) with one of the spaces targeted as a car-share space.*
- *An extra storey has been added to accommodate the increase in two-bedroom units, making it a five-storey building.*
- *The mid-block connection to Robinson Field was removed.*

27, 29, 31 Robinson

- *46 dwelling units with 6 bachelor, 19 one bedroom, and 21 two-bedroom units.*
- *Parking increased to 6 parking spaces (3 visitor) with one of the spaces targeted as a car-share space.*
- *An extra storey has been added to accommodate the increase in two-bedroom units, making it a four-storey building.*

130, 134, 138 Robinson

- 46 dwelling units with 6 bachelor, 19 one bedroom, and 21 two-bedroom units.
- Parking increased to 6 parking spaces (3 visitor) with one of the spaces targeted as a car-share space.
- An extra storey has been added to accommodate the increase in two-bedroom units, making it a five-storey building.

36 Robinson

- No changes made.

Our comments below address the design changes as well as the rezoning applications. ASH invited Robinson Village residents to copy us on any comments they submitted to the City and have taken note of those comments in preparing this response.

All: Parking

All the building designs include significantly less tenant parking provision than the applicable bylaw requires. While ASH supports increased use of transit and active transportation, the lack of amenities close to Robinson Village – in particular grocery stores and other services such as health clinics – means that a vehicle is a necessity for many professional couples, young families and seniors who might want to live in the neighbourhood^{1, i}. The lack of tenant parking is not fully compensated for by provision of vehicle sharing spaces or any additional bicycle parking.

All the local residents who copied ASH on their comments identified concerns with the lack of parking provision in the designs:

- Weekday parking is often near capacity in the neighbourhood as a whole due to on-street “park and ride” parking by non-residents;
- Parking is especially constrained during winter as incomplete snow clearance means the street is often reduced to a single lane;
- Illegal parking combined with partial street blockage due to incomplete snow clearance can restrict access for garbage trucks, school buses and emergency services, and this has already occurred when fire trucks could not reach a building fire; and,
- There is no elasticity in parking supply due to the “island” nature of the neighbourhood, i.e. no nearby parkable streets for overflow.

Residents are not convinced that tenants in the proposed buildings and their visitors will not park vehicles on the street, thereby adding to the existing difficult parking situation.

ASH requests that the applicants comply with the zoning bylaw parking requirements fully (possibly by assigning some of the bylaw-mandated parking as vehicle share spaces).

Bicycle parking

¹ The City of Ottawa *Transit-Oriented Development Guidelines* read: "These guidelines are to be applied throughout the City for all development within a 600 metre walking distance of a rapid transit stop or station,". Per Google maps only one of the sites (#19) is actually within 600 metres (see endnote). The most direct walking route also involves significant grade changes to cross over highway 417 which separates Robinson Village from Lees transit station. ASH contends that while many of the Guidelines can be used to justify providing less parking, developers should not rely on those that favour their proposal in isolation. For example, the proposed projects do not address Guideline 6: “Create pedestrian and cycling “short cuts” that lead directly to transit.”. Suggesting residents take the informal trail up to Lees is completely unacceptable. See also Annex A.

The bicycle parking proposed for #19, 29 & 134 is in unsecured outside areas that will discourage its use (Robinson Village residents have experienced bicycle thefts even from existing individual properties).

ASH requests that the bicycle parking be in a secured area, preferably inside the buildings, to discourage theft of tenants' property.

19/29/134 Robinson: Design, unit mix, amenity space

The email referenced above (“Heads-up: Robinson Avenue – 4 Rezoning applications and Site Plan updates” of 6/9/19) indicated that there were 21 2BR units in each of the revised designs. The floor plans currently available at Ottawa Devapps² seem to show #19: 12, #29: 18 & #134: 18 2BR units.

Regardless of the exact numbers, ASH acknowledges that the unit mix now includes significantly more 2BR units (albeit small ones) for all three buildings, which is closer to addressing the specific “missing middle” housing shortage in Sandy Hill.

ASH notes that, based on the submitted floorplans, the 2nd submission designs include the following changes:

17, 19, 23 Robinson: ground floor amenity room added, no laundry in either submission (presumed in-suite).

27, 29, 31 Robinson: ground floor amenity room added, no laundry in either submission (presumed in-suite).

130, 134, 138 Robinson: ground floor amenity room added, common laundry removed in 2nd submission (so presumed in-suite).

ASH and current residents remain concerned that the outside (roof top) amenity spaces shown in the designs have been included simply to reduce the construction cost (by limiting the size of the internal amenity areas) and will lead to problems of noise and loss of privacy for people in neighbouring homes (as well as being unusable for tenants during the colder months). ASH agrees with neighbours that this is not an appropriate feature for these locations. More appropriate would be to reinstate the connection to Strathcona Park, and ensure it is permeable.

ASH still requests that the designs be improved further to appeal to a broader demographic by including:

- **Some 3 BR units in each building**
- **Tenant storage lockers**

ASH requests that the roof top amenity spaces be replaced with something that does not threaten the enjoyment of residents in neighbouring properties and is more useful year-round for the tenants.

#36: Scale, design

Despite the relatively minor changes to the design ASH reiterates our previous comments:

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 stepback of the higher floors. The 2015 decision to allow 8 stories on the site was in

² 19 (http://webcast.ottawa.ca/plan/All_Image%20Referencing_Site%20Plan%20Application_Image%20Reference_2019-09-11%20-%202nd%20Submission%20-%20Elevations%20and%20Floor%20Plans%20-%20D07-12-18-0174.PDF); 29 (http://webcast.ottawa.ca/plan/All_Image%20Referencing_Site%20Plan%20Application_Image%20Reference_2019-09-11%20-%202nd%20Submission%20-%20Elevations%20and%20Floor%20Plans%20-%20D07-12-18-0164.PDF); 134 (http://webcast.ottawa.ca/plan/All_Image%20Referencing_Site%20Plan%20Application_Image%20Reference_2019-09-11%20-%202nd%20Submission%20-%20Elevations%20and%20Floor%20Plans%20-%20D07-12-18-0172.PDF)

the context of a condominium building design that had only 8 stories in total (not 9), 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 (for example jogging the building footprint to exactly following the property line on the south side).

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 (of the Sandy Hill Secondary Plan) 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.*

The location of the parking garage entrance at the west edge of the building next to a residence, rather than in the middle of the façade, will create unnecessary noise for the neighbouring residence from vehicle and door noise. Residents of immediately neighbouring homes to the east are also concerned at the loss of privacy arising from having living area windows in #36 overlooking 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, to bring it down to a scale more suitable for its environment.

ASH requests that the parking garage entrance be relocated to the middle of the façade rather than the end.

#36: Ground floor deck setback

ASH can see no justification presented for pushing the footprint of this already overly-dominant structure further towards the surrounding public space by encroaching on the required 1m buffer between the decks and the lot line. Not the least reason is that it is likely to lead to an already narrow footpath being impassable during winter due to snow build up.

ASH requests that the current zoning requirement for a 1m buffer be upheld.

#36 Unit mix

ASH is disappointed that no significant improvements have been made to the unit mix of #36, which still comprises almost entirely 1BR and bachelor units.

ASH maintains its request that the design of #36 be revised to have a unit mix that addresses the wider needs for rental accommodation in Sandy Hill. This means including a significant proportion of 2 & 3 BR units and providing tenant storage lockers and either in-unit or on-site laundry.

#36: Rooftop terrace

ASH and current residents remain concerned that the outside (roof top) amenity space shown in the design has been included simply to reduce the construction cost (by limiting the size of the internal amenity area) and will lead to problems of noise and loss of privacy for people in neighbouring homes (as well as being unusable for tenants during the colder months). ASH does not believe this is an appropriate feature for this location.

ASH requests that the roof top amenity spaces be replaced with something that does not threaten the enjoyment of residents in neighbouring properties and is more useful year-round for the tenants.

All: external design

The external designs for all 4 developments are very uniform in the street facing facades:



Given the proportion of the Robinson Village street scape these projects would occupy it would be desirable if the designs were not so similar.

ASH requests the designs exhibit greater variety so as not to overwhelm the existing streetscape.

Robinson Village Community Building Plan

ASH is disappointed that despite work being done by the proponents and the City to progress the four proposals which, if approved, would add well over 300 new units to the Robinson Village neighbourhood, there has been no further activity to engage the current residents or ASH in developing the Robinson Village Community Building Plan referenced in the applications. This Plan cannot be considered part of the application.

With the residents of Robinson Village, ASH looks forward to being kept informed as these development proposals progress toward a final design that is compatible with the built form and neighbourhood mix, and contributes to easing the particular car-related challenges the Village has.

Yours truly,

Susan Young
President, Action Sandy Hill

ANNEX A: Distance to Lees LRT station

Google Maps screenshot showing walking distance (600m) to Lees transit station from #19 Robinson.

