



January 19, 2020

Steve Gauthier
Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development
110 Laurier Ave West
Ottawa, ON K1P 1J1

114, 118, 122 Russell Ave.: D07-12-19-0181

Dear Mr. Gauthier,

Action Sandy Hill (ASH) is a volunteer-led community association that is advocating for gentle densification using a diversity of "missing middle" housing options, to sustain a healthy balance of long- and short-term residents in our neighbourhood. ASH supports appropriate, high-quality development that contributes to the character and sustainability of historic Sandy Hill. As a downtown and destination neighbourhood, we feel this approach will contribute to the economic health of the City of Ottawa.

Please could you ensure that our full set of comments is shared with the developer(s) of this project, and we ask that the architect and the planner who wrote the Planning rationale also see them.

A reminder that the Sandy Hill Secondary Plan, last updated in 2015, calls for:

5.3.1 General

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 maintain and co-ordinate both the local functions of Sandy Hill (primarily as a residential neighbourhood) and the functions that serve a wider area (e.g., the mainstreet mixed uses area along Rideau Street and the University of Ottawa). [Amendment 19, January 12, 2005]

5.3.2 Land Use

1. Residential Land Use

1. To preserve and enhance the existing stock of good housing.
2. To distinguish among types of new housing on the basis of scale, and to locate the different types in areas appropriate to them.

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3. To provide a wide variety of housing, including accommodation for low-income people, the elderly, the handicapped and others with special needs.

Our comments are as follows:

1. Street context: This block of Russell, if this project and that of 71 Russell proceed as proposed, will suffer the loss of three large red-brick character homes (the first being on the southwest corner of Russell and Osgoode). Whereas in the past these types of houses would have been the object of renovations to increase their density, instead we are witnessing wholesale demolition. This is a trend that is undermining the built fabric of our neighbourhood.

We strongly encourage the City Planning Department and the developer to work together to envisage how the house at 114 Russell can be re-purposed to increase its density, while maintaining its built form. We wonder if some of it could be counted as interior amenity space for the entire development, if it were connected to, for example, a single slightly larger and sympathetic stacked apartment building to its south (where 122 and 118 Russell stand now). The current kitchen could be shared by tenants in suites on its second floor (see the article here for an example of this co-living model: <https://rentals.ca/blog/more-young-professionals-choosing-co-living-spaces-in-downtown-toronto>). Such an approach would be a welcome and important signal for future development in Sandy Hill. If minor variances were necessary in such a scenario, Action Sandy Hill would consider not opposing them.

2. Tenant diversity: We encourage the proponents to design their units to appeal to a broad range of tenants who are looking to make Sandy Hill their home for its proximity to shops, services and downtown, for its built character (to which your building will contribute), and for its inviting, green street- and landscapes. While the current floor plans show different-sized apartments, when the living area of a 4-bedroom apartment is smaller than that of a 1-bedroom, we wonder at how attractive the units will be to young professionals or families. It will also be important to offer in-suite and basement storage space for these tenant types. These are missing from the provided floor plans.

3. Design: As the proposal is situated in a mature, low-rise neighbourhood, we have structured our comments with respect to the principal applicable elements in the City of Ottawa's Design Guidelines for Low-rise Infill Housing, as we place considerable importance on new builds being sympathetic to their existing surroundings.

a. Streetscape - "Reflect the desirable aspects of the established streetscape character." We note that the front of your building follows the same front line as its neighbours and will be landscaped. We'd like to emphasize the importance of pedestrian-scale lighting around the entryway only, that points downward in order to minimize light pollution and prevent spillage onto neighbouring properties.

b. Landscape - We encourage as much front yard tree planting as possible to contribute to the canopy of Russell Ave., and the use of permeable pavers (turf blocks) for the parking spaces, to maintain absorption of rain and snow melt.

c. Built form - "Infill development should be a desirable addition to an existing neighbourhood. ... recognizing the established scale and pattern of the context and the grain of the neighbourhood."



The Design Guidelines suggest:

"Design infill to be rich in detail and to enhance public streets and spaces, while also responding to the established patterns of the street and neighbourhood. To appropriately transition into an established neighbourhood, consider elements from the neighbourhood such as: materials, patterns and colours used in wall treatments; cornice lines, form of the roofline and chimney details; size, shape, placement and number of doors and windows; the pattern and location of projections, recesses, front porches, stoops, and balconies".

There are a number of examples directly from nearby Russell Ave. properties to draw from to modify the design of your very institutional-looking building, to better integrate into the existing built character. For example, you could make the front facade of the building pick up some of the brick design above and below the windows or embedded in the walls. Your building needs some articulation and window treatment to better fit in with its neighbours on the street. Also, most houses are articulated with at a minimum, front porches. Your use of balconies is appropriate, as they support "eyes on the street" and interactions with neighbours. This is presuming your tenants will not be exclusively students, some of whom unfortunately choose to disrupt neighbours and subsequently require City resources to enforce the zero-tolerance noise bylaw that exists in Sandy Hill. A good example is 167 Russell, where three lots were combined in the 1980s to create a low-rise apartment-building with an articulated brick façade that melds well with the street. The aesthetics of brick and articulation that reflect the porches and look of the neighbouring houses is commendable. Again, we'd like to reiterate how adding some character and style will contribute to keeping long-term tenants, and lower operating costs.

4. One point with respect to the planning rationale for this project: it is misleading to state that the existing houses are past their economic life. To say so would require full cost accounting, including the real economic and environmental costs of demolition and disposal, and a value assigned to the houses' embodied carbon. It is insufficient merely to state that they have reached the end of their useful economic life. Planning professionals should be required to substantiate such comments if they make them. With upkeep, these three houses could outlive us all.

Finally, we submit that the approach we propose here would meet the Provincial Policy Statement's intent for appropriate densification, and therefore also that of the City's Official Plan with respect to appropriate built form, and the conditions set out in the Sandy Hill Secondary Plan. The plans as they currently stand represent over-densification in a neighbourhood that has already seen more than 2,250 bedrooms added to its ranks since 2012. In particular, the case for demolishing 114 has not been made. We believe the developer should integrate the house into any new development and efforts made to appeal to broader demographics (e.g., young families, young professionals, retired couples) than the typical offerings we have seen over the past decade, by designing housing that is suitable to their needs (e.g., with more living space, and storage).

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide constructive comments. We are counting on the City Planning Department to take a proactive approach with the developer and would be happy to attend any meetings that may be required to work toward the scenario we propose here. We look forward to seeing the next iteration of the plans.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Young".

Susan Young
President, Action Sandy Hill