

## Community uproar over draft Official Plan

By Anwer and Areeba Khan

Communities from Cumberland to Lowertown to Goulbourn are upset, and have let the City know. Friday, 12th March was the formal deadline for submission of comments for the draft Official Plan (OP) and the City was inundated with comments, feedback, suggestions, and complaints.

The City acknowledged that it has received an “unprecedented level of public engagement on the draft OP, “far surpassing anything we had projected and what occurred during the last OP update.” While welcoming some positive developments, hundreds of residents and community associations have written in to recommend improvements and to castigate the City for a rushed and flawed engagement process and an overly complex and incomplete OP. This plan was drafted and rushed through



**MONOTTAWA:** The new official planning game where the goal is to regenerate properties by replacing houses with large multi-unit buildings.

during a once-in-a-century pandemic that has revealed new priorities and vulnerabilities for residents, businesses, community associations and the City itself.

In March 2019 the City launched a multi-year process to replace the 2013 OP, with the release of discussion papers on key issues facing the City. This was followed by preliminary policy directions in August 2019, with Council voting to establish key directions of the draft OP, which was released in November 2020. From the beginning, the OP was a hasty process, with a politically determined deadline that did not change despite the challenges encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ottawans and local community associations across Ottawa were united in complaining about the sheer complexity of the OP. It has 264 pages, with multiple annexes and schedules and citations and references. There is confusing new and generic terminology to keep track of, such as transect, regeneration and overlay. There are 21 one-pagers available with feedback

*Official Plan page 4*

## Introducing ‘Friends’ of Lowertown parks

By Hannah Manning and Sandra Milton

Over the last year, we’ve seen more than ever how important our neighbourhood parks are. Lowertown residents are fortunate to have so many choices, whether it’s Bordeleau Park on the banks of the Rideau River, heritage-designated Macdonald Gardens, dual-purpose Cathcart Square, or one of many others.

Since August 2020, a coalition of residents has been meeting as Friends of Lowertown Parks. Together, we share a passion and interest in the care and maintenance of our parks. The coalition currently includes residents actively in-



involved as volunteers through Friends of Bingham Park, Bordeleau Park, Cathcart Square, Cumberland Park, Jules Morin Park, King Edward Park, Linear Park, Macdonald Gardens Park, Raphael Brunet Park and Rose Park.

We are aware of the need to foster and develop an appreciation and understanding of the uniqueness of each park while identifying common issues that can be addressed in cooperation with the City. Our goal in forming the coalition was to have a voice, and to understand the needs of each park and how best to ask for information.

*Parks page 18*

## Building resilient neighbourhoods means affordable housing for all

By Mattheu Fleury

As a City, we need a culture change.

No one knows better than our community. The City of Ottawa faces big City challenges when it comes to housing, mental health and addictions. Lowertown has lived these evolving challenges directly.

We need to stop managing crises and get ahead in preventing homelessness.

13 000 - the number of people on Ottawa’s waiting list for affordable housing. And 2,000 – that is the number of those residents who are without a home. Who are using Emergency Shelters nightly in our City. The remaining residents on the list, re-



quire affordability to maintain their current homes.

On March 10th, City Council rubber stamped a Work Plan and Long Range Financial Plan that prioritized increased emergency shelter spending, more money spent on “transi-

*Affordable page 3*



The Echo, a non-profit community newspaper, is supported financially by its advertisers and the Lowertown Community Association. Opinions expressed are those of contributors and advertisers and do not necessarily represent those of the volunteer editorial staff.

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The Echo welcomes articles, letters, photographs, notices and other material of interest to its readers in the Lowertown community. Name and telephone number of contributor must be included.

If you'd like to write articles, draw cartoons or other illustrations for stories, or take photographs on assignment, please email and leave your name and telephone number at [echo@lowertown-basseville.ca](mailto:echo@lowertown-basseville.ca). No age restrictions. The Echo reserves the right to edit in part or in whole all contributions.

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Tous les articles, lettres, illustrations, photos et autre matériel qui peuvent intéresser les lecteurs de la Basse-Ville sont les bienvenus. Leurs auteurs doivent indiquer leur nom et leur numéro de téléphone.

Les personnes qui aimeraient collaborer avec l'Echo sont invitées à envoyer un courriel au [echo@lowertown-basseville.ca](mailto:echo@lowertown-basseville.ca) en indiquant leur nom et leur numéro de téléphone. Nous apprécions la contribution de tous, quel que soit leur âge. L'Echo se réserve le droit de modifier en tout ou en partie les documents.

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*Letter to the Editor*

Douglas R. Wallace  
294 Cathcart St.  
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March 24, 2021

Mr. John Chenier,  
  
Editor  
  
[echo@Lowertown-basseville.ca](mailto:echo@Lowertown-basseville.ca)

I write to commend you not only for your superb Community Newspaper in general but for two articles in your latest edition which I found of exceptional merit. The first is your lead story on the threat to the “fifteen-minute city” caused by the loss of two community oriented businesses.; Trudel Hardware and The Bytowne Cinema. Well said ! A community is made up of many small pieces, each important in its own way.

The second is the related article by our Association President, Norman Moyer. I found Mr. Moyer’s article outlining the three major threats to our community and the required action to ward off these threats , to be succinct, insightful and right on the money. Parts may have been said before but never with such clarity and irrefutable logic.

This article should be read and reread by every politician and would-be politician wishing to represent this community.

Sincerely yours,  
  
Douglas R. Wallace

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# NEWS - NOUVELLES

## Affordable housing

tional housing” and not enough money dedicated to capital investments for new affordable housing.

16 votes in favour and 7 votes against – including my voice in opposition.

What seems lost in this plan is the people. Public investments need to be hyper focused on securing and creating affordable and adequate housing.

Investing \$14.6M per year in new affordable housing units falls short. We must be bold in our investment plans.

Last year the City spent close to \$38 million on emergency shelters and motels. It’s time to match this spending in yearly capital investments for new

units. By investing in capital projects, we pay off operational pressures.

*With our experience and knowledge, we are in a unique position to speak up and support a shift in approach and in public investments.*

Lowertown is one of the most desirable neighbourhoods in our City. Mixed-use, mixed-income, walkable amenities – a community where you can truly work, live and play.

We are a welcoming area and want to support our community’s most vulnerable. With our experience and knowledge, we are in a unique position to speak up and support a shift in approach and in public investments.

As a neighbourhood faced with immense pressures due to a concentration of services, the City needs to urgently move away from putting more money into an old and broken model.

Investments in permanent housing must be the focus.

We are at a point where shelters are no longer used as an emergency. We must eliminate this “transition” and ensure residents have a permanent home - in all neighbourhoods of our City.

## Bâtir des quartiers résilients pour offrir des logements abordables à tous

*La Ville a besoin d’un changement de culture.*

Personne n’est mieux placé pour le savoir que notre communauté. La Ville d’Ottawa a de grands défis à relever en matière de logement, de santé mentale et de dépendance. La Basse-Ville est touchée directement par ces défis en constante évolution.

Nous devons cesser de nous limiter à la gestion de crise et travailler à prévenir l’itinérance.

*Nous devons cesser de nous limiter à la gestion de crise et travailler à prévenir l’itinérance.*

13 000 – c’est le nombre de personnes inscrites sur la liste d’attente de la Ville d’Ottawa pour l’obtention d’un logement abordable. Et 2 000, c’est le nombre de ces résidents qui sont sans domicile et se trouvent dans des refuges d’urgence chaque nuit. Quant aux autres résidents inscrits sur la liste, il s’agit de personnes qui n’ont plus les moyens d’habiter dans leur logement actuel.

Le 10 mars, le Conseil municipal approuvait un plan de travail et un plan financier à long terme qui proposaient d’accroître en priorité les investissements dans les refuges

d’urgence, ce qui fera plus d’argent pour les « logements de transition », mais des investissements insuffisants dans la construction de nouveaux logements abordables.

Ce plan a été adopté par un vote de 16 voix contre 7 (dont moi).

Il y a quelque chose qu’on perd de vue dans ce plan : les gens. Les investissements publics devraient être plus que tout consacrés à la garantie et à la

mobilisations, nous allégerons les contraintes opérationnelles.

La Basse-Ville est l’un des quartiers les plus attrayants de notre ville. Usage polyvalent, revenus variés, services accessibles à pied – c’est véritablement une communauté où l’on peut travailler, vivre et se divertir.

Nous sommes un secteur accueillant qui tient à soutenir les membres les plus vulnérables de la communauté. Grâce à notre expérience et à nos connaissances, nous sommes dans une position unique pour prendre la parole en faveur d’un changement d’approche et d’une réorientation des investissements publics.

En tant que quartier confronté à d’immenses pressions en raison de la concentration des services, nous prions la Ville de cesser de toute urgence d’investir dans un vieux modèle brisé.

Notre priorité doit être d’investir dans des logements permanents.

Les refuges ne sont maintenant plus utilisés comme une solution d’urgence. Nous devons éliminer cette solution de « transition » et faire en sorte que les résidents aient un logement permanent, et ce, dans tous les quartiers de la ville.

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# Official Plan

forms where feedback was measured by degree of agreement with various, almost seemingly randomly selected, statements or ideas rather than with actual policies. And until significant outcry and repeated requests, the OP was only available online.

All this occurred when residents, especially those who are marginalized and vulnerable, found themselves uniquely discouraged from public participation. Those without internet at home could no longer access libraries. Parents juggled their jobs with children’s virtual schooling from home. Child-care became impossible. So many suffered from anxiety and mental-health challenges in the wake of sustained economic pressures and continuing uncertainty and loneliness.

Residents and community associations continue to call for a delay to the OP process, citing how other Ontario municipalities (e.g. Halton Hills) have agreed to delay their OP report decisions until in-person consultations can be conducted safely. This request has been denied by the Mayor and Council.

*There is confusing new and generic terminology to keep track of, such as transect, regeneration and overlay. There are 21 one-pagers available with feedback forms where feedback was measured by degree of agreement with various, almost seemingly randomly selected, statements or ideas rather than with actual policies.*

son consultations can be conducted safely. This request has been denied by the Mayor and Council.

To its slight credit, faced with the sheer volume of concerns, the City has modified its approach, setting up further opportunities for Ottawans to further engage with the OP, such as a city-wide

question-and-answer session, and an update on the 15-minute neighbourhood project. Both will take place in March. Furthermore, the City has indicated that there will be an As We Heard report in April 2021.

This will present another opportunity for residents to verify if the City truly did hear all the concerns, questions, and comments, and for residents to see how proposed policies have changed in light of public engagement. There will be opportunities for residents to give further feed-

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back and provide commentary before the submission to the Planning Committee in the fall, when residents will be able to present their case, either in writing, or in a five-minute presentation in person.

Beyond the overly complex presentation of the OP and the lackadaisical plans for public engagement accompanying it, residents and community associations also identified serious concerns with the contents. Ironically, the OP lacks a plan to monitor the City and hold it accountable or to measure its performance

on the multiple laudable goals the City set itself. There is not enough attention paid to equity.

While the Plan acknowledges the importance of a by-law mandating a certain proportion of affordable housing in multi-unit developments, it fails to set out any clear objectives and principles. There is considerable community concern that the Heritage Management Plan and some Secondary Plans are missing. The draft OP sets a welcome goal of 40% tree canopy but considers it city wide rather

than for each neighbourhood. Moreover, the draft OP does not go far enough in integrating Climate Change and Energy Evolution strategic recommendations.

The Lowertown Community Association also identified specific concerns, including concerns regarding the By-Ward Market Special District. In the draft OP, it is focused entirely on cultural programming, patios, nightlife and commercial activities. There are no policies encouraging the farmer’s market or small retailers and no acknowledgement that hundreds of people live in the Market and thousands more surround it. This vision does not consider the many problems facing the By-Ward Market and it is a significant departure from the current secondary plan without consultation.

Also, the Plan further disappoints in that, after almost 60 years following the construction of a major inter-pro-



vincial truck route through Lowertown and downtown Ottawa, the draft OP only commits to “collaborate” with other agencies to identify future crossing(s) to relocate the interprovincial truck route away from downtown.

This is not to say that the OP is irredeemable. Far from it. There is excellent material on the environment and resilience, noteworthy recognition of Ottawa parks as components of the city’s greenspace, and laudable goals on mixed-use and walkable neighbourhoods. In particular, the am-

healing the wounds of amalgamation that continue to scar the ability of communities to chart their own course within Ottawa. Ideally, we would like the City to take more responsibility for the future development of Ottawa, rather than let the private sector direct development, and for the OP to reflect that.

It is up to all Lowertown residents and the wider Ottawa community to hold our planners and councillors to account, and to make sure that our voices are heard in the upcoming engagement

*Overall, the draft OP contains a series of often worthy goals that lack clarity on prioritization between competing or overlapping goals. It seems to provide justification for almost any decision city planners or developers may wish to make in the future.*

bitious 60% intensification target is worthy of celebration. It will be important, however, to ensure that the infill is respectful of each neighbourhood and gradual in height, rather than stark.

Overall, the draft OP contains a series of often worthy goals that lack clarity on prioritization between competing or overlapping goals. It seems to provide justification for almost any decision city planners or developers may wish to make in the future. And the plan does not go far in

opportunities as the draft OP is revised and submitted to the Planning Committee in the fall. The draft OP will be strengthened by incorporating insights and perspectives across Ottawa. With our input and insight, the draft OP can become an incredible success, or at least better, and Ottawa can achieve, or at least continue on, its vision of transforming into the most livable mid-sized city in North America.



L'honorable Mona Fortier

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# Clarence Gate: “The little condo that could,”

By Liz MacKenzie

Affordable home ownership was a pretty heady idea 20 years ago. There was a lot of talk, talk, talk about various models of ownership, but finally CAHDCO (Centretown Affordable Housing Development Corporation), a sister corporation to Ottawa’s social housing innovator the Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation (CCOC), made the decision to stop talking, choose an ownership model, get shovels in the ground and build the first Affordable Home Ownership project in Ontario.

A vacant, city-owned site at the corner of King Edward and Clarence was

available. The price was not negotiable and the City only included a flat allowance in the event of contaminated soil. (Yes, the soil was contaminated and yes, the City was responsible and no, the allowance did not cover the cost of remediation and no, the City would not increase their allowance.)

CAHDCO bought the land, hired an architect, settled on a design for 30 units, in 4-storey stacked townhouses, and sent the drawings out for bid. The project was named Clarence Gate. As with CCOC housing, the design brief put emphasis on being a good neighbour providing quality family housing, built within the zoning, with materials compatible with the neighbourhood, and contributing to the urban canopy.

Domicile, a premier contractor and good friend of CCOC came in with the lowest bid. Domicile, of all the builders in Ottawa, understood that these properties had to be built to the highest standard, so owners of modest means would have minimum repairs

in equity would be shared between the owner and CAHDCO.

To keep the homes affordable, new purchasers had to meet the original affordability criteria.

Prices ranged from \$94,000 for a one bedroom + den, to \$138,000 for 3-bedroom models. When funds ran short, (Remember the extra expense for soil remediation?) it was necessary to sell ten units and seven parking spaces at market prices with no strings attached. That put the Clarence Gate construction budget in the black.

Despite the unusual shared-equity ownership arrangement, the Bank of Montreal agreed to finance the construction and to provide owners with mortgages. However, it soon became clear that buyers of very modest means, some paying off student loans, and many without an established credit rating, faced financing challenges.

A sympathetic mortgage broker helped smooth out financing difficul-

ties for many purchasers who could not meet the “big bank” regulations. Every mortgage approval was a massive cause for celebration.

Over time, cracks appeared in the financial underpinnings of CAHDCO’s shared-equity financing model. Banks consistently balked at renewing mortgages. Property taxes were also an issue because homes were assessed at their market value, not the limited resale value. CAHDCO did not have administrative resources to manage the evaluation, resale and remortgaging issues that faced owners. After some tense consultations, a buy-out option was proposed, which allowed owners to purchase their home outright or continue under the shared-equity agreement.

There are ongoing challenges. Seventeen years ago it was a quieter corner, but now King Edward Avenue is a highway on the doorstep, and the issues with homeless people struggling with mental and health distress have increased exponentially. The looming threat of new projects towering above permitted zoning is ever present as a new development paradigm ravishes Lowertown.

Clarence Gate, “the little condo that could”, will continue to house residents who are engaged in our community and who put kids in our neighbourhood schools. It is a lasting reminder of what housing could have been before intensification spun Lowertown in a completely new direction.



Clarence Gate project: top and bottom right - view from King Edward Avenue; bottom left - view along Clarence Street. Photos from Google Earth

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# HERITAGE - PATRIMOINE

## Lowertown legends: The Desloges sisters

By Nancy Miller Chenier

The plaque at 159 Murray Street, the former Guigues School, does not name any individuals involved in the battle over Regulation 17. If it did, Diane Desloges (1892-1945) and her sister Beatrice Desloges (1895-1957) would definitely be there in capital letters. Called the “Guardians of Guigues”, these two Lowertown women are well known to Francophones but less recognized by others.

Ontario Regulation 17, passed in 1912, placed severe restrictions on the teaching of French in our Lowertown schools, forbidding the language beyond the first two years. Beatrice and Diane Desloges, who were teachers at Guigues School at the time, defied the ban and were dismissed from their school.

With the assistance of Lowertown neighbours, they set up classes in the vacant Charbonneau store at Dalhousie and Guigues and in the Notre Dame du Sacre Coeur Chapel, which was then on Murray Street. When smuggled back into the school with the help of women armed with hatpins, they continued to teach under the protection of angry women and men.

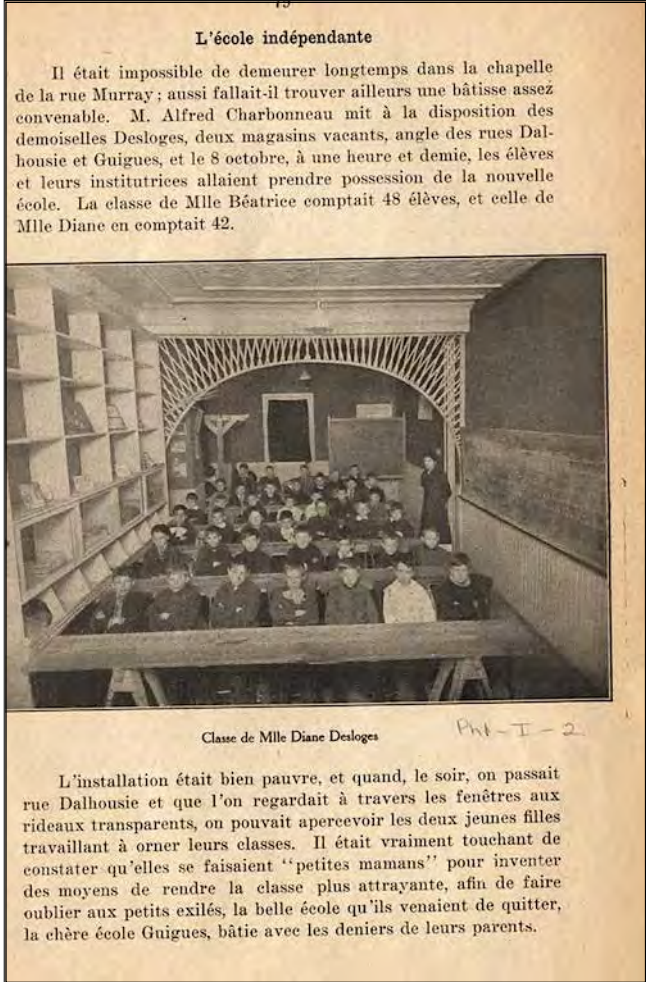
What motivated these young women to do battle and become symbols of Franco-Ontarian resistance? Was it family stories of the grandfather who had fought as a patriote in the Rebellion of 1837-38? Had they been following the debate about votes for women in Ontario? Was it a sense of loyalty to the families that they had known since childhood?

Diane and Beatrice grew up on the streets of Lowertown - Cathcart, St Andrew, Bolton, Cumberland - while their father, Alexandre, worked at the S.J. Major Company. The children they taught were from these streets; the mothers and grandmothers who defended them were from their Notre Dame parish; the fathers worked with their father and brothers.

In many ways, they were ordinary women doing extraordinary things during a brief period of their lives. We know little of their lives afterwards. Diane married Georges Tanguay a few years later in 1917 and moved to Montreal. Beatrice married Ovila Lanthier in 1923 and lived in the community until her death.



The Desloges sisters, Diane (L) and Beatrice



Diane Desloges teaching in Charbonneau store

## An interprovincial connection

By Michel Rossignol

The Royal Alexandra Bridge quietly celebrated its 120th birthday recently. A locomotive made the first crossing of the bridge on December 12, 1900, shortly after the end of construction. Initially called the Interprovincial, in September 1901 the bridge was renamed the Royal Alexandra Bridge in honour of

Canal just before they entered the station.

In the 1950s, Canadian Pacific bought new locomotives and railway cars to provide faster and more comfortable cross-country travel. Starting on April 24, 1955, a train called The Canadian with new silver coaches, dining cars, and sleeping cars (still used by VIA Rail today) travelled daily be-



Tracks near Rideau Canal between Royal Alexandra Bridge and Union Station. Photo: Canada, Department of Interior, LAC, PA-034371.

Queen Alexandra, the wife of the new British monarch, King Edward VII. When he died in 1910, King Street was renamed King Edward Avenue, so the royal couple left their mark on Lowertown.

At first, the bridge was used only by Hull streetcars and regional trains travelling in Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec. However, by the 1930s, it became an important part of the Canadian Pacific rail network which, like the Canadian National network, linked together communities across Canada.

The Canadian Pacific, which owned the Royal Alexandra until 1970, used it so that its trains to and from western Canada could arrive and leave Ottawa's Union Station through the northern entrances. After crossing the Royal Alexandra, trains going to Vancouver travelled a short distance through Hull before returning to Ottawa by crossing the Prince of Wales Bridge near the Chaudière Falls to continue westward. Trains arriving from the west used the same route in the other direction, giving passengers a beautiful view of Parliament Hill and the Rideau

tween Montreal and Vancouver, with a stop in Ottawa.

At the invitation of Canadian Pacific, A.Y. Jackson and other Canadian artists had painted murals for the new railway cars. Thus, between 1955 and 1966, trains carrying Canadian art and many Canadians crossed the Royal Alexandra daily near the present site of the National Gallery of Canada.

The Canadian and other trains stopped crossing the Royal Alexandra in 1966 when the new train station on Tremblay Road was completed. Railroad operations were moved away from the Union Station area as recommended by the Gréber Report of 1950 which guided Ottawa's development. At about the same time, the railroad yard north of Boteler Street was replaced by the road leading to the Macdonald Cartier Bridge. Thus, Lowertown was no longer connected to the rail networks across Canada.

Since 1966, only pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles cross the Royal Alexandra, but the bridge is still an important, historic intercity and interprovincial link.

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# Rideau Library: Serving its community

By Nancy Miller Chenier

**G**ood news about our Rideau Street library came in the form of a February news release stating that customers would be welcome inside for returns, hold pickups, and some browsing. For many in our community, the public access to the computers was a long awaited benefit.

The Rideau Branch opened officially in 1934 with former Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden as key speaker. Its early status as the first bilingual public library in North America was largely attributable to the board members like Jules Tremblay, Maurice Morriset and Henri St Jacques, avid defenders of French language and culture. The branch started in 1926 in a rented building on Rideau Street at the northeast corner of King Edward Avenue. At the opening, the Ottawa Citizen noted that of the 1000 volumes on the shelves, half were in English and half were in French.



For Henri St Jacques, the library at 377 Rideau Street was a key institution in his neighbourhood. When he purchased his corner property at 113 Charlotte Street in 1921, he was already a lawyer and raising a young family. As a member of the Ottawa Public Library board, he argued for the site between Nelson and Friel. When he became chair of the board a month after the new building opened, he acknowledged receipt of gifts for the branch - Canada history books donated by Arthur Doughty and a marble sculpture of Savonarola donated by Mrs. Andrew Fleck. During the tough depression years of the late 1930s, he continued to fight for funding and for increased acquisition of books written in French for the branch.

Over its nine decades of service, there have been occasional closures of the branch, mainly when it underwent alterations or repairs. Over the years, it has been rearranged and lost some original interior features such as the central charging station with brass rails to guide anyone entering or leaving the building past the desk. It had one short closure after the 2010 earthquake when it was inspected for damage. It has always had to find ways to fund some changes: government grants for repairs and replacement of heating systems, and on occasion, book sales to fund new technology.

But for most of the time, the library has been open to residents of all ages and interests, not only for book and other borrowing but also for events with local authors, occasional movies, space for art exhibitions and meeting rooms to rent. At present, the virtual world of the Ottawa Public Library is rich with programs offering advice on gardening, homework, technology, genealogy, or a chance to participate in virtual cooking classes and talks by authors.

The Rideau public library is both an important building in our community and a major community service. The pandemic has made us more aware of its loss during times of closure. While some residents can connect virtually with the wider library system during Covid times, many miss the ability to walk through the distinctive pedimented door and into this heritage building with its lofty interior and decorative beams and art works from the City's collection.

Access to our library is so essential for our community; even more so in this time when we are distanced from people and events. So, keep advocating for this wonderful building and the services that make a difference in our neighbourhood.

# Murray Street mosaic

By Nancy Miller Chenier

**T**he distinctive features of the houses that remain across from the Shepherds of Good Hope shelter are hidden under drab grey paint and behind protective black metal fences. The unified streetscape has already lost the distinctive two-storey house at 207-209 Murray with the creative brickwork pattern on its facade.

And for some reason, 215 Murray has never been recorded in any city directory or fire insurance plan. The surviving buildings, several originating as early as the 1860s, were included in the Lowertown West Heritage Conservation District in 1992.

Today, with many of their heritage architectural features concealed, the houses between Cumberland and King Edward reveal few of the characteristics that once made them vibrant family homes over the last 150 years. Like so many Lowertown buildings, each house still standing has a story, in this case a story of diverse families with different origins and backgrounds.

When this section of Murray Street was developed, it was a typical Lowertown street with wooden homes lining both sides. By the 1880s, it had a school at both ends: Notre Dame, now the site of the ruins of Our Lady's School facing Cumberland and an earlier building for St Bridget's School (the present-day site of the Shepherds of Good Hope shelter) facing King Edward Street.

By the 1890s, English speaking Catholics had the choice of the newly built St Brigid's Roman Catholic Church for residents who did not want to walk to Notre Dame on Sussex.

The houses eventually acquired brick facades. After the turn of the century residents of the growing Jewish community had the choice of several nearby synagogues, first Adath Jeshurun on King Edward followed by Agudath Achim on Rideau Street and eventually Machzikei Hadas on Murray.

Horse-drawn vehicles travelled in the area, some



Murray Street circa 2002

las Hotte, a cabman born in Quebec who lived on Murray Street and was the original occupant at 211-213. In the 1863 city directory, he is listed on the street, presumably with his wife Philomene Jolibois, whom he had married several years earlier. His cab work occasionally resulted in a news story when he was perceived to be in contravention of a city by-law for parking in the wrong place or being in an accident with another vehicle.

Elizabeth Birdwhistle at 217 Murray outlived two Irish-born husbands. The first, a Murphy, left her with two children and possibly the frame house where she was living at the time of the 1861 census. By the 1881 census, she had married Thomas Tallon and added five more children to the household.

After Thomas's death, she worked as a fruit dealer on Rideau Street and later may have relied on income from her daughters still living at home, one who was working as a salesclerk and the other as a seamstress. Her oldest son, Edward Murphy, was living in the house in 1923.

By the 1930s, the Italian family of Charles and Theresa Crivellaro were occupants at 217 Murray. During the Second World War, when housing was scarce, they divided the house and shared with the Panasiuks, a Ukrainian family. Over the years, the Crivellaro children were active participants in the community, serving on the local Bingham Square Youth Village as well as with several Italian organizations.

At 223 Murray, Norbert Sevigny was an early occupant, possibly from 1863. His son, Norbert Joseph Sevigny, a onetime blacksmith at the ByWard Market, eventually lived in the house for a few years with his wife

Catherine Boese and some of their ten children. Many of the family stayed in Lowertown, with several sons in business as barbers while some daughters worked as tailors and hat makers.

The Steinman family, who had emigrated from Russia, were longtime owners of 227 Murray Street, with the house passing over the years from Hyman and Mollie to daughter Leah. In 1923, Hyman was listed as a pedlar. Max and Minnie Drazin, owners of a fruit business at the ByWard Market, were at 229 Murray. Max was president of the synagogue at Murray and King Edward, and by 1933, he and Minnie were recognized as prominent members of the Jewish community.

The occupants and the buildings changed over the decades but the homes endured, some headed by men, others by women. Most were Roman Catholic and some were Jewish, a mixture of those with origins in Quebec, Ireland, Russia, Italy, Ukraine, and other parts of the world. Like the rest of the community, employment opportunities developed that allowed a movement from blue-collar labourers to white-collar work as business owners and retail clerks.

All the elements that help make a community vibrant were here. It was part of a true 15-minute neighbourhood, with places to shop and play and have religious observances; schools to educate children; respectful but not necessarily similar neighbours; and most of all homes. The challenge for our city and our community going forward is to conserve and reimagine this Murray Street block as homes for a new Murray Street mosaic.

# LCA-ACB

## Harvest the ByWard/Cultivons le marché By

By Norman Moyer,  
President, The Lowertown  
Community Association

This summer Markets Ottawa will begin the revival of the ByWard Local Farmers Market. The York Street local farmers' market will be limited to Saturday mornings, but if that succeeds, we can build from there. When the Lowertown Community Association surveyed its followers last May, they indicated that the revival of the farmers' market was their top priority. This summer will be our chance to support the farmers in the best way possible: by buying their wonderful, fresh produce.

The LCA will partner with the ByWard farmers' market to promote, celebrate and support local farm products. Come to buy and come to learn about the best local produce to eat now and to preserve. On selected Saturdays the LCA will sponsor harvest cooking events matching the great chefs of Lowertown with local farmers in events that will show people how to select, prepare and preserve local products. We have the chance to learn more about using local products and, at the same time, re-establish the

brand identity of Lowertown/Byward as the food and cuisine hot spot in Ottawa. trend to local food. The Lowertown Community is ready to support this.



The cabbage man at the ByWard Market. Photo: Johanne McDuff

No city in Canada has as much agricultural land within its boundaries. New generations of farmers are experimenting with better ways to bring high quality food to market. The ByWard Market is the iconic home of this meeting of food producers and food buyers. The past year of pandemic has underlined for all of us the need to decrease our dependence on imported food. This year can start the

Here are a few of the activities this summer when you come to buy your local produce at the farmers' market:

- 1. Hascaps: Do you know about the wonderful berry that competes with blueberries for taste and versatility but arrive at the market from local farmers a month ahead of blueberries. Come down to the ByWard Market on a Saturday morning in late June or early July

(exact date depends on the weather) and learn how to use them and preserve them.

- 2. Eggplant: The vegetables are enjoying a real renaissance as Canadians become more familiar with Mediterranean and Middle-Eastern cooking. In late July when they are abundant in local fields and can come fresh to the market still warmed by the sun, come learn some new recipes and suggestion about menus and wine matching.
- 3. July, August September: sweet corn, beans, and squash. Learn how these "three sisters" sustained the first nations of Canada.
- 4. September: leeks, beets, apples
- 5. September/October a harvest feast event to pull it all together

Let us know if you have a favourite local product that you would like to see highlighted in one of our Saturday events. Send your suggestions to [info@lowertown-basseville.ca](mailto:info@lowertown-basseville.ca).

Look for more details in the next issue of the ECHO and on the social media sites of the LCA and Markets Ottawa.

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# Lowertown development: under planning or under construction

By Warren Waters

With the City’s decision to intensify land use near LRT stations, Lowertown will continue to change. Our neighbourhood’s sometimes elderly buildings and a homelessness emergency are only part of the pressure to develop. Real estate is also an attractive but risky gamble for investors. Most investors find the time needed for planning and development to be their greatest uncertainty, which favours larger developers and bigger projects, resulting in more changes to the neighbourhood. In Ottawa last year, only twenty-one percent of Site Plan Control applications which were complex, or required public consultation, got a decision within Council-approved target timelines of 133 days.

Here are the sites we know will be changing very soon:



1 Rideau – Recently approved is the addition at the rear of the Château Laurier Hotel: two towers, one 10-storey and another 11-storey, with a 2-storey base joining them, with 159 hotel suites and 301 parking spaces



73 Guigues at Parent - Construction of three-storey, seven-unit townhouse is underway, for 11258770 Canada Inc.



216 Murray – Shepherds of Good Hope have proposed a 16-hour-a-day drop-in on the main floor, with a second floor kitchen/dining hall, and 6 more floors with up to 48 single apartments. No active application has been submitted yet, but it is anticipated shortly.



201-213 Rideau - Prince Development’s 24-storey Marriott hotel/condo building between Dalhousie and Cumberland (the former Beer Store) is under construction, including redevelopment of the Waller Mall.



180 George, 245 Rideau - Claridge Plaza under construction on the site of the old Metro, includes 3 buildings (a 26-storey condo tower, a rental building and a hotel). Occupancy is expected next winter.



126 York & 151 George - In October 2020, the developer consulted with residents, suggesting a 22-story apartment building with about 200 units on George, while preserving and converting the Major building on York into a hotel with about 200 rooms. No application has yet been submitted.



116 York - Bayview Hospitality Group’s 17-storey hotel adjacent to the proposed addition to the Andaz Hotel. Zoning By-law Amendment Application was refused by the City and the applicant is reported to be appealing.



110 York, 137 and 141 George - Claridge Developments’ 19-storey addition to the Andaz Hotel. The Site Plan and zoning application is on hold pending a response from the applicant.



260 Murray, 261, 269, 277 King Edward - Claude Lauzon Group’s 2016 proposal of a 6-storey mixed-use development is on hold pending a response from the applicant, but rumours about another 8-story hotel are circulating.



541-545 Rideau (at Cobourg) - Chenier Group’s 9-storey mixed-use apartment building is under construction, with 102 residential units and 53 parking stalls, retaining the original 150-year-old house facade in a new duplex on Cobourg St.



151, 153 Chapel - Trinity Development’s two, 25-storey residential towers to be completed in two phases, includes a total of 633 apartments and 9,200 square feet of retail space. One mixed-use highrise with 315 residential units is now under construction, to be followed by an all-residential building with 318 apartments.



641 Rideau (east of Wurtemberg)- Proposed 25-storey apartment building.



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# POLITICS



Hon. Mona Fortier  
M.P., Ottawa-Vanier

Dear Neighbours,

Spring symbolizes hope and new beginnings. This year, it is not only the sunshine and melting snow bringing me a renewed sense of optimism, but also the sense that this difficult pandemic period will soon be coming to an end. I, like many of you, breathed a sigh of relief as my parents received their vaccines. I am proud to say that with Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca, and the Janssen vaccine approved and secured for distribution, we will have enough vaccines available for every Canadian by the end of September.

We are almost there, so in the meantime please continue

to follow the measures laid out by Ottawa Public Health. Our Government has and will continue to do everything we can to keep you safe and supported; this includes our commitment to rebuild our economy. That's why Budget 2021 that will be tabled on April 19th, is focused on jobs and inclusive growth, recognizing the plight of small business and our most vulnerable. Although the recovery will not be easy, I know that with the lessons of the past year, Canadians are able to tackle these and other challenges together, such as homelessness and climate change. I am thrilled to report that we are injecting \$31.9 million through the City of Ottawa into affordable housing through the Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI). Four projects have been selected, one is our Shepherds of Good Hope that is receiving \$10.8 million of the RHI investment for transformative programming to care for our homeless community and will provide 48 units of supportive housing.

On climate change, I am happy to report that the recent Supreme Court of Canada

decision on the carbon pricing has given the Government of Canada the clear authority to act. We can now make the bold, difficult decisions needed to combat this global threat. It is the right thing to do for our planet. It is the right thing to do for our children. So although there is optimism in the air, we must continue our hard work and collective resolve to keep our loved ones and ourselves safe, our businesses alive and hopefully thriving, our most vulnerable cared for, and our planet healthy for the next generation.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chères voisines, chers voisins,

Le printemps symbolise l'espoir et les nouveaux départs. Cette année, ce n'est pas seulement le soleil et la fonte des neiges qui m'apportent un regain d'optimisme mais aussi le sentiment que cette période difficile de pandémie touche bientôt à sa fin.

Comme beaucoup d'entre vous, j'ai poussé un soupir de soulagement lorsque mes par-

ents ont reçu leurs vaccins. Je suis fière de dire qu'avec Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca et le vaccin Janssen approuvés et sécurisés pour la distribution, nous aurons suffisamment de vaccins disponibles pour chaque Canadien d'ici la fin septembre. Nous y sommes presque, sauf qu'il faut continuer à être COVID avisés et suivre les directives de santé publique énoncées par Santé publique Ottawa.

Notre gouvernement a fait et continuera de faire tout ce qui est en son pouvoir pour assurer votre sécurité et pour vous soutenir – cela inclut notre engagement à reconstruire notre économie. C'est pourquoi le Budget 2021, qui sera déposé le 19 avril, est axé sur les emplois et la croissance pour aider les petites entreprises et les personnes les plus vulnérables de nos communautés. Même si la reprise ne sera pas facile, je sais qu'avec les leçons de l'année 2020, nous sommes en mesure de relever ensemble ces défis, notamment la communauté sans-abri et le changement climatique.

C'est la raison pour laquelle on attribue 31.9\$ million à

travers la ville d'Ottawa pour les logements abordables grâce à l'Initiative pour la création rapide de logements (ICRL). Les Bergers de l'Espoir recevra 10.8\$ million de l'investissement IRCL pour des programmes transformatifs qui prennent soin de notre communauté sans-abri.

Je suis ravie d'annoncer que la décision de la Cour suprême du Canada sur le prix sur le carbone a donné au gouvernement le pouvoir d'agir. Nous pouvons désormais prendre les décisions audacieuses et nécessaires pour lutter contre le changement climatique. C'est la bonne chose à faire pour notre planète. C'est la bonne chose à faire pour nos enfants.

Nous devons maintenant, à la lumière de cet optimisme, continuer notre travail acharné pour assurer notre sécurité et celle de nos proches, pour maintenir nos entreprises en vie afin qu'elles prospèrent, pour prendre soin de notre communauté sans-abri et de garder notre planète en bonne santé pour les prochaines générations.

## Building a More Affordable Community



Lucille Collard  
MPP, Ottawa-Vanier

For many, Ottawa-Vanier has become unaffordable. Shelter beds are increasingly in demand and too many residents are living in inadequate, unaffordable or unsuitable housing. That is why, in a collaborative effort, our local City Councillors, Tim Tierney, Mathieu Fleury, Rawlson King, and I launched the Affordable Housing Task Force in October. We meet regularly to work on this important issue and I wanted to share an update on what we have accomplished so far.

We began by mapping out public lands from all levels of government in Ottawa-Vanier

and beyond to explore potential land use. Then, we identified and sought feedback from key housing stakeholders to help guide our next steps forward. We formally reached out to the provincial Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Honourable Steve Clark, to request that the province assist with our efforts. We also submitted recommendations and requests for support to the federal government as part of their pre-budget consultations last month. Finally, we have recently started the conversation with developers to seek their input as their active participation is vital to finding a solution.

As we continue our search for interested partners looking to pursue innovative and sustainable affordable housing projects, the help of the community is welcome! I invite you to share any ideas and interests you may have on this subject with my office.

Your representatives at all levels are committed to work-

ing together to facilitate the implementation of effective and suitable solutions to the lack of affordable housing in our community.

As always, thank you for doing your part in fighting COVID-19. My team remains available to help. Please feel free to give us a call at 613-744-4484 or send us an email at [lcollard.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org](mailto:lcollard.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org).

### Bâtir une communauté plus abordable

Pour beaucoup, Ottawa-Vanier est devenu inhabitable. Les refuges sont de plus en plus sollicités et trop de résidents vivent dans des logements inadéquats, inhabitables ou inappropriés. C'est pourquoi, dans un effort collaboratif avec nos conseillers municipaux locaux, Tim Tierney, Mathieu Fleury et Rawlson King, nous avons lancé le Groupe de travail sur le logement abordable en oc-

tobre. Nous nous réunissons régulièrement pour travailler sur cette question importante et je voulais partager une mise à jour sur ce que nous avons accompli jusqu'à présent.

Nous avons commencé par cartographier les terrains publics de tous les paliers de gouvernement à Ottawa-Vanier et au-delà pour explorer le potentiel d'exploitation. Nous avons ensuite identifié les principaux intervenants dans le domaine du logement et recueilli leurs commentaires pour nous aider à guider nos prochaines étapes. Nous avons formellement communiqué avec le ministre provincial des Affaires municipales et du logement pour demander que la province nous assiste dans nos efforts. Nous avons également soumis des recommandations et une demande d'appui au gouvernement fédéral dans le cadre de ses consultations pré-budgétaires le mois dernier. Enfin, nous avons récemment entamé la conversation avec les développeurs parce que leur partici-

ipation active est vitale pour trouver une solution.

Alors que nous poursuivons notre recherche de partenaires intéressés à poursuivre des projets de logements abordables innovants et durables, l'aide de la communauté est la bienvenue! Je vous invite à partager vos idées et votre intérêt à ce sujet avec mon bureau.

Vos représentants à tous les paliers du gouvernement se sont engagés à travailler ensemble pour faciliter la mise en œuvre de solutions efficaces et adaptées au manque de logements abordables dans notre communauté.

Comme toujours, merci de continuer de faire votre part dans la lutte contre COVID-19. Mon équipe demeure disponible pour vous aider. N'hésitez pas à nous appeler au 613-744-4484 ou à nous envoyer un courriel à [lcollard.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org](mailto:lcollard.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org).

# BUSINE\$\$

## Markets spring to life this May!



By Zachary Dayler  
Executive Director,  
Marches d'Ottawa  
Markets

What is in a market? When we think of our Ottawa Markets, visions of farmers, carriages, or packed parkades come to mind. What about a market after a global pandemic?

In 2017 the City of Ottawa created a Not-for-Profit, Marches d'Ottawa Markets. The corporation is charged with reviving our beloved public markets program in ByWard and Wellington West (Parkdale). The rebuild also falls in line with a larger plan

for the ByWard area. The recently approved Public Realm Plan sets a \$130 million vision and direction for rebuilding public space, intending to create a destination and space where residents and visitors can experience Canada's best and the best of our City, curated in a pedestrian-focused area.

Change is never easy, and Ottawa Markets is endeavouring to do things differently. We must. The team at Ottawa Markets is focused on creating new economic opportunities. For the first time in some years, applications have reopened, and the recruitment process has seen over 100 new applications.

We also implemented a Farmers' First policy, launched a Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of Colour (BIPOC) Initiative, and are excited to launch the York Street Farmers' market on Saturdays along York Street. This is just the beginning, and we are confident these efforts will help grow back our markets program.

We are also committed to building a home for new farmers. Our markets need to be a place to grow and educate residents and visitors on the importance of supporting small and medium-sized agriculture. New ByWard farm vendors like Rutabaga Farms, Vintage Soil, Russel Farms will be helping with this effort.



The renewed focus on local and regional product will come with a bit of a different experience. You won't see products on the market the way you once did; while you will still be able to get fresh produce in the area 7 days a week, we have tightened up the rules, allowing only regional and Canadian products sold.

These measures will limit the reselling that has evolved over the years. Instead, the market will have something different and exciting with the seasons - or if we are outside a particular season, you can have confidence that the product came from a Canadian grower.

We are at the very start of an exciting new chapter for our outdoor markets. Ottawa Markets believes that it is essential to cultivate new commercial opportunities for the next generation of farmer and producer as we regrow a seven-day-a-week experience.

We also believe that work has to be done to better educate the public on farming, food security, and healthy seasonal options. We have become very immediate in our shopping behaviours. We hope the Ottawa Markets program will provide a much-needed opportunity in our City to reconnect with valuable public space while also becoming educated about what is on our plate or in our cupboards.

How do we make this work? We need you. We need Ottawa residents to listen and follow COVID protocols while relearning how to get back out there safely. This summer, we encourage you to take a walk through ByWard or Parkdale Market. Get re-acquainted with the local butcher or grocer, the farmer, or the crafter. - - But do keep coming back.

Build shopping locally, whether in ByWard, Wellington West or one of the other unique neighbourhoods across this City, into your routine. Together we have an opportunity to reshape this City and what it means to support local shops and producers.

Simply, make a point to put a piece of the region on your plate every night or week this year. The regrowth won't happen overnight, but as we head to the 200th anniversary of the ByWard Market in 2027 and the 100th of Parkdale in 2025, let's focus on building these markets back up for another 200 years!

## Inside the black box: Lowertown's latest food establishment

By Jordan Ferraro

"It takes a community to build a burger", muses Lowertown resident and entrepreneur, Donald El Batal, who recently launched his newest enterprise with business partner Jocelain Frem, at the site of the old Tim Horton's at King Edward and St. Patrick streets.

This marks a culinary and marketing departure from their other Ottawa success story, Le Suq. While the others locations are stores where customers can enter and browse, the King Edward location is a totally black, windowless structure containing a state-of-the-art kitchen that serves food for take-out or delivery that can only be ordered on-line..

Hidden within the mysterious black façade at 360 St. Patrick Street is an ecologically sensitive and green-minded staff intent on keeping the product healthy, locally sourced, hormone

free, non-genetically modified, and, most importantly, affordably delicious.



Their business model was inspired by a recent trip to Dubai. At their burger and fries emporium, Hushh.ca, you can order all-natural burgers of 100% Canadian beef, chicken, or a plant-based option with a side order of fat-free air fries.

The plant-based burger challenges the taste buds to detect the difference. The patty of your choice is applied to buns fresh-baked on premises, then garnished with an array of lettuce, tomatoes, pickles, red onions, and hint of piquant.

There are also combos with a burger, fries, freshly tossed coleslaw and a beverage. For

dessert, Hushh offers Nutella brioche buns and chocolate caramel cake. There is also a small breakfast menu,

Orders can be placed and paid for online at Hushh.ca, or through Facebook and Instagram, with pick-up at the location or delivery to your home.

El Batal is a vibrant member of the Lowertown community who intends to engage his home turf in a myriad of social, cultural, and philanthropic endeavours.

One proposal is to face his newly painted black virtual restaurant with a mural by a local artist as an inspired nod to new energy transforming a revitalized ByWard Market. This might be a good move given that the building is a

blackboard just begging to be tagged with graffiti.

For those wondering what was going on in that black box, we can now say "Ottawa's best kept secret is out."

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# Business profile: Spark Auto Service Center

By John Chenier



Ashley Golden and Carolina Vargas

What’s a community without a community garage? As garages and gas stations desert the central core of Ottawa, community garages are becoming few and far between. The combination service stations —gas and garage—that used to be at almost every major intersection are long gone from most neighbourhoods. Lowertown residents can count themselves fortunate in that we have one gas bar and two garages to service our vehicles, Spark Auto Service Center on Nelson Street east of King Edward Avenue and Roland Levesques & Fils on Cumberland in Lowertown West.

Spark Auto has been part of the Nelson Street scene for the better part of two decades. A little over two years ago, the garage went up for sale.

Ashley Golden and his wife Carolina Vargas had been looking to buy a garage for a number of years. Ashley’s job as an industrial mechanic working on large litho presses in Montreal was very demanding. When large presses go down, money is lost, tight schedules are shredded and clients aren’t happy. Keeping the presses in working order is a 24 hour-per-day occupation.

Ashley loved working on cars and considered owning and running a garage as a first step towards retirement. The thought of starting at 8 a.m. and calling it a day at 6 was very appealing. But it couldn’t be just any garage in any location.

They were looking for a garage outside Montreal in a downtown location, with a good reputation and an established clientele. Their search ended in Ottawa when Spark, a garage with many years of glowing reports from satisfied customers, came up for sale. The four-bay garage came equipped with a team of mechanics who started out as Ashley’s employees but whom he now considers his friends.

Like most small businesses, Spark has been hard hit by the COVID shut-down. According to Carolina, people coming in to work in nearby office towers and businesses accounts for 60% of their business, so the fact that people have not been driving into work in the neighbourhood for more than a year now has been very hard.

Even now, as the garage is heading into what is normally a very busy period when people change their tires from winter to summer, there is a great deal of uncertainty. A tire change often involves other regular maintenance such as oil changes, brake inspections, new tire sales and so on. In anticipation of pothole season, one of the bays has been converted to a wheel-alignment station. All that remains to be seen is how many customers will return this year.

Two years into the first phase of his pre-retirement, I ask Ashley if he had to do it over again, would he make the same decision.

After a short pause to reflect, he says, “Yes”. But clearly, he is anticipating a return to normal and not a repeat of this past year.

Does he have any advice for young people thinking of following their love for cars and becoming car mechanics?

“Study!” he says. Cars are becoming more complicated and harder to fix every year. Diagnosing problems might be somewhat easier with the new diagnostic tools and computers to point to parts that are failing, but fixing cars is becoming harder. Knowing that a certain sensor is acting up is only a small part of the job. Knowing whether it is critical that the sensor be replaced immediately, knowing where the sensor is located, how to replace it, and whether other sensors or components should be replaced at the same time to prevent further problems are equally important.

New cars are relying on computers and sensors more than ever before. “Gone are the days,” says Ashley, “when a young person could just walk into a garage and apprentice as a mechanic. As we transition from ever more complicated internal combustion motors to hybrids and electric cars, you have to learn about how the many modules interact and control how a car functions. For that you have to go to school.”

Each year, a mechanic from Spark attends specialist courses at Algonquin College.

Spark offers service in English, French and Spanish. But Ashley and Carolina know that the most important language is the multilingual smile of a satisfied customer and the sound a smoothly running car makes when it leaves the garage. You can check out the services provided and the latest specials at [sparkautorepairs.com](http://sparkautorepairs.com)



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# Feel-Good Coffee

By Alison Hobbs



Coffee connoisseurs of Lowertown are lucky. Three years ago, a Lowertown Echo article by Peter Gould described the variety of congenial coffee outlets in this neighbourhood; since then, some of those businesses have closed, but new ones have taken their place.

The Spa Café, the Boulanger Français and Mantovani 1946 on Murray Street, La Bottega and Lollo on George Street, as well as the well-known Café 55 and

Le Moulin de Provence at the Byward Market, all serve coffee imported from Europe, the taste of which gives a momentary illusion of being there. Casa di Moni on York Street offers a Swiss blend sourced from the Peruvian rain forest (supplied by Morala Trading of Centretown). This coffee is also served in government offices on Parliament Hill.

Discerning customers increasingly demand coffee that’s grown without damaging fragile eco-systems or exploiting the harvesters; for such committed environmentalists, Lowertown offers a range of options for guilt-free and enjoyable drinks from compostable (paper) or reusable (ceramic) cups, and not a plastic spoon in sight!

I Deal Coffee on Dalhousie Street bakes its own scones and doughnuts daily and roasts directly traded Guatemalan and Honduran green beans on its premises. Their supplier is the Happy Goat company, one of whose direct outlets is on the corner of Rideau and Cumberland Streets.

The Happy Goat owners are proud of travelling to their coffee’s country of origin, meeting the individual farmers and negotiating a fair price. If you’re curious about the name, read the “Legend of the Goat” which tells how an Ethiopian imam first discovered the magical drink.



Finding a place to sit and enjoy your cup of coffee can pose a challenge these days.

Famous for its lavish desserts, Oh So Good on York Street serves organic, ethically sourced coffee from North Brew, which donates some its income to Ottawa’s charities and homeless shelters.

Bridgehead outlets on Dalhousie and in the Rideau Centre sell fair trade, certified organic coffee, sustainably grown in shade. Their buyer visits the coffee plantations to choose varieties that taste especially good when milk is added. None of Bridgehead’s waste goes to the landfill; if you want compost for your garden, they give away their used coffee grounds.

HQ on Clarence Street buys its coffee from the Bluebarn Coffee Roasters in Wakefield, another source of sustainable and ethical produce, and a new kid on the block, Opulence Café on Dalhousie, is also worth noting for its environmentally friendly credentials. Apart from an occasional hot chocolate made from just two ingredients—dark chocolate and cream—coffee is all it serves.

Four times a day, green beans are freshly processed in a micro-roaster at the café to make a unique dark roast. The beans have been organically grown at 1,600 metres above sea level by farmers of the Rainforest Alliance in Peru, who receive decent healthcare, housing and education in water management from the Canadian Humaniterra Foundation.

Planet Coffee has been in the Clarendon Lanes courtyard since 1994, sourcing its coffee from small-lot farmers who make use of “fluid coffee roasters” with solar-panel-generated electricity as their source of power. These farmers are paid 60% more than the average fair trade prices, ensuring their survival in a competitive world.

A further reason for stopping at Planet Coffee is to eat the treats baked on site, daily, from local ingredients. This winter, outside their shop, you could find straw bales to sit on, plus complimentary blankets. It was almost like visiting Sweden.

Sampling coffee of such quality in our neighbourhood gives you the incentive to make a habit of it. At the same time you can feel glad to be supporting not only those distant coffee harvesters, but also the local business owners and their dependents.



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# ARTS & CULTURE

## Artists at work

By Jessica Ruano

The power of the arts is unparalleled. I realize that's an expected statement from someone who works in the arts. But let me give you a couple of examples of how the arts transcend both time and geography, not to mention keep us connected while we're having to stay apart. And here's the best part: both these stories take place in Lowertown!

A few weeks ago, as part of the Lowertown Virtual Concert Series, MASC artist Brad Lafortune performed Métis jigging for a friendly group of seniors from the Centre de services Guigues. One of the residents, Marjolaine, was interested in the ceintures fléchées (traditional Métis arrowhead sashes he presented and said that she had a very similar one.

After the concert she got in touch with MASC and said that she wanted to give Brad her arrow sash as a gift, because she felt he should have it. Delighted by the offer, Brad went to pick it up from the Centre and a few days later wore it for a virtual performance for children in the Northwest Territories. Thanks to Marjolaine's generosity, her meaningful gift alongside Brad's performance was enjoyed by young students thousands of kilometres away!

Meanwhile, at York Street Public School, students worked in collaboration with MASC artist Tina Le Moine on an animated video about La bataille des épingles à chapeaux (The Battle of the hatpins) that told the story of two sisters in 1912 who rebelled against the government of Ontario in order to teach French at a school in Lowertown. (See the article



Left: ByWard mural project; Top: Métis ceintures; Right: Brad Lafortune



about the Desloges sisters elsewhere in this issue.)

The video – now available on YouTube, featuring another MASC artist Mehdi Cayenne – was released on the same day a private member's bill was proposed at Queen's Park to have January 7 named Le Jour de la bataille des épingles à chapeaux to honour the two Franco-Ontarian women and their community who fought for the right to teach in their own language. When we connect with history, history connects right back.

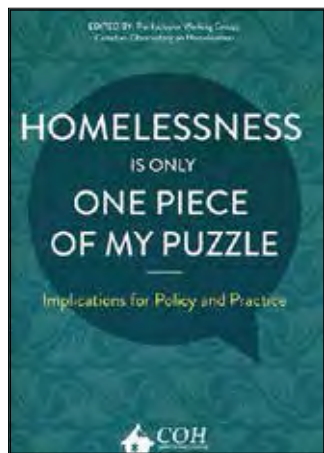
Over the past year, we've discovered so much about what is possible through the arts. It is wonderful that we continue to be surprised by each other's gifts, by the generosity of strangers and by the ingenuity of young and older people. And to think, it's all happening right here in Lowertown, amid your neighbours, teachers, and friends. May our creativity continue to thrive!

Next up from MASC: The Lowertown Community Association's Arts & Culture Committee are working on

a new mural in the ByWard Market with MASC artist Jimmy Baptiste, and community members are needed to help paint! For more information, come to our virtual information session on Tuesday April 13 at 7 p.m.. Register at [bit.ly/BywardMural](http://bit.ly/BywardMural)

Jessica Ruano is the Communications Director and Community Program Coordinator at MASC

## Books by or about Lowertowners



Sean LeBlanc, "Hope Eternal". Chapter 19 (p.96-102) in *Inclusion Working Group, Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, Homelessness Is Only One Piece Of My Puzzle: Implications for Policy and Practice*, 2015.

This entire edited collection is relevant to understanding the daily lives of individuals who are experiencing homelessness, but the chapter by Sean LeBlanc gives us particular insight about Lowertown. Sean, featured

recently in a Shepherd's of Good Hope newsletter, now has a home in our community. His message in the newsletter, as in the book, is "Don't give up on the people who are homeless."

Sean currently works as an advocate for people living with addiction and trauma. After he started a group called the Drug Users Advocacy League, or DUAL for short, he found a purpose and a path to recovery. Along the way, he became a co-investigator in 2013 with the community cohort study called PROUD (which stands for Participatory Research in Ottawa Understanding Drugs).

One thing is clear from his story in the book. Shelters are not solutions to homelessness or places to deal with addiction or mental health. He writes that everything from the food to the lack of privacy to the illnesses to the violence means that: "There is no such thing as healthy living at a shelter."

After surviving multiple traumas and being homeless for over seven years, Sean now has a place to call home, as he says, a place to hope, a place to feel safe. It is also a place from which he can participate in the wider life of the community. His personal story and the others in the book reveal just part of the puzzle of homelessness. But in this time of crisis, the insights about ways to move people off the streets and out of shelters and into safe and affordable homes give us a worthwhile read.

## Our stories through art

By Kendra Hughes and Fiona Sant

The Lowertown Arts and Culture Committee was established at the end of 2020 and its members, Kendra Hughes, Fiona Barbaro Sant and Drew Bernand together bring a wealth of experience in community arts, event planning and project management.

Since its inception, the committee has met regularly to establish its mandate and priorities. Naturally, it has been difficult to start planning arts events, but the committee has used this time to meet with and establish relationships with various arts organisations in Lowertown. We are excited about all the partnerships we are building and the emerging networks and projects. We are still expanding and welcome anyone interested in joining to contact us at [lcaartsandculture@gmail.com](mailto:lcaartsandculture@gmail.com).

Our current focus for the coming months is working on planning and engaging the community in the development of a New Mural in the Byward Market.

We believe that the story of a neighbourhood starts with the people who live and work there, and public art can tell that story in an accessible, dynamic, and unique way.

As an integral part of Lowertown's diversity and history, the Byward Market is many things to us: a public food market, a destination to visit local shops, restaurants, bars and boutiques, or a district known for its heritage and cultural activities. We believe it can also be a central space for community expression through art.

Lowertown residents of all ages are invited to meet with Ottawa muralist Jimmy Baptiste in an engaging dialogue about our neighbourhood that will inspire the creation of a new mural in the Byward Market.

When: April 13 at 7pm

Where: Zoom, please email [lcaartsandculture@gmail.com](mailto:lcaartsandculture@gmail.com) for registration link

\*\*This is a bilingual event with both English and French being spoken\*\*



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# REAL ESTATE

## Choosing where to live: Why choose Lowertown?



By Lynda Cox

How do buyers choose where to live? Sometimes they have identified a specific area and style of home but often it comes down to price and availability. In this buyer-heavy/low inventory market, buyers often have to look outside their preferred area and make compromises. Realtors quickly try to assess their needs. Is it a particular school catchment area they want? Is it within walking distance of their job? Is it land, space and privacy? Is it a home just like mom and dad's?

The list can be long. If buyers have grown up and lived in Ottawa some-

times they want to live in the same neighbourhood or part of the city that is familiar, while others might choose the complete opposite.

So who chooses to live in Lowertown? We see suburban dwellers who are tired of their commute to work and willing to sacrifice space for time spent at home. We see grown children of suburban dwellers looking for a vibrant community for their first apartment. We see retirees leaving the suburbs and their big homes to simplify their lives and try condo living.

I think it might also come down to this: people who move to Lowertown want to be in the heart of the city. They don't want to depend on a car anymore. They want to walk to all amenities if possible. If they are still working, they want to walk or ride their bikes to work. They don't mind the great diversity of population, architecture and commerce; they love it.

I met a young family recently who had come from Turkey. I asked them why they chose to live in Lowertown. They said it felt more like home to them. They did not want to have a car.

### Real Estate Update (from January 25 to March 25, 2021)

#### Residential

8 Active Listings 1 Conditionally Sold  
10 SOLD (5 sold over list price ranging from \$75K to \$121K over)

#### Condominium

21 Active Listings 3 Conditionally Sold  
32 SOLD 6 sold over list price ranging from \$1K to \$106K over)

Note: We are starting to see the market balance out as more listings are coming to the market. Interest rates are still low and buyers still plentiful. As the inventory increases the number of bidding wars should lessen. These bidding wars are causing "buyer fatigue" to set in. Some buyers have offered 15 or more times on different homes only to be outbid.

They did not want a long commute to work. It just felt right. They love it.

Why did I personally move to Lowertown? I had spent years as a suburban dweller, a country dweller and an urban dweller, but when I had to choose a home for my golden years there was nowhere else but Lowertown for me. Every day I am glad to be here.

As a realtor I have sold houses from Orleans to Kanata, from Lowertown

to Barrhaven but now, as I return home after a trek to Manotick and beyond I am so thankful to be in this great neighbourhood where everything is just a short stroll away. I love it.

Lynda Cox and her son Jim form the "Cox Home Team". They are with Royal LePage Performance Realty 613-238-2801.

## Community spirit initiatives in condominiums



By David Lu

As a condominium lawyer I deal with a lot of disputes and conflict, but I would say that the vast majority of condominium communities live with a vibrant community spirit. However, this spirit doesn't come by default. Rather, it is often hard work and a creative mindset that allow a positive community spirit to flourish.

In my view, the biggest asset to \

condominium is undergoing a major repair project.

Of course, it is almost impossible for every piece of communication in a condominium community to be good news. Sometimes bad news, such as special assessments, must be delivered. In these situations, it is often better to provide as much transparency as legally permissible. (There are sometimes legal and/or privacy concerns that can limit the amount of information shared.) Informed owners are more likely to understand and support a decision than uninformed owners.

Aside from communications, I find that social events can also do a lot to bring a community together. Many condo communities have a social committee, which organizes themed events throughout the year designed to get neighbours to interact and get to know each other. Neighbours who

know each other enhance the security of the community as a whole and decrease the likelihood of conflict.

However, social gatherings don't have to wait until COVID-19 is over. Virtual gatherings can still take place in the meantime. While they aren't the same as in-person gatherings, they might be helpful in getting the community through this last stretch as we wait for the vaccination campaign to run its course. Some ideas that I've seen lately include: a virtual "concert" via Zoom or some other streaming platform, virtual trivia or movie nights, and continuing meetings virtually for previously established clubs. (I've seen book clubs, knitting clubs and chess clubs.)

With warmer weather coming, if your condominium community has gardens or areas where gardening can be done, gardening can be another

avenue to improve community spirit. Downtown living means that green space is at a premium, but what may be lacking in quantity can be made up in quality. I've seen gardening committee initiatives be a great success, both enhancing the property community spirit.

Lastly, don't forget charitable initiatives. We've all struggled over the past year, but there are certainly members of our society that have struggled even more. I'm always inspired to see a condominium community get together and use its positive energy to help others, particularly those in the local community.

David Lu is an Associate at Davidson Houle Allen LLP, a boutique Condominium Law firm serving Eastern Ontario.

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# COMMUNITY

## Porte-à-porte en pandémie

Par Fatima El Moustauoui

Un an déjà. Un an déjà qu'un virus microscopique a transformé le monde et bousculé nos vies. Un an déjà que le personnel du Centre de Ressources communautaires de la Basse-Ville a mis en œuvre toute son énergie pour continuer à servir ses résidents de façon sécurisée.

Cette même volonté d'aider la communauté, surtout en ces temps difficiles, a toujours relevé de l'évidence pour moi. Suite à mon expérience comme bénévole à la Croix-Rouge lors du premier confinement, tout juste huit mois après mon arrivée au Canada, j'ai maintenant le privilège de pouvoir coordonner une belle initiative de sensibilisation communautaire au CRCBV.

Covid-19, la santé mentale, la vaccination, mais aussi les services des partenaires. Les brochures sont disponibles en plusieurs langues et notre équipe a l'avantage d'être multilingue. Des masques, voire des produits désinfectants pour les mains sont également offerts.

Une fois les visites terminées, commence un travail de suivi réalisé par nos intervenantes en soutien social ou par les partenaires. Lorsqu'une situation urgente est constatée sur le terrain, la personne est immédiatement référée au Centre. Enfin, les statistiques et les témoignages recueillis sont transmis à Santé Publique Ottawa.

Ces visites de sensibilisation sur le terrain permettent de constater l'im-

## Door-to-door outreach in pandemic times

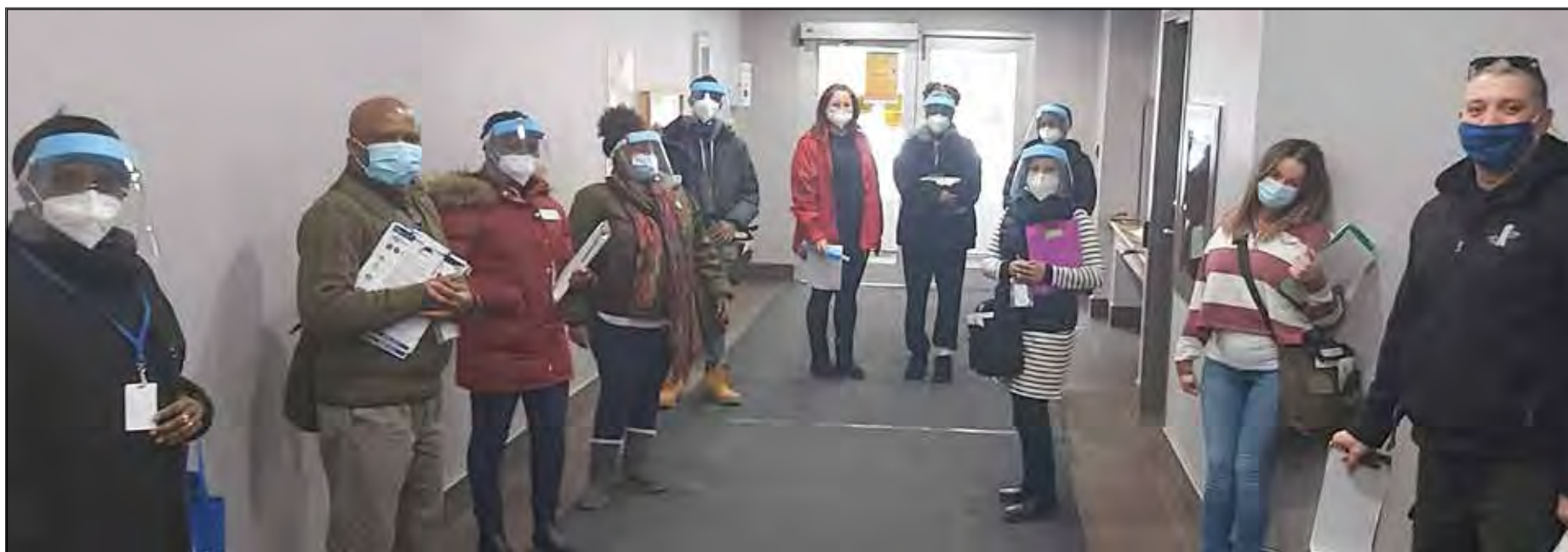
By Fatima El Moustauoui

It's already been one whole year. One year that our world has been transformed and our lives turned upside down by a microscopic virus. One year that the team at the Lowertown Community Resource Centre (LCRC) has buckled down to maintain support for Lowertown residents.

Serving community has always been part of who I am. It was the way I was brought up, and that is even clearer for me now in these difficult times. Eight months after my arrival in Canada, I was able to volunteer for

safety guidelines, mental-health supports, vaccination, the Ottawa Mission's food truck and the many services at the LCRC, including the food bank. We also hand out masks, disinfectant and pamphlets in six different languages. When people facing urgent issues are identified, we refer them to our Centre for immediate support. Follow-ups are carried out over the rest of the week by our social-support workers or by partner organizations. Finally, statistics and observations are compiled and shared with OPH.

These visits have given us a further window into the impact of the



**Début de la campagne de sensibilisation dans la Basse-Ville sur la question COVID et des besoins connexes des résidents.**  
The team's first day of Lowertown COVID outreach in Cumberland and Bruyere rooming house.

C'est porté par cette détermination de répondre au mieux aux besoins de la communauté que le CRCBV a mis en place depuis plusieurs semaines cette campagne de sensibilisation au Covid-19. La nouvelle équipe en charge de ce projet travaille en étroite collaboration avec des partenaires locaux tels que Logement Communautaire d'Ottawa, Santé Publique Ottawa, Options Bytown, Boys & Girls Club of Ottawa et avec deux résidents. Notre banque alimentaire contribue également en fournissant des sacs de nourriture d'urgence.

Chaque mardi après-midi, nous avons le plaisir de rendre visite à des résidents du quartier. Nous réalisons cette activité de porte-à-porte en équipes de deux, en portant l'équipement de protection individuelle et en respectant la distanciation physique. Durant ces visites de bien-être, nous informons les résidents et identifions les personnes intéressées à recevoir un coup de main. Les informations distribuées portent sur les services du Centre incluant notre banque alimentaire, le camion de restauration de la Mission d'Ottawa, les informations de Santé Publique Ottawa sur la

pact de la pandémie et les défis auxquels les résidents sont confrontés, comme l'insécurité alimentaire, le manque d'activités pour les enfants mais surtout l'isolement. C'est pour cette raison aussi que les habitants apprécient nos visites et reconnaissent avec gratitude les efforts du CRCBV pour les aider. C'est un moment de partage d'informations, de sourires; certains expriment le besoin d'échanger sur leurs craintes ou tout simplement de jaser. En ce moment, beaucoup s'interrogent sur le processus de vaccination et notre mission première reste de les informer. « Votre visite est très appréciée et apporte beaucoup de positivité dans ma vie » confie un résident.

Et ces visites m'amènent beaucoup aussi. C'est une autre façon de prouver ma reconnaissance à mon nouveau pays d'accueil et de contribuer, à mon humble niveau, à apporter une petite lueur d'espoir. L'espoir que cette pandémie se terminera bientôt. L'espoir d'entretenir ces liens de solidarité créés tout au long de l'année. L'espoir dans notre résilience.

the Red Cross helping migrant farm workers during the early days of the pandemic. Now I have the privilege of coordinating the LCRC's COVID outreach initiative.

Our mission and vocation to respond to community needs has spurred us to play an important role since January in a door-to-door COVID-19 outreach and awareness campaign. The team heading up this important initiative is comprised of local partners Ottawa Community Housing, Ottawa Public Health (OPH), Options Bytown and the Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa, as well as two residents of Lowertown. Thanks to our food bank, we are also able to distribute emergency food to those in need.

Every Tuesday afternoon, we are pleased to be able to visit residents in their doorways. The multilingual crew divides into teams of two, dons protective equipment and ensures physical distancing at all times. These wellness visits serve to share important information and to identify people in need of a helping hand. We tell them about OPH COVID-19

pandemic and the challenges faced by residents, such as food insecurity, lack of activities for children and, most prevalently, social isolation. This is why so many appreciate our visits and express their gratitude. It is a small but important moment to share not only information, but also a smile. Some convey their fears but many more are simply happy to have an opportunity to talk in person. Over the past couple of weeks, vaccination questions are front of mind for many and our primary mission is to bring up-to-date information. Said one resident: "I appreciate your visit so much. It has brought a lot of positive energy to my life."

Being involved in this initiative brings me positivity as well. It is another way to show my recognition to my new country and to contribute, in my own small way, a little bit of hope. Hope that this pandemic will be over soon. Hope to maintain bonds of solidarity and connectedness throughout the year. Hope grounded in our resiliency.

# Technology, loneliness and the pandemic

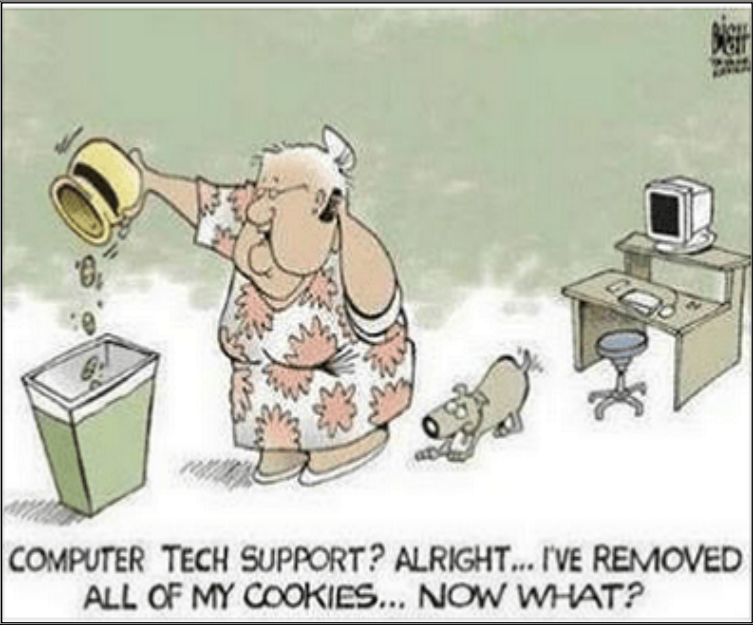
By Claudia Chandra

Lockdowns, physical distancing and other restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly limited in-person social interactions. All community members, young and old, are facing similar challenges such as stress, anxiety, loneliness and isolation.

More than ever, community members have been turning to the Internet and online video-communication platforms such as Zoom, Skype, Google Meet and FaceTime to connect with friends and family. While Canadians are adopting the technology faster than ever, an AGE-WELL poll conducted by Environics Research in 2020 found that only about 23 per cent of Canadians over the age of 65 are using video-calling features on their smartphones.

There are a variety of reasons for this. Some are physical, such as lacking a suitable device — computer, tablet or smartphone — or missing essential components for these like a webcam or speakers. Another is not having access to a suitable Internet connection.

Equally important is the lack of knowledge or experience on using this technology. While everyone may know how to use a telephone to call a friend or book an appointment, it is a big step



Tech Support by Bish from Geezer Stuff

from that to connecting via a video-communication platform..

Several seniors were interviewed and asked about their experience in learning to use things like Facetime or Zoom to keep in touch with family and friends since the pandemic struck. Not surprisingly, it was often grandchildren who were able to teach grandparents how to use the technology, perhaps because it can take a strong bond of love to overcome and outlast the frustrations that often arise when computer screens don't match or wrong buttons are pushed.

One of the persons interviewed had to replace her old computer during the lockdown. Her new computer tended to ask for old passwords long forgotten; it didn't like the old USB drive where

she stored most of her data; had its own preferred means of receiving emails; and, needless to say, did not come with the software needed to run her scanner.

With help over the telephone from knowledgeable neighbours, she has managed to overcome some of the problems and learned to live with the ones that persist, at least until she can have help come to her home.

Connected Canadians (CC), which was started in 2018 by two Ottawa women, Emily Jones Joannis and Tas Damen, helps seniors learn to use the new technology. CC's mandate is to provide technology training and support to seniors. For the first two years it offered in-person, one-on-one or small-group training sessions to help seniors learn to do things as

simple as sending an email, or attaching photos, to using video-communication platforms.

With the onset of COVID, it was no longer safe to offer in-person training, but, at the same time, knowing how to use the technology became more vital in order to reduce isolation and loneliness. So, CC started offering free remote support over the phone or online.

With help from CC, volunteers at Centre Bruyère learned how to continue their regular volunteer meetings and maintain regular connections with their elderly patients they used to visit in person. CC has also been working closely with the Lowertown Community Resource Centre (LCRC) to help seniors in our community learn how to connect with friends and family and to access the virtual programs offered by the LCRC.

To help those who do not have the necessary equipment, the LCRC is planning a second-hand devices drive, collecting second-hand smartphones, laptops and desktop computers. Anyone wishing to donate should contact the LCRC to arrange drop-off or pick-up. While the social-distancing constraints of COVID will slowly disappear, the habit of connecting with faraway friends and family via Zoom or other such programs is likely with us for good.

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# Parks

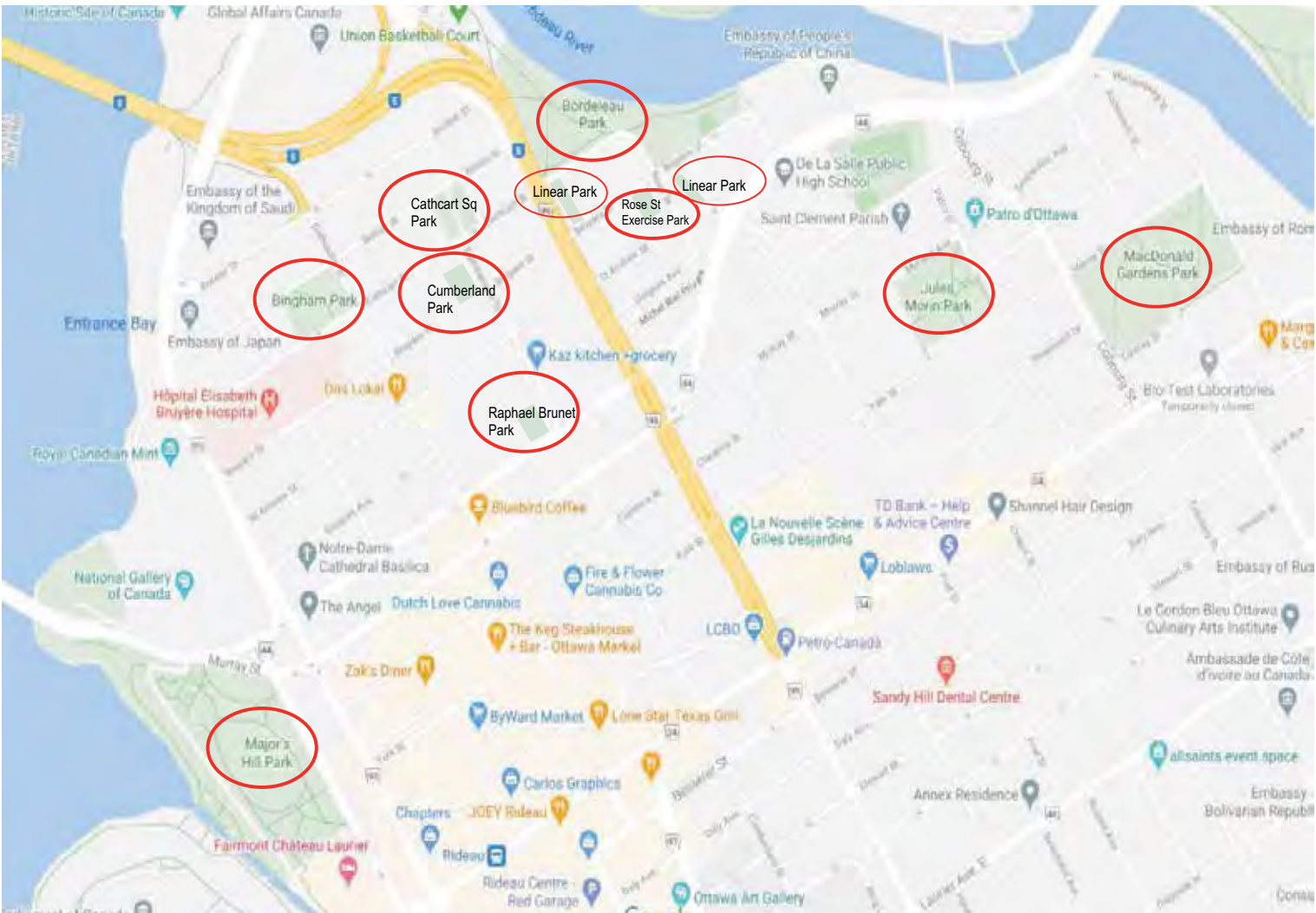
## Goals of The Friends of Lowertown Parks

The Friends are dedicated to promoting the health of our parks and to supporting the City of Ottawa in keeping the parks accessible and safe for all residents, and have a number of goals:

- Increase awareness of The Friends mandate and projects;
- Develop The Friends relationship with the surrounding Lowertown communities and partners;
- Maintain a healthy partnership with City of Ottawa and parks programs and the National Capital Commission;
- Advocate for protection and maintenance of healthy parks;
- Provide awareness of the impacts of human activities in the park and changes in attitude and actions that can mitigate these impacts; and
- Exchange information about best practices.

To achieve these goals, we have been meeting with City of Ottawa staff, the National Capital Commission, Councillor Fleury’s office and other key stakeholders. Discussions have covered safety in our parks, beautification efforts, input on the City’s Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan, and more.

While the “Friends Of” initiative is old news to some parks, keep an eye out for new



### Lowertown has numerous parks and “parkettes” that need friends to care and watch over them.

signs to be posted as we formally adopt and commit to the maintenance of our local parks. This spring Friends of Lowertown Parks will be hosting park cleanups as part of the Cleaning the Capital initiative. All are welcome to join in and help make our parks clean and safe for all to enjoy.

#### Successes so far

**Bingham Park:** The outdoor rink at Bingham Park was well used this winter, and Friends of Bingham Park

are continuing to work with Councillor Fleury’s office toward the revitalization of the park.

**Bordeleau Park:** This spring, a “first train to Bytown” pop-up informed passersby of the history behind the stone pillars at the edge of the park and in the Rideau River, all that remain of the first rail line to reach Bytown. The spring cleanup is scheduled for May 8 between 10:30 and 11:30 a.m. in both Bordeleau and King Edward parks, including shoreline cleanup.

**Cumberland Park:** As soon as the snow melts, Friends of Cumberland Park will be starting cleanup. In past years, almost 20 bags of compost were gathered during the first roundup! This winter, the park lost a mature tree, which will hopefully be replaced.

**Macdonald Gardens:** The Macdonald Gardens Park, which has a rich history, received heritage designation in 2017. The community advocates for the preservation and restoration of the Park and discussions with the City on

a Heritage Conservation Plan are ongoing. The Friends of the Park organizes biannual cleanups. The spring cleanup this year is scheduled for May 1, between 10 a.m. and noon, followed by a planting day later in May, weather permitting.

**Raphael Brunet Park:** A garbage can was installed this winter, helping to reduce the amount of garbage in the bus shelter and the park. A park cleanup is planned for May 1 between 10 and 11 a.m. and will be followed with beautification efforts later in the spring.

Preplanning your funeral and cemetery arrangements is one of the most thoughtful and considerate gifts you can give to your loved ones, because it relieves the burden of making difficult and expensive decisions at the time of grieving, and lets you set your own legacy.

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# Lowertown East Residents Committee

By Sandra Pilote

If you have ever wondered about this group, wonder no more. Here are some basic details. The Lowertown East Residents Committee (LERC) is composed of any interested member of the community who lives in the Lowertown area east of King Edward Avenue. Involved residents volunteer their time in an effort to increase neighbourhood safety. The overall goal is to engage residents in building pride in our community.

Our Lowertown East community is culturally and economically diverse. The neighbourhood has individuals of all ages, genders, ethnic backgrounds and abilities. They may live in townhouses, apartments, condos or single-family dwellings. All live in the same geographic area but do not necessarily share the same interests or goals. But the residents who volunteer do see participation as a way to address common concerns about safety and security.



Residents gathering at de La D+Salle for a Lowertown East walk-about

Why does the group focus on Lowertown East? LERC is the resident partner with the service agencies and organizations in the Lowertown Our Home (LOH) safety project. LOH was established in 2007 as the Lowertown East Security Committee to address community fears related to drugs, gangs, graffiti and other activities that reduced a sense of pride and security.

What do LERC volunteers do? They try to share information through meetings, Facebook, walkabouts and social events. During the Covid period, the monthly meetings continue virtually. In non-COVID times, LERC organizes two key activities in the neighbourhood: Winterfest in Jules Morin Park and Movies in the Park, usually in Jules Morin Park but sometimes at the Patro. The volunteer-led walkabouts may involve a representative from the councillor's office or one of the partner organizations. Or it might be a community member offering historical walking tours or flowering plants or miniature pumpkins door to door.

The best way to promote safety in our community is to be engaged in identifying concerns and finding solutions together. The feeling of belonging to a community comes from participating in the community. If you want to join the fun and get involved in your community, contact LERC at 613-789-3930 Extension 375.

# Planting hope in Community Gardens

By Kelly Butler



Left to right: Gardeners Alec and Elena (in the back) kindly gifting sunflowers to LCRC staff Alain, Anabelle, Sarah and MC

This spring, Lowertown's Community Gardens are preparing for the upcoming gardening season with the support of the Lowertown Community Resource Centre (LCRC) and Ottawa Community Housing (OCH). In addition to approximately 60 raised beds in the area, some of which are accessible, containers will be available for residents to borrow for the season. There will even be a seed exchange on registration day, organized by gardeners to get people started.

Community gardens are a transformative way to engage local residents while adding beauty to our public spaces. They can improve the health and well-being of active gardeners and bring interest to passers-by. Lowertown's community gardens enhance our neighbourhood and provide affordable access to healthy food.

Resident and volunteer Alec Maclaren first got involved when building the beautiful Angel Square Community Garden located at 40 Cobourg Street. As a gardener himself and an experienced woodworker, he has seen first-hand the real joy and spirit of sharing that lives within community gardening. Thanks to many helping hands, projects are typically built in one day and those who may be interested in volunteering should know that no experience is required. Activities are organized to maintain the gardens and pre-pandemic, included social gatherings.

Just Food ([communitygardening@justfood.ca](mailto:communitygardening@justfood.ca)) is the non-profit organization which oversees all of the community gardens that are on land owned by the City and provides free online resources for anyone seeking to broaden their gardening knowledge. Community gardens are deemed an essential service and Covid-19 safety precautions must be followed by all.

Most recently, a new garden was completed at 160 Charlotte Street, and another one is scheduled to be completed this year at 312 Cumberland Street. One of the big challenges is the availability of wood and its impact on costs.

Not surprisingly, demand is higher than available plots resulting in waitlists as many Lowertown residents are interested in gardening. LCRC's Alain Lutala said that an advisory committee is being implemented to launch a community-garden network that will share resources and advocate for expansion in our area. Some of the vacant land in Lowertown could be converted into vibrant green spaces where residents could collectively create and maintain gardening projects. Beyond the many positive benefits associated with the gardens, they also provide an opportunity to meet your neighbours, building inclusion and growing hope in our community.

Anyone interested in community gardening or becoming a volunteer can contact the LCRC [reception@crcbv.ca](mailto:reception@crcbv.ca) or OCH [info@och.ca](mailto:info@och.ca) for referral to your local community garden to register.

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# Lowertown seniors: community vs. COVID19

By Joel Weiner

Except for loners, people of all ages beyond early childhood instinctively seek out relations with others beyond their immediate families. For seniors living in Lowertown's retirement facilities of various kinds, these social connections largely revolve around interacting with fellow residents on a regular basis and engaging in common activities. But COVID-19 has halted many activities, imposed strict public health measures like social distancing and, as a result, tested community bonds.

One of Lowertown's principal facilities for seniors is the Ottawa Community Housing (OCH) apartment building at 160 Charlotte Street just below Rideau. The main organizations supplying social services to residents there are the Lowertown Community Resource Centre (LCRC) and Ottawa West Community Support (OWCS), which operates its Aging in Place program at 11 OCH seniors' complexes across the city.

"COVID-19 has been very difficult and lonely for seniors," says Jennifer Lalonde, OWCS' executive director. "Since the beginning, seniors have been told that they are the most vulnerable and need to stay home to stay safe. Those living in congregate settings like 160 Charlotte often feel that they cannot leave their apartment because they need to share hallways and elevators with others.

"At the same time, many of the support services and excursions that we and other community partners provided to the residents stopped overnight. Seniors lost access to their friends, and forced social isolation has had an impact."

The LCRC has also had to curtail many of its activities for seniors. "We used to offer fitness classes, coffee klatches and group cooking and eating sessions," says Sarah McGirr, a social support worker, "but Coronavirus put an end to those. With COVID, people have had to find new, non-physical ways to connect."

Together with other agencies, the LCRC came up with new programs that can be safely delivered under current conditions. Two examples are the Lowertown Concert Series, featuring music, dance, and storytelling over Zoom, and the Storytelling-Over-The-Phone Series. Both were afternoon events organized by Multicultural Arts for Schools and Communities (MASC) in partnership with the LCRC and other neighborhood partners. (See "MASC on the job" in the February issue of The Echo).

The two series provided participating seniors with opportunities to stay engaged and also keep in touch with each other as well as the organizations

that help them. Unfortunately, both ended last month when funding for the program expired.

While concerts and storytelling over Zoom and the phone have ended, other activities are set to begin. The LCRC is about to launch a project in which seniors at home will create pieces of art out of recycled objects, with an expert guiding them by video link and phone. This follows a similar activity that took place between January and March: 16 residents at 160 Charlotte were given art supply kits and, under the remote supervision of professional artist Nicole Bélanger, created a collective work.

Not all organized activities for seniors require communications technology. Last year, in collaboration with MASC, LCRC organized outdoor dancing at 160 Charlotte: standing on their balconies or socially distanced in front of the building, participants learned new steps under the tutelage of Suzan Richards. Eight sessions took place before cold weather forced a halt.

But dancing will be back this year. Although the dates have not been finalized, New Horizons for Seniors has already confirmed its financial support.

Another outdoor program last year at 160 Charlotte was rebuilding the community garden. A partnership between the LCRC and OCH, that project engaged a knowledgeable volunteer who guided participants in revitalizing the property's neglected garden. Successful and popular, this activity will likely resume once the weather and public health measures permit.

Before COVID-19, the large gymnasium at the Patro was the venue for the traditional holiday gatherings hosted by the LCRC. Meals donated by Zak's Diner were served to between 150 and 175 people, many of them seniors from 160 Charlotte.

"Last year, we had to cancel the annual Christmastime party, so we took the party to the residents and delivered holiday meals to them," Sarah McGirr recalls. "We also brought a community meal in the summer to 60 people."

Like many of the LCRC's projects, this was another collaboration with OWCS and OCH. "We worked with partners to provide contact with every client household at least twice a year through door knocks and holiday drop-offs," says Jennifer Lalonde. "For Christmas, we came together to ensure that everyone at 160 Charlotte had a short visit, a gift and meal."

Yet another activity aimed at maintaining a sense of community is the LCRC's Ethnocultural Program that checks in with residents at 160 Charlotte (and beyond). Last year, it made a total of 2,600 weekly "COVID wellness calls" to seniors with language

and cultural barriers who have difficulty accessing services. This outreach helped break isolation and learn about any problems.

All these approaches are fully in line with the growing body of scientific literature about how to reinforce a sense of community among seniors during a time of pandemic. Most of these studies focus on Long-Term Care (LTC) facilities, but experts have begun to examine how lessons learned in LTC's can be applied to seniors in more settings or living in private homes.

A recent study by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research identified a number of strategies to support social connection under COVID-19. Among them are: opportunities for creative expression, like art, music or storytelling; exercise; gardening, either indoors or outside; and using technology to communicate. Clearly, all these types of initiatives are applied in Lowertown for the benefit of our seniors.



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# Community of Communities

Shepherds of Good Hope: Creating Community for All in Lowertown

By Deirdre Freiheit


Shepherds of Good Hope (SGH) believes in creating homes for all, community for all, and hope for all. There is no typical person who comes to SGH for support. There may be common themes to their stories, most notably trauma and loss. There are marginalized groups that disproportionately experience homelessness, such as indigenous peoples and women.

This past year has been difficult for everyone. Homelessness in Lowertown has become so much more acute and visible during the pandemic. We understand that the environment in many parts of Lowertown has been increasingly challenging for residents. It has been the same for SGH and those who use our services. At the same time, we are moving forward with our goals to decrease our emergency shelter beds and increase supportive housing options, including our new development at 216 Murray Street.

The language we use when we talk about our vulnerable population is important. There is a lot of dehumanizing language. Labelling individuals as “the homeless” is stigmatizing. This is rarely done maliciously, but is often experienced as limiting and stigmatizing. The word “homeless” describes a person’s housing situation. It does not define who they are. Most of us would not like the lowest points in our lives to be used to define us.

Our use of the term “people experiencing homelessness” is very purposeful. When we consider homelessness as an experience we begin to humanize people who are often cast aside unless they conform to society’s expectations. Expectations that are often set by those of us who have never experienced the kinds of situations that lead individuals to experience homelessness.

### WHO STAYS IN SHEPHERDS OF GOOD HOPE'S SHELTER?



**MORE THAN 3,700 INDIVIDUALS**  
used shelter services this past year.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

**69% MALE / 30% FEMALE / 1% TRANS**

**20% IDENTIFY AS INDIGENOUS**

of those individuals:

38% First Nations

36% Inuit

8% Metis

18% Non-status

**88% BORN IN CANADA**

**12% BORN OUTSIDE CANADA**

of those individuals:

49% Permanent Residents

39% Refugees

12% Work/Student Visa or Other

**10% HAVE A PHYSICAL DISABILITY**

**2% ARE VETERANS**

disabilities, gender diverse individuals and more. Nobody chooses to become homeless but everyone deserves choice in where they live. Our vision for the future is one in which experiences of homelessness are brief, and people are supported to choose the housing that is right for them. Communities around the world have done it, and we can too.

Our future multipurpose building at 216 Murray is designed to address many of the community’s concerns. It will offer a day and evening drop-in program and community kitchen to assist people in the area experiencing homelessness, food insecurity and isolation. Importantly, it will provide permanent housing with supports to people who have been living in crowded shelters for years - not by choice, but because there is a shocking lack of housing options in our city that meet their needs. We do not pretend to be the solution for ending homelessness but we are a part of it.

When we treat people who are experiencing homelessness with empathy and compassion, we see the individual. Their beautiful, tragic and inspiring stories are part of the diverse history of the Lowertown community.

Deirdre Freiheit is President & CEO of Shepherds of Good Hope and Shepherds of Good Hope Foundation and Chair of the Alliance to End Homelessness. Deirdre has been a leader in the not-for-profit sector for almost 30 years.

Our core values at SGH are based on providing services and supports to vulnerable individuals where they are in their journeys, without judgment. Although SGH operates programs across Ottawa, our roots are in Lowertown. Starting almost 40 years ago, we opened our first soup kitchen, shelter and supportive housing residences here. Our experience in Lowertown is of a generous, compassionate community with a strong interest in the well-being of all of its neighbours.

There is no one-size fits all solution to homelessness. We are, however, optimistic that we are on the brink of a fundamental shift in the way we deliver our services in the City of Ottawa. As we do this, we must start all discussions about homelessness with a simple premise: people experiencing homelessness are people.

The demographics of the people who use our services at SGH are varied; their stories are varied; and their needs are varied. We work with Indigenous peoples, seniors, newcomers, people with

# Rebuilding community the cooperative way

By John Chenier

De La Salle was one of three cooperative housing projects built specifically for the purpose of providing homes for francophones that had been displaced when their homes were demolished during the urban renewal craze of the 1960s and 70s. Like the other two cooperatives in Lowertown that preceded it, Beausoleil (1973) and Brebeuf (1978), the stipulation was that the housing was to go to those families that had been forced to move from Lowertown.

All three cooperatives provided a mix of subsidized and market-priced housing built on plots of land that had been expropriated by the city as part of the renewal. The 82 dwellings of the de La Salle coop stretch along four streets: Guigues, Rose, Michel Riel and St Andrew. When it opened in 1982, the first residents were mostly the children of families that had been displaced. Their parents had established roots in their new communities since the time they had been forced to leave and had little interest in moving back to Lowertown.

Coop de LaSalle. The buildings with the shiny metal roofs belong to the coop. Photo: Google Maps

According to Renée Sylvain, who has been at de La Salle from the beginning, the first years were much like a family or class reunion. While the new residents may not have known each other, discovering someone they knew in common from their past, someone who had been in their class at school or lived on their street, was easy. Common facilities, such as a safe, enclosed, well-equipped playground for the children and a separate building with an office and a large “community hall” for meetings and parties broke down the isolation and contributed to the development of community.

Ms. Sylvain says that there are many things that promote a sense of community within the coop. The social programming is one example. In the early days, there was an annual BBQ where a large piece of meat was cooked for the members. The BBQ has been replaced by an annual picnic held every June before people leave for their summer vacations.

Coop page 23

**B**

**A**

**R**

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Lowertown's meeting place in the Market!

La Basse-ville se retrouve Chez Lucien!

# LCRC and Club 310 meet the COVID challenge

By Christine Kilfoil

During the first province-wide school lockdown one year ago in March, the Lowertown Community Resource Centre (LCRC) responded immediately. The LCRC was quick to adapt in creative ways to continue to serve the community while staying safe. While other CRCs closed their after-school programs and laid off staff, the LCRC kept all of its after-school-program staff working and moved to a virtual Club 310 program for Lowertown kids.

The decision to stay open was prompted by the need to keep Lowertown kids connected to the program, their community and each other as key to helping them stay well. Club 310 is free after-school program offered by the LCRC. The program is for children 6 to 12 and runs Monday through Friday from 2:30 to 5:30pm at York Street Public School (310 York Street). Children are provided with a healthy snack as well as a variety of physical and artistic activities and workshops.

Club 310 has managed to adapt to the pandemic and continue to offer a safe place for the kids of Lowertown to go once the school day ends. In addition to the virtual pro-

gram, the LCRC also initiated a snack program that provided food and healthy snacks to kids who would normally have breakfast at school and



then another meal at Club 310.

The LCRC distributed food and snacks once weekly to more than 140 children from Lowertown throughout the provincial lockdown. This program was in operation from March 2020 until the end of September 2020.

When the school lockdown lifted and in-person learning resumed in September, Club 310 also resumed in-person operations at York Street School. It followed all of the guidelines and protocols mandated by Public Health and the Ministry of Education.

Club 310 has a wide reach that serves children from many different schools that

reside in Lowertown drawing kids from École Sainte-Anne, École Francojeunesse, St. Brigid School, and Rockliffe Park Public School. However,



er, when schools re-opened in September, access to York Street School was limited exclusively to York Street students. In order to serve kids from other schools the LCRC

opened a second after-school program at the Lowertown Youth Centre. It also partnered with Crossroads Children's Mental Health Centre.

With the most recent provincial lockdown, the LCRC resumed its virtual after-school program as well as the snack program. Virtual Club 310 creates a virtual classroom where staff uploaded activities and challenges every day.

Staff member Megan Wilson-Lockhart says that staff and kids meet on Google Meet—one group of children 5 to 10 years old and

workshop with MASC artist Tina Le Moine.

The program also has an online classroom where children can watch videos, ask for homework help and interact with other students as well as facilitators. Club 310 offers incentives and prizes to the students who complete the most challenges, like coloring books, games, puzzles, Lego small gift cards.

Club 310 has always played a crucial role in the lives of the kids of Lowertown. When they move on to high school, many former Club 310 members come back to volunteer and to connect with old friends and staff.

The program changes the lives of Lowertown children in ways that are impossible to measure. During the pandemic, it has been a lifeline for the children of Lowertown, offering stability and some semblance of normalcy during abnormal times.

Virtual Club 310 will continue even though the stay-at-home orders have been lifted, offering activities to students learning from home.

Lowertown residents can email meagangilsonlockhart@crbcv.ca for more information about Club 310. The program is offered in both English and French.

## Coop

There are parties for the children at Christmas, Easter and Halloween where all the children receive gifts and goodies. To help pay for these, the coop raises money by holding a 50-50 draw every two weeks.

The coop is self-governing and very self-reliant. Whereas a condominium typically pays outside workers to do most of the work to maintain the building and grounds — and hence has high fees, coop members are expected to do much of the regular upkeep. The members of the LaSalle Board of Directors lead committees responsible for overseeing the maintenance of the building exteriors, the interiors of the units, the selection of new members, organizing the leisure and social activities and



seeing that the rules and regulations are followed. Every member of the coop is expected to offer four hours of their time every month, if needed, to do the things that need to be done.

De La Salle has paid off its mortgage and has a healthy financial reserve to pay for those exterior

repairs it knows are coming after 40 years. As a result, the rents are very affordable and there is no shortage of applicants looking to live there. However, turnover is very minor and the selection committee has many applicants to choose from. The prerequisite that housing go to families displaced from Lowertown has been removed as it was getting difficult to find people who met the qualification. In addition to looking for young families, the coop chooses people who understand that they are not renting a unit but joining a coop where they will have obligations for sustaining the community.

The President of the coop, David Ross points out that over the years, de La Salle has become a reflection of the new Lowertown. The mix of residents has become ethnically diverse and includes people from many parts of the world who have chosen to make Lowertown their home and de La Salle their community within a community.

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