

*General Meeting on
Proposed Development of
Lansdowne Park*

Glebe Community Association

Ottawa, Ontario
October 22, 2009

Table of Contents

General Meeting on Proposed Development of Lansdowne Park	1
Principles	1
Comments.....	1
The Issues	4

General Meeting on Proposed Development of Lansdowne Park

Moderator **Anne Scotton** welcomed participants and outlined the meeting's format.

The future of Lansdowne Park is a recurring theme in the community. This meeting's objective was to reach conclusions about the perspectives of the city and the community to assist the Glebe Community Association (GCA) in developing its presentation to city council.

Principles

Bob Brocklebank, past president of the GCA, provided the recent history of Lansdowne Live, outlining the city's participation in the process, and GCA involvement. The GCA proposed three basic principles for development:

- An open, transparent, competitive process for decision-making
- Full opportunity for public involvement
- Limited financial risk to the city

After a brief explanation of each principle and how it relates to Lansdowne Live, participants would be asked to vote on each principle separately before dealing with more difficult questions.

Because a straw vote indicated that no one was opposed to a transparent decision-making process for Lansdowne Park, Scotton offered an opportunity for three or four proponents to comment.

Comments

Emphasizing the importance of a transparent process, one participant said the city was misrepresenting the Glebe response to Lansdowne Live as a "not in my back yard" (NIMBY) issue. This lack of vision is bad for the city, and pits one community against another rather than bringing all communities together, the participant said.

Another participant referred to a recent media report that offered credible evidence organized crime controls 80% of the construction projects in Montreal. Although he was not suggesting that this was the case in Ottawa, he said the city's breach of "ethical norms and practices" placed it on a slippery slope, heading in the direction of conflicts of interest, corruption, and charges of "systemic incompetence."

People are in a difficult position, said a participant. If they want to contribute to the eventual plan, they are forced to engage in a flawed process; if they refuse to engage in the flawed process, they essentially forfeit any right to a strong voice. He said he believed it would be better not to engage in a flawed process, but he recognized the risks in this approach.

Principle 1:

That the city adopt an open, transparent, competitive process for decision-making

Action:

As a result of a vote, Principle 1 was adopted unanimously.

The second principle, concerning public involvement, contains two parts: full opportunity for public engagement in the consultation debate on the redevelopment of Lansdowne Park, and an opportunity to use the facilities provided by the redevelopment.

For clarification, a participant asked whether the wording of the principle represented what the group wanted to accomplish. Scotton said participants could discuss and vote on the principle, with the GCA refining the words to reflect people's views.

In response to a suggestion that, for common understanding, the principles utilize the city council's wording regarding consultation, Brocklebank said the intent of the principle's wording is to create a wider process than the city envisaged. Scotton added the issue covers not simply consultation on redevelopment, but community use of taxpayer-funded facilities.

A participant recommended consultation prior to proposals being tendered so that bidders would know what was required of them. Scotton agreed this would be an ideal process.

Another participant emphasized the need for precise wording, particularly because the GCA was criticizing the city's imprecise language. Scotton cited the regular, respectful meetings between the project team and the community on the development of the Glebe Community Centre building, noting this was a standard to be promoted. She suggested people vote on the principle and then provide specific examples of how consultation should occur.

Lansdowne Live is very complicated, said one participant, because although the National Capital Commission (NCC) and the city would be able to use the facilities for events, the developers would be running those events. There is an issue of costs and revenues.

A participant said the two separate but important parts to the second principle involve engagement prior to proposal acceptance and the continuing public use of the area and involvement in any proposed changes.

June Creelman, chair of the GCA's Lansdowne Committee, said the principle could speak to "best practices in consultation," but that there was insufficient time during the current meeting to craft the exact wording. Scotton added the principle could include examples.

Another participant contrasted the city's pilot project in Vars and Hintonburg, where the city seemed interested in the concept of community consultation, with the attempt to "run roughshod" over the Glebe community regarding Lansdowne Park. He offered to work with Brocklebank to incorporate wording from the city's own documents.

Responding to a question about adding another principle regarding accessibility, Scotton said the principle would remain unchanged but the wording would be reworked before it was presented to the city. The participant said she was hearing growing support for a separate principle on community access.

Creelman asked whether the group would support the GCA asking the city for best practices in public engagement consultation prior to a decision, along with a second principle regarding

public access.

Principle 2(a):

That the GCA will ask the city to adopt best practices in public engagement consultation at all stages of planning and developing Lansdowne Park.

Action: The group voted in favour of Principle 2(a).

Principle 2 (b)

That the City should provide a full opportunity for public involvement in Lansdowne Park, by ensuring ongoing public and community access and maintaining public control and management of the site.

Action:

The group voted unanimously in favour of Principle 2(b).

The third principle relates to limiting the financial risk to the city. Long-term leases should be scrutinized seriously and the full costs and obligations factored in.

A participant said the principle should contain a reference that "revenue neutral" should not be used as a financing method for the project. Although it claims to be revenue neutral, the current proposal provides that the development's taxes be used to pay off the loan. Property taxes provide for direct services to the property and for general services such as libraries. The

developers would be getting a free ride, because their taxes would not be available for services, which would leave taxpayers to pay the difference.

Brocklebank added that if a fire broke out in the hotel, the fire department would be called. Because the developers' taxes would be applied to paying off the loan, the cost of activating the fire department would be borne by regular taxpayers.

Several participants asked whether the principle's wording is too restrictive regarding costs. They said if all of Lansdowne were maintained as a public park, there might be an additional cost to the city for public benefit; they did not want the proposal to be automatically rejected. Brocklebank replied that the GCA proposal is sufficiently flexible to allow for that situation.

In Roman times, sports were used to distract the masses from real issues, said a participant, who questioned the wisdom of building a stadium to distract people from fighting for their rights. Some serious social situations, such as homelessness, could be resolved through the use of development taxes.

On the issue of revenue neutrality, one participant recommended that a small portion of the land be sold for housing to provide revenue to maintain the rest of the park for community use. Another suggested rewording the principle to refer to "fiscal clarity, fiscal accountability, and full disclosure."

Principle 3:

That the financial implications of any development be clearly presented and assessed to limit financial risks and protect public interests.

Action:

Principle 3 was approved with one abstention.

The Issues

Brocklebank reviewed the GCA principles from 2007 and asked whether participants believe they are still relevant.

A participant said that whether Lansdowne is considered a park would determine how it is developed. A mixed-use approach should conform to the historical use of the land as an exposition place. Preference should be given to shows and expositions over the retail space proposed by Lansdowne Live.

A participant who identified herself as affiliated with the Centretown Community Health Centre said that in 2004, the CCHC developed eight health-based principles for consideration in the development of any city venue. These included recreational opportunities and ecological soundness. She advocated rolling these up into the GCA principles to protect and improve the health of the community.

Lansdowne Park comprises 15.63 hectares, in comparison with Brewer Park's 19.64 hectares, said another participant. According to the city standard for parks and recreational facilities of four hectares per 1,000 people, the Ottawa core area is "woefully underserved" in its recreational space. Once Lansdowne Park is lost, it cannot be recovered, she said.

A participant said the planned 40 townhouses along Holmwood Avenue would create a wall along one side of the area. To build the units, it would be necessary to cut down the lovely trees along both Holmwood and Bank streets. She said she opposes Lansdowne Live because of the density, design, and loss of trees.

A participant said the current use of Lansdowne creates severe traffic density problems at times. Lansdowne Live would increase traffic density on a full-term basis. As it currently stands, transportation is inadequate; the plan would be bad for the entire city.

Describing the Aberdeen Pavilion as the cornerstone of Lansdowne Park, a participant expressed concern that the architecture of the new buildings would not live up to the Aberdeen standard.

One participant said the proposal is predicated on renovation of the stadium, which would benefit a small minority of citizens. The city has never asked people whether they wanted a stadium. He suggested telling the city that a stadium should not be the basis for revitalization. Scotton referred to a ballot at municipal election.

A participant expressed concern about the sustainability of the Lansdowne Live planning. Given what has happened with other construction projects in the area, she said she did not believe the water table would allow for underground parking.

The stadium issue should be readdressed, as should spending taxpayers' money to support professional sports teams, said another participant.

Speaking as a Glebe resident, Councillor **Clive Doucet** characterized the Lansdowne Live process as the "alienation of an ancient Ottawa park for private profit." The process was

corrupt, and an affront to every democratic citizen of the city. It would be more honest to sell the land outright rather than enter into a complex, multi-layered deal that would cost the city hundreds of millions of dollars, he said. Lansdowne Park is a “part of our soul” and once lost, will never come back.

Saying he moved from Toronto five years ago, one participant expressed concern about the height of the buildings along Bank Street and Holmwood Avenue, which would have the effect of cutting off the area from the rest of the Glebe. He compared the situation to “the travesty” that had been perpetrated along the Toronto waterfront.

To be clear, said another participant, eliminating the stadium cost would enable all the wishes for the rest of the park to come true. He recommended mixed use of the area with activities—such as a farmers’ market, trade shows, and perhaps the Central Canada Exhibition—that remain true to the historical use of the land. It should be held in public hands, he said, but if the area were to be developed in the future, parcels should be rezoned and sold at true market value.

A participant said Lansdowne Live should build a stadium elsewhere on public transit lines. Developing Lansdowne Park as envisaged by Lansdowne Live would kill smaller businesses and the village atmosphere in the Glebe.

While she does not like the current Lansdowne Park, a participant said accepting the Lansdowne Live proposal would do a disservice to the city’s potential to become a beautiful capital.

Another participant said there seemed to be unanimity that a Lansdowne proposal should reflect the community vision. He asked about coalition efforts to obtain the support of the rest of the city. Creelman advised that the GCA has been working with various community associations, which support the GCA principles. Scotton said the use of public funds for private investment is a concern for all taxpayers.

Referring to the flawed process and the sole-sourcing, a participant said the proposal should be killed. He said the city document is inaccurate and misleading.

A participant said people should address the big picture. Lansdowne Park needs redevelopment and a public/private partnership (P3) could be beneficial, but the city should not be forced into the proposed agreement. There should be a full and open assessment of what Lansdowne Park represents for the entire city and how it should be developed. Prime focus should be on the Aberdeen Pavilion.

Another participant agreed that there should be more housing intensification in Lansdowne Park, but said any tendering process should be open. High-calibre designers should plan the area’s development, with special consideration given to making any proposal environmentally friendly and ecologically sound. Open minds are needed, to look at things differently.

There is a high risk that in six weeks city council could make a decision the people did not like, said one participant, who asked about potential recourse.

Brocklebank mentioned the November 12 court hearing and the special council deliberations on November 12 and 13, at which delegations could present their views.

One participant asked whether any of the great ideas that had emerged during the 2007 meeting had been retained, because Lansdowne Live is not a good plan. The value of a proposal should not depend on how well one knows the mayor.

Saying he was not against redevelopment or Ottawa football provided that was what the people wanted, another participant said Lansdowne Live is “fabulous” from a business perspective, with little risk and great profit. His concern was that the proposal would pass.

A Glebe merchant said the proposed shopping mall would be huge, built *by* big business *for* big business. It would destroy the current sense of village in the Glebe business community.

Another participant stressed the importance of talking about the health and quality of life issues in the proposal, and not just focusing on planning and finances, for example. She said health issues would arise from increased traffic, transportation, and noise. No recourse would be available once the proposal went in. She asked whether the community was interested in including a section on health issues because the by-laws are inconsistent with environmental controls. The organizers said any such ideas could be expressed in the comment cards, which the board of directors would consider during its vote.

A representative of the design community said the proposal is “an unholy alliance” between the city and developers. The plan is mediocre and suffers from a “poverty of imagination.” Ideally, he said, there should be a vision/ideas competition, summarized in a site master plan.

To illustrate the potential traffic problems, a participant compared Scotiabank Place’s parking requirements to the Lansdowne Live proposal. Lansdowne Park is funded by the public and should be enjoyed by the public, in much the same way as the Boston Commons and the Chicago waterfront.

One participant said the GCA principles enunciated in the October *Glebe Report* remained excellent. He suggested including references to the poor design quality and the undemocratic nature of the Lansdowne Live process. The stadium could be located elsewhere on an area served by city transit, such as LeBreton Flats. Lansdowne should have improved transportation and a great many activities for people.

Participants suggested the GCA become more politically strategic, talking to residents in other areas of the city and exerting pressure on city councillors. Business reacts to business pressure, said one. The GCA could take out a full page advertisement in the *Ottawa Citizen*, listing its

basic principles. The Glebe should emphasize that it is not against professional football in the Glebe, but pro sports should not be subsidized as in the Lansdowne Live proposal. Lansdowne Park is a city-wide resource, and Glebe residents are merely the park's stewards.

One participant said city council had already gone through a bad process with light rail, and wanted to show that it could accomplish something. The province is suffering from the bad process involving the eHealth Ontario situation. People should email their members of provincial parliament (MPPs), linking the two situations to embarrass the province into taking action.

A participant suggested the site could be used for a new concert hall, supported by the money promised by both the federal and provincial governments. The hall would benefit the entire city.

Another said the only way to convince those councillors still undecided was to attack the city negotiators' positions, such as the deep undervaluation of the property and the fact that the projected revenues from the mall would come from "other pockets," such as Billings Bridge.

Given the refusal of provincial and federal government funding for Lansdowne Live, a participant asked what these levels of government would be willing to finance. Another participant said with the right process in place, the federal, provincial, and municipal governments would work together, as they were cooperating on a study to determine whether there was a case to build a CFL stadium in Regina. Scotton said the 2009 federal budget allowed for massive government investment, but the government would not invest money in a closed process.

Saying he refused to limit himself to the Glebe, a participant said Lansdowne Park is a public asset and should not be lost. Where there is development on a public asset, it should be used for public purposes. Development does not need to pay for itself; there is a need for a strong city-wide vision.

Participants discussed potential legal action, such as an injunction to delay the council vote. They asked whether the GCA board had discussed supporting the injunction, what it had decided, and whether it would pass a motion of support to provide an evidentiary basis for the law firm's contention it was acting in the public interest. Although the GCA had not yet discussed the issue, Creelman said it might do so at the next meeting.

Describing herself as a pragmatist, one participant asked how to overcome the other city communities' antipathy to "Glebites." She added that MPPs have been cautioned against offering any comments because no provincial money is involved.

A participant said one should never seek development at “the cost of wasting existing resources.” Rather than becoming a vibrant place for all, Lansdowne Live is a development planned solely to line the pockets of the rich. It is time for the community to drive change.

Creelman thanked everyone for participating. She said the views expressed would be considered by the GCA Board of Directors when framing the GCA presentation to city council.

NOTE: Each participant was also given a comment card to assess their individual views.