

March 1, 2010

Ref: Application # D07-12-10-0011

To Whom It May Concern,

We live in the downtown neighbourhood of Old Ottawa South. The rear of our house faces south towards Hopewell Avenue, and our yard lies kitty-corner to a proposed development at 71 Hopewell. We are writing today to express our concerns about that development.

As you know, Old Ottawa South is a heritage neighbourhood that contains a great deal of infill development. We are wholehearted supporters of densification, to maximize the potential and existing infrastructure of the downtown and to ensure opportunities for other people to live in this desirable part of the city. We have lived here for almost five years now and have seen many properties redeveloped, both on Sunnyside and nearby streets. Some of those new buildings are lovely, and blend seamlessly with the traditional older homes...even those that are of more modern construction. But there are a few developments that have been approved, even though they appear to clearly contravene the sound intent behind the design guidelines the city has laid out for infill. They do not, in other words, “respect the character of existing areas.” As a result, they detract from the aesthetic appeal and livability of the neighbourhood instead of enhancing it. If the proposal for 71 Hopewell Avenue is permitted to proceed as submitted, we believe it will be one of these unfortunate examples.

What follows is a summary of our objections, with reference to the relevant sections of the City of Ottawa’s Urban Design Guidelines for Low-Medium Density Infill Housing (2009).

**Public Streetscapes:**

*2.2 Provide a streetscape that is inviting, safe, and accessible, emphasizing the ground floor and street façade of buildings with principal entries, windows, porches, balconies and key internal uses at street level.*

*2.3 Landscape the front yard to blend with surrounding front yards’ landscaping patterns. The landscaping should complement and enhance the continuity of uses along the street and create a significant green presence.*

The plan for the row-house complex for 71 Hopewell Avenue would see a large structure, built right to the edges along the front of the property line, that prioritizes the creation of three garages to be the “face” of this home to the street. There will be one small “front door” facing Hopewell and two other doors to the side. So, a single-dwelling heritage property that had a paved parking spot and detached garage and a lovely large grassy area will be demolished to make way for a townhouse building that replaces almost all of the front and rear green landscaping so it can give a garage to each of three families. Instead of a front porch, some greenery and a clear entrance to welcome neighbours, the “face”

of this property will now be three off-putting garage doors in an area where very few homes have indoor parking.

### **Building Design:**

*3.1.1 Ensure new development faces and animates the public streets.*

*3.1.2 Locate and build infill in a manner that reflects the existing or planned pattern of development in terms of height, front, rear and side yard setbacks.*

*3.1.7 Avoid the arrangement of units where the front of one dwelling faces the back of another, unless the units in the back row have façades rich in detail, recessed garages and extensive landscaping. Do not break the pattern of the green front yards of the neighbourhood by placing parking at the front.*

*3.1.8 Determine an appropriate separation distance between infill housing blocks to ensure appropriate light, view, and privacy considering: building heights, site orientation and locations of windows. Ensure visual privacy, for example, by offsetting new windows from neighbour's windows.*

*3.1.9 Locate rear elevations and rear yards in line with their context so that the rear amenity space is generally consistent with the pattern of the neighbours.*

*3.1.10 Respect the privacy of outdoor amenity areas of adjacent residences and minimize any undesirable impacts through the siting and design of buildings and through the use of screening, lighting, landscaping and other mitigative design measures.*

*3.2.1 Construct at both a residential scale as well as a scale, mass and proportion that contributes to the quality of the streetscape.*

*3.3.2 Allow the front door (the public entrance) to dominate the front façade as opposed to the garage. The use of quality materials and an eye-catching entrance is preferable over recessed and shadowed entrances.*

*3.3.7 Create building faces that are detailed with inviting entrances and living spaces close to the ground that offer 'eyes on the street' and contribute to the amenity of the public realm.*

The proposal for 71 Hopewell appears to have been developed with no respect for the guidelines noted above. The size of the row-house complex is grossly disproportionate to the surrounding properties. There is no front porch on the main level, no welcoming front entrance, and no front garden – all unifying characteristics for the street. There is no question the development would break the pattern of green front yards by putting three garages out front. We oppose any building with ugly garage doors facing the street, but in this design they are not even recessed to minimize the aesthetic disruption. On the contrary, the garages are the dominant element to the streetscape. The face of the building is essentially a long brick wall with three garage doors and a small front door to one of the units. For a pedestrian walking by, it would appear forbidding and unwelcoming. The windows of the units are recessed from the street, to provide three second-floor balconies in front. Perhaps this was a tip to the front porches of Old Ottawa South, but it's hard to see how these are a suitable replacement. Are new neighbours expected to stand back from the garage doors, crane their necks and yell up to the occupants seated behind

railings on the second floor balconies?

With respect to the impact on our own quality of life, the rear of the building also does not conform to sensible design guidelines. The building size is so out of proportion to the property size that the development will essentially eradicate most of the existing greenspace. The current property has a large grass-covered yard. The small bit that would be left, once the existing garage is torn down, will be split into three tiny allotments with new fences in between. It will disrupt what is now a very organic backyard community. There isn't room for the row units to enjoy a back deck, like virtually every other house on Sunnyside and Hopewell. Instead, the developer has planned for four distinct second and third-story balconies. Not only are they uncharacteristic and not conducive to neighbourly interaction, they also pose serious privacy and noise issues for people living beside and behind. Although we live in a dense neighbourhood, the current pattern of fences and yards had ingeniously allowed for some socialization, while also maximizing privacy and minimizing noise. That will be lost if 71 Hopewell is allowed to go forward as planned.

### **Parking and Garages:**

***“A garage should not dominate any façade facing a street, public space or other residential dwelling. Soft landscaping should prevail for its aesthetic and environmental value.”***

*4.7 If access to a garage is at the front, limit the garage width to occupy no more than 50 per cent of the width of the lot to preserve soft landscaped areas for the environmental value, streetscape aesthetic and space for snow storage.*

*4.8 For semi-detached and multiple-attached dwellings row houses, where the 50 per cent goal is more difficult to achieve, a percentage reduction can be considered provided the visual dominance of the garage is downplayed. The garage should be recessed into the building, with windows, projecting balconies, living space and landscaping as the dominant elements facing the public streetscape.*

With regard to parking and garages, many of the relevant points have already been made. It defies logic and aesthetic sense to design an urban building in an environmentally-conscious heritage community around garage space. By giving no less than three garages facing the street primacy in design, there is no question this development is permitting “the car to dominate the public realm.” We would also note that the developer seems to have utterly disregarded greenspace and landscaping and the value they provide to both the tenants and the neighbourhood. Front and back gardens are prized in this area, and this building provides for neither.

In conclusion, we have a multitude of concerns with the plan for 71 Hopewell — both as citizens of Old Ottawa South and as “backyard” neighbours. There is no question that infill housing can be a desirable addition to an established neighbourhood. But it has to be done, as the City put it so well in its own guidelines, “in a civic-minded spirit.” This is not the spirit of this development. The proposal violates almost every infill design guideline set by the city, especially with regards to enhancing streetscapes, supporting

established landscaping, emphasizing front doors rather than garages, and minimizing privacy, sightline, light and noise concerns for surrounding properties.

Citizens may have different sensibilities in terms of personal taste and preference in housing construction. Our concerns are not about the “look” of this townhouse complex, but rather the desire for any redevelopment of this property to follow sound guidelines for preserving the character and appeal of great older communities and minimizing foreseeable negative impacts with immediate neighbours. We know from its clear guidelines that the City of Ottawa shares this desire, and we are hopeful this development will not get a green light without major adjustments.

Thank you for your time.  
Sincerely,

Stacie Bergwerff and Mats Lindeberg