



Centretown Citizens  
Community Association

Sunday, November 20, 2016

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Ottawa, Ontario  
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[www.centretowncitizens.ca](http://www.centretowncitizens.ca)

Tomas Whillans  
CCCA President

Hon. Catherine McKenna  
Member of Parliament – Ottawa Centre  
Minister of the Environment and Climate Change  
107 Catherine St, Ottawa, ON, K2P 0P4

Dear Minister McKenna,

Re: New location for Ottawa's Central Library

I am writing to you, on behalf of the Centretown Citizens Community Association, in your capacity as our Member of Parliament for Ottawa-Centre and in admiration for what you achieved by ensuring transparency and consultation with regard to choosing the site for the Ottawa Civic Hospital. We are seeking your support in what we consider an equally important issue -- the location the new Central Library. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you on this matter, ideally before December 15 when the Ottawa Public Library Board will publicly release the staff recommendations for a site and other aspects of the project.

Our community association is deeply troubled and opposed to the plan to locate the new central library outside Centretown. Statements by the Mayor lead us to believe that Lebreton Flats is almost certain to be the favoured location. We believe that this would be the wrong decision for our City and for the downtown community that is the heart of Ottawa. Assuming that the City is seeking federal funding for this major public project, we urge you to consider the impact of relocating a major piece of social infrastructure away from the densely populated downtown core where users live and work.

This major decision is being made by the City without the kind of open and transparent process that is required to serve the public interest. The Library Board's and the City's closed-door approach is not consistent with the priority your federal government places on transparency and consultation. This stands in sharp contrast with the process used for the location of the Ottawa Civic Hospital. In the case of the new Central Library, the public consultations focused on the selection criteria for determining the location but did not allow for discussing specific locations. The public has also been denied access to the short-list of sites under review and will only learn of a final recommended site on December 15.

A central library plays a vital social and community role and should remain in the densely populated downtown core, where more than 24,600 people live and 115,000 people work. Furthermore, over 2,200 students in Centretown public schools would also benefit from a Central Library in Centretown. To remove a crucial public institution -- with all its vital services for families, children, youth, newcomers, the unemployed, the elderly and others -- would be misguided and risk to the socio-economic prospects for downtown.



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To date there has been no justification made for why LeBreton Flats would be appropriate for a central library – except that it is slated for redevelopment. LeBreton Flats does not compare at all with Centretown on the basis of the current residential statistics. Nor does it compare on the basis of projected residential populations two decades into the future, even on the assumption that the LeBreton Flats development will proceed. (For analysis of population and density statistics see the 2011 census, “Explaining the Map: Sources and Numbers” by Councillor T. Nussbaum at [www.bookmarkthecore.ca](http://www.bookmarkthecore.ca)); and enrolment data for 2015-16 school year from the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board.)

The LRT has been emphasized as essential to the success of the new Central Library, with Centretown LRT access providing shorter rides for most downtown neighbourhoods than LeBreton stations.

A site in LeBreton Flats does not offer walkability that is even close to that of Centretown. Currently, 81% of Main Branch users walk to the library. In addition to being significantly further away for much of the residents of Centretown, the escarpment at Bronson would be a major impediment to walkability especially for seniors and people with disabilities. And for the neighbourhoods to the east, south and west of Centretown, recent and planned public investments including the Laurier West and O’Connor Street bike lanes, and the Corktown footbridge will increase the desirability of a location in the heart of downtown for Centretown residents and for all of the immediately surrounding neighbourhoods.

During your campaign, you pledged to support a request for federal funds for the new central library. We urge you to seriously consider the vital issue of location of this project. As a major piece of social infrastructure, the central library is vital for the health and well-being of our community. Even if it is not supported by federal funding, we ask you as our Member of Parliament to ensure the central library is located where is most needed and will succeed in the public interest – namely, in Centretown.

Timing is of the essence as: on December 15, the staff recommendations for a site will be released to the public; on January 31, 2017, the Board will meet, discuss and make their decisions; and, February 8, City Council will discuss and approve final decisions. We look forward to hearing from your staff and meeting with you in the near future.

Yours truly,

Tomas Whillans, CCCA President

Cc: CCCA Board of Directors  
Library Special Committee Co-Chairs