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What's on: New Anne Frank exhibit, 8

# THE CENTRETOWN BUZZ



Little Free Libraries are scattered across Centretown. One library provider would like you to use them as a destination for neighbourhood walks, and has compiled a map of them. See our story on page 6.

GAIL MCGUIRE/THE BUZZ

## A new diverse community takes shape in Dalhousie

Alayne McGregor

The pieces have come together this month for Gladstone Village, a massive public redevelopment of the western end of Somerset Ward in lands formerly used for federal government warehouses. A doubling of the size of Plouffe Park and 1160 new, mixed-income residences are in the immediate plans. An expansion of the Plant Recreation Centre, a new school, and even a grocery store could come later.

Councillor Catherine McKenney said this new development is planned to be the “most inclusive neighbourhood we will have in the city, an amazing mix of incomes, [with] a mix of uses from housing to retail to institutional to an arts hub.”

Having families with different incomes living beside each other, shopping in the same stores, and with their children going to the same schools, builds “the kind of equity that we need in our city,” McKenney said.

Gladstone Village is a large (8.52 hectares) and mostly vacant site stretching along the Trillium LRT Line from Somerset to Gladstone. It will be jointly developed by the city and Ottawa Com-

munity Housing (OCH), which had earlier bought the southern 3.26 hectares for its 933 Gladstone mixed-use project.

The entire development will be centred around the planned new Corso Italia LRT station on Gladstone Avenue. Its design will minimize car use and strongly promote cycling, walking, and transit.

This month, the City of Ottawa arranged to buy 1010 Somerset Street, the final outstanding piece of Gladstone Village, from the federal government. And on February 25, the city Planning Committee approved the Corso Italia Station District Secondary Plan, which provides a detailed framework for the entire area. The secondary plan covers a larger area than Gladstone Village, extending west to Breezehill and Loretta Streets, and east to Preston and Booth Streets. Both decisions were expected to be approved by City Council on March 10. The 1010 Somerset purchase also needs federal Treasury Board approval.

As part of that purchase, the city will also develop a concept plan for a new community hub effectively expanding the Plant Bath. The French pub-

lic school board will have two years to investigate a primary school in the development, replacing the school currently on Beech Street.

Last summer, the Dalhousie Community Association (DCA) submitted a list of concerns with the secondary plan, in particular about insufficient affordable housing and park space.

DCA President Michael Powell said he felt these concerns had been responded to in the current plan. “Broadly the CDP is in the right direction.” The acquisition of 1010 Somerset was particularly important: “This is a significant increase in park space, and compared to earlier drafts of the plan, it’s contiguous park space.”

The one-hectare park was an essential part of the development, McKenney said, and they refused to support the secondary plan without it.

McKenney said that, pre-pandemic, the Plant Centre was the #1 recreation centre in Ottawa for memberships, and it’s “just not big enough to accommodate the people in this neighbourhood. It’s hard to get your kids into swim lessons at Plant. It can be overcrowded at times.”

In Gladstone Village, the cont in “New homes” on p 5

## Is anybody home? Ottawa considers a vacant homes tax

Victoria Welland

Ottawa City Council has passed a motion to study the feasibility of a vacant unit tax, a move which could help address the city’s growing housing crisis.

The goal of the tax would be to reduce the number of homes which lie empty and neglected for extended periods of time, according to Catherine McKenney, the city councillor for Somerset Ward.

McKenney, along with Mayor Jim Watson, introduced a resolution in December directing the city to study the viability of a vacant homes tax and report its findings by the end of June.

The report will look at Ottawa’s current tax legislation as well as similar taxes implemented in Vancouver and Toronto, McKenney said. In December of 2020, Vancouver raised their tax on empty residences from 1.25 to 3.0 percent of the home’s value, and Toronto recently passed a resolution to implement a vacant homes tax by 2022.

The revenue from the tax would go towards funding for affordable housing initiatives, they said, though this is a secondary benefit.

“This is not a tax that is

meant to be punitive. It is a tax that aims to increase housing supply which we desperately need here in the city.”

Cheryl Parrott, the treasurer of the Hintonburg Community Association, has seen first-hand the problems vacant homes have caused for her community. Parrott first noticed the issue nearly a decade ago, when a number of residential properties in Hintonburg were bought by a developer, the tenants evicted, and then left empty or demolished.

“There are eight boarded buildings within one block of the Tom Brown Arena respite centre [and] within two blocks of people sleeping [in] homeless encampments. These are perfectly good buildings and these people were our neighbours that got evicted.”

Not only do these vacant residential properties go unused while people sleep on the streets, but they also use up city resources, she said. “In terms of all [the] city services trying to keep them from being an eyesore [and] from being a danger-between bylaw police, fire—it costs a lot of money.”

cont in “Vacant unit tax” on p 4

## No surrender: keeping pets together with their owners

Jack Hanna

What if you own a pet and have little money, and life throws you a curve ball?

Maybe you are evicted and end up in a shelter, and your cat is not allowed. Maybe you twist your knee and cannot walk your dog.

For someone lacking extra money, even a small setback can mean losing a pet.

The individual is forced to turn over their cat or dog to an animal shelter or rescue service. That means parting with the pet permanently. The Ottawa Humane Society’s policy is that all animal surrenders are permanent.

Marna Nightingale says people whose lives are “precarious” often “are one bad day away from losing their pet.”

Nightingale, a freelance editor and former editor of *The BUZZ*, is launching a volunteer service in Centretown to help. She believes people sometimes can benefit from a little assistance getting past a momentary bump in the road, so that they can keep a beloved pet.

Her service is named No Surrender, because the goal is to avoid the necessity of pet owners having to give up—formally termed “surrender”—a pet to an animal shelter or rescue service.

That pets can suddenly become homeless and need help was driven home to Nightingale last November, following a tragedy in Centretown. Cat-lover Jonathan Hammell was killed after a fight. Abruptly there was no one to look after the cont in “Lending a hand” on p 5



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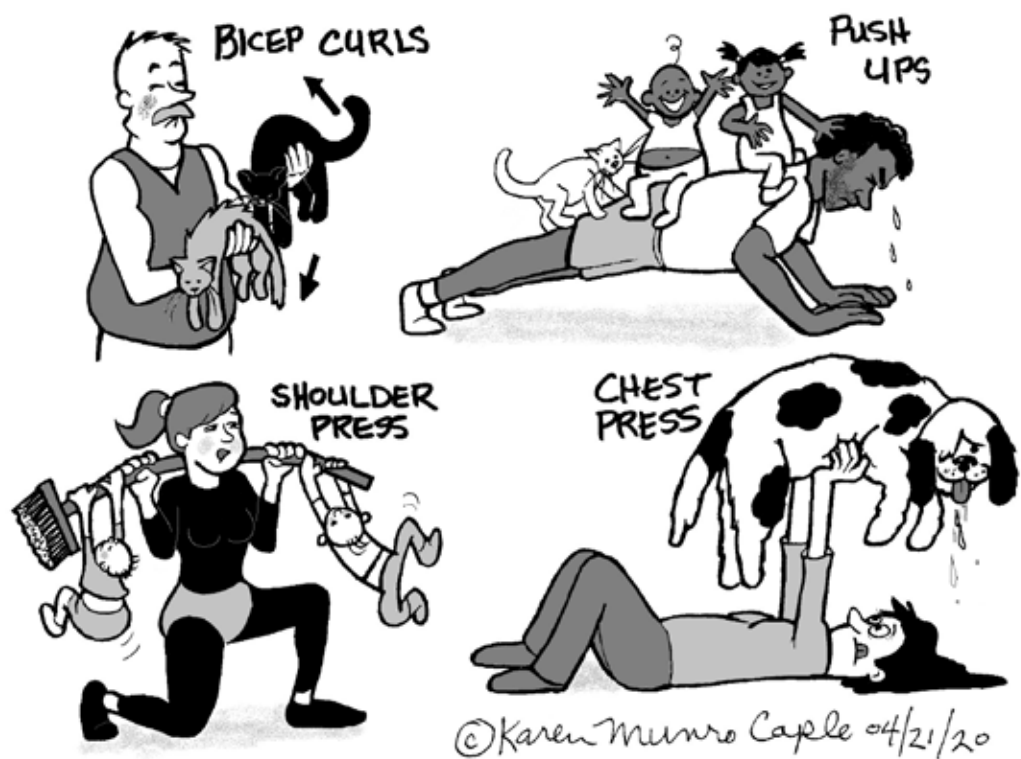
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## The Lighter Side of the Pandemic, by Karen Munro-Caple

# HOME GROWN Gym!



## The Good, the Bad, and the Bumpy: Removing construction barriers

Ryan Lythall

Recently, I received my first letter in response to my column in *The BUZZ*. I would like to share some of it with you.

The letter writer provided examples of various barriers in Centretown and how they had moved several of these out of their way. The writer advised that some of them were due to various construction sites/projects from July to November 2020. They included:

- construction signs in the middle of the sidewalk on Frank Street near O'Connor Street, as well as on the sidewalks on Lisgar, Metcalfe, and O'Connor Streets,
- a directional sign on a path near the Hurdman Bridge, and
- a mailbox located on a sidewalk near O'Connor and Somerset Streets.

Many times I have been unable to get around construction signs and most people with disabilities aren't physically able to move these signs. We shouldn't

have to. Accessibility is a right and not a privilege.

My other issue with sidewalk construction is that there are no alternative ramps to get back onto the sidewalk if a curb is being repaired. Frequently, I've had to drive my chair onto the road just because there was no way for me to get back onto the sidewalk. Depending on where you are and the time of day, this can be very scary.

However, I do agree 100 percent with moving construction signs that prevent accessibility as long as they don't put either you or others at risk in doing so. So, by all means, please keep on moving them and thanks to the letter writer for bringing up the issue. People with disabilities need all the help we can get when it comes to accessibility and, in general, getting around Ottawa's streets.

The letter writer also had other suggestions about maintaining the sidewalks:

- More salt boxes on city streets would be useful, as would more signage that the public can use.

- Owners of parking lots and buildings should be required to have salt boxes.

- There could be better snowplowing techniques.

I encourage readers to reach out to me and tell about your experiences getting around Ottawa. Let me know how you feel when you aren't able to go to certain places, do certain things or shop at local businesses due to a lack of wheelchair accessibility. You can also bring other issues to my attention so that I can share your experiences with others as well.

I'm easy to find on Facebook or Twitter, or you can send me a letter care of *The BUZZ*. Just advise if you're comfortable sharing your letter or message.

Follow Ryan on Twitter:  
[@rolling\\_enigma](https://twitter.com/rolling_enigma)

## Comment: Bridging the social distance

Berkley Robinson

As we come up to the one year anniversary of the pandemic, I have started to take stock of my surroundings.

A one bedroom apartment in Centretown. No balcony, just me and two cats. A desk for working from home. A few feet away sits a couch and a TV ready for Netflix, a puzzle half-finished on the coffee table.

But, after a year of near continuous lockdown, these things cease to provide distraction. The novelty of working from home has worn off, snow covers our pathways and limits outdoor activities, and nothing has quite taken the world by storm like the Tiger King documentary on Netflix last March. For those of us who live alone, the struggle of solitude continues.

A year ago, I wrote an article for *The BUZZ* about how volunteering was a great way to connect to the community. It explored the relationship between volunteers and their chosen cause. At the time, I was volunteering multiple

times a month at various organizations, and my connection with my community was stronger than ever.

I never would have guessed that, a year later, things would look completely different. While some volunteer positions still exist, many have been placed on hold or operate on Zoom due to COVID. Now, unable to see friends or family, living alone, I am denied another important connection: that of my community.

Already, my visits to local stores are quick and contactless, and small talk has become a fearful endeavour. I miss chatting with cashiers from my favourite local shops, attending trivia nights at pubs where waitresses knew my name, and trying whatever new workout class popped up. There are fewer and fewer opportunities to engage in our community, and the lack of volunteer positions has only highlighted the feeling of despair.

Some who would normally volunteer may be more at risk for COVID or feel unsafe volunteering during a pandemic. Thus, they're no longer able to

use volunteering to connect with the community. After a year of this, what are we to do? How are we to engage in our community in a safe way?

What I have come to realize is that, as we recover from the effects of this devastating pandemic, I must continue to foster my community connection through those around me. I have no idea when life will return back to normal, but what I do know is that some people still need help. For myself, I will continue to look out for neighbours who might need help with getting groceries or medication. I'll offer to walk friends' dogs, shovel driveways, and donate to local food banks. I'll tell myself that this is just for a little longer and try to believe it.

If you are struggling with feeling disconnected from your community, please check out Centretown Community Health Centre's Winter Schedule: <https://www.centretownchc.org/2021-cchc-winter-schedule/>

Berkley Robinson is a member of Centretown CHC's Advocacy and Communications Action Team.



# Skyline: end of the line for the bus station... Next stop “hub of luxury”?



In 2011, Ottawa City Council approved rezoning for 19 and 25 storey towers along Catherine Street as part of a proposed development (called “block265”). (City of Ottawa report)

Robert Smythe

The intercity bus terminal is leaving Catherine Street for good. The land has been sold to Brigil Construction, a Gatineau-based developer, who is planning a “prestigious project promoting urban densification.”

At 2.55 acres, the site is uniquely large for Centretown. The block of Catherine between Kent and Lyon Streets was assembled by Voyageur Bus Lines owner Paul Desmarais beginning in 1970, after the largest property owner in the block, the Barrett Bros. lumberyard, relocated to Nepean. The building supply business had moved there eight years earlier after their original location was expropriated for the Queensway’s construction.

Acquiring the land for the bus station was an arduous task. The remaining 28 separate properties were bought up over several years, piece by piece, resulting in one full block of development poten-

tial surrounded by an area of small buildings on small lots.

In 1964, when Ottawa’s first comprehensive zoning bylaw was passed, the site was classified as a manufacturing zone because of the sidings and spurs from the rail corridor across the street (later the Queensway).

With the adoption of the Centretown Plan in 1976, Catherine Street was re-designated as a “Queensway-Commercial” zone, with a minimum building height of six floors. It was hoped that these buildings would act as a noise buffer for the highway! Furthermore, this odd zoning actually prohibited any further residential use. To my knowledge, no buildings were developed under this formula.

The presence of the Voyageur-Colonial bus terminal precipitated a change for this section of Catherine into a “Ground Transportation Facility” zone during the city’s 2008 housekeeping updates of The Centretown Plan.

After it was rumored

that the bus company was prepared to abandon the terminal, a 2011 proposal was submitted by Crerar Silver-side Corporation of Vancouver (the owners of the bus terminal building and lot) to redevelop the entire site. It was approved and the block was re-zoned for “General Mixed Use.” This project called for two condo towers at 19 and 25 storeys on the Catherine frontage, and mid-rise stacked townhouses along Arlington Avenue, with some commercial uses.

Most notably it was stipulated that the block was to have a minimum of 25 percent public open space, conceived as two interior pedestrian streets crossing through this development, titled “block265,” and designed by Brisbin Brook Benyon Architects.

The latest set of design guidelines to be layered on this property is the 2013 Centretown Community Design Plan’s categorization of the district as the “Catherine Street Corridor” which permits a range of retail,

employment and residential uses. It’s defined as “an area where several new projects are anticipated to occur in the future. These projects have the potential to enhance the image of the street by bringing new life to the street and improving the conditions of the public realm.”

The “Tall Building Typology” (that’s planners’ speak) says that “New developments along this corridor should be designed to minimize shadow and wind impacts on the neighbourhood to the north” with a minimum separation distance of 20 metres between towers. Tall buildings facing each other should not overlap by more than 15 to 20 percent of the facades.

Initially, the CDP called for buildings between 16 and 25 storeys along Catherine Street, and that “the fine-grained quality of Arlington Avenue should be considered in building designs.” It appears that this has morphed into 27 storeys, the city’s new go-to height for towers in Centretown. It’s equally unclear as to whether the new developers will adhere



The 2011 proposal featured nine-storey buildings with three-storey townhouses along Arlington. (City of Ottawa report)

to the built-form and open space strictures imposed by the 2011 zoning.

So the table is set for a major clash of visions for the southwest quadrant of Centretown. Quiet low-rise residential streets or super-block mega developments? The Official Plan and the zoning bylaw seem to favour the latter.

Brigil is perhaps best known for the controversial Place des Peuples, a 55-storey project in the Hull sector of Gatineau directly across from the Canadian Museum of History, although their Ottawa projects have generally been more modestly-scaled.

The developer told CTV News that “Brigil is still in the preliminary design phase and expects to file its proposal with the City this spring. An architectural design competition involving Montreal and Toronto architectural firms is already underway.”

The plans include “a hub of luxury rental condos, office space, hotel buildings, neighbourhood restaurants, and specialty stores.” That’s quite the departure from a now deserted asphalt wasteland that was once the bus station, and quite a lot to pack into this blowsy block of Catherine Street.



The Voyageur Colonial bus terminal under construction. It opened in 1972. (CMHC)

## Somerset Ward: finding home-like options for long-term care

Catherine McKenney

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it became clear that we have lost focus on our collective responsibility to long-term care (LTC) and the residents who reside in these homes.

The issues of low-wage personal support workers who must move from home to home just to make a living wage, inadequate care in too many homes, and other health and safety issues existed long before COVID-19 began.

However, now more than ever and within a pandemic environment, there is a pressing need to change the system so that residents in LTC homes are safe, comfortable, and live a dignified life.

It was for this reason that I was compelled to bring a report ([catherinemckenney.ca/blog/2021/2/10/plan-regarding-innovative-models-of-care-for-long-term-care-homes](https://catherinemckenney.ca/blog/2021/2/10/plan-regarding-innovative-models-of-care-for-long-term-care-homes)) to the city’s Community and Protective Services Committee recommending that the city make it a priority to improve the care in the city’s four long-term care homes by adopting an innovative model of care for people living with dementia.

Without a transformative culture change, no additional amount of staff, home inspections, or personal protective equipment will remedy the failings in the system.

These new innovative models of care are relationship-based, where residents, staff and families feel part of a community and are treated with dignity and respect. Residents know and feel like they are living in a warm, caring environment which looks and feels like home. Staff deliver person-centred

care which enables them to get to know who their residents and families are, and what their life was like before they entered long-term care. It means schedules and routines are flexible to match the residents’ preferences and needs. It means residents are involved in many meaningful activities according to their abilities and what brings them joy.

We can look to several innovative models of care in LTC homes in other countries, as well as Ontario examples, such as Malton Village in Peel, Henley House in St. Catharines and, most recently, Henley Place Home in London. Eight other long-term care homes in Ontario are in the process of implementing innovative models of care including two in Renfrew County and one in Ottawa: the Glebe Centre.

The Glebe Centre has

begun implementing The Butterfly Model of care and is committed to putting the well-being of residents first and providing the type of care and services that connect people to where they are in their life journey.

The centre’s first step was to pilot one of their home areas into a more “home-like” place that reflects the people who live there.

They painted the walls bright colours and gave every resident their own personalized front door. They created stimulating wall murals, some interactive, so that there would be things of interest to look at and engage with. They created nooks and spaces throughout the home area so residents could have quiet spots to sit and be engaged with an activity or just watch the goings-on around them. They filled the house with the stuff of life—

things that people could be active with—books, magazines, puzzles, things to sort and rummage through, music and art, and couches to sit on next to a friend.

They have reported that key indicators for adopting this model include decreasing pain levels, decreasing the use of psychotropic and sedative medications, seeing an increase in resident wellness and quality of life through meaningful engagement, a reduction in resident distress, a reduction in falls, reduced

staff turnover, and higher staff engagement scores.

It is time for a shift in our thinking about how we address the systemic problems in LTC homes that have been exposed by the current pandemic and the tragic loss of so many lives of long-term care residents in Ottawa and Ontario. I am committed to ensuring that our city-operated homes adopt these models of care to ensure a life of dignity and meaning for people living with dementia.

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# MPP report: Voula's Law will protect family caregivers

Joel Harden

On March 4, the Ontario Legislature debated my motion, Voula's Law. It called on the Ford government to clarify to care home operators that they cannot use trespass notices to ban family members who speak out about their loved ones' living conditions. I'm delighted to share that the motion passed unanimously with the support of all parties.

Voula's Law is inspired by Mary Sardelis, who is the primary caregiver for her 98-year-old mother Voula who lives with dementia. In 2018, Mary expressed concerns about the treatment of Voula's personal support workers by management in a retirement home.

When her concerns went unheard, she filed a complaint with the regulator of retirement homes and discussed this with other residents of the home. For doing so, she was banned from the home and separated from Voula for 316 days. Her story has been featured by *CBC Marketplace*.

The same thing happened to Joy Seguin, a Cornwall resident whose 34-year-old son Andre lives in a group

home. Family members had consistently noted shortfalls in Andre's care. These complaints provoked trespass orders, and ultimately the home evicted Andre, leaving him on Joy's doorstep. Andre's possessions were stuffed in a garbage bag.

Incidents like these are happening across Ontario—families are separated from loved ones for making reasonable complaints about their relatives' living conditions in care homes.

This is wrong. The Trespass to Property Act (TPA) should not be used in instances like this. Home owners and operators have an obligation to ensure safety, but dangerous or threatening behaviour is a Criminal Code violation. The TPA is not about behaviour and shouldn't be used as a tool to stifle complaints.

Residents have a legal right to see visitors, and family members have a right to advocate for loved ones (particularly when they are substitute decision-makers.) This is what I have heard from experts in my capacity as critic for accessibility and people with disabilities.

As family caregivers have said to anyone who will listen, the withdrawal of

family visitations comes at a steep price. Residents are deprived of crucial support. There is a moment when politics has to preserve the dignity of people in crisis, and this is one of those moments.

Voula's Law asks a simple question: Whose side are we on? Will we support seniors, people with disabilities, and their families impacted by unfair trespass orders? Or will we enable a minority of care home operators who engage in terrible acts of cruelty?

Thankfully, my colleagues in the Ontario Legislature chose to support families by supporting the motion. This is a victory for both the rights of family caregivers and their loved ones living in care homes.

We know, however, that this motion is only the first step. The Ford government must respect the will of the legislature and clarify to care home operators that trespass orders cannot be issued to speak out.

Families have waited long enough, it's time for this government to act and put an end to this cruel practice once and for all.

# City wants opinions on vacant homes tax



Boarded-up houses in Centretown.

VICTORIA WELAND/THE BUZZ

cont from page 1

During last November's city budget hearings, Parrott presented this issue to city councillors on the Community and Protective Services committee, urging them to consider a vacant homes tax like those in other Canadian cities. During the meeting, city bylaw staff reported that city records show 217 vacant homes in Ottawa.

Parrott believes the number is even higher than the city's records indicate. "We know that's not all of them because we've since walked around and determined that there's some others that are empty, [...] but they weren't on the vacant property list that the city has."

According to a [2016 report by point2homes.com using data from Statistics Canada](https://www.point2homes.com/en/blog/article/ottawa-real-estate-market-report-2016), there were 20,000 homes in Ottawa deemed "empty or temporarily occupied." However, these

could include properties that are rented out as Airbnb's or are occupied by retirees who spend the winters outside of Canada.



Cheryl Parrott asked the city to consider a vacant homes tax.

Under Vancouver's current system, each home owner makes a declaration on their property taxes as to the occupancy of their home. If this method was adopted in Ottawa, there could be more

clarity on the exact number of vacant homes.

Councillor McKenney wants to make the messaging clear that this tax would not apply to the majority of homeowners. "It really is only for homes that are sitting empty. So, if you're using your home, if you're living in it, if you're renting it out, you are not affected," said McKenney. "But if you're allowing a home to sit vacant [...] there could be an added tax."

The Ottawa Real Estate Board's Government and Community Relations Committee is currently reviewing the issue of a vacant unit tax, according to Debra Wright, the Board's president. Currently, their main concern is that the tax be practical and effective.

"It's important to have a clear understanding of what the intended purpose [...] and objective of the municipal tax is," said Wright. "If it's to add additional rental housing, we would want the city to be sure that such a tax will actually add rental housing."

The city is currently asking for public feedback on the specifics of the tax via an online survey. It includes questions on how long a property should remain vacant before the tax would apply and possible exemptions, such as when a house is for sale or under construction.

To add your opinion to the conversation, you can fill out the survey at [engage.ottawa.ca/VUT](https://engage.ottawa.ca/VUT)

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# Joel Harden

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# Planet of the Scapes: side up for soup & a side

Pearl Pirie

**A** key to good health: greens and beans, brights, grains, or seeds. This food combo hits all the spots. The cornbread is nutritional, bright, and colourful. The broccoli is green.

Not a fan of the green flower? This soup could change your mind. After snow shovelling, it tastes even better.



Savoury cornbread is bright with red pepper, spinach, and corn. PEARL PIRIE/THE BUZZ

## Side Dish: Savoury Cornbread

I'm not a fan of sweet cornbread, nor dry, so this one hit the spot. Vegetarian and dairy free, it is dense but not moist and is full of flavour.

Preheat a 10-inch cast iron pan at 400F.

Mix dry:

- 1 cup yellow cornmeal
- 1/3 cup whole wheat flour
- 1/2 cup unbleached white flour
- 1 Tbsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 cup frozen corn
- pinch of 1/4 tsp hot pepper flakes (to taste)
- 1/2 large red bell pepper, diced

Mix and add wet to dry:

- 2 eggs, beaten

- 85g frozen spinach (thawed and drained)
- 1/4 cup corn syrup
- 1/4 cup whisky
- 1/4 cup melted margarine
- 1 cup unsweetened almond milk

Pour into the hot pan and bake 30 to 35 minutes until the top is browned and a toothpick comes out clean.

If you don't have whisky on hand, water or water with a teaspoon of apple cider vinegar works.

The loaf freezes well so you can thaw slices as needed.

## Main Dish: Broccoli Soup (30 minutes, serves 6)

Cut up one head of broccoli into florets (discard the stems). Boil or steam until crisp-tender.

Puree the cooked broccoli with:

- 2 roasted cloves of garlic
- 2 yellow onions, diced, cooked in olive oil until tender
- 1 red potato, cubed, boiled
- 1 Tbsp cornstarch
- 1 bouillon cube
- ground black pepper
- pinch of salt

Add to blender or food processor:

- up to 1 cup unsweetened almond milk until desired thickness is reached

Garnish:

- sprinkle of sesame seeds and black pepper (optional)

*Pearl Pirie's fourth poetry collection, footlights, is getting good reviews! Coming in April: online classes on editing at [www.pearlpirie.com/classes](http://www.pearlpirie.com/classes) Keep staying home, washing your hands, phones and masks. Get the vaccine when you can.*

# New homes, new park, new school

**cont from p 1** DCA wanted to avoid north-south through car traffic, and ensure that the new neighbourhood is "walking-focused and doesn't have an endless amount of cars," Powell said.

In fact, the secondary plan strongly de-emphasizes the car. "New streets or extensions will prioritize the safe movement of pedestrians and cyclists in their planning and design so that they enhance the active transportation experience, ensure safety, calm traffic and create a more enjoyable and welcoming public realm," it says.

The plan in general will prohibit new surface car parking across the district, and "strategically control the availability of on-street parking, only where the need is most anticipated" – instead using the space for bike lanes. It does envision cars still being driven and parked in the district, but suggests more efficiently sharing parking among developments with different peak demand times.

It calls for bike parking to be "ubiquitous and plentiful" and located as close to destinations and entrances as possible.

It also proposes creating a City Centre Under-

pass Pathway. This pathway would become a "primary north-south pedestrian and cycling gateway and route" from the district to City Centre, LeBreton Flats, and the Bayview O-Train Station.

At 933 Gladstone, buildings will connect directly to multi-use pathways. Streets will be pedestrian-oriented with widened sidewalks, passive recreational space, and a "woonerf" (shared) street. The plan also proposes a new pedestrian/cyclist bridge over the LRT trench at Laurel Street.

"This whole area is getting denser. We're building a community on top of a transit station," Powell said. "I think that the focus should be on that as a preference. People will still move in and out [by car] and there will be garbage trucks. It's just how you do it in a way that's primarily local in nature."

He said he thought the long-term effect of the new development on the Dalhousie area is "all positive. The ownership structure of this is really important, making sure that it's a real diverse neighbourhood in terms of economic opportunities for people to rent, not just if

you're particularly affluent or double-income. City affordable and deeply affordable housing will be important. The children going to schools will be of all types and that will be good.

"Having a huge chunk of land that's basically a blank slate will allow for some development opportunities in terms of laying out the community that wouldn't otherwise be available. And I think how we think of where the front and back are will change a little bit. The Trillium multi-use path will be the easiest connection to transit stations and to 900 Albert. It could become a more primary conduit than we have seen previously."

He said the DCA's first priority will be to "move the park expansion forward as soon as possible. It shouldn't wait for the buildings."

McKenney said they were worried that city services like parks, transit, and recreation programs won't keep up with the development. "The plan looks great, but unless we follow it, we're not going to build the kind of neighbourhood that we have the perfect opportunity to build."



No Surrender's first foster cat: Michael's cat Niqe explores its new space.

CAT MEIER/THE BUZZ

# Lending a hand to keep pets with their owners

**cont from p 1** two dozen cats Hammell Nightingale sprang into action, trapping the cats in a humane trap one by one. A GoFundMe campaign raised almost \$7,000 to pay vet bills. Nightingale and her friends worked the phones, quickly finding temporary or permanent homes for all the cats. ([See the December 2020 Centretown BUZZ.](#))

That experience led to No Surrender.

## Help tailored to needs

No Surrender tailors its service to meet the need, Nightingale said.

If an individual experiences a temporary mobility problem—for instance, sprains an ankle—No Surrender can find a volunteer to walk the dog.

If the money runs out and there's no cash for pet food, No Surrender can help. There are established organizations, such as Ottawa Paw Pantry and the Ottawa Humane Society, which operate as food banks for cats and dogs, giving out free pet food. No Surrender can direct someone to the nearest pet-food pantry.

As well, if the person cannot get to the pet-food pantry, No Surrender might be able to supply a driver to

make the delivery.

Nightingale hopes No Surrender will be able to purchase some things a pet owner might require, such as kitty litter or basic veterinarian services.

No Surrender can even find a temporary foster home for a pet.

Someone who is evicted might end up in a shelter or on a friend's sofa and their cat is not welcome. What's needed is a foster home for the pet until the individual finds new lodgings.

Or a person might be admitted to hospital and need someone to take their dog until they are out.

## Seeking volunteers

No Surrender is seeking volunteers who can provide a temporary home for a cat or dog.

"We just need people who can provide a sofa and some love for a little while," Nightingale says.

One possible source of

foster homes, she says, is university students. "A university student may not know where he or she will be in two years' time and so cannot permanently commit to a pet. But they know where they will be for the next six months and would love to have an animal for a while."

One cost No Surrender will face is veterinarian bills. For instance, before a cat or dog goes into a foster home, it will go to a vet. The animal will be spayed or neutered, and receive vaccinations and an ID microchip implant. The cost ranges from \$120 to \$500 per animal.

No Surrender is also seeking donations. The people it assists "do everything they can to care for their pet and just need a little bit of help," Nightingale says. "Why not lend a hand?"

You can reach the group at [nosurrenderottawa.ca](http://nosurrenderottawa.ca) or by emailing [help@nosurrenderottawa.ca](mailto:help@nosurrenderottawa.ca)

**CENTRETOWN**  
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

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**Catherine McKenna**  
M.P. for Ottawa Centre | Députée pour Ottawa-Centre

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# Managing change and growth in Ottawa and in Somerset Ward



High rises in northwestern Centretown form a wall blocking the view for lower-rise buildings. The only place light can break through is at roadways.

STEPHEN THIRLWALL/THE BUZZ

Stephen Thirlwall

The City of Ottawa has plans to create a livable, vibrant, mid-sized North American city. The questions that need to be answered are According to whose view? and Which North American city models?

In many respects, Ottawa is already there. It now only needs to carefully manage more organic growth in moderate increments, instead of trying to force major growth through its upcoming Official Plan.

Ottawa is actually very large in physical area, but much of this space is rural land: farms and forest. That is a healthy state to be in, providing good sources of local food. Those living downtown can be “in the country” in a 20 to 40 minute drive. To spoil this relationship with excessive suburban sprawl and overcrowding of downtown is not a good idea.

Compared to Canadian cities like Toronto and Montreal, Ottawa is at best mid-

sized. By world standards, it is small, perhaps comparable to some mid-sized European cities. It is relatively clean, safe, and full of activities.

In non-pandemic times, life in Centretown and Dalhousie can be very interesting, exciting, walkable, and bikeable. There are many public events, arts festivals, and street festivals. What is appealing about this district is its variety of housing choices and activities; the diversity of people; and the many small shops, restaurants, and cafes. At certain times, some neighbourhoods can even be very quiet. The low-rise residential sections are full of trees, gardens, and wildlife.

But, over the past several years, this area has already undergone major changes and disruptions. Downtown has become congested and noisy at times because of major roadwork and replacement of utilities, construction of the LRT line, and significant high-rise and mid-rise development. De-

spite the introduction of the LRT, Ottawa remains a very car-centred city, with heavy rush-hour traffic.

To reach its mid-city goal, the city seems intent on growing much larger. This translates into (1) aggressively extending the suburban sprawl boundary and (2) aggressively intensifying inner city neighbourhoods by quickly building many high rises (10-30 storeys) and mid rises (5-9 storeys).

## Open season for height?

The developers’ interpretation of the unfolding Official Plan seems to be that they have open season on building ever-taller high rises and skyscrapers downtown, lots of high mid-rise buildings in areas like Westboro and Hintonburg, and many large single-family dwellings in new suburban areas. This is very evident in Somerset Ward, both in recently completed buildings, new construction, and current proposals for towers of over 25 storeys. Mid-sized

buildings are being used to line the main thoroughfare on Bank Street, especially in the area between James and Catherine Streets.

The 40+ storey building near Dow’s Lake is a highly visible landmark and will provide fabulous views to most of its residents. Yet, it is just a tall skinny box, close to many restaurants but not near any major grocery stores or daily amenities. There is another high rise under construction just across Preston Street.

## The process and impacts of intensification

Centretown in particular has gone through a series of waves of intensification interspersed with a year or two of slower activity. Around 2000, intensification meant creating small enclaves of townhouses. This model ended quickly. From 2010 and continuing on, there has been a fixation on growth measured in high-rise and taller mid-rise condos of increasing number and height.

With the increased intensification of the inner city, the number of single family dwellings is declining, as all new buildings are multi-unit and many large houses are subdivided. This will limit the variety of housing choices. The size of units in new condos or apartments is also declining (becoming claustrophobic), and their cost is increasing. Even with the pandemic, home prices and rents are soaring. Taxes are likewise rapidly increasing. For some, it means being forced out of the area.

Every new high rise adds a huge shadow area. Wind patterns are altered and our view of sky and landscape is increasingly blocked. Furthermore, high rises are growing in clusters of two or three towers. Between Bank and Elgin streets in the mid 2010s the Tribeca triple towers appeared as did The Soho on Lisgar near Bank. The Onyx across the street from Soho recently opened. Within a block or two, four more high rises over 25 storeys are to be built, with a few other properties ready for redevelopment but on hold at the moment.

Even when there are breaks between towers to let light through, other towers behind fill the gaps. We can only barely see some of the old high rises because of the new ones. Where once office workers and residents in high rises had spectacular views, they may within a few years be staring into the windows of other high rises.

The high-rise and skyscraper “wall” running east-west through northwestern Centretown between Laurier



New high rises between Gloucester and Nepean Streets, just west of Elgin Street.

STEPHEN THIRLWALL/THE BUZZ

Avenue and Nepean Street is now extending across Bronson Avenue into the Dalhousie area. One tall high rise is well under construction near Nepean Street, another proposed near Laurier. The only places light can break through this wall are along the roadways.

Increased intensification means further congestion on streets and sidewalks. Although ground level parking lots are decreasing, underground ones are being built, with little decrease in car parking. High-rise populations may outstrip the availability of surrounding amenities (social and other services, grocery stores, pharmacies, and shops), especially in the area between Gloucester and Gilmour along Metcalfe and O’Connor. Near the corner of Elgin and Gloucester, there are three high rises (each over 25 storeys) in various stages of construction.

The hardware stores and cinemas formerly in Centretown are now gone. The library will eventually move away. The pandemic has made this worse: many coffee shops, restaurants, and other stores have permanently closed. Will enough new ones open up quickly as the pandemic gets under control?

All these factors increasingly place pressures on the social aspects of neighbourhoods. Many seniors now live downtown and a growing number of vulnerable people are here as well—but affordable housing is not keeping up. Families are already being squeezed into apartments or condos that are too small for their family size. As singles marry and couples have children, will they be able to stay here?

So what does “livable” mean in the Official Plan—livable for those who can afford and can find suitable housing, or livable for every single person that lives here?

## The problem

The city’s Official Plan is obviously complex because of the range of issues it covers over the urban, suburban, and rural parts of the city. There are numerous rules, regulations and principles laid out for new and replacement developments.

The written plan acknowledges many of the public concerns raised by individuals and groups. Adequate parks are to be provided and maintained; more complete streets developed that allow proper flow of all vehicles and pedestrians; and limitations set for building height, footprint, style, and closeness to create a great skyline and permit appropriate access to sunlight and healthy airflow.

But is reality living up to the plan? Perhaps in some parts of the city, but it does not seem so for Somerset Ward.

There appears to be little constructive dialogue or collective planning between parties. The real planning is done in isolation by a few people, and many of the city’s own rules are not being followed. Consideration and dialogue on social issues, community impact, environment and beauty of buildings are still kept at a minimum.

If the city does intend to move into a new enriched, enlivened and beautiful city, new and real relationships, dialogues, and decision-making processes need to be established between city administrators, developers, small businesses, and residents.

## Explore your neighbourhood, find a book

Alayne McGregor

Little Free Libraries—those wooden cabinets on posts stuffed with books—have been sprouting up in front yards across Ottawa during the pandemic. They allow readers to find new books or to drop off ones they’ve finished for others to enjoy.

A Centretowner has made it easier to find local free libraries by putting them on a map, which so far includes nine locations in Centretown and 25 in urban Ottawa. Caitlyn Pascal, who runs a free library on McLeod Street, has published it at <https://goo.gl/maps/8BLyXgx17R5QAxAN7> (also linked from [twitter.com/LFL\\_McLeod](https://twitter.com/LFL_McLeod)).

The reason? She’d like the little libraries to become destinations for people as they walk around their neighbourhoods. They encourage people “to stop in front of houses that aren’t theirs, in the same way a bench invites pedestrians to stop. Most times, we travel along a vector until we reach a destination, but things that get us to slow down increase the chances of seeing neighbours and noticing the city around us,” she said.

“When you’re out walking a dog, it’s very difficult to not take a moment and peek at new books.”

The LFLs also offer “a constant suggestion to return to books as an activity,” she said, and encourage people “to purge their books by giving a low-effort place for them to go.”

Pascal said she gets a steady stream of traffic at her LFL, which has been up for about four years,

“If a book is in the box for four days I will move it on to a different box, but about 60 percent of the books that go into our box get picked up within three days. We have given away thousands and thousands of books. Probably 8k+.”

Many of the books came from people passing by, she said, but the biggest source has been Black Squirrel Books, which has donated about 80 percent of all the books her LFL has given away. These books are from people who bring in books to the store that cannot be sold and who don’t want them back, so the bookstore donates them to charities and to free libraries.

Most of the libraries on the map Pascal found by stumbling upon them, she said. She’s happy to add more locations: tweet her at [@LFL\\_McLeod](https://twitter.com/LFL_McLeod).

“I really like the idea of having the LFL map as a destination because it gives a chance to make a plan that involves exploring the city and maybe finding something awesome, but it doesn’t cost a cent. It’s not going out for a fancy drink or something that costs admission. Just pick some spots on the map, go check the libraries, and you might find something you or a friend will enjoy. And worst-case scenario you’ve had a great trip and maybe seen some parts of the city you might not have poked your head into.”





## CCA report

Jack Hanna

### Ottawa's New Official Plan

The city is creating a new Official Plan (OP), which will define its vision for its future growth and the policy direction for its physical development in the next 25 years. City Council is currently scheduled to approve the plan this fall.

The CCA is not completely happy with the results so far.

The CCA's OP Working Group says the draft plan fails to adequately consider the aftermath of the pandemic and the demographic shift towards more seniors.

If some form of COVID-19 is here to stay, what sort of buildings will people want to live in—skyscrapers or walk-ups?

If the overall population of Centretown is going to tilt towards seniors, what services need to be developed to support older residents?

The working group wants the new plan to have teeth and drive real change. It suggests the plan have five-year targets that will drive the city to create 15-minute neighbourhoods; more green spaces; sustainable sources of electricity; affordable housing; improved walking, cycling and transit; and resiliency in the face of climate change.

In particular, so that citizens can ascertain progress towards these goals, public engagement needs to be ongoing and robust.

### 267 O'Connor

The CCA has written the city opposing proposed skyscrapers at O'Connor and Gilmour.

Taggart O'Connor Corp. plans to build two towers of 28 and 30 storeys in a neigh-

bourhood of residential and mid-rise buildings.

The developer is applying under the city's Landmark Buildings Policy, which allows a builder to hugely exceed zoning height maximums in return for creating an extraordinary piece of architecture.

The CCA argues the developer's design "fails to honour the trade-off at the heart of the (Landmark Buildings) Policy.

"The proposed towers are ordinary and outdated," the CCA says, "and resemble towers common in cities for several decades."

The Landmark Buildings Policy also requires "leadership" in environmental design. The CCA says the developer is offering only "a minor reduction in energy usage" and this is "not enough to meet the policy."

### Tax Vacant Homes

The city is studying a tax on houses, condos, and apartments left vacant longterm, with proceeds from the proposed levy going to finance affordable housing.

The CCA has written supporting such a measure.

Until the end of March, you can fill out a city online survey to say what you think of the idea of a vacant home tax. The survey is at <https://engage.ottawa.ca/VUT> or search for "Engage Ottawa Residential Vacant Unit Tax."

Some investors simply leave properties vacant for long periods, which contributes to a housing shortage, and may also mean they become neglected and an eyesore in the community.

Vancouver and Toronto introduced Vacant Home Taxes last year, and the CCA hopes Ottawa will join them.

## Mindy Sichel: "I'm often the first person to raise my hand"

Alayne McGregor

When Mindy Sichel walks down her street, she's reminded of the power of citizen action and community associations.

Three years ago, she and her neighbours, with the help of the Centretown Community Association (CCA), successfully persuaded a developer to change the proposed design of a nearby building. It was proposed to be flush to the sidewalk, leaving no room for greenspace, nowhere to pile snow in the winter, and with icicles falling down on the sidewalk.

The building now going up at Kent and McLeod was redesigned to have a five-foot setback from the sidewalk, which gives room to breathe, she said.

That success persuaded Sichel to join the CCA board in 2018, and then to become CCA president this January.

Sichel and her partner bought their house on McLeod Street 20 years ago ("before it was cool"), and live there with their 10-year-old child. Sichel has worked in the high-tech sector since moving to Ottawa in 1997.

What does she love about Centretown? "The walkability of the neighbourhood and how basically anything you need is within that 15 minutes, or in most cases even less. The diversity of the people. My neighbours come from all kinds of different backgrounds and do all kinds of really cool things."

She says she's "always been interested in what's going on. I'm the kind of person who stops and reads the panels on those development application signs. I love talking to people, when I'm outside and walking around."

At the CCA, she joined the Planning and Trees and Greenspace committees. Her experiences there confirmed to her that "by getting involved you can actually effect change and make things happen. That for me is the coolest thing about a community association."

Sichel said that CCA board members encouraged her to run for president. "I thought, 'Well, this seems like an exciting, important thing to do.' I also joke I have volunteer-itis! When there's a call for volunteers, people to get involved, I'm often the first person to raise my hand and say that I'll do it. Now that I have a kid to take care of and a job, I try to balance it a little bit and sit on my hands sometimes because otherwise I get involved in too many things and I can't do everything."

There was a contest for CCA president this year, Sichel running against local activist Charlie Brenchley. At the same time there was a large spike in association memberships, from 130 at

the beginning of the year, to more than 200 by the January 19 AGM. The association now has 249 members, Sichel said.

The association's elderly website—which the CCA is working to replace—had problems. On the day of the AGM, there were 30 to 40 people who had technical problems with registration and might not be able to vote.

Sichel and Brenchley went through the list and called or emailed each person individually to ensure their membership payment went through.

Although Sichel won the election, she and Brenchley have kept working together closely, she said, developing a CCA Communications Committee.

During the election, Brenchley told the AGM that "there are people who want to be part of this organization. They just don't necessarily feel represented at the table."

Sichel said she responded to this criticism by being welcoming and open to different people. She pointed out that new members on the current CCA board "are more dynamic and diverse than we've ever had before, pulling in from different parts of the community. Younger people, more diverse people, and that's how we go about being representative. More renters, more LGBTQ, more racial-



Mindy Sichel was elected as CCA President in January.

ized minorities in general."

As CCA president, she said, she wants to continue supporting the Planning Committee and the very practical work of volunteer gardeners. She's also reviving the CCA's Transportation Committee under new board member Ward Verschaeve.

"Our board has grown in diversity, and having more people from different communities and from different places. I think it's also paying

attention to different things, like the Anti-Racism Working Group is an important start. We're also talking more about affordable housing."

Sichel said she was excited by the enthusiasm of CCA members.

"What's really exciting about the CCA is how many people are getting involved and how many people care enough to show up and come out and want to discuss things."

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# What's on(line) this month in Ottawa and beyond

Tony Wohlfarth

## Margaret Atwood

Folk Alliance International (FAI) is the world's largest gathering of folk artists from around the world. Led by a Canadian, Aengus Finnan, FAI took its annual conference online last month at [www.folk.org](http://www.folk.org)

*Folk Unlocked 2021* kicked off on February 22 with Canadian author Margaret Atwood. Atwood's talk was a discussion with Anaïs Mitchell, singer-songwriter and Tony Award-winning director of *Hadestown* ([www.anaismitchell.com/](http://www.anaismitchell.com/))

Atwood's conversation with Mitchell (30 minutes) can be seen at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4FxykdfCk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4FxykdfCk)

## Sundance 2021: *My Name is Pauli Murray*

Last month, the Sundance Film Festival welcomed film buffs to virtual theatres and *The Centretown BUZZ* was there.

From the directors of *RBG* – the 2018 Oscar-nominated documentary about US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg – comes another remarkable story, about the life of Pauli Murray.

Pauli Murray was a transgender law professor from Durham, North Carolina. She challenged segregation practices on buses in 1940–15 years before Rosa Parks fought this battle. Murray went on to be the first woman to study law at Howard University and became a close friend of Eleanor Roosevelt. Her legal analysis was relied upon by Ginsburg in briefs before the US Supreme Court in landmark cases overturning Jim Crow segregation laws, such as *Plessy v. Ferguson* and *Brown v. Board of Education*. Murray went on to receive a Doctorate in Law from Yale University, and facing discrimination as a lawyer, worked overseas teaching law in Ghana.

The film deals sensitively with the gender issue. Murray was diagnosed with undescended testicles. While the condition was not treated, she led a successful career as a law professor and non-binary professional. Then, in 1977, Murray went on to study at a seminary college and became the first African-American woman to become an Episcopalian minister.

*My Name is Pauli Murray* is a richly textured film, drawing on personal diaries and 141 boxes of files which Murray left to Harvard University's Schlesinger Library. Talleah McMahon, one of the producers, combed through these archival records to paint a vibrant biography.



The Reverend Pauli Murray

COURTESY OF PAULI MURRAY FOUNDATION

Murray died in 1985 at the age of 74. What is remarkable is that few Americans know about her. It's about time they did.

This 2017 profile from *The New Yorker* gives a more detailed picture of Murray: [www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/04/17/the-many-lives-of-pauli-murray](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/04/17/the-many-lives-of-pauli-murray)

## Remembering the ByTowne Cinema

When the ByTowne closed in late December, Ottawa's own Lynn Miles wrote a song, "Goodbye ByTowne" in tribute to the iconic theatre. You can view the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oo2gU3c6ny0>

## International Film Festival of Ottawa (IFFO)

From March 11 to 21, the Canadian Film Institute (CFI) launches the new International Film Festival of Ottawa (IFFO). The program includes 21 films along with Q & A sessions with key directors.

On March 15, IFFO screens *Mouthpiece*, the 2018 film by Canadian director Patricia Rozema. After the screening, Rozema will participate in a discussion with the audience. All the screenings are accessible online.

The complete schedule is available at: [www.iffoc.ca](http://www.iffoc.ca)

## National Arts Centre (NAC)

Performances at the NAC (1 Elgin) are available via live stream. This month, you can see *Kadeema* (March 12), *Shawn Jobin* (March 19), *Le Vent du Nord* (March 20), and Ottawa's

own *Blakdenim* on March 26. See all NAC performances this month at <https://nac-cna.ca/en/calendar/list/2021/03>

## Easter 2021

Purdy's Chocolates is running an Easter fundraising event, in support of the local Guide Dogs for the Blind: [www.guidedogs.ca/2021/01/18/easter-chocolate-fundraiser-2021-ottawa-area/](http://www.guidedogs.ca/2021/01/18/easter-chocolate-fundraiser-2021-ottawa-area/)

## The Gladstone Theatre

On March 19, the Gladstone Theatre (910 Gladstone Avenue) will livestream the 10-year anniversary concert by Ottawa rock/metal/world band Red Heaven. Tickets: [redheaven.ca](http://redheaven.ca)

## Anne Frank – A History for Today

The Canadian War Museum (1 Vimy Place) has a new exhibit about Anne Frank, whose diary of her time hiding from the Nazis with her family in an attic in Amsterdam during the Holocaust has become a world-renowned classic. The in-person and virtual exhibit is available until April 25: [www.warmuseum.ca/annefrank/](http://www.warmuseum.ca/annefrank/)

## Irene's

Irene's Pub (885 Bank) is back—at least virtually. The kitchen is open and Irene's has live music on Fridays and Saturdays. On Friday, March 19, it's *Corduroy Moon* and on the 26th, *Mikhael Laxton*. Saturdays feature the *Saturday Night Revue* with multiple musicians providing family-style music.

Limited in-person seats are available, or you can buy tickets to see the shows online at <https://irenes-pub-restaurant.myshopify.com/>

*Tony Wohlfarth is an Ottawa-based freelance film, arts and entertainment writer. He participated in the online Sundance Film Festival in January and the Folk Alliance International Folk Unlocked Conference in February.*



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## Catherine McKenney • City Councillor for Somerset Ward

# Keep up to date on Ottawa's COVID-19 vaccination plan

For updates on COVID-19 vaccinations in Ottawa, please visit: [www.ottawapublichealth.ca](http://www.ottawapublichealth.ca). Until vaccines are widely available, please take steps to protect yourself, your loved ones and our community.



## Keep in touch!

For the latest news on Somerset Ward, sign up for my newsletter at [catherinemckenney.ca](http://catherinemckenney.ca) and follow me on social media:

[mckenneycatherine](https://www.facebook.com/mckenneycatherine) [cmckenney](https://twitter.com/cmckenney) [cmckenney14](https://www.instagram.com/cmckenney14)

## Questions? We can help!

613-580-2484

[catherine.mckenney@ottawa.ca](mailto:catherine.mckenney@ottawa.ca)

