



Don Kwan explores identity and memory, 6



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# THE CENTRETOWN BUZZ



In 1900, a chimney fire in Hull spread to timber mills and lumber piles and burned down 15 percent of the homes in LeBreton Flats and two-thirds of Hull. The Bytown Museum is now displaying two paintings created by a visiting artist, painted immediately after the blaze. Museum senior exhibitions manager Grant Vogl selected the paintings by Patti Jack for *A Local Canvas*, a special exhibit of rarely-seen art from its archives. The exhibit was installed just before the museum had to close for two years because of the pandemic. It just recently reopened (see *What's On* on page 12).

ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ



Convoy protesters have repeatedly returned to Ottawa since February, including this short parade July 1. Note the poster comparing Justin Trudeau to Fidel Castro. ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

## People's Commission to investigate occupation

Alayne McGregor

Local community activists have decided to run their own independent examination of last winter's convoy occupation.

Starting this fall, the Ottawa People's Commission ([opc-cpo.ca](http://opc-cpo.ca)) will hold public hearings in which those affected by the occupation will be invited to describe their experiences and concerns. The hearings are designed to "begin building trust and accountability in a traumatized community."

The three commissioners – lawyer Leilani Farha, director of housing rights group The Shift; human rights lawyer Alex Neve; and Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah, the executive director of the Canadian Centre for Sexual and Gender Diversity – hope to deliver their final report next February.

The commission is the brainchild of resident Ken Rubin. Rubin said that other current federal and city reviews were "barely scratching the surface of the

continued on page 8

## Task force to search for ideas to revitalize Ottawa's downtown

Alayne McGregor

In the wake of the pandemic and the convoy occupation, Ottawa Centre MP Yasir Naqvi has created a task force to look for ways to rejuvenate and revitalize downtown Ottawa.

The task force, announced July 29, includes representatives from community groups, BIAs, the Board of Trade, and Ottawa Tourism, plus city politicians as observers.

Neil Malhotra of Claridge Homes and Graeme Hussey of not-for-profit housing developer Cahdeo are co-chairs.

The task force will propose ideas to attract more people back to the commercial area north of Gloucester Street, to support local businesses and transit. Most federal offices in that area have been closed for the last two years, with workers at home instead. Statistics Canada says 46 percent of Ottawa's workforce is still working at home.

With the continuation of hybrid working arrangements and the need for more affordable housing in the area, Naqvi said, the task force needed to "reimagine" downtown into an "exciting

and safe place."

The task force will also look at ways to attract tourists and counteract the negative effects of the convoy occupation, he said. "It has become branding issue for the city. A lot of tourists are thinking twice about coming to Ottawa because they are concerned that there may be protests that are not safe for them."

Centretown Community Association President Mary Huang said she would be advocating on the task force for more affordable housing and for diversifying the types of businesses downtown.

"You have to have a healthy, functioning downtown," said Somerset Ward Councillor Catherine McKenney. "We know that people are not all coming back, so how

do we ensure that we have a downtown where people can work, shop, and live?"

Hussey said they would also look at ways of repurposing empty office space for affordable and social housing. McKenney said they had seen conversions that worked, but they were currently "labours of love" and more tools were needed.

The task force will meet into the fall, and will present recommendations to the city post-election. It will also provide input into the federal government's current strategic review of real property leading up to its next budget, Naqvi said.

"I don't want any of us to wait around to see what the world looks like six months from now. I think we need to take charge now."

## Candidates respond to the Strong Mayor proposal

A BUZZ poll of the candidates for Ottawa's mayor shows they'd rather work collaboratively with city councillors.

Catherine McKenney, for example, termed the provincial bill that would substantially strengthen the mayor's powers

an "anti-democratic move." Six candidates were opposed, while three supported or somewhat supported the bill. Three did not respond.

You can read about the proposal and the full responses from mayoral candidates at [centretownbuzz.com](http://centretownbuzz.com).

August 19, 2022 — Vol. 27, No. 7

# THE CENTRETOWN BUZZ

AT THE HEART OF OTTAWA SINCE 1995.

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Ottawa, ON  
K2P 2K4  
Phone: 613-565-6012

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Centretown BUZZ is created and distributed in Centretown, Ottawa, located on traditional and unceded Algonquin land.

## NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of *The BUZZ* will be published September 16. Deadline for ads and submissions: September 6.  
ISSN 1204-1604

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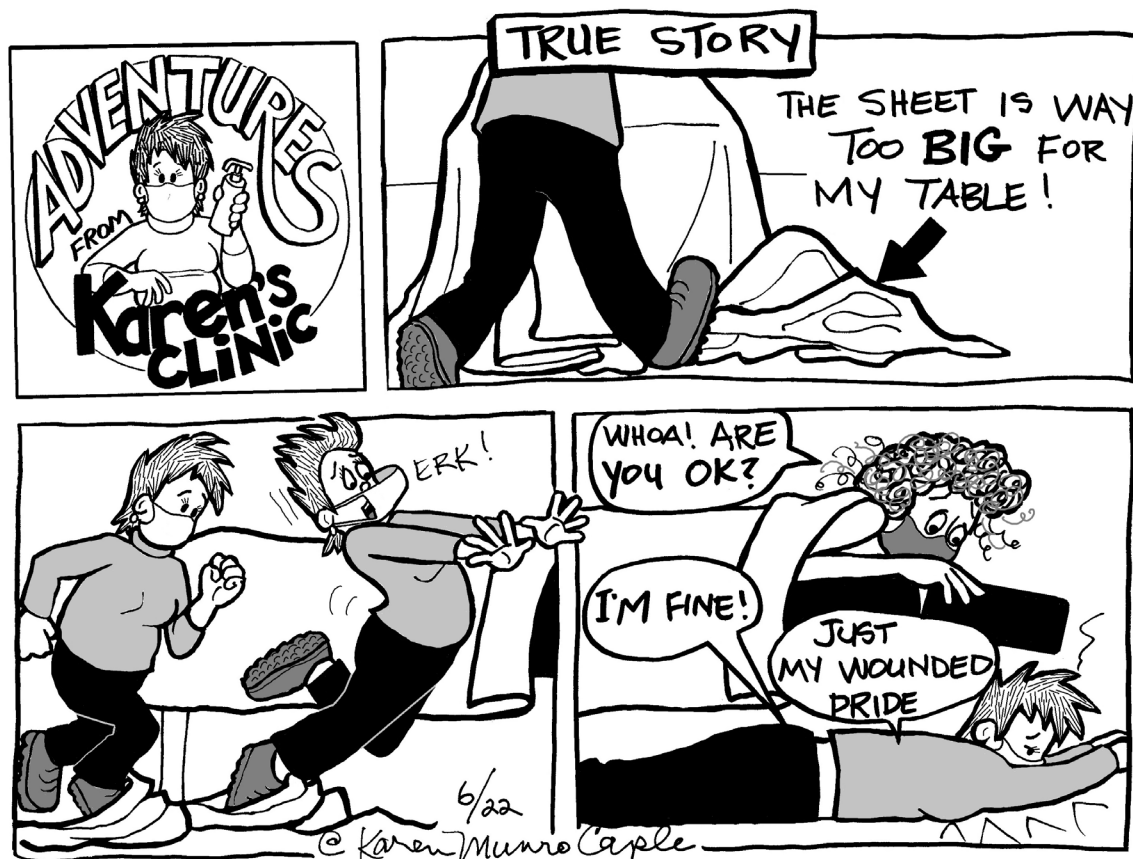
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The Centretown BUZZ is published by The Centretown BUZZ Board of Directors, a group consisting of community members representing all residents of Centretown.

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



## The Good, the Bad, and the Bumpy: Who is most affected by the Centretown heat island?

Ryan Lythall

I hate to state the obvious, but it's been a hot summer.

As I type this, it's 33 degrees Celsius, with a humidex of 41. Thankfully, I have the air conditioner on.

Having air conditioning is often viewed as a luxury, especially for recipients of the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), seniors, and residents of apartments and long-term care homes without AC.

In 2020, Premier Doug Ford promised that all rooms in long-term care residences would have AC. As of July 20, 90 long-term care homes were still without AC.

Over the past few weeks, we've heard stories on how it's impacting the residents, many with ongoing medical conditions.

However, little has been said about the staff working in LTC homes not equipped with AC. Given we are experiencing a severe shortage of health-care workers in Ontario, all measures should be taken to ensure that staff and residents are safe and comfortable. The last thing we need right now is to send people to the hospital due to a situation that could have easily been avoided. As

well, with fewer personal support workers (PSWs), it becomes more difficult for people with disabilities and seniors to go outside to get cool.

Many ODSP recipients simply cannot afford an AC in their homes. While there are various programs to ease the cost, with prices continually rising those programs fall short of covering the total amount.

Each month, ODSP recipients already have difficult decisions to make. Many must decide between putting food on their table, paying their rent, or paying their hydro bill. Even without using AC, hydro is extremely expensive.

To those living in Centretown, the struggle can be even more challenging.

Recently, I learned for the first time about the Urban Heat Island Effect. Here's an explanation from the City Of Ottawa's website.

The urban heat island effect occurs when built-up areas are hotter than surrounding areas. Buildings, parking lots and other dark surfaces in built-up areas retain heat and become hotter than nearby greenspaces, water and rural areas. The annual mean air temperature of a city with one million people or more can be one to three degrees Celsius warmer than its surroundings during the

day. The difference can be as high as 12 degrees Celsius in the evening.

More information on the Urban Heat Island Effect, complete with coloured maps indicating varying degrees of temperatures, is at [engage.ottawa.ca/climate-resiliency/news\\_feed/urban-heat-island](https://engage.ottawa.ca/climate-resiliency/news_feed/urban-heat-island)

I've lived in Centretown for almost 30 years. I noticed Centretown seemed hotter than other parts of the city, but I never knew why or if it was just my imagination.

For the longest time, I had doubts that climate change was real. Over the last few years, and especially now, it's pretty clear we're in a crisis.

We need to do more not only to protect our planet but also our vulnerable residents in Centretown and beyond. When it gets extremely hot or frigid outside, check in on your neighbours, especially if they're elderly or have a physical disability.

So many of us take for granted that we have AC or can step outside to get fresh air. That's not always the case, though. Some are stuck at home or in their room simply because there's no one around to take them out.

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

## Comment: latest downtown task force has a daunting task

Robert Smythe

Yasir Naqvi, the MP for Ottawa-Centre, has announced a downtown Ottawa revitalization task force: "Reimagining Downtown Ottawa for People." Its membership includes business representatives, developers, a non-profit housing co-ordinator, and the two current downtown city councillors.

The task force's goals encompass affordable housing, healthy local businesses, a sustainable environment, and Indigenous reconciliation. These would certainly be "nice-to-haves" but are probably unattainable if, at the same time, downtown Ottawa doesn't regain its primacy as the region's largest federal employment hub.

For two decades, the Government of Canada has been draining the central area

of federal jobs, and should recommit to rebuilding its downtown workforce.

More than two years of a work-from-home regime has magnified that slow trickle to a full-blown exodus of federal workers. It won't be enough to convert the heap of empty office towers left in their wake into condos, although more downtown residential development would be desirable.

A strong employment base (say 100,000+ jobs, which is the current capacity) would benefit private sector businesses and the related support services, and grow a more successful downtown. That would also put Ottawa's multi-billion-dollar light rail system, which was designed as a commute-to-work network focused on getting people downtown, to good use.

The key Government of Canada departments who could deliver this – the

Treasury Board and Public Services and Procurement Canada (the old Public Works) – are absent from Naqvi's task force, but presumably he is in the right position to bring any employment-based recommendations to his government.

There is much that needs revitalization. The public realm? Much of the central area is an untended hellscape of narrow treeless sidewalks bordering one-way arterial roads. Long stretches of empty and forlorn street-level store frontages in aging, partially-deserted office towers are forlorn and empty.

Healthy local business? They need urgent care and assistance. Affordable housing? Good luck with that.

The task is certainly daunting. I wish them well and hope that they don't join the trail of broken dreams that constitutes the work of task forces past.



The architect's view of the central parkette at the proposed 665 Albert development (City of Ottawa Development Information Files).

## 665 Albert: does it tick all the boxes?

Ed McKenna

On July 7, an informative public meeting organized by Somerset Ward Councillor Catherine McKenney provided a detailed look at the development plan for 665 Albert Street.

It's audacious.

Two slender, angular, shed-roofed skyscrapers will rise 36 and 31 storeys above the street. Their metal skin colour is brick red at the base, which gradually lightens to a faint pink at their summits.

The towers exceed the permitted height in this area, and will require city council approval to amend the Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw.

The National Capital Commission refers to this property in their master concept plan for LeBreton Flats as the "Library Parcel," but don't confuse it with the new library at 555 Albert. The library parcel occupies the corner of Albert and Booth Streets, on the east side of Booth, adjacent the Pimisi LRT station.

In January the NCC announced that "Dream LeBreton" had been selected to develop this corner. It's a partnership between Dream Unlimited Corporation and Dream Impact Trust of Toronto, and Ottawa's Multi-faith Housing Initiative.

Dream LeBreton hosted the public meeting, with the participation of their design consultants. We saw the portfolios of each member of the design team, and how these talents have been applied to 665 Albert.

In an unhurried question period that followed Dream's presentation, thoughtful responses were provided to public concerns. (The [presentation is available online](#) at [devapps.ottawa.ca](http://devapps.ottawa.ca). Search for 665 Albert.)

David Seaborn, chair of the Dalhousie Community Association's "planning our neighbourhood" committee, has practiced architecture in the city for more than 40 years. He said that the proposed development was one of the best he has been asked to review. It pretty much "ticks all the boxes" on the DCA's development checklist.

So how does 665 Albert measure up?

First of all, this is a housing development, with 601 rental units. There is a strong commitment to attracting residents from a mix of income levels, and to affordability: 241 units (41 percent) will be affordable, and 130 of these will be owned and operated by MFI. The non-market units will include a number of three-bedroom apartments, suitable for families with children. (It's worth noting that a new study of 35 recent housing developments in Dalhousie reports that only five have an "affordable" component.)

The development includes a daycare, some retail space, and a bicycle repair shop. There will be 741 bicycle parking spaces. Half the site area will be landscaped and "vegetated." (Mature trees feature prominently in the renderings!)

Each tower sits on its own five-storey podium, which is terraced down to ground level. The street wall along Albert opens up to Lorne Avenue to the south. The towers will be imposing, but on the ground the site should be very walkable.

Connections to Adisōke, Pimisi Station, and even the condo residences to the north will be strengthened through a network of multi-use pathways extending from the site. Empress will be re-established on the north side of Albert and provide vehicular access to the property.

The developer has committed to zero carbon building standards. There's a strong social procurement program. Fifty percent of the contracts and jobs associated with the development will go to "local residents."

These elements ticked many boxes for the DCA,

and for others who attended the public meeting.

For this, we can largely credit the two-stage procurement process used by the NCC, which required that prospective developers commit to a high level of affordable housing, sustainable construction, and community benefits, including for Indigenous peoples.

Still, some of us at the public meeting had reservations. It's an abrupt transition from skyscrapers to the established low-rise residential community on the other side of Albert Street.

Several participants had questions about the quality of life for people who will live in these towers. Can you build community vertically? Where are the professional and retail services for local residents, including for food? Will this development help establish Pimisi Station as the community hub that thousands of new residents in this area will need?

How will the site's heritage, including that of Indigenous peoples, be acknowledged? Is yet another "gathering circle" sufficient?

And then there is the question about "affordable" housing. Local advocates have called for more non-market housing where rents are based on income. Non-market rents at 665 Albert instead will be calculated as a percentage of local market rents, which is still unaffordable for many in Dalhousie.

Despite these reservations, most of those present at the public meeting agreed that Dream's presentation revealed a bold plan for the development of 665 Albert, with a challenging, iconic design that is responsive to many community concerns.

Construction begins next year.

### Affected by Elgin St. Construction?

**We are looking for people in the Golden Triangle in Ottawa whose properties suffered damages such as cracked foundations arising from the Elgin Street road construction. If your house or property was affected, please contact [RPetersen@lmrlawyers.com](mailto:RPetersen@lmrlawyers.com). Thank you.**  
**[www.lmrlawyers.com](http://www.lmrlawyers.com)**  
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## The BUZZ asks and Somerset Ward candidates respond: improving LRT reliability

On October 24, voters in Somerset Ward will elect a new city councillor for 2022-26.

In each issue up to the election, *The BUZZ* will ask the candidates running in this ward one question about city issues important to this ward. If you have suggestions for future questions, email [editor@centretownbuzz.com](mailto:editor@centretownbuzz.com).

This month, we ask:

"Having heard the testimony from the Ottawa Light Rail Transit Commission hearings in June and July, what do you think the city should have done to improve the chances of the Confederation Line operating well for riders?"

### Stuart MacKay

Testing, testing, and testing. The biggest thing the City of Ottawa and OC Transpo should have done with the Confederation Line was to increase the testing period of the system to ensure that it was reliable, robust, and ready for riders.

We knew that the Alstom Citadis Spirit trains were a brand-new design, and had never been used before in any city in the world. Without a proven track record of performance, the city and OC Transpo should have demanded a longer testing period with the full complement of trains. The city and OC Transpo should also have insisted on lengthy and rigorous outdoor winter testing, to ensure that the trains and the track could function during Ottawa's harsh winters.

Finally, the city and OC Transpo should have been much more transparent and prompt in relaying information about LRT testing and delays to councillors and the general public.

With Stage 2 of the LRT launching soon and Stage 3 on the horizon, Somerset Ward needs a councillor with significant transit experience

and knowledge. With my experience as a co-founder of Ottawa Transit Riders and my work as an advocate for public transit, I will be ready on Day 1 to hold city staff and OC Transpo to account and ensure that we don't repeat the mistakes of the past.

I will fight for better communication, more transparency, and more accountability from the city and OC Transpo, so that Ottawa's residents finally get the transit system they deserve.

### Ariel Troster

Ottawa residents deserve public transit that is reliable, frequent, accessible and affordable. None of those things are happening right now and the problems with the LRT are a huge factor.

I don't believe that the flawed P3 deal for the LRT was in the best interests of the city or of transit riders. Citizens deserve complete transparency when it comes to an ambitious and costly project of this nature. Especially when it has failed us repeatedly. Hindsight is 20/20, but looking back, the city should have:

1. Engaged in a fulsome and transparent testing phase – it is clear from what we are hearing in the public inquiry that there was pressure to launch the LRT before it was ready.

2. Brought the project under public ownership and management: public transit is a public asset and should not be a profit-making venture for large corporations.

3. Maintenance should have always been in-house: if we own the system, we should be able to fix it.

I am thankful that Catherine McKenney pushed so hard for a public inquiry into the LRT disaster. We would not be receiving the same level of transparency without it. All Ottawa residents deserve a functional public transit system that gets

us where we need to go, on time. The next City Council will have a lot of work to do to make this happen.

I would like to see more dedicated bus lanes, more drivers hired, and a re-orienting of the system beyond the commuter model. For public transit to be a real option for people, it can't take twice as long to get places and be more expensive than driving.

We need serious climate action in this city and investing in public transit is a huge tool for reducing emissions. That starts with ensuring that our LRT actually works – in all weather, every single day.

### Brandon Russell

These hearings gave us a small window into how this city has handled, or mis-handled in this case Ottawa's LRT system. With more outages planned for mid-August it is clear the LRT needs a lot more than this city can provide under our current leadership. I am a huge fan of the LRT, in fact I use it almost every day, or at least when it's not closed. I know firsthand how these outages have impacted families and our community.

This will be a Day 1 issue for me, with my background as a crisis manager I know when a crisis needs attention, and this crisis needs top-level attention. I want to start with an independent assessment, then assessments from OC Transport's international competition. Thus allowing us to see what it would take to have transport to the standards of Vancouver or Toronto. I have also heard voters express their wants and needs for a water bus style transport on the Rideau canal. Allowing for this kind of transport could have a fantastic impact on our city. As your councillor I promise to listen to the needs and wants of our community, something that has been missing from this conversation.

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# New suburbs are a Ponzi scheme, says planner

**Strong Towns: A Bottom-up Revolution to Rebuild American Prosperity**

by Charles L. Marohn, jr.

Wiley, 2020

reviewed by Alayne McGregor

“There is no reason for any North American city to build another foot of roadway, or put in another length of pipe, to serve any new property anywhere. Our infrastructure is maxed out; we’re done expanding and, in fact, I anticipate nearly all our cities contracting their obligations to some extent.”

That’s the gauntlet Charles Marohn has thrown at city governments across the continent. Having done the calculations, he has concluded that continued expansion into new suburbs will eventually bankrupt cities because the money is not there to maintain them in the long term.

New infrastructure – subdivisions, roads, sewers, etc. – is not an “investment,” he contends. It’s a liability which will come due when there won’t be the tax revenues to support it. Many cities right now are paying for current maintenance needs from taxes coming in from new developments in what is essentially a Ponzi scheme, he says, because that money needs to be saved for future maintenance.

## “An infrastructure cult”

In his book *Strong Towns*, Marohn argues that cities are addicted to growth.

“Thanks to a bunch of perverse incentives, we’ve prioritized growth over maintenance, efficiency over resilience, and instant, financially risky development over incremental, financially productive projects,” he argues. “Cities with a mind-boggling backlog of unfunded road maintenance regularly go out and build new roads. Places with pipes crumbling and pumps failing from lack of maintenance give incentives to developers to build more pipes and pumps for the public to maintain.”

Marohn, who is an American civil engineer and land use planner, says that the belief in the power of infrastructure spending us “now so deeply embedded within our society that we struggle to identify it as belief, let alone systematically question it ... Since the end of World War II, America’s leadership class has grown to be an infrastructure cult.”

Instead, he says that cities should be in the business of wealth creation, and that means first maintaining and supporting existing viable neighbourhoods, rather than continuing to build out. First, fix the potholes and cracked sidewalks, sweep the streets, mow the grass, and pick up the trash. When there’s extra money, make small changes incrementally, based on looking at actual neighbourhood needs and experimenting with temporary changes.

“Maintenance secures a community’s wealth; little bets are how to expand it.”

“See a streetlight out: replace it. See a weed: pull it. See a crosswalk faded: repaint it. See a sidewalk broken: fix it. The [downtown] neighbourhoods that are generating such wealth for the community need to be showered with love.”

He also emphasizes the importance of maintaining critical systems and adding to them, to increase a city’s resiliency.

## Preserve current neighbourhoods first

Marohn favours traditionally-designed neighbourhoods (such as Centretown and Ottawa’s inner suburbs), which build on centuries of “tinkering” to create emergent systems that work. These neighbourhoods are able to grow incrementally. This house may gain an addition, or a granny flat; this smaller building may be replaced by a larger. They can change based on changing demographics and needs. And they create more wealth for the city because they’ve have a greater tax base.

On the other hand, when a developer puts up a suburban subdivision, everything goes in at once: the houses, the sewers, the water lines, the arterials, the local roads, the power lines. That’s great for a while – until the infrastructure all starts to need repairs at the same time and the city might not be able to afford the cost. And because it’s automobile-dependent, it creates less wealth for the city.

Cities term all that new infrastructure an “investment”.

Marohn calls it an “eternal maintenance obligation,” and describes it as a “Municipal Ponzi Scheme.” He is particularly critical of “investing” in new roads and interchanges to attract big box stores and warehouses; he’s checked the numbers in several cities (at one point doing a year-long study) and demonstrates that the long-term payback simply isn’t there.

Nor does it make sense to take on debt for a project that doesn’t have a monetary payback, he says: “It’s not enough to measure saved time, reduced carbon emissions, or an improvement in happiness and equate that to dollars. An investment that justifies debt must have a real return [in tax dollars].” Otherwise, the city will be forced to continue to pay for the project at the expense of other needs in the budget.

## Studies show cities lose money on growth

Marohn came to these conclusions after running his own planning and engineering firm for more than a decade. One of the projects he worked on was determining the financial costs and benefits of a highway widening or bypass project in a Minnesota city. His firm costed out the alternatives, and then projected how much private wealth would be created based on each alternative and thus how much more taxes the city would get. In every option, the city lost money: in the option he preferred, it spent \$1.5M and only gained an extra \$121,000 in taxes over the life of the improvements.

He said he subsequently modelled dozens of residential developments: urban, suburban, exurban, and rural. “I could not find one that came close to covering its own basic expenses, let alone the collector roads, traffic signals, bridges, interchanges, an other communal expenses those revenue streams were expected to support. Not a single one.”

But what if people prefer cul-de-sac suburbs? “I can respect that some people prefer development styles that are financially ruinous to my city...[but] my local government should not feel any obligation to provide those options, particularly at the price points people expect.”

On the other hand, when he looked at tax revenue from traditional main streets – even those which were badly run-down – it substantially exceeded that from big box developments. The same was true for job creation and local economic development. In his hometown of Brainerd, MI, an “old and blighted” block with 11 small businesses has a total taxable value of \$1.1M, whereas a redeveloped block with a new fast food franchise on it only had a taxable value of \$620,000. The old block generates 77 percent more property tax than the new, although both cost the same to service.

The planning group Urban3 modeled hundreds of cities across North America, he said. Their conclusions: older neighbourhoods financially outperform newer neighbourhoods, even if blighted. Poor neighbourhoods tend to outperform wealthier ones (with an exception for highly gentrified areas). If a city has a traditional core, the closer to the core the higher the level of financial productivity. The more storeys a building has, the more financially productive it tends to be. The more reliant on the automobile an area is, the less financially productive.

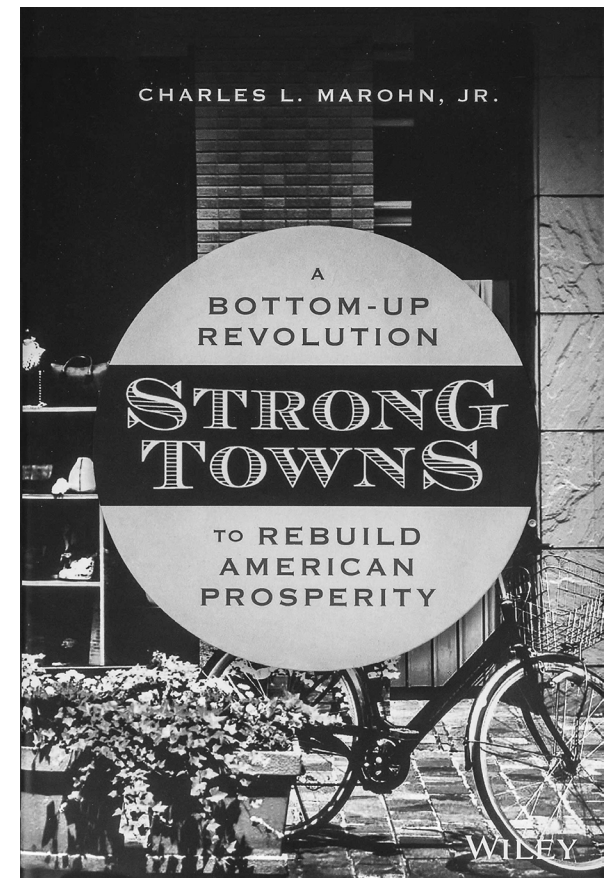
## Traditional neighbourhoods are more flexible

Traditional downtowns, because of the nature of their buildings and their dense design, also can shift uses more easily than a big-box complex. “I’ve seen some of these storefronts shift from retail, to a restaurant, back to retail, then to office space. There is an amazing amount of flexibility in this pattern, an ability to adapt as the market changes.”

He argues that cities must stop depending on growth, because it leads to financial insolvency. Traditional cities could grow, but were stable without growth. Today, though, many American cities “are increasingly like a person on a bicycle; it must keep growing, at ever-accelerating rates, or things fall apart.”

Instead, cities – as complex systems – must build strength and stability at a fractal level. “Successful blocks beget successful neighbourhoods. Prosperous neighbourhoods make up a prosperous city. A strong and stable state is an assembly of strong and stable cities.”

Marohn lives in a small town in Minnesota. In Canadian terms, his politics might be described as a cross between small-c conservative and Green. He describes himself as originally Republican, but says his actual politics range from



libertarian federally to progressive at a city level to “pretty much a socialist” at the neighbourhood level. He emphasizes throughout the book the importance of working across party lines to create good cities.

Marohn’s conclusions echo what Ottawa community activists have been saying for many years – that areas within the Greenbelt are subsidizing suburbs outside it. But those discussions have centred around the initial costs of building those suburbs; Marohn adds in the bigger bill of the full lifecycle costs.

His solution? Gradual intensification, with certain levels of infill as of right, rather than just plunking in high rises. That’s a partial solution, but doesn’t deal with problems of high land costs and other barriers to development, nor current developer preferences. Nor does this book deal with gentrification and how low-income residents get pushed out of liveable neighbourhoods into the suburbs. But his analysis does encourage us to avoid mistakes like suburbs designed to fail.

*Strong Towns is available at the Ottawa Public Library.*

## Downtown library branch not in the cards?

Alayne McGregor

The Ottawa Public Library is proposing a facilities framework that might eliminate the possibility of a local downtown library branch.

The draft framework, which is now available for public comment, calls for urban residents to have a local branch no more than 3km away (a 40-minute walk according to Google Maps).

This distance is substantially higher than in Toronto (1.6km), Montreal (1.5km), or Vancouver (2km).

The Main branch will move from 120 Metcalfe Street to 555 Albert Street in 2026. The distance from the eastern end of Centretown to the new location is about 2.8km. The current ward councillor, Catherine McKeenney, has several times raised the possibility of a another small neighbourhood

branch downtown to serve those who use the current Main branch.

The framework does not mention population density in its criteria. It does, however, refer to the city’s commitment to “healthy, walkable, 15-minute neighbourhoods,” noting that this “suggests that facility spaces would be smaller and that there would be more of them. This is in contradiction with the library facilities trend to maximize financial resources and provide larger, more strategically located facilities.”

An above-average population growth rate (>25 percent) within the next 5-25 years is also a criterion for a new branch.

Residents can [submit comments on the framework](#) or fill out a short online survey until September 15. The library will also hold a virtual open house session from 7 to 8 p.m. on August 23.

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# Skyline: A new 'landmark building' at Kent and Gilmour Is beauty in the eye of the beholder?



The proponents hope that their tower at Kent and Gilmour will act as a beacon. In this low-rise heritage neighbourhood, it will certainly be hard to miss. Hobin Architecture/City of Ottawa Development Information Files

Robert Smythe

The heart of Centretown's largest heritage district is being challenged by yet another development proposal that's being submitted under the City of Ottawa's open-ended "Landmark Building" policy. This process involves an architectural beauty pageant with few objective or truly measurable criteria.

The landmark building policy is a hangover from the 2013 Centretown Community Design Plan which first recommended it. This was appealed by the Community Association and, in a murky decision, the former Ontario Municipal Board neither approved nor refused the policy, and instead ordered the city and the developers to work it out among themselves.

In a nutshell, a landmark development can "break the rules" provided that the architecture is "iconic"; the site design is "extraordinary"; the landscape design is "outstanding"; and the land use and building programme serve a "civic and national function." It's left to fellow architects and design consultants to score the development according to their

particular tastes.

Of course, the 359 Kent Street development is further complicated by the fact that, under the Ontario Heritage Act, it sits within a designated Heritage Conservation District and requires approval from the city's Built Heritage Advisory Committee, whose statutory authority actually exceeds the city's design review process.

As the land is currently designated for low-to-medium development it will also require both Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw Amendments. The Centretown Community Association has submitted comments objecting to the project's extreme height and lack of affordable housing in the unit mix.

For context, once the site is cleared of the 1950s office building that now stands at the southwest corner, and apart from two mid-rise apartment buildings on Bank Street, the rest of this block comprises 10 two-and-a-half storey 110-to-130 year old houses along Gilmour and MacLaren.

In raw numbers, the proposal encompasses 405 residential units and 322 parking spaces. While the applicant's summary states that the building is to be "111,000

metres" in height, the actual figure is likely closer to 100. The two existing houses at the rear of the development site on MacLaren Street are to be restored "to a high standard," with one of them dedicated to new commercial tenants and the other given to "a deserving community group" such as the Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa.

This is not the first attempt at a landmark building from this team: the Taggart Group, Hobin Architecture, and Commonwealth Historic Resource Management. In January 2021, it suffered what one neighbour described as a "drubbing" from Ottawa's Urban Design Review Panel, which has rejected the plans for their very large, very tall, two-tower development at 267 O'Connor Street between Gilmour and MacLaren.

The proponent's design statement for 359 Kent is too rich not to quote at some length: "Because of the landmark nature of the site – the vision is to create a development that is truly iconic in the neighbourhood and the City. ...A pedestrian-oriented corner plaza emphasized by a dramatic four-storey cantilever at the entrance



A view of the site from the corner of Kent & MacLaren. The ivy-covered house will be retained. The tower will be located where the 1950s office building now stands. ROBERT SMYTHE/THE BUZZ

at the corner of Kent Street and Gilmour. ...Above the podium a 34-storey tower acts as a beacon for this site. Its dramatic shape not only acts as a guide to the downtown core and the Parliament Buildings from the highway, but as a new iconic piece in the Ottawa skyline."

"The tower itself is to act as the visual landmark. Its slender, dynamic shape creating visual interest from far and near, to the west, is comprised of a central solid element with punches [sic] windows which connects to the ground floor."

"In conclusion, our team is presented with a great opportunity with this designated landmark site to create iconic architecture that will celebrate the importance of Centertown [sic] and its community as well as it's [sic] role as a future wayfinder to the Parliament district. While enjoyed locally, this tower will be an incredible icon to visitors entering the Parliament Buildings and downtown core via the Kent Street corridor."

It should be noted that any super-tall building (be it iconically beautiful or not) in

this location would serve that signpost function, provided that the most important perspective on this Centretown neighbourhood and its significant heritage character is that of drivers exiting the Queensway.

Of course, developers can't be blamed for availing themselves of a wacky process that was concocted by the City of Ottawa. If wildly out of scale landmarks are to exist, the guidelines must be broadened to include important planning issues like community context and compatibility.



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# Don Kwan brings his family and their memories into his art

Alayne McGregor

The last two years have given Centretown artist Don Kwan a chance to shine.

Kwan has been best known for co-running the Shanghai Restaurant with brother Ed (China Doll). The Somerset Street restaurant, which opened in 1971, was a local landmark both for its food and the art exhibits and shows run there by the brothers. Kwan was also the mover behind Chinatown Remixed, an annual arts festival run from 2008 to 2021, as well as public arts projects in Chinatown.

But this spring, Kwan was given the Peter Honeywell Mid-Career Artist Award by the Ottawa Arts Council (OAC), in recognition of both his own work and the support he has given to Ottawa's arts community.

The council noted that he has drawn on "his own experiences and challenges of being a gay, third-generation Chinese Canadian artist as a way to ground himself in broader conversations about identity, representations and intergenerational memory-making in the diaspora."

The Ottawa Art Gallery is also now featuring a ma-

major exhibit of Kwan's work in conversation with classic art from its Firestone Collection. *Landscape, Loss, and Legacy* will run until next January.

In it, Kwan's installations and photographs are contrasted with art by A.J. Casson, Lawren Harris, and Harold Town, among others, in a discussion about what belongs in the Canadian landscape.

## Chipping away since 1994

Kwan said he felt validated by the OAC award. "I've been chipping away. I've been part of the art community since 1994 when I started taking over the restaurant from my parents' and grandparents' generation."

He said he draws much of his artistic inspiration from family history, and uses family photographs in his art. His OAG exhibit is about his family's journey traveling to Canada, "celebrating their stories and highlighting them in the artwork through the use of different media." This November will be the 100th anniversary of his grandfather's arrival in 1922, he said.

## The lantern holds memories

Central to the OAG exhibit is a Chinese lantern,

whose image appears in various forms, both whole and disintegrated.

Originally Kwan inherited a large Chinese lantern from Wong's Palace Restaurant. He used that as a centerpiece of an exhibit at the Shanghai in 2018 called "Illuminating our ancestors," in which he replaced the original glass with family photographs. That piece was sold to a collector.

When his parents died in 2019, he took another rosewood lantern, and hung it out in the woods near his studio "to illuminate my dad's spirit to come back."

He took the glass panels off to expose it to the harshness of the landscape. "I left the lantern outside in the harshness of winter, the torrential rains of the spring, and then the summer heat."

It was outside for two years, slowly decaying and becoming "very much like a layered piece of work." The remnants are displayed in a case in the OAG exhibit. He said he had to scour the ground and take away two years' worth of leaves to find each piece.

Kwan said the lantern was emblematic of loss but also of strength and resilience.



Don Kwan says that his sculpture "This land is my land, this land is your land" in his Ottawa Art Gallery exhibit uses Muskoka chairs to create a sculpture that "hints to the Canadian history of inclusion and exclusion when it comes to Chinese immigrants." ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

"It held its colour. The tassels were still a brilliant red although it was falling apart. Every time I would look at the lantern, I would be reminded of my parents passing and then I would reflect upon their journey coming from China to Canada and all the hardships. There was a lot of emotion that I've imbued onto that lantern."

He has also included a

new version of the lantern in the exhibit as well as photos of the decayed lantern.

## Examining representation

Kwan said he hoped the OAG exhibit would make people think about belonging and what is represented in art. He said he went through the entire 1600-piece Firestone Collection to pick the pieces by other artists in

the exhibit, first looking at computer images and background information, and then viewing the actual pieces on his shortlist.

What stood out to him, he said, was the lack of pieces by queer or indigenous people or people of colour: "I saw a real gap there." He referred to that in the exhibit by including landscapes with

continued on page 8

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Barbara Sibbald leads the Dundonald Park Gardening Group, which beautifies the park with donated plants. But now these plants are being pilfered. *JACK HANNA/THE BUZZ*

## Repeated plant thefts plague Dundonald Park gardeners

Jack Hanna

Folks donate the plants. Volunteers put them in the ground in Dundonald Park and tend them.

Then thieves steal the plants, pulling them from the ground in a public park.

“We continue to have people pilfering plants,” says Barbara Sibbald, leader of the Dundonald Gardening Group. “It is a shock to me – to put a plant in the ground and soon after to see a gaping space.”

This spring, a volunteer planted a dozen geraniums in Dundonald Park’s big central planter. The next day, 11 were gone.

“There have been thefts in past years,” says Sibbald, “but this year it is a lot worse.”

Two rose bushes have been stolen, one the night after it was planted. As well, an Emily Carr Rose that was established – it had been planted a year earlier – was dug out and swiped. “It made

it through a winter and was looking beautiful, and someone stole it.”

Other plants have vanished.

### Signage didn’t work

Sibbald tried to address the problem with signage. A volunteer made a dozen signs stating: “These gardens are made by volunteers. Please be respectful.”

But the thefts continued.

“This is being done by people who have a home and a garden, dishonest people who are too lazy or cheap to go out and buy plants,” says Sibbald.

The volunteer gardening crews – working in Dundonald Park, St. Luke’s

Park, and along the verge of Frank Street – are with the Centretown Community Association.

Although the City has provided small grants, the volunteers get most of their plants from individuals who split what’s growing in their gardens.

As well, the Master Gardeners of Ottawa this spring donated all the plants left over after their big plant sale at the Experimental Farm.

“We are trying to create something beautiful,” says Sibbald.

“All the volunteer labour and energy, all the donations – there is a lack of respect for all that. It’s very frustrating.”



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## CCA report

Jack Hanna

### Tomatoes just peachy at Elgin Street farmers market

Tomatoes are the big seasonal item at the Elgin Street farmers market right now. They are at their juiciest and available in several varieties.

Niagara peaches and Ottawa-area raspberries, along with root vegetables such as beets and squash, flow into the market stalls in late summer, says market manager Chris Penton. And Brussels sprouts.

The corn still is excellent.

And of course, there's everything else the market offers every Sunday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Boushey Square: craft beer, cider, honey, bread and pies; Lebanese and Italian foods; and even carpets.

### Take a walk through Centretown's history

The Centretown history walking tours on Sunday mornings will continue through the autumn.

There are two walks, offered on alternating Sundays.

*Blunders and Beauties* focuses on historic boobos in downtown Ottawa made by those who govern, and Centretown's architectural



beauty. It looks back millennia to the last ice age and the Champlain Sea, and discusses why buildings in the heart of Ottawa crack.

The other tour, *Canal and Communities*, looks at the building of the local portion of the Rideau Canal, and at the communities that have lived on Centretown lands, from indigenous encampments to the canal builders' shantytown and early villages.

The walks, each about one kilometre, leave from the Elgin entrance to the Elgin Street farmers market Sundays at 11 a.m. There's no cost, although donations to the Centretown Community Association (CCA) are gratefully accepted.

### Kids can go fly a kite – after they make it

The CCA's Fall Festival will be rich in activities for kids, including the opportunity to make a kite.

The festival will be held on Saturday, September 24 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Dundonald Park.

Kids also can plant daffodil bulbs, paint a rock, learn

about bees and other pollinators, or sit on the grass and listen to stories being read aloud.

For adults, there's instruction in drawing trees, demonstrations of Chinese drumming and dance, and displays on everything from nurturing Centretown's trees to the tool library.

The festival is jointly sponsored by the CCA and the Centretown Community Health Centre.

### Don't steal plants

Through years of work, dozens of volunteer gardeners have transformed the huge garden spaces in Dundonald Park from weed beds into expanses of flowers and shrubs.

The leaders of the volunteer gardeners hope new signs, highlighting the volunteer effort, will cause potential thieves to pause.

This summer there's been a lot of thefts of plants, including rose bushes, from the gardens. The new signs state the gardens were created by volunteers and ask folks to "be respectful."

## Full library hours waiting for more staff

Alayne McGregor

It's not clear when Ottawa Public Library (OPL) branches will return to regular hours. OPL staff told *The BUZZ* this month that there's no firm date to restore the hours, which were chopped by more than one-quarter in January.

But at the same time, the OPL is surveying users about their preferences for changed or expanded hours, and it will increase Sunday hours starting in September.

The library is currently only open two evenings a week and has reduced morning hours as well. Donna Clark, the OPL's Division Manager, Branch Operations, said the reduction was "due to the uncertainty of the pandemic and staffing pressures."

"The change in hours provided customers with consistency in opening hours by avoiding the need for sudden closures to respond to fluctuating staffing levels.

Because we continue to work through staffing challenges, we have not yet been able to resume regular open hours."

The OPL has had user complaints about the reductions, Clark said. "We are trying very hard to resume regular hours because we know how important they are to our customers and employees."

Centretown resident Diane Bassett wrote to OPL management in June saying the reduction in hours was unacceptable and "greatly limits meeting the needs of the OPL Patrons." In her letter, copied to *The BUZZ*, she said this disenfranchises patrons without access to computers or high-speed Internet.

Clark said the OPL faced "staffing challenges," made worse by higher educational and language requirements, and had increased its job promotion. "Once staffing shortages have been resolved, we will be able to resume regular branch open hours."

Ontario Library Asso-

ciation executive director Shelagh Paterson said the pandemic has affected recruitment for Ontario libraries. "I am hearing from some public library employers that they are not getting as many candidates applying for some of the jobs that are currently available, and that's possibly just part of the overall employment trend that's going on right now."

She said that the OPL's bilingualism requirement may also limit the number of candidates. However, "the numbers are still really good in terms of [new library school] graduates."

Clark said any funds saved from fewer hours would go to reserves. The OPL Board allocated \$5M of its 2020 surplus caused by pandemic shutdowns to funding the new central library.

Starting in September, Clark said, the OPL would increase Sunday hours to be the same as Saturday hours at 10 branches, based on a 2017 user survey.

The library is currently "refreshing" that survey in light of the pandemic to determine hours that "best meet community needs." The survey asks patrons what they do when visiting the library, what days and times they would use most frequently, and whether they want more Sunday hours.

## 142 Nepean tenants get a short reprieve

Alayne McGregor

Tenants in the low-rise, affordable apartment building at 142 Nepean Street got a temporary reprieve in July, as city staff look for an alternative to turning that building into a parking lot.

The city Planning Committee decided to defer until August 25 a decision on demolishing the building. Councillor Shawn Menard moved deferral because "there's more creativity there to come" in terms of alternate solutions.

Developers Glenview Homes and Taggart Management want to use the land at 142 to 148 Nepean for a 30-spot surface-level parking lot, to replace the parking lot at 108 Nepean now used by a nearby office building. On the 108 Nepean parking lot, Glenview and Taggart will build a new 27-storey mixed-use tower. That project was approved by Planning Committee.

## Independent People's Commission to hold hearings into convoy occupation

**continued from page 1**  
dangerous, undemocratic, and hurtful occupation. I've never seen this level of trauma in a community."

He said it would listen to residents, business owners, workers, and organizations "whose lives were turned upside down" and were subject to insults and torture-level loud noise. It will also examine what failed to happen that might have ended the occupation sooner, and how to prevent it happening again.

## Don Kwan: a recent chance to shine

**continued from page 6**  
with no people at all in them, and also included several ink drawings by artists of Asian descent.

Kwan said that his artistic career has exploded in the last two years. He has pieces in three exhibits right now, including at the OAG and the SAW Gallery in Ottawa.

The pandemic shut-down also gave him more time to concentrate on art – starting with creating artwork out of decorated masks, which became very popular.

He also produced a China Doll colouring book, which is available online as a PDF or in print at the OAG store.

### Shanghai reopening?

One question Kwan wasn't willing to answer was when and if the Shanghai might reopen (it closed at the start of the pandemic.) He said he couldn't speak for his family: "it's difficult."

As well, both Ed (China Doll) and he pivoted during COVID-19, and both are still

At the meeting, Glenview president Mark Shabinsky strongly insisted that Glenview's office building must have control of "its own parking destiny," and was not willing to rent spots in other lots instead of using 142-8 Nepean.

"The tower will not proceed unless we have control of our parking next door. It's not a threat, it's simply a commercial reality that we are dealing with."

Somerset Ward Councillor Catherine McKenney disagreed. "To be held hostage, to say that if you don't allow us to demolish this six-unit building for parking – for parking! – this building won't go up, it just doesn't hold true. We've got plenty of parking lots that could be used for these 30 spots. Do not take away people's housing for a parking lot," she said.

Councillor Jeff Leiper said the committee makes its decisions on the basis of good city planning, not private

commercial considerations. "If the developer has not thoroughly beaten the bushes and been willing to take a little water with their wine in order to make their commercial arrangements work, I'd like them to know that there is the possibility that this committee may simply not approve this demolition."

Tenant Lionel Njeukam told the committee that his two-bedroom apartment was affordable at \$1200/month and close to work, school, and daily needs. His family and the other tenants "do not want to move." He said the proposed demolition was overwhelmingly stressful to his family.

While tenants have been promised nearby apartments at the same rent for the next five years, Njeukam expected they would then be forced out of Centretown because even "affordable" rents would be too high. "I honestly don't know where we will go."

"It was such a dramatic event – and it still isn't over." He said that the commission would also hear how residents are being affected by the repeated reappearances of convoy protesters.

The commission will be supported by the Centretown Community Health Centre, an agency whose work was disrupted by the illegal occupation protesting vaccine mandates and the Trudeau government. The centre is accepting donations to support the commission's work,

which Rubin estimates may cost up to \$250,000.

This summer, the city Auditor-General also held public hearings into the occupation, as part of her investigation on behalf of the city and the police service.

The two A-G sessions did hear from local residents and agencies about their harrowing experiences, but almost half of the speakers defended the convoy occupation. Those speakers were almost all from outside Centretown.



Don Kwan's photo of himself with the lantern, from the Ottawa Art Gallery exhibit.

very busy with their alternate careers. "We're blessed to be able to be able to focus on our artistic practices. They're both being well-received."

Kwan has his first exhibit outside Ontario this summer, in the Chinese gardens in Vancouver. He said China Doll was coming with him to Vancouver for the exhibit,

and they would do events together there. He will also be reviving a performance where he serves a pot of tea that was made from the ripped-up remnants of his grandfather's head tax certificate.

"It was very therapeutic for me. Art for me is very healing."



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## DCA: new park & new developments

Ed McKenna

### Last touches for design of Norman Rochester Park

The Dalhousie Community Association's (DCA) Public Realm Committee met July 26 with city planners to discuss the final design for the new public park at the corner of Norman and Rochester Streets.

"Norman Rochester Park" will occupy the southwest corner of the Canada Lands Company's Booth Street Development, and will add 2,280 square metres of much-needed greenspace to the neighbourhood.

The DCA has written to the city with a dozen suggestions to enhance the current design, including the addition of a public washroom and a water fountain.

### Traffic Calming on Eccles

Residents on Eccles Street petitioned the city at the end of July requesting that the street be closed to through traffic between Booth and Rochester.

Councillor McKenney supports the petition, funding has been identified, and the city is ready to implement a plan to create a dead end on Eccles.

Speeding, cut-through traffic has been a long-time major concern for local residences. Many are families with young children. Traffic calming measures including "bulb-outs," speed bumps, and temporary barriers haven't been effective.

### 200 Bronson? Or Is it Cambridge Street North?

The DCA has written to the city to oppose an appli-

cation for a zoning by-law amendment that would allow a nine-storey building to be constructed on Cambridge Street North, an established residential area.

Bronson Ridge Apartment Inc. wants to build behind the existing apartment building at 200 Bronson Avenue, where the "traditional mainstreet" zoning permits mid-rise apartments. But the building will front on Cambridge Street North, where the recently-revised zoning bylaw does not permit nine-storey buildings.

The DCA letter notes that the recently completed apartment building next door at 192 Bronson, "The Beckett," also occupies a lot that extends through to Cambridge North. But this development respects the different zoning on each street. Rising to 19 storeys on Bronson, "The Beckett" on Cambridge North presents as three-storey, red brick townhouses with entrances at ground-level.

In contrast, writes the DCA, the proposal for 200 Bronson "constitutes over-development of the site. In its present configuration we are opposed to it."

### Preston Hardware Employee Parking

Preston Hardware has applied to the city for permission to replace residential properties on Larch and Balsam Streets with a 21-space parking lot for its employees. In three years, the application states, the parking lot will in turn be replaced by a proposed six-storey residential building.

Preston Hardware already has permission to de-

molish the buildings, but on condition that the property is fenced and landscaped. Other uses of the property, including parking, are prohibited. Now it proposes that this condition be removed.

The DCA is opposed to new parking lots in the community, and to this application.

Preston Hardware says that in the future, employee parking will be provided underground, beneath the proposed six-storey residential building. Why then, build a large surface parking lot on the site, and in the midst of a residential neighbourhood?

### The Library Parcel

The "Library Parcel" is how the National Capital Commission describes the property at the northeast corner of Albert and Booth Streets. It will be sold to Dream LeBreton and developed as a mixed-use property, with 601 residential rental units in two towers, including 247 units of affordable housing.

The DCA supports Dream's application to the city for a zoning bylaw amendment to allow it to proceed with this development. In most ways, this development aligns with DCA's goals for the neighbourhood. We said so in a public meeting, described on page 3 of this BUZZ.

### Summer's End

We're taking a break in August, but regular DCA monthly meetings resume September 7, when committee activities also will ramp up.

Join us. More info: [president@ottawadalhousie.ca](mailto:president@ottawadalhousie.ca).

## Square dancing in the new century

Lamar Mason

Looking for a way to keep your step-count up during the fall and winter? Not interested in skiing, skating, or being a cold-weather jogger? Need to add something new to your exercise program but don't want to go to the gym and you have no room for a treadmill or stationary bike?

You should try modern square dancing.

WAIT, don't leave! Read on... Were pictures of crinolines, Western shirts, and old-time music running through your mind? No more! Square dancing has joined the 21st century: casual clothes, modern music, and fun!

Do you like Classic Rock music? New country? Top 40 hits? Rock 'n Roll? Do you know your left from your right? Can you count to five? Can you walk briskly? Then modern square dancing is

perfect for you!

Modern square dancing is a fun, fast paced and social. We dance in groups of eight people (four couples) – but you don't need a partner to join. You'll meet all sorts of people: young people, empty nesters, retirees. So, come as a couple, a single, or a group of friends. Everyone is welcome.

Each dance night you will learn different steps or calls. The dance leader then strings the calls together in a danceable order and dancers must react and work together to execute the sequence as the calls are given. Our dance leaders are great teachers: they are very patient in making sure you learn the calls before they are used in a dance!

Square dancing is great physically. It will make your Fitbit go wild – you will easily register 5,000 steps in a normal two-hour dance night!

It's a great way to enjoy some exercise that is too much fun to be called exercise!

Meri Squares Square Dance Club dances in central Ottawa. We offer an introductory program ("Social Square Dancing" – the name says it all!) for new dancers on Tuesday evenings this fall. We will have you dancing up a storm to great music with new friends in no time at all.

Join us at our free Kick-Off Dance on Tuesday, September 20, at 7 p.m. at the J.A. Dulude Arena at 941 Clyde Ave. Meet new people. Dance to great music. Get fit. Have fun!

More info: [MeriSquares.ca](http://MeriSquares.ca), or Lamar at 613-221-9188 or [lamarmason4@gmail.com](mailto:lamarmason4@gmail.com)

*Lamar Mason is President of Meri Squares, and has been an avid dancer since 2009.*



The closed-off section of Wellington Street is attracting pedestrians.

ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

## MP report: Wellington St. is a chance to reimagine our nation's capital

Yasir Naqvi

The re-imagining of Wellington Street has the potential to bring dynamic change to Ottawa's downtown core, setting our tourist district up for success in a post pandemic era.

Since the illegal occupation took place in our downtown core, I have had numerous conversations with residents of Ottawa Centre, our local city councillors, Mayor Jim Watson, Business Improvement Areas, and the tourism sector to hear their perspective and ideas on what the future of Wellington looks like.

Throughout these discussions, there is consensus on the opportunity that has presented itself, which has provided a space to be bold, innovative and thoughtful in how we re-imagine Wellington Street.

The 24-day long occupation was devastating to our community and brought our downtown core to a halt. Residents and businesses were subjected to racist and bigoted taunts which had a severe impact on their quality of life.

The traumatic experience has resulted in the indefinite closure of Wellington Street for security reasons and has subsequently led to a serious re-evaluation on how to prevent another disruptive and prolonged occupation.

Earlier this year, MPs began to study a revision of boundaries of the parliamentary precinct to include Wellington and Sparks streets, following a request jointly made by Greg Fergus (MP for Hull-Gatineau) and myself.

So far, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs has heard from several witnesses, including Algonquin Chief Wendy

Jocko, Councillor Catherine McKenney, NCC CEO Tobi Nussbaum, and former Ottawa Police Chief Peter Sloly.

Most of the witnesses agree that one of the best ways to enhance security around Parliament, while keeping it accessible for local residents to enjoy and businesses to thrive, is the closure of Wellington Street to vehicular traffic and the creation of a new, state-of-the-art active transit corridor and pedestrian mall.

As the MP for Ottawa Centre, I am committed to take concrete steps towards climate action in our community, and that includes seeking opportunities to increase active transportation and thereby reducing emissions and getting more cars off the road.

A pedestrian-focused Wellington Street provides countless possibilities. It could serve as a space for innovative tourism events and local business promotions. It can offer a space to promote reconciliation with Indigenous communities, as well as a space to feature the work of Indigenous artists.

Additionally, in the long term, this can pave the way for a potential development of a public transit loop that would connect Ottawa and Gatineau. And lastly, it provides a space for all Canadians to exercise their democratic right to peaceful protest in a safe and responsible manner.

This is an opportunity to

be bold, innovative, and to contribute to the rebuilding and revitalizing our downtown. It nicely complements the redevelopment of Block 2, a section of buildings on the South side of Wellington Street (between Metcalfe and O'Connor). Block 2 – right across from the Peace Tower – will bring an entirely new character to the street, creating a Parliamentary square for all Canadians to enjoy. You can learn more about it at [bit.ly/30lrD2Z](http://bit.ly/30lrD2Z).

Let's make Wellington Street a safe and vibrant space, designated for active use, that is accessible to all Ottawa residents and visitors alike who wish to walk, run, bike or roll in front of our historic national institutions, permanently. Our Parliamentary Precinct is the heart of Canadian democracy. It's high time it reflects our values and keeps our community safe.

I welcome your comments and feedback on this or any other issue. Do not hesitate to contact me at 613-946-8682 or write to me at [Yasir.Naqvi@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Yasir.Naqvi@parl.gc.ca).

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# Ottawa Jazzfest 2022 lineup thrilled



Saxophonist Kamasi Washington was the highlight of the festival.

STEPHEN THIRLWALL/THE BUZZ

Stephen Thirlwall  
After two years of online and limited in-person shows, the Ottawa Jazz Festival returned with a full, pre-pandemic-level festival in Confederation Park in 2022.

In that time much has changed in the world of music and the world in general. Both performers and audiences have been eager to return to live shows, but many are still hesitant. Attendance

is not quite back to normal but getting close.

## Where's the Jazz?

With all festivals increasingly presenting concerts from across the musical spectrum, is the Ottawa Jazz Festival still a jazz festival? We were able to find amazing jazz elements in this year's program.

For example, though I fully loved the very expressive pop and reggae of

Corinne Bailey Rae, I felt drawn to leave it partway through to be able to hear the Tord Gustavsen Trio from Norway. I got the last available seat in the packed NAC Studio. The multi-generational audience was very appreciative, remaining totally silent in quiet parts of the performance, attentive to every note. The concert was full of complex jazz improvisations. As Gustavsen told the audience, the trio starts

with a specific piece but usually ends up somewhere completely unexpected.

Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra presented classic jazz, concentrating on pieces by Billy Strayhorn. Each member of the orchestra was given time to strut their ability. Most band members are themselves advanced composers as well as players, thus creating new jazz classics. Marsalis introduced another trumpet player as perhaps the current best in the world. His solo playing proved Marsalis correct.

The Charles Lloyd Quartet, featuring Lloyd on flute and saxophone and Bill Frisell on guitar, was a real crowd-pleaser on the main stage. A big surprise discovery for me was Aurora Nealand & the Royal Roses. They played the jazz of their hometown New Orleans with youthful joy and energy. Its bounce and swing compelled people to get up and dance. Nealand smoothly moved back and forth between vocals and clarinet or saxophone. She also appeared earlier in the festival program playing accordion improvisations in a duo with Tim Berne on sax. Immediately after Nealand, the audience got another dose of straight-ahead, bold, brassy New Orleans jazz from the Dirty Dozen Brass Band. Holly Cole and Cécile

McLorin Salvant are two very different vocal jazz interpreters. Cole's repertoire draws on pop songs from different eras, with her giving them a unique jazz edge. She performed many of her well-known songs, but left out more major hits like "I Can See Clearly Now."

Salvant began her career with a very formal classical style, which I heard at a previous festival. She has changed, now singing in styles ranging from moody bluesy numbers to over-the-top pieces from Kurt Weill musicals. She also sang her own compositions. Salvant has an extraordinary vocal range and can sing both very softly and full-out. Her presentation is very quirky in dress and manner and involves extensive vocal gymnastics. These antics temporarily blew out her part of the sound system. She had her band continue as sound technicians ran around fixing the problem.

A young Quebec jazz vocalist, Dominique Fils-Aimé, gave a strong performance with a more modern rock-style accompaniment. She did a lovely cover of "Feeling Good," a song made popular by Nina Simone.

Laila Biali's performance was a ray of brilliant light. She played piano and sang with such joy, liveliness, and expertise. The core of her sound is jazz, whether she is playing actual jazz tunes, covering folk and pop numbers (Mitchell's "Woodstock," Young's "Heart of Gold" and Bowie's "Let's Dance"), or performing her own compositions. After her show, I went to the merchandise tent where she was signing CDs. Biali was warm, gracious, and generous, having intimate (but masked) few-minute conversations with each person in line.

## Outside of Jazz

Some of the non-jazz acts were superb. I was looking forward to the Punch Brothers. Their music falls within the roots-trad category, but is very youthful, modern, and progressive, combining elements of bluegrass, country, folk, fiddle tunes, and rock. Most interesting is when their traditional sound starts to break down and become something otherworldly that can't easily be described or classified though still played on traditional instruments. Many traditional groups have rich vocal harmonies. Not so the Punch Brothers. The instruments play the intricate harmonies over which is placed the single voice of Chris Thile in a rich flow of words. His voice is gritty but fits with their sound that moves from mellow to frenetic. With two band members ill, two friends from another band were brought into the fold, creating the Punch Brothers and Sister.

This served as a marvellous opening to the festival.

Two bands followed a similar format – an outstanding lead guitarist and/or singer and a backup group with a horn section – the J-W Jones Big Band from Ottawa, and Cory Wong. Both bands were loud, but excellent.

A special treat was Busty and the Bass from Montreal, with a real soulful dance sound. They had just added two vocalists to their mix of brass, keyboards, and rhythm. The singers were outstanding in their vocal quality and their let-it-all-out enthusiasm.

The ancient members of The Blind Boys of Alabama belted out old and new gospel. The glamorous and talented China Forbes led the longtime crowd pleasers, Pink Martini and guests, through various cross-genre pieces.

## Best for Last

Once Kamasi Washington and band hit the stage, they blew away all the other performers in the entire festival. Their presence, competence, power and beauty of sound reigned. Washington's jazz ranged from tranquil and meditative to incredibly forceful. Yet any loudness came through the strength of the music, not excessive ear-hurting decibels.

The group had great spontaneity and freshness. Washington always moves forward with his music, not repeating what he has done before (no matter how great it was). The band does a lot of improvising, and Washington keeps composing brilliantly. His pieces have social relevance – peace, justice, equality, family and always spirituality. As a new father, he wrote a long composition for his child.

Washington's saxophone playing is very delicate at one moment and intense at another when joined by horns and drums and bass. The pianist of the group played as if silver streams of water were falling from his fingers. The band had two superb drummers with full kits, each playing a solo. A magnificent show.

## Music beyond the festival

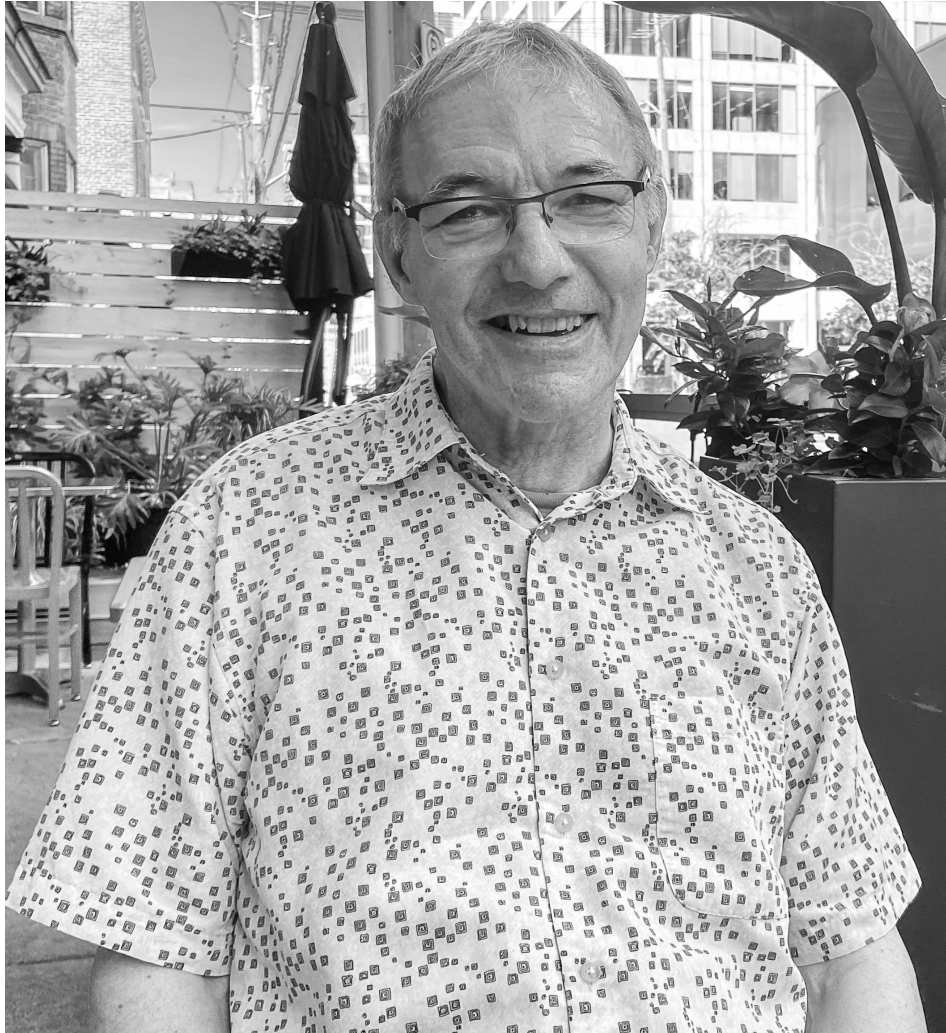
This was a most appropriate and thrilling celebration of the festival's 40th anniversary. It showed again how much people love music and how integral it is in our society, economy and individual well-being and development.

Coming to festivals like this helps us to be both entertained and educated. If we follow up the festival by listening to recordings or following groups online and attending other concerts, we can further develop our musical tastes, find similar artists, have a great time, and keep music alive.



Aurora Nealand, with clarinet, sang New Orleans jazz with joy.

STEPHEN THIRLWALL/THE BUZZ



Centretowner Phil Lillies loves to sing, including in the Musica Viva choir. LINDA POLLOCK/THE BUZZ

## A life spent singing, from a tar paper shack to a community choir

Linda Pollock

Phil Lillies has always had “an inclination to sing” – but he didn’t join a choir until his mid-40s. Today the Centretown resident sings baritone in the Musica Viva Singers community choir.

Lillies’ childhood home was a tar paper shack in northern Manitoba. He was allowed to stay up to watch *Don Messer’s Jubilee* on Friday nights.

“A neighbour, an old-time fiddler, came over regularly, and after sharing a half mickey of rye with Dad, would play ‘Maple Sugar’ while Mom and Dad danced until the whole house shook,” he says.

When he was 12 years old, Lillies took his life savings (\$50) and bought an old upright piano that he happily plunked on with one finger. His mom loved that piano and used it to practice the hymns she played on the church organ on Sundays. Every Christmas, the family gathered around that piano and sang carols.

In high school, he tried his hand at learning the violin in the orchestra. “I was never much of a violinist but I did learn to read music.”

In mid-career, Lillies found himself working in France. His children attended the local school and he noticed that music, and particularly singing, was a serious part of the curriculum.

“The French are quite fond of singing together and choirs are everywhere.” In fact, the company he worked

for had its own choir. So when a colleague invited him to join he decided to try it out.

When Lillies wants to relax, one of his favourite pastimes is solving puzzles and mathematical equations. He found that learning to sing a piece of music well in harmony with others is a bit like solving a puzzle.

He enjoys the feeling of accomplishment that comes with achieving a goal. “But the real payoff is that making music with others allows you to forget yourself and soar with the music.”

Upon returning to Canada, Lillies and his family landed in Moncton, New Brunswick. In that bilingual city, he ended up once again in a French community choir.

At times, like most singers, Lillies has to work at getting the pitch right. His Moncton choir encouraged singing buddies to support choristers needing help with a particularly challenging piece of music.

Back in Ottawa Phil joined Musica Viva Singers (MVS), a non-audition choir founded in 1997. MVS is a diverse group which includes both members with limited singing experience and exceptionally skilled and knowledgeable singers.

Members encourage and support one another as does director Scott Richardson and longtime piano accompanist Tom Sear.

Under Richardson’s leadership, the choir aims to master both the technical and artistic aspects of choral singing while enjoying the experience of making music

together. The programming is an eclectic mix of both contemporary and classical pieces. It felt like a good fit for Lillies.

One of Lillies’ musical highlights since joining MVS was singing the *Mass in Blue (Jazz Mass)* by Will Todd.

“This was so much fun. I loved learning this piece with its jazz rhythms and bluesy feel. And it was challenging!”

He has also explored new technologies which convert notes on the page into audio tracks in order to help singers learn and practise music between rehearsals.

He volunteers in MVS to create these tracks for choir members.

As Lillies neared retirement from his job as a federal government auditor, he decided to include space for a choir.

“I think everyone knows a healthy retirement includes cultivating friendships, making new connections, seeking opportunities to try new things, learn new things. Musica Viva Singers has given me all these things. And that’s why I intend to keep on singing.”

MVS meets every Monday evening at 7:15 at Centretown United Church, 507 Bank Street. It will restart September 12 after its summer break.

For more information: email MVS membership secretary Marjorie Cooper at [marjcooper@rogers.com](mailto:marjcooper@rogers.com)

Linda Pollock is a singer with Musica Viva Singers.

## MPP report: the politics of ice cream

Joel Harden

In Ottawa Centre, we love our ice cream. More specifically, we love the many local ice cream businesses that offer delicious tastes and flavours.

That’s why it was a shock to see The Merry Dairy recently targeted by provincial government officials before the August long weekend.

Inspectors from Ontario’s Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) told Marlene Haley, owner of The Merry Dairy, that wholesaling its ice cream pints to local shops contravened Ontario’s Milk Act.

Merry Dairy pints slated for wholesale were required to be pulled off store shelves within 24 hours or fines of \$1000 per day would apply. Arrest and imprisonment later if non-compliance persists. Why?

Because Ontario’s Milk Act stipulates that only certified industrial dairy plants have the right to wholesale dairy products to local stores. OMAFRA officials have said this is to ensure

the quality and safety of the dairy products available in local markets.

We all want to ensure dairy products are safe, and rules to ensure that are important. But does blocking the Merry Dairy and other small ice cream shops from wholesaling accomplish that objective?

Marlene tells me all aspects of her ice cream are traceable. The supplier for their base mix is Reid’s Dairy in Belleville, a certified dairy plant. Records for ingredients added at Merry Dairy are kept should any issues arise. So what’s the risk to public safety?

I’ve also learned that Moo Shu Ice Cream, Fari-nella, and Pascale’s Ice Cream – other local ice cream shops – have also run afoul of the Milk Act. In each case, a complaint was made, an OMAFRA official visited, and ice cream wholesaling was stopped. Each store opted to wholesale vegan products, or sell ice cream directly to consumers. Wholesaling stopped.

But who wins when local

ice cream shops are kept out of grocery stores? Big producers: Nestle, Unilever (i.e. Breyers and other brands) or Neilson. These players dominate the wholesale market, leaving limited space for others.

Liz Mok, Moo Shu’s owner, also notes that The Milk Act currently restricts the wholesale of any products made with dairy ingredients, not just ice cream.

She supports amendments to the Milk Act that would allow small producers to sell wholesale with reasonable limitations (e.g. within the jurisdiction of the local public health unit, or under a certain volume of milk product).

This would benefit not only ice cream shops, but local bakeries, chocolatiers, cheesemongers, and others who sell dairy products. It’s a smart solution to a flawed status quo.

Now it’s your turn – do you agree with Marlene and Liz?

Let me know what you think by sending a message to [joel@joelharden.ca](mailto:joel@joelharden.ca).

## What’s on in Ottawa and beyond

continued from page 12

will gather in Toronto for the annual Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). Tickets and films to watch: [www.tiff.net/](http://www.tiff.net/)

### City Folk/OIAF

Closer to home, City Folk will return from September 8-17 at Lansdowne Park, and the Ottawa International Animation Film Festival ([www.animationfestival.ca/](http://www.animationfestival.ca/)) gets underway on September 21.

City Folk kicks off on the 8th with Ottawa’s own Kathleen Edwards. It wraps up on the 27th with Sarah Harmer.

### National Arts Centre (1 Elgin)

The NAC is home to a diverse range of music this fall. Here is a guide to the top acts to watch out for:

August 19: the **Female Voices of the Middle East**;

August 25: The 2022 **Capital Pride Pageant**;

August 27 - September 18: **Buffy Sainte-Marie: Pathfinder**, a free retrospective exhibition of Sainte-Marie’s paintings, sketches, artifacts and behind-the-scenes photos;

August 30-September 4: **Anastasia**, the latest musical live from Broadway;

September 15: **Matt Dusk Sings Frank Sinatra**;

September 16: **Buffy Sainte Marie** in concert.

Tickets and info: [nac-cna.ca/en/calendar/list/2022/08/](http://nac-cna.ca/en/calendar/list/2022/08/)

### Dundonald Park

On Fridays from 6:30 to 8 p.m. in August and September, you can hear free shows by local musicians in Dundonald Park.

A jazz guitarist is scheduled to play August 19. The schedule is at [www.hearthousecafe.ca/events](http://www.hearthousecafe.ca/events)

### Live on Elgin (220 Elgin)

On August 22, there’s a

Queer Folks kitchen party at Live on Elgin featuring queer musicians from the Ottawa region (Jack Pine, Tina Wallace, Grayce Aromatic) playing a variety of acoustic, indie, and folk music as part of the Capital Pride festival. Other Pride-related shows are on August 24 and 28. See [www.liveonelgin.com/](http://www.liveonelgin.com/).

### IFFO

Also as part of Pride Week, the International Film Festival of Ottawa is presenting the classic LGBT+ film *But I’m a Cheerleader* at the Ottawa Art Gallery on August 22 at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are PWYC, but seats must be prebooked at [iffo.ca](http://iffo.ca)

Tony Wohlfarth is an Ottawa-based freelance film and entertainment writer. He is currently covering the Edinburgh International Film Festival.

## FREE! PACKING SCHOOL LUNCHES WORKSHOP

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# What's on in Ottawa and beyond this month

Tony Wohlfarth

## Canadian War Museum

The Canadian War Museum (1 Vimy Place) opened a new outdoor exhibition, *War Machines*, this week. You can see demonstrations of real combat equipment, from the Second World War to the modern era, in operation in the area behind the museum. The rumble of tanks will only run from August 18 to 21, at 10 a.m., noon, and 2 p.m. each day. Vehicles will also be displayed inside.

Inside is the temporary exhibition, *Forever Changed* – a portrait of Canadians who played a role in World War II, ranging from factory workers making armaments to soldiers who fought and died in the battlefields of Europe and in Asia. I spent two hours touring this exhibit on Emancipation Day and found it very informative. It runs until September 5.

*A Community at War* is an exhibit developed by the Niagara Military Museum, profiling black Canadians from that region who played a role in defending Canada. It has been extended until

March 19, 2023.

The permanent exhibition at the CWM has been revamped with new displays on the Cold War, the Korean War, and the peacekeeping role Canada plays in places as diverse as Kosovo and the Golan Heights.

Timed entry tickets to the CWM must be reserved at: [www.warmuseum.ca/visit/](http://www.warmuseum.ca/visit/). The museum is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Thursday until 7.



Ashley Brook of *Canadiana*

INGRID HAMILTON

## Canadiana

Last month, I caught up with the crew for *Canadiana*, filming outside Library & Archives Canada (LAC). *Canadiana* is a series of films about incredible moments from across Canada,

told by a narrator who brings Canadian history to the small screen, accessible for both the young and the old.

Ashley Brook is the producer for the series. The film shoot which brought her to Ottawa is episodes 5 (about the Cold War) and 6 (the building of the Rideau Canal). Hosted by Adam Bunch, the series streams at: [thiscanadiana.com](http://thiscanadiana.com). The series is also available on YouTube, via [their channel](http://theirchannel).

Are you a history buff? If so, *Canadiana* is for you. I found the episode on Sudbury and the origins of its vast mineral deposits informative and entertaining. Episode 5 drops on August 30.

## The Bytown Museum

The Bytown Museum has re-opened, after closing for over two years due to the pandemic. The museum is located beside the Rideau Canal near the Chateau Laurier Hotel and features three floors of artifacts dating from the canal's opening in 1832. The Rideau Canal is a national historic site.

The museum is open from Wednesday to Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Ad-



At the reopened Bytown Museum, you can see this tabletop made out of 10,000 individual pieces of wood from 19 local species, created for the 1876 World's Fair by a manager at E.B. Eddy Company. It's a birds-eye view of the Eddy works at Chaudière Falls. ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

mission is \$8 for adults, \$5 for seniors, \$2 for children, and \$18 for a family.

## Fourposter Bed

The Classic Theatre Festival is staging a version of the Broadway classic play by Jan de Hartog at Arts Court (2 Daly). *Fourposter Bed* runs from August 5-28 with eight shows each week. See [classictheatre.ca/the-four-poster-ottawa/](http://classictheatre.ca/the-four-poster-ottawa/)

## SAW Gallery (67 Nicholas)

SAW Gallery is currently running a series of concerts and music videos outside its location near the ByWard Market. The final one is set for Sunday, August 22, with Ottawa street poet and rapper City Fidelia. Check out [www.manymoonconcerts.com](http://www.manymoonconcerts.com) for more information.

## Imagine Monet

A colourful larger-than-life display of the art by French impressionist Claude Monet is on offer at the EY Centre, 4699 Uplands Drive. Monet is considered the father of the Impressionist school of art.

I previewed the exhibit in April during its run at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC) in Montreal. I recommend devoting one to two hours for the display.

*Imagine Monet* continues until September 4. See: [www.imagine-monet.com/ottawa-tickets/?lang=en](http://www.imagine-monet.com/ottawa-tickets/?lang=en)

## Banksy 360 at Lansdowne

Banksy is widely considered the world's most famous street artist. He hides under a pseudonym but is thought to be from Bristol.

An unauthorized immersive exhibition of his work, *Banksy 360*, is on display at the Aberdeen Pavilion in Lansdowne Park until October 7.

I had an opportunity to see the exhibition firsthand earlier this month.

The first three rooms are a storyboard, followed by a larger-than-life animated film directed by Justin Alexis. Well worth spending an hour discovering this artist and his work. There is a large gift shop with mementos from Banksy's work.

Tickets and more information: [banksy360.com/home/ottawa/](http://banksy360.com/home/ottawa/)

## Looking ahead to September

On September 8-18, film buffs from around the world

continued on page 11

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**Building off the success of 2021, Ottawa Markets is excited to announce the return of the ByWard and Parkdale Public Market program for 2022. This season also brings the launch of our new ByWard Night Market Every Thursday from 5pm-9pm, starting in June and running to September.**

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