

DESIGN LANSDOWNE



ORSA 100 YEARS
OTTAWA REGIONAL
SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTS

Design Lansdowne Right

an open position paper

6 November 2008

ORSA's Position

An unsolicited offer to redevelop Lansdowne Park has prompted this updated position paper. ORSA believes that this offer should be set aside to allow the original *Design Lansdowne* process to resume.

ORSA supports the approved *Design Lansdowne*, Council-approved process as having great merit and suggests that with some modification, namely an urban design competition for a Master Plan, the overall process can be improved. This would allow council to maintain transparency of process, control of financial commitments, contents, and architectural and urban design quality for the long-term benefit of its citizens. The following are our detailed recommendations:

1. Recommence the *Design Lansdowne* process as approved by Council.
2. Continue and enhance the public consultation process that was initiated as part of *Design Lansdowne*. Clearly establish the range of redevelopment scenarios that are of most interest and value to Ottawa's citizens.
3. Determine how much money, over what period of time, and from what sources, can be committed to the redevelopment of Lansdowne Park.
4. Conduct an urban design competition to establish a long-term Master Plan. The Master Plan would establish the redevelopment framework for the site.
5. Have a jury of citizens, urban designers, architects and stakeholders judge and identify those Master Plans with the greatest merit. Publicly display and discuss all Master Plans. Select the best Master Plan.
6. Engage the proponent of the best Master Plan to assemble a comprehensive team to refine it. Maintain an ongoing public consultation process.
7. Develop a Business Plan for the implementation of the Master Plan that respects available financial resources and assesses revenue generating opportunities.
8. Develop an Implementation Strategy for the development of the site in accordance with the Master Plan. Maintain flexibility to adapt to opportunities and economic conditions. Give the redevelopment the time it needs to unfold.
9. Utilize a series of Rights to Develop Competitions to select proponents to develop portions of the site in keeping with the Master Plan, Business Plan and Implementation Strategy.



images City of Ottawa



What has Vancouver done?

Granville Island

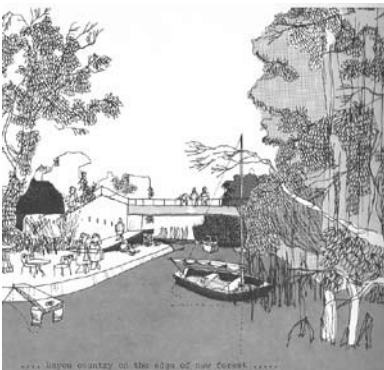
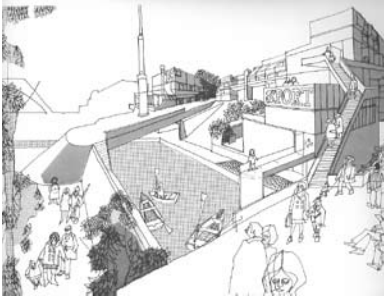
images Allan Teramura



What has Winnipeg done?

The Forks

Opportunity Seized



Images from 1972 Murray and Murray Architects report on Lansdowne redevelopment

There are no comparable City-owned lands that offer the potential for major civic developments as is found at Lansdowne Park.

Lansdowne Park, an 18-hectare site, in the center of the City, bounded by the Rideau Canal, an UNESCO World Heritage Site, a vibrant residential community, and an active commercial street, offers tremendous opportunities. Lansdowne Park, if sensitively and intelligently redeveloped, can be a grand legacy, a gift to future Ottawans.

Other leading cities when faced with similar sites have responded with vision and daring. Leading cities have seized opportunities to build with pride and provide facilities for current and future generations.

A high-quality integrated urban, architectural and landscape design will offer many benefits. An excellent design for Lansdowne Park can increase tourism, improve quality of life in the area, raise property values and the tax base, promote sustainability, support local business, and enhance public transit and infrastructure. More than ever, the City needs to create a strong identity built on a progressive place-based vision of the future.

Design Lansdowne offers the stepping stone towards that prosperous and liveable future. ORSA hopes the opportunity will be seized.

Ottawa by Design



Images from 2007 Erick McEvoy design

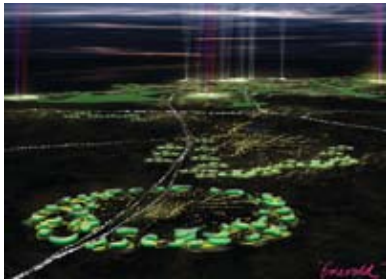
In the Official Plan's *Strategic Direction for Building Liveable Communities*, a commitment was made to pursuing a comprehensive urban design strategy, called *Ottawa By Design*. *Ottawa By Design* in turn committed the City to "increase design awareness through design competitions for municipal buildings, open spaces and other projects, and through design charrettes for neighbourhood plans or individual sites", and to "provide leadership in urban design through the quality of public works delivered by the City and through its role as a partner with communities, the development industry and other levels of government."

This noble commitment is intended to foster a design culture. The City has stated that "Urban design needs to be discussed publicly and often for it to become a strong part of the culture of a place. Additionally it needs successes to thrive as a culture. It is important that the City take the lead role in pursuing design excellence to move it from an "add on if the budget allows" to a "core requirement" for how the city does business."

ORSA encourages the City to follow through its Official Plan's clear statements. The City must strive for design excellence and promote a culture in which the design of our city has importance. We believe Lansdowne Park can be the critical transformational point of words into action. It offers the City a singular opportunity to lead by example like no other.

ORSA

Design Lansdowne Right



Greater Helsinki Vision 2050 Competition with 86 entries, shown above winning scheme "Emerald" by WSP Finland



Vorse By Competition for Copenhagen with 221 entries, shown above winning scheme "Vores Rum" by Entasis



Point Pleasant Park International Design Competition for Halifax, 21 entries, 2 stage competition, above winning entry by NIP paysage



Nathan Phillips Square Design Competition winning design above by Plant Architect & Shore Tilbe Irwin

How to Proceed

The Deputy City Manager's report, *Planning, Transit and the Environment*, dated 1 November 2007, was the basis for the Lansdowne Park consultation and redevelopment process. The nature of the process has caused much confusion. The term "design competition" was predominant within the report, and on the *Design Lansdowne* web site. It painted the picture of a process in which vision and design are paramount and the lead is taken by architectural and urban design teams. However, this was misleading. What in fact the report recommended, and Council approved, was a one-step "Rights to Development" process in which developer-lead teams submit design and financial proposals. It is this one-step Rights to Development process that was suspended.

ORSA had previously recommended a modification to a two-step process. In the first step an urban design competition would be used to set a publicly supported vision and Master Plan for the site. In the second-step the development community would implement portions of the Master Plan through a Rights to Develop process. Ongoing public consultation would be essential in both steps.

The idea of a design competition is now part of the public discourse. From comments made by Councillors, the public and pundits, there remains a considerable and unfortunate misunderstanding of the process and benefits. An urban design competition is not about pretty pictures or fanciful visions. A well-run competition can focus the best professionals on Master Plans for Lansdowne Park and will allow the public to see a wide range of practical options.

ORSA reiterates our offer to work with the City to develop an urban design competition process for a Master Plan.

Business Plan

Ottawa faces financial challenges and taxpayers naturally dislike tax increases. Lansdowne Park, no matter how it is redeveloped will require significant public investment.

ORSA notes that a solid Business Plan is a key founding element for any redevelopment. The City should maximize quality within the context of a reasonable budget. The timing of development must coincide with available funding.

Timing

Many citizens, pundits and Councillors are becoming impatient with the redevelopment process and the danger is they will accept any proposition that expeditiously addresses the matter. It takes time and wisdom to build a great city.

A flexible Implementation Strategy to complete a Master Plan provides latitude to seize opportunities, have early successes and respond to changing circumstances.

Lansdowne's redevelopment, once completed will last for more than a century. ORSA recommends that we take time to get Lansdowne right.



Abandoning Approved Process

City Council's suspension of *Design Lansdowne* and potential consideration of an unsolicited offer negates the very process it established. The originally approved process would provide for competitive financial proposals, show a range of redevelopment options, incorporate public consultation, and allow an informed value-for-money decision to be made.

About ORSA

The Ottawa Regional Society of Architects (ORSA) is a non-profit, volunteer organization, and a Society of the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA), the self-regulating professional body of architects. For more than a century, ORSA has provided a forum for free discussion of professional matters, a focus in the community for activities involving architects, and a centre for educational, community, and social activities of its members. As a point of contact between the public and the architectural profession, ORSA is actively involved in programs that enhance the general level of understanding of architecture and the architectural profession. ORSA is committed to presenting informed opinion on issues affecting architecture in the National Capital Region, as well as increasing public awareness of the social importance of architectural design.

ORSA's members are interested in the Design Lansdowne initiative as both residents and architects. ORSA's members participated in the public consultation process and prepared a Position Paper on 24 March 2008. Given that an unsolicited proposal, branded as "Lansdowne Live" has been made by a consortium of local businessmen, it is an appropriate time for ORSA to reaffirm its position.

ORSA encourages City Council to reinstate the approved *Design Lansdowne* process with one modification. A step to establish the Master Plan through an urban design competition should be incorporated.

Conclusion

With minor modifications, ORSA supports the original *Design Lansdowne* process. An approach that includes, in its early stages, a true exploration of Master Plan options, and yields community support for a particular vision is essential.

ORSA is committed to the success of the redevelopment of Lansdowne Park. Our members have a wealth of experience and insight and a willingness to share them with the City. We have well-founded concerns that the present process will not yield the results deserved by our fellow citizens. We believe that, with some modifications, the current process can be dramatically improved. The most fundamental aspect to get right is the vision for Lansdowne Park. It requires thought, discussion, and a process to incorporate it. ORSA looks forward to working with the City on this important initiative.

Design Lansdowne Right!