



Rawlson King

**Councillor / Conseiller,
Rideau-Rockcliffe**

Policy Position on
Manor Park Official Plan Amendment

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Introduction

I have heard from many residents over the last few weeks about the proposal to alter the Official Plan and set out parameters to redevelop 35 acres of land in Manor Park. I want to thank residents for their passion, and I want to recognize the time and energy that they have put into providing thoughtful and constructive comments to my office as well as to City planning staff.

Some residents at the outset had asked me to rapidly articulate my view on this application. I want to say to those residents that there are very few situations that I, as a Councillor, will form a conclusion about such complex planning applications without taking the time to thoroughly engage in fulsome study of the file, along with engaging in meaningful community consultation. My role as City Councillor is, first and foremost, to represent the best interests of the residents of Rideau-Rockcliffe Ward. I have taken the time to over the past few weeks to examine the hundreds of comments received concerning this application, along with visiting groups of numerous residents to directly listen to their concerns.

It is important to note that an Official Plan Amendment is one of the most complex planning scenarios that we can deal with at the City, as it seeks to change the municipality's Official Plan, which determines where new housing, industry, offices and shops will be located; what services like roads, watermains, sewers, parks and schools will be needed; when, and in what order, parts of the community will grow; along with community improvement initiatives. In this situation, the change has been requested by a property owner, Manor Park Management, who owns large swathe of land in Manor Park. A request for an amendment by a landowner is permissible under Ontario's planning process. It is important to note that the City is in receipt of the landowner's application, but that the City has not yet approved anything. We are in a process, and that process includes a technical review of the submission by City staff, along with continuing discussions with both the community and developer. In this instance, the developer has committed to listening to community input in order to reflect it in a revised version of their submission later this autumn.

I have developed this position paper to benefit both Ward residents along with the developer by providing a cursory outline of my impressions of the application, as currently proposed. It is important to note that my views are unencumbered as I have never, and will never, accept electoral donations from property developers.

Main Concerns with the Proposal

I have four key concerns with the overarching proposal.

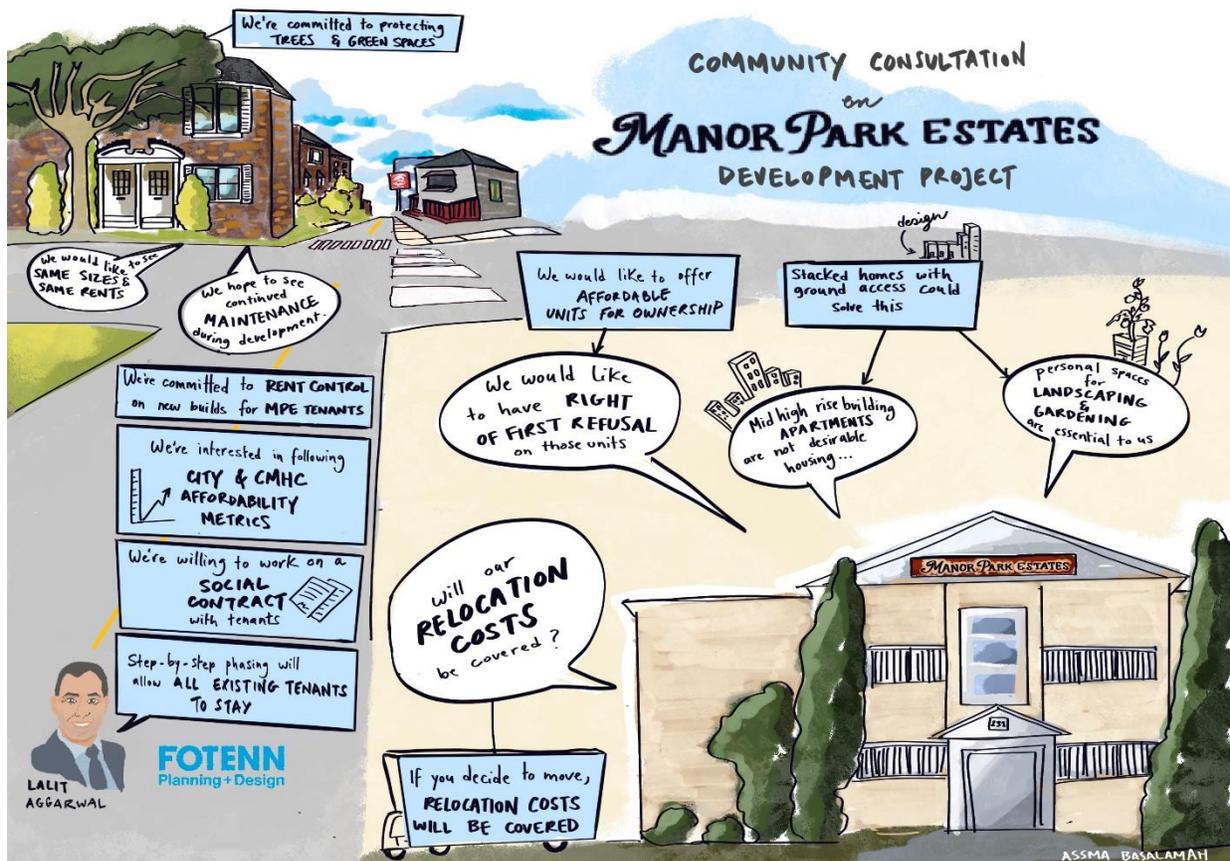
1. Social contract assurances needed to guarantee anti-displacement for residents whose homes will be subject to demolition
2. Proposed heights of individual buildings and density proposed for the overall plan
3. Preservation of greenspace.
4. Other 'soft' infrastructure considerations including the need for amenities and services, impact to the local school, traffic impacting quality of life and others.

Necessity of a Social Contract

Firstly, there have been many commitments made by the property owner, Manor Park Management, to the current tenants of Manor Park Estates. These include:

- Rent control for current residents for units similar or better than the ones that they currently occupy;
- Covering relocation costs for tenants who may have to move;
- That affordability will be maintained in accordance with City and CMHC metrics (no more than 30 percent of income on housing); and
- Step-by-step phasing during construction to allow all existing tenants who wish to stay in Manor Park, to stay.

I am pleased that these commitments have been made, but I understand the cynicism expressed by tenants living in Manor Park Estates. Consequently, I understand and agree with the need for a legally binding social contract, which would provide a guarantee to Manor Park Estates tenants against displacement.



Graphic Recording Illustration of meeting between Manor Park Estates Residents, City Planners, Manor Park Management and City Councillor Rawlson King on 1 June 2021 by Assma Basalamah on behalf of the Manor Park Community Association.

I appreciate that social contracts are usually not contemplated in an Official Plan Amendment. Residents have asked me whether a social contract can be accommodated within the wording of the Official Plan Amendment itself. I do not believe this is the case because the Official Plan is first and foremost a land use planning document. A social contract, guaranteeing certain commitments to renters must be achieved independently. To that end, I will work with the City's legal team and other experts to determine what is required to implement a social contract concerning this application.

While I cannot presuppose City staff's legal advice, it would be my preference in this situation to seek a full Community Benefits Agreement with the developer to both protect against displacement and ensure that any development moves forward under substantial community direction and cannot be circumvented through property sale by the application. Such an agreement must involve community members, stakeholders, developers of infrastructure and building projects and government agreeing to achieve a broad range of socio-economic outcomes that are designed to benefit the community.

Ultimately, a Community Benefits Agreement should drive grassroots community driven outcomes in Manor Park including:

- Prevention of resident displacement due to "renoviction" with rent control protections;
- Affordable and diversified housing with a range of family friendly, owner/renter typologies;
- Community amenities, e.g., parks, community centres, food services;
- Hiring/Job Readiness programs targeted to local hiring and equity seeking groups;
- Construction and operations phase supply chain opportunities through social procurement of goods and services from social enterprises.

A Community Benefits Agreement would ensure robust accountability in achieving a range of community benefits concerning the proposed development and ensure that community members have a meaningful role in the development process and its outcomes.

Height and Density

While I appreciate that height and density are not one and the same, I have coupled them here together as I have concerns about both.

Manor Park Gardens

I do not support a 15-story 'gateway' building on the corner of Hemlock and St. Laurent Boulevard. Even with the grade being lower, when travelling north on St. Laurent Boulevard away from Manor Park, I believe that, even if stepped back at higher levels, this is too high for this corner.

When looking at the renderings on page 54 of the application when standing at the north-east corner of the intersection, the intersection seems engulfed by the tower. As outlined in urban design principles, community and remembrance is important to Manor Park and a 15-story building does not align with those principles. Manor Park is predominantly characterized as a low-rise community. While most residents accept the notion that additional density is needed, they have also expressed that new levels of densification must be reasonable and sensitive to the context of Manor Park as a whole.

To reiterate my perspective on minor corridor designation which I outlined in my recent position paper on the separate Official Plan process: “I have heard many reservations from people who currently reside along Hemlock who maintain that that it should be designated a residential street. Planned development in Manor Park, as well as ongoing construction in Wateridge Village will naturally place pressure on Hemlock over the next 25 years to transform into a walkable street with shops and amenities that will be available for the increased numbers of residents anticipated. If greater density occurs as a result of development plans currently proposed, it will provide an opportunity for greater street improvements that can mitigate speeding, such as more permanent cycling infrastructure and larger sidewalks that would enhance the pedestrian experience. Because the transformation will not occur quickly, I would like to ensure that residents have maximal opportunities to participate in the planning process. Consequently, I would like to see Hemlock Road provisionally excluded from minor corridor designation, and that it is only be included after a Secondary Plan is adopted or amended. While my preference includes context-sensitive development occurring along corridors, residents in neighbourhoods that will be impacted by regenerative transformation must have a meaningful opportunity to provide input to ensure that development approaches incorporate a “human-scale” approach.”¹

While I appreciate the creation of the new outlet from Glasgow Crescent onto Hemlock, I agree with the Manor Park Community Association (MPCA) that this access should be limited as a pedestrian plaza for pedestrian and cycling access only.

Along St. Laurent Boulevard, I would expect that the mature trees would be retained. Working back from the corner of St. Laurent and Hemlock, I have heard from community members that six story buildings would be more appropriate. I cannot support the 12-story building proposed behind the proposed ‘gateway’ building or at the corner of Glasgow Street and St. Laurent – that is far too tall. In order to better complement the neighbourhood, no more than six stories along St. Laurent above Hemlock should be proposed, with the last block after Eastbourne being all stacked townhomes or no more than four stories.

I heard very clearly from the residents and neighbours of Jeffrey Street that with their gardens immediately abutting the proposal for Block 1, they would prefer a reorientation of the stacked townhomes. In their discussion with myself, they also noted that they would like to see amenities be placed behind with the homes facing Eastbourne and personally, I also believe that having the homes be ground facing also leads to a better walking experience through the neighbourhood. It allows for front porches, which encourages more personal interaction and streetscape animation. Since the residents of Jeffrey Street expressed concerns about shadowing affects, the developer should entertain a reorientation of those buildings in order to mitigate shadowing effect on their rear yards.

¹ King, Rawlson., Policy Position on Ottawa’s New Official Plan, <https://bit.ly/2UahhwL> May 2021. (accessed 16 July 2021)



The current view from the backyard of 8 Jeffrey Street. Neighbours along Jeffrey don't want the building any closer to their yards than they already are to maintain light, tree canopy and privacy.

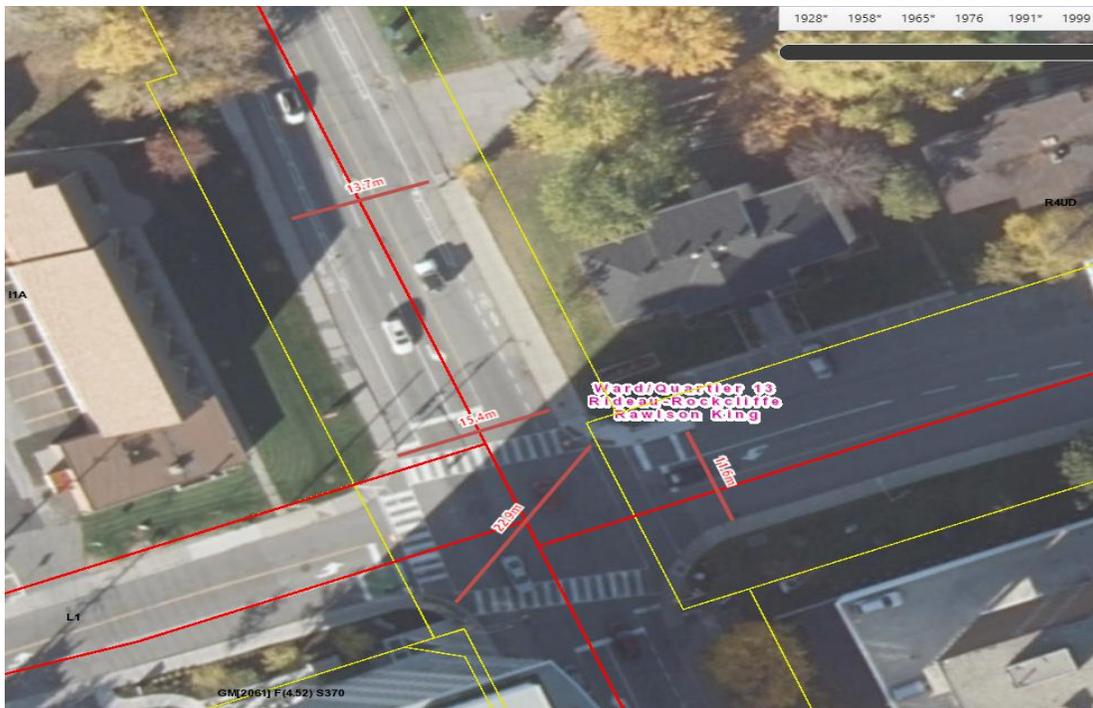
I would also like to see an increase in the stacked townhomes throughout the design. Part of the character of Manor Park that many residents have told me that they love about the neighbourhood is the ability to be able to sit outside and chat to their neighbours. They worry that apartment style buildings exceeding six storeys would ruin that sense of community and I do understand that feeling. Where possible, it would be better that the number of stacked and back-to-back townhomes is increased. In the current proposal for Manor Park Gardens, there is approximately 1,483 apartments and 108 townhouses proposed – I would like to see the latter number increased where possible. At a minimum, I would like to see a doubling of the number of townhomes in the proposal and a dramatic reduction in the overall number of apartment units by at least a third at a minimum, if not more. In conversations with some residents, there was a preference for the retention of existing row home footprints, with redevelopment exercised in a fashion that would increase heights from the existing two to four storeys within those existing housing footprints. I agree that such an approach would better complement the existing neighbourhood, while concurrently increasing density, maintaining the existing tree canopy, and retaining greenspace.

I have no concerns with the proposal for Mart Circle, and in fact, would prefer more of the lower level two to four story and stacked townhomes to be available throughout the rest of the plan. On this topic, I agree with the submission by the Manor Park Community Association that this section here at Mart Circle serves as a good example for what the rest of the development could look like. While I would acknowledge there will be issues at the site plan stage concerning traffic management, I believe that what is proposed for Mart Circle is more context sensitive to the adjacent homes and dwellings.

Manor Park Heights

More density and height are proposed for the Manor Park Heights area, which is slightly more appropriate, if one considers that more intense development should be located near a main street designated as major transit corridor. However, I do not believe that the concerns of the immediate low-rise neighbourhood adjacent to the area (commonly referred to as Manor Park Hill) has been adequately accounted for.

Consequently, I do not support the proposition for a 30-storey building at the corner of St. Laurent Boulevard and Brittany Drive. If we examine the roadway allowance with measurements for the intersection in question below, we find a roadway allowance of only 15.4 metres on St. Laurent, and 11 metres on Brittany Drive. This allowance does not adequately accommodate a 30-storey building at this intersection. Furthermore, the shadowing effect on the neighbourhood would be severe (the shadow from 460 St. Laurent Boulevard can already be seen in this image below).



Screen grab measurement of the intersection of St Laurent Boulevard and Brittany Drive from geoOttawa, the City of Ottawa mapping tool.

The other consideration here is that the grade of the site at this corner is essentially a hill, in comparison to the neighbourhood behind it. While good practice is generally that density and height is located at corners and intersections, context is very important. The intersection already has taller buildings on the south-west corner with 460 St. Laurent (13 stories) and the Highlands complex to the south-east. A building in the order of 10-stories, considering the grade and topography would be more reasonable. In addition, while it is predominantly a matter of site plan, the approval of such a high-rise building at this site should be contingent upon the entry and egress to the garage being at Coleford and a generous enough set back so that the sidewalk could be widened to accommodate better pedestrian walkability and access. I am cognizant of the fact that greater density would create greater traffic for both St.

Laurent and Brittany, the effects of which would need to be addressed before any proposed development.

Furthermore, the other buildings proposed in Block 1 for Manor Park Heights are too tall. The Building C in Block 1 is 12 stories – because of the lowered grade in the area behind this proposal, the homes with backyards facing onto this property will be about 20 to 30 feet from the building, losing privacy and sun. The height should be distributed along St. Laurent (12 stories at the corner with 9 along St Laurent) and then buildings C and D reduced significantly in height, or even replaced entirely with townhomes.



Building C at 12 stories would completely overshadow these homes which are at lower grade, behind the proposal for Block 1

The proposed unit mix in Manor Park Heights is predominantly apartments with only six townhouse units proposed. I heard clearly from many of the residents who currently reside in the red brick, two story townhomes along Brittany Drive, Rockledge Road, Quarry Road and Kristin Way that one of the things they loved the most about living in Manor Park is the generosity of front yard green space, the ability for neighbours to gather and socialize outdoors and their love of the lower residential feel. To better maintain this feeling, I would prefer a plan that had more four storey buildings for Block 2 and lower heights along Brittany Drive. However, depending on what technical comments come back, where infrastructure can support it, where the two 30-storey buildings are proposed currently abutting Truro Street (ends of Block 3 and Block 4) this would, in my opinion, be the better place to situate height, though not at that extreme scale proposed in the first iteration of the plan. To mitigate “canyoning” I would prefer that the buildings opposite (Block 5, Building A) also be lower than what is proposed.

If lower density, more walkable four storey stacked townhomes and other housing typologies can be incorporated especially throughout Blocks 1 and 2 in Manor Park Heights, I would be far more amenable to more height further along Brittany Drive since that would more compliment existing surrounding high-rise development and would be in closer proximity to priority bus transit.

Preservation of Greenspace and Tree Canopy

Understandably, one of the most preciously guarded characteristics of Manor Park by its residents is its tree canopy. When I refer to greenspace, I am not just referring to parks. I am also referring to the mature trees that line many of the streets. Consequently, I am concerned about how such spaces could be better utilized and made greener. As it is now, Manor Park residents have very generous front yards, where many have taken a great deal of time and energy in creating spaces, beautifying the area and generally taking a lot of pride of place. To maintain that character and to emphasize what we have learned about the importance of greenspace concerning both physical and mental health during the pandemic, it will be very important to seek the retention of personal and private greenspace.

Since a comprehensive tree conservation report is not required for an Official Plan amendment application, I am very appreciative that one was included by the developer. However, I think to further strengthen tree conservation efforts, a replanting plan should be put in place for any trees that will have to be removed as a result of construction. In such a scenario, I would be looking for an aggressive replacement ratio (at least two for one), where possible.

The tree canopy is critical for the environment and our health, in order to mitigate the urban heat island effects that will come about from more and taller buildings because of the increase in hard surfaces. Urban trees can reduce the temperature by up to 25 degrees Celsius.² The very name of the community is Manor Park. While it may not have the same heritage conservation features as the adjacent Rockcliffe Park neighbourhood as designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, it shares many of the same greenspace characteristics and qualities that make it so beloved.

I would strongly urge the developer to consider forming a working group with current tenants who have put a lot of time into their gardens and who intend to remain in Manor Park, to seek input into the design of the amenities spaces throughout the plan. Residents could then provide substantial input on art, street furniture (benches, picnic tables, etc.), flower beds and raised beds that they would want to see in each amenity area.

Other Considerations

There were many concerns raised about increased traffic, pressure on infrastructure, and the increased demand on local schools.

I want to let residents know that, when an application such as this comes to the City, it is circulated by the City planner for technical comment. This means that it goes to a host of organizations (including Hydro Ottawa, gas and water utilities, school boards, the City's transportation department, etc.) for their assessment and evaluation of the proposal. Because of the highly technical nature of these comments (size of pipes, etc.) some of the technical data is not shared with the public. Despite this, I know that many residents wanted to challenge some of the assumptions made for example in the transportation assessment, along with the traffic noise surveys. I would agree that traffic and transportation must be properly assessed in order to accommodate any development, and my office will

² Environmental Protection Agency, Using Trees and Vegetation to Reduce Heat Islands, December 2019, <https://www.epa.gov/heatislands/using-trees-and-vegetation-reduce-heat-islands> (accessed 29 June 2021)

work diligently to obtain the appropriate data in order to ensure proper decisions are made.

I would also agree with the community association's recommendations that calls for an overall vision that extends the dominance and visual continuity of soft landscaping evident throughout Manor Park as the defining village characteristic. The association has also enumerated several approaches which I agree with concerning any plan that is ultimate finalized:³

- a visual reference framework regarding the design of the buildings based on “best practice” built urban development references in comparable urban zones and climate zones;
- an analysis of design options demonstrating that the dramatic building heights provide a desirable benefit at ground level to the community (i.e., the consideration of building higher with the aim of freeing up open space at ground level vs. a low-rise densification option);
- a “rulebook” of visual references indicating the range of high-quality permitted materials to be used on the buildings;
- a ground level/streetscape analysis of projected pedestrian and cycle traffic in the context of future demand;
- a vehicle traffic analysis within the site with consideration of underground parking to eliminate cars from the streetscape beyond Hemlock and St Laurent Blvd.;
- a design strategy for street lighting (There is an opportunity to implement 'Dark Sky' objectives – which means ambient light does not escape upwards. Soft lighting is used.);
- a public art strategy with emphasis on Indigenous heritage;
- a retail masterplan for village shopping along St. Laurent Blvd. with curated small floor areas shops, shop windows sheltered by porches and consideration;
- a village wayfinding and signage set of principles and rules (with emphasis on St. Laurent Blvd.);
- the design concept of a village square as a central gathering space for the community unencumbered by traffic and with high-quality (permeable) hard and soft landscaping (e.g., cobblestone paving and planting of mature trees);
- an environmental report calculating the carbon footprint of the development and indicating how the energy demand will be (partially or fully) met with central zero-carbon energy generation.

Given the scale of the proposed development, and the long-term impact, I agree with the community association that the above points are a bare minimum of what needs to be covered in a serious urban masterplan. I along with the community association and community members look forward to another plan iteration that works towards achieving these objectives.

³ Manor Park Community Association. Report on Manor Park Estates Redevelopment. <https://bit.ly/3rg2SuL> May, 2021. (accessed 16 July 2021)

Conclusion

As I have stated publicly and continually, I prefer master planning exercises because they set clear expectations up front for what will be the path forward for the neighbourhood for the next several decades. Each individual building, or group of buildings must still be subject to zoning by-law amendment and to site plan control. Consequently, issues surrounding specific building design, sidewalk design and how traffic flow is managed will still have to be worked through.

In May 2020, many residents of the Ward, including from the Manor Park community wrote to me indicating that they wanted me to vote against the expansion of the urban boundary as proposed for the new Official Plan. They did that, knowing that intensification would occur in our Ward. I would agree however that the general expectation of most residents is for proposed developments to compliment the community with appropriate levels of densification. As a result, many have expressed dismay at the extent of the intensification proposed in this application, and their objections are founded in a love for the neighbourhood and wanting to retain what is special about Manor Park. I do believe that this can be done sensitively if the size of the buildings proposed are scaled back and additional considerations are given to abutting neighbours. Ultimately, I would like to see more townhomes and an overall reduction of the number of apartment units, along with the preservation of existing greenspace and the tree canopy.

This master planning process, if undertaken with more sensitivity to community desires, could effectively determine how development in Manor Park over the next 20 to 50 years can occur. I hope that within this paper I have made suggestions concerning how the entire project can be scaled down and scaled back for it to occur at a density and scale more appropriate for the community.

Summary

- I will be seeking social contract guarantees and exploring the feasibility with City staff and would welcome all who would have suggestions for how we could make this workable and legally binding for tenants.
- I do not support 15 stories for the corner of Hemlock and St Laurent.
- I want to see the heights for Manor Park Gardens reduced overall.
- I would like to see the number of townhomes doubled in Manor Park Gardens and the overall number of units reduced.
- I have no changes or objections to the Manor Park Gardens proposals east of St. Laurent.
- I do not support 30 stories at the corner of St. Laurent and Brittany Drive.

Acknowledgements

Councillor Rawlson King would like to acknowledge the contributions of all Manor Park residents and the Manor Park Community Association who participated in multiple public consultation exercises and provided input. The Councillor would also acknowledge the efforts of office staff, especially Susan Ong, in contributing to the development of this policy paper.