



The wordmark for Canada, featuring the word 'Canada' in a serif font with a stylized crown over the letter 'a'.

October 1, 2010

Planning and Environment Committee
City of Ottawa

Nancy Schepers,
Deputy City Manager, Infrastructure
Services and Community Sustainability,
City of Ottawa

BY E-Mail

Re: NCC comments on proposed Airport Exhibition Facility

Please find attached the National Capital Commission's (NCC) comments on the Site Plan Application for the Airport Exhibition Centre proposed at 4899 Uplands Drive. This letter follows two meetings held between NCC staff, the proponent and its consultants, on September 22 and 30. Appendix 1 provides the comments on the proposal and Appendix 2 includes NCC background documentation used to complete the review.

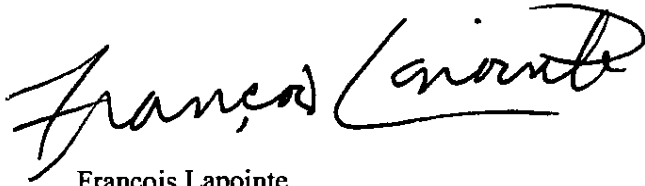
The NCC and the Ottawa MacDonald-Cartier International Airport Operating Authority (OMCIAA) have differing positions on the jurisdiction of the NCC in respect to these lands. Discussions are underway between the NCC and the OMCIAA in an effort to resolve this impasse. Notwithstanding those efforts, and without prejudice to the NCC's position, the NCC hereby submits the following substantive comments.

The NCC appreciates the adjustments and modifications that were made to the proposal to address NCC concerns. After reviewing the revised proposal, the NCC's conclusion at this time is that there have been improvements to the landscaping and architecture and that, as it stands, and if the dialogue can continue to resolve details, we are confident that many of the outstanding issues can be addressed in order to achieve a positive contribution to the Capital at a site that is very visible for the Visitors to the Capital.

The NCC understands that many of the important steps in the development review process have not yet occurred and appreciates the desire to act expeditiously. However, the NCC would encourage the City of Ottawa, the Airport Authority and the proponent to complete the missing due diligence environmental studies identified in the appendix (including mitigation measures during construction) and respectfully request that no clearing of trees or other vegetation be allowed to occur on the proposed site before this issue is addressed.

The NCC has asked the proponent to continue the dialogue to resolve details in the design, including architecture, landscaping, signage and lighting and our understanding is that they have agreed.

Thank you for your continued commitment to achieving the highest quality development for Canada's Capital. We look forward to continue working together toward building a Capital of excellence.



François Lapointe,
Executive Director, Capital Planning

c.c. Simon Deiacco City of Ottawa
 Kevin McCrann Shenkman
 Daniel Paquette Paquette Planning and Associates LTD.

Lucie Bureau NCC
David Malkin
Marta McDermott

attachments

APPENDIX A - Comments on the proposal

The NCC understands that this proposal is located on Federal lands owned by Transport Canada that are leased on a long-term basis to the Ottawa Macdonald-Cartier International Airport Authority (OMCIAA). The subject site is expected to be sub-let by the OMCIAA to the proponent, Shenkman Corporation. The facility will be built and operated as a private facility by the Shenkman Corporation, though the City of Ottawa is providing funding.

Documents received by the NCC as part of the review process includes:

- Site Plan, prepared by David S. McRobie Architects Inc.
- Landscape Plan, prepared by Larocque Levstech.
- Building Renderings, prepared by David S. McRobie Architects Inc.
- Preliminary Light Locations Plan, prepared by Utility Box Designs.
- Site Servicing and Stormwater management Report (revised)
- Transportation Impact Study

The following summarizes the NCC comments and provides general recommendations to help guide the development of the site plan by considering the range of options to mitigate the impact of large scale development of particular importance to the Capital. The emphasis is on inspiring innovative and effective site planning, design which integrate environmentally sustainable solutions.

I. Environmental Issues

- The Proponent has undertaken many studies that are routinely part of an environmental assessment (EA) for a proposal of this scale such as a stormwater management plan, transportation study, environmental site assessment, and fish habitat study. An environmental assessment complete with mitigation measures should be carried out for this proposal through a process similar to one under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*. In order to complete an EA the following is required:
 - Detailed project description
 - Completion of an assessment of the federal wetland evaluation, if any are present, including an assessment of any effects on neighbouring wetlands according to the “Wetlands environmental assessment guideline”
 - Tree inventory providing details on the species present, their size and health
 - An evaluation of any potential effects, especially as any hydrological effects, on neighbouring wetlands should be completed following the guidelines of the *Federal Policy on Wetland Conservation* and the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*
 - A species at risk survey
 - Mitigation measures for construction practices including:
 - Statement on dealing with ash trees felled to comply with the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada ministerial order “Emerald Ash Borer Infested Place Order”
 - Construction around and near existing fish habitat in ditches
 - Effects on birds should construction occur during the bird nesting season
 - Tree compensation measures
 - Tree preservation measures
 - All effects on the ecological functions of the site
 - Compensation measures for lost vegetation and ecological features.

II. City of Ottawa's RFP process

- The City process considered only the need for City approvals and did not consider any federal statutory, regulatory, policy, planning and program requirements. The Proponents are encouraged to fulfil all relevant requirements at the federal level.

III. Site Planning and Landscape Architecture

The NCC has reviewed the revised Landscape Plan which includes the following changes:

- Reduction of the parking to 1837 spaces;
 - An increase of the green buffer along Uplands Drive including the extension of the berm to break up the large continuous horizontal plane;
 - A more diversified planting of trees and shrubs for the three dry swales;
 - The introduction of Zone C, naturalization and reforestation planting that wrap around the corner of Uplands Drive and Airport Parkway as well as a secondary planting on the northwest corner.
 - The incorporation of bus parking with screening at the southwest corner of the property.
- These changes are positive, particularly the reduction of parking spaces and the addition of a green buffer along Uplands Drive and Airport Parkway. The changes to the swales could be augmented by a more diversified plant selection to interrupt the continuous expanse of asphalt.
 - The green buffer on the site does not meet the *Ottawa International Airport Urban Design Framework and Guidelines* recommended 7 metre evergreen setback from the property limit. While the Proponent is to be commended for having reduced the parking on the site, a further reduction would permit the Airport Urban Design Guidelines to be respected. The Airport Urban Design Guidelines recommended a forested buffer of at least 60 metres from the edge of the Parkway. The lot created does not appear to allow this distance to be respected and suggests the program is too ambitious for the site, especially if future expansions are to be accommodated.
 - The existing forested area on City of Ottawa and Transport Canada lands was not addressed in detail. This area offers the opportunity for compensatory reforestation, especially given the expected loss of ash trees as a result of the emerald ash borer. In addition the vigour and screening capacity of this wooded area will be critical to screen the operations zone. The NCC recommends that the Proponent prepare a comprehensive reforestation plan throughout the existing buffer, especially as the setbacks on the site are minimal.
 - Additional detail is required to assess the viability of the proposed landscape plan especially the plantings chosen at the edges of the parking aisles.
 - The NCC is concerned about the use of the parking lot for outdoor trade and commercial shows in the parking lot and the view of these shows from the Airport Parkway. Additional screening is recommended to ensure that views from the Airport Parkway are not degraded. A views analysis (see section VI) is necessary to determine this.
 - While the constraints and options were discussed with the proponent at the meeting regarding site layout options, the NCC is not convinced that the proposed arrangement is the only or necessarily the best site layout.

- Further lowering the amount of space occupied by parking could facilitate the addition of landscape design elements and sustainable stormwater management features etc. Staff acknowledges that some positive efforts have been made to incorporate landscape and stormwater management elements in the proposed site plan. However, additional consideration is needed in this area through discussion with adjacent tenants and landowners to develop a parking management strategy for airport lands which reduces the requirement to clear forested lands.
- The Proponents are encouraged to minimize the visibility of any electrical (hydro) servicing cables and poles. No information was reviewed relating to electrical services.
- The integration of stormwater management features; in this case the dry swales, pedestrian circulation, integration of surrounding natural areas, hard surface selection to optimize infiltration and define pedestrian areas etc. are an essential part of the landscape architecture design process, which continue to be addressed in the proposal.
- High quality landscaping elements should be achieved as the site and the proposed facility would act as a part of the 'gateway experience' for many Capital visitors arriving from the airport. While the recent revisions are welcome, the site plan does not demonstrate the level of quality design that is expected of a high-profile site of this nature. More effort to integrate landscaping elements within the design is needed. We would like to review the detailed plans to ensure a large naturalized, forested buffer is provided along the Airport Parkway, as well as Uplands Drive, to screen the site from the Airport Parkway. Attention is required to the lands adjacent to the 'lease area' of the subject site to determine how additional landscape treatments can be integrated.
- A large parking lot should include dedicated pedestrian pathways with ample trees and plantings to enhance visitor experience and to mitigate the heat island effect. Site and parking layout should provide a safe, yet pleasant experience for the user. Parking and pedestrian routes should be oriented to accommodate the most simple and direct path of travel. The integration of pedestrian circulation and SWM elements should maximize the use of space and efficiency.
- Rest areas, with planting and shade structures, for visitors to congregate outdoors should be integrated in areas adjacent to the building.

IV. Architecture Issues

- The Proponent's recent revisions have improved the façade treatment by selecting *Alucobond*, a high quality, prefinished aluminum panel which offers a variety of arrangements, colours and textures. The consultants have employed interesting and very positive architectural devices to help break up the huge expanse of the front façade through the introduction of shadow 'reveals', openings to distinguish the trade halls and more dynamic wall ends.
- However, the consultants are encouraged to go further by considering the introduction of warmer tones and materials on the front facade in addition to the anodized aluminum panel in order to avoid a large surface area that may be too bright and stark compared to the background of the natural environment. Warmer colours/materials could be introduced

on the large curving facade and/or at the lower pedestrian level, for example on the exterior of the front meeting room areas or the entry ways.

- The form and massing of the building has not changed significantly, nor has the integration of the mechanical units. Whereas it is positive to screen these from view, the best architecture integrates these into the overall design.
- The worthy goal to achieve LEED Silver on this project is acknowledged, but the team is encouraged to seek a Gold or Platinum standard for this greenfield site, as additional opportunities exist to enhance the sustainability achieved by this proposal. Green technologies should be integrated into the building systems, but should also be a visible part of the visitor experience. This may include a green roof, living walls, solar energy systems, low flow and flush sanitary systems.
- The introduction of structures such as green walls, columns or modular systems that allow for greening and an improved view of the main entrance to the building are suggested. These options could be integrated within an esplanade area that accommodates pedestrian circulation and breaks the continual expanse of hard surface. This comment was partly addressed in the revised proposal.
- Site furniture, including seating, planters and lighting fixtures should be considered a family of elements, and be consistent with the overall project design concept and architecture. We understand that details on these issues are still being developed.

V. Lighting and Signage

- The NCC has received the preliminary lighting plan and would like to comment further as the proposal proceeds.
- A detailed submission of specific lighting, signage, and amenity options being considered is requested and should follow the relevant Airport Urban Design Guidelines and the findings of the Airport Signage Study.
- Site lighting and building lighting should be as minimal as possible for the hours of use, expected volumes of visitors and vehicles, and achieve a very high level of efficiency.
- Light pollution should be avoided as the NCC seeks to promote a dark night sky within the Greenbelt. Full cut off luminaries are required to achieve this objective. The site lighting strategy should consider the combination of a low lighting wattage on shorter poles.
- Underground wiring of any lighting poles is recommend

VI. Visual quality & View Protection

- A views and vista analysis is required to fully appreciate how this building (massing, facades, lighting, signage and roofscape) will affect the views of the Greenbelt from the Airport Parkway (especially at overpass) and on Uplands Drive.

- The relevant *Ottawa International Airport Urban Design Framework and Guidelines* and recommendations of the Airport Signage Study should be followed.
- The proposed facility may have a negative impact on the naturalized landscape that buffers the Airport Parkway near the airport. Maintaining and improving the visual quality visitors experience while travelling along the Airport Parkway, a Capital Arrival route, is a key concern for the NCC. However, the principle of proper screening of unattractive views does not in of itself imply that the proposed development should be developed to a lower standard of quality.
- The removal of outdoor advertising billboards is recommended in order to preserve views in this corridor

VII. Storm Water Management (SWM)

- We are pleased to see the initiative to apply the use of the dry swales within the parking lot and the recent revision to the plantings in the swales. The use of non-structural storm water features such as the dry swale, have multiple benefits to the site and we encourage that this feature be further developed and integrated in the overall design of the parking lot as an aesthetic feature contributing to the overall appearance of the project.
- The importance of making effective SWM decisions on a site that introduces substantial impermeable surfaces is strongly recommended. For this reason, all efforts to maximize on-site infiltration are strongly recommended. By keeping the water on the site and allowing the water to infiltrate naturally, runoff travel time is increased, flow velocity is substantially decreased and the integrity of our urban watercourses is maintained. The efforts made to allow on site infiltration and retention are acknowledged.
- The integration of partial or sectional green roofing to increase infiltration is strongly recommended.
- The proposed facility offers an important opportunity to take the initiative to apply ecologically responsible and aesthetically pleasing solutions to managing stormwater, particularly on such a high profile site located within the Greenbelt. Consequently stormwater management strategies should be developed with a focus on maintaining and enhancing the natural environment.
- The addition of a layer gravel fill when compacting the soils could create a natural soak pit layer that would complement the proposal for dry swales and assist in stormwater management.

VIII. Transportation Impact Study

- The Proponent's transportation impact study recommends significant changes to Uplands Drive which the NCC would like to review in more detail with the City and the Airport Authority. The NCC encourages the Proponents to address the potential effects on views and landscaping of these transportation changes which are a concern
- The proposals for the widening of the Albion Road and Lester Road corridors would need to be studied in the City's and the NCC's planning processes and cannot be guaranteed.

This can also be addressed as part of NCC comments on the Airport's Master Servicing study.

- Pedestrian and cyclist facilities and access to neighbouring areas is a concern and does not appear to be fully addressed
- Proposed changes to the roadway under Airport Parkway overpass structure is a concern; we would like to be fully consulted on this proposal
- Underground wiring of any traffic signals is recommended
- Once detailed plans are available for the changes to Uplands Drive and the nearby intersections, attention to landscaping treatments will be necessary to ensure the views of the widened roads are appropriate to one adjacent to a Capital Arrival route

APPENDIX 2 – NCC background information and Capital planning framework that informed the comments

References for the review:

- *Plan for Canada's Capital*, NCC, 1999
- *Greenbelt Master Plan*, NCC, 1996
- *Ottawa International Airport Urban Design Framework and Guidelines*, prepared by the NCC and Transport Canada dated December 1992.
- *The MacDonal-Cartier International Airport Signage Study*, NCC, 1993
- Sawmill Creek Watershed Study, for NCC
- *Airport Master Plan*, Airport Authority, 200
- *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* and related federal environmental policies

The proposed site for this development is located on lands owned by Transport Canada in the National Capital Greenbelt. This parcel is designated as part of the *National Interest Land Mass* ("NILM") which represents a formal expression of the federal government's interest in the long-term use of these lands as they are essential for the long-term natural and cultural landscape qualities, symbolism, functions, and physical structure of the Capital. The site is located adjacent to and is visible from the Airport Parkway, a *Capital Arrival* route identified in the *Plan for Canada's Capital* (Section 6.1) and the *Greenbelt Master Plan* (Section 4.2).

An exhibition or trade centre is a highly public facility that will host regional, national and international events attended by first time visitors to Canada's Capital, as well as the local public. Development at this site should, therefore, strive to help *build the NCR into a source of pride and unity for Canadians*.

Accordingly, lands near to the Ottawa MacDonald-Cartier International Airport, such as the site selected for the proposed exhibition facility, should be developed in a manner that reflects their importance in proximity to a regional transportation node and a key point of arrival for visitors to the Capital. The landscape and the sequence of views visible from the Airport Parkway and roads nearby the airport is a key interest of the NCC, as these routes are often used by visiting international dignitaries. These views are described in the *Ottawa International Airport Urban Design Framework and Guidelines*.

Environmental issues

In its review role, the NCC must take into account all federal acts and policies.

- It is our understanding that the Airport Authority has the obligation to address issues normally included in a federal environmental assessment under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. All federal environmental policies and related requirements should be followed including, but not limited to the federal *Fisheries Act*, the *Federal Policy on Wetland Conservation*, the *Migratory Birds Act* and the *Species at Risk Act*.
- The *Plan for Canada's Capital* (Section 4.1) and the *Greenbelt Master Plan* (Section 5.2, p.70) include policies supporting the protection of valued ecosystem components, which apply to all development in the Greenbelt. These policies apply to both losses of forest cover as well as ecological function
- The *Plan for Canada's Capital* (Section 4.1) and the *Greenbelt Master Plan* (Section 5.2, p.70) include policies supporting the protection of valued ecosystem components,

which apply to all development in the Greenbelt. These policies apply to both losses of forest cover as well as ecological function.

- All City of Ottawa and provincial requirements for environmental assessments and/or environmental studies should be met. All development review requirements and policies that apply to this proposal (City of Ottawa Official Plan, Sections 3.2, 4.2, 4.6 and 4.7) should be met. Further refinement of mitigation measures aiming to soften the impact of the proposed development on the natural environment should be developed.

Site Planning and Landscape Architecture

- The *Plan for Canada's Capital* (Section 4.6) recommends high quality landscape and architecture design on lands of Capital importance.
- The subject site is a high-profile location on federal lands with significant Capital importance, in proximity to a *Capital Arrival*. The *Plan for Canada's Capital* (Section 6.1) calls for the protection of scenic views and natural elements along the *Capital Arrival* routes. Similarly, the *Greenbelt Master Plan* (Section 4.2) describes a *Capital Arrival* as providing a dramatic introduction to the Capital with a sequence of views that create a clear sense of arrival. High-quality landscape design and appropriate wayfinding are recommended along arrival corridors.
- The relevant principles and the guidelines of the *Ottawa International Airport Urban Design Framework and Guidelines* should be followed
- Green site design and parking principles as well as those in the *Ottawa International Airport Urban Design Framework and Guidelines* should be integrated into the site plan to reduce the environmental impact of parking areas.

Architecture Issues

- The *Plan for Canada's Capital* (Section 4.6) encourages the NCC to work with partners to achieve a high standard of architectural design appropriate to lands and buildings of Capital significance.

Lighting and Signage

- The relevant principles of the *Plan for Canada's Capital* and the guidelines of the *Ottawa International Airport Urban Design Framework and Guidelines* should be followed.
- The *Greenbelt Master Plan* (section 5.2) encourages “the conservation of Greenbelt character through.....maintenance of a dark night sky, through safety-related illumination only and shielded lights.”
- The *MacDonald-Cartier International Airport Signage Study*. The major objective of this study was the development of guidelines to facilitate the approval of commercial signage proposals at the airport by providing clear design criteria. The guidelines outline the permitted types and scale of signage for both airside and groundside, reflecting the following constraints developed from the identification and analysis of the issues:
 - No commercial signage of any type is permitted in the Airport Parkway zone.

- Signage should be scaled for vehicular and pedestrian traffic for confirmation of destination from an immediate viewing distance. No long-distance “landmark” signage is required.
- Advertising signage and billboards are not permitted in parkway corridor and Airport Central Area.
- Back-lit, box signs, or Dynamic, flashing or rotating signs are not permitted;

Visual quality & View Protection

- As the *Plan for Canada’s Capital*, the *Greenbelt Master Plan* and the *Ottawa International Airport Urban Design Framework and Guidelines* state, the Airport Parkway should contribute to a special sense for arrival for all visitors entering the Capital. It should provide a ‘sequence of experiences’ demonstrating a sense of ‘arrival to’ the Capital. High-quality landscape design is emphasized along the length of the Capital Arrival.
- Design Guidelines previously prepared for the area surrounding the Airport’s Terminal Area suggests that the Airport Parkway maintain a significant naturalized buffer that opens up into as it approaches the Uplands intersection.
- **Storm Water Management (SWM)**
- As stated in the *Greenbelt Master Plan*, the recommendations of the Sawmill Creek Watershed Study should be respected. Recent experience in the Pinecrest Creek watershed, also a highly urbanized watershed, provides valuable direction. The City’s recently approved SWM policies should be fully applied to this proposal.

