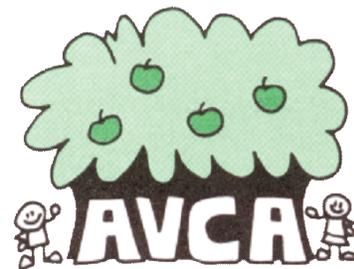


ALTA VISTA COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Initial Response to Timbercreek Communities' Submission for an Official Plan Amendment, impacting properties at:

- 2851, 2848, 2881 and 2898 Baycrest Drive;
- 2820 and 2831 Cedarwood Drive;
- 2816 Sandalwood Drive; and
- Community surrounding the development area.



**Submitted by: Marty Carr, President
On Behalf of the Alta Vista Community Association
July 2019**

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Character of Neighbourhood	3
Social Contract	6
Facilities and Services.....	9
Transit and Transportation.....	12
Conclusion.....	13

Introduction

The Alta Vista Community Association (AVCA) has prepared this document to offer initial comments on Timbercreek's application for an amendment to the Official Plan for the properties identified. Many comments, observations and recommendations extend beyond the request for an Official Plan amendment to subsequent phases including the anticipated Site Plan application for the next phase of development of Heron Gate (Block B). This document also provides comments for consideration by Timbercreek regarding the social contract announced by Timbercreek and Ward 18 Councillor Jean Cloutier in February 2019, as well as comments for consideration by the City of Ottawa.

This (re) development is significant for the entire Alta Vista community including current and future Heron Gate residents as well as neighbours in Alta Vista, particularly those to the west and north of the area. The re-development will impact all of Alta Vista as the proposed density is 3x what was in place pre-2016 demolition and will change the character of the neighbourhood, have significant impacts on transportation and transit, and potentially move the Heron Gate community away from a family-oriented one, which would be a significant departure. It is noted the planning rationale is entitled "Heron Gate Village", implying the developer is seeking to rename the community known as Herongate/Heron Gate for many years. There is potential this could be perceived as re-branding a diverse and established family-oriented community.

AVCA has participated in the majority of consultations carried out by Timbercreek and Councilor Cloutier in the past eighteen months, has hosted meetings with respect to the proposal, and has been a participant on the Heron Gate¹ Steering Committee with other community organizations and service delivery partners. Through these interactions and discussions with community residents, the AVCA has prepared this initial response within the short timeframe provided. As the proposal is amended and consultations resume, the AVCA will continue to participate and provide comments representative of the community. At this point, many recommendations are preliminary and will be further refined with an AVCA Working Group in the Fall of 2019. The AVCA is hopeful it will be able to continue to work with Timbercreek, Councilor Cloutier, and the community at large to refine Timbercreek's proposal and ensure the current character of the Heron Gate and the larger Alta Vista communities are respected.

¹ The Heron Gate Steering Committee works in collaboration and partnership to create positive change and respond to the diverse needs within the HG community

Character of Neighbourhood

Density, Height and Built Form

The proposed density is extreme for a 20.41 hectare parcel of land. While AVCA understands intensification within Ottawa is necessary as the population increases, the proposed density is not supported.

According to Timbercreek's application, all existing mid-rise buildings and townhomes will eventually be demolished, in addition to the 235 townhomes that have already been. It is not apparent from the application how many new townhomes will be built; however, it is clear this number will not be close to the number in the Heron Gate community pre-2016. It does not seem the construction of new townhomes will be a priority, as the next phase of development will be along the Heron Road frontage, between Sandalwood Drive and Baycrest Drive. This section, identified as Block B, proposes 19 new buildings which includes only several blocks of townhouses. This Block is directly adjacent to the three buildings currently under construction, the HG7 buildings, approved through a site plan in 2016. These three apartments are nearly complete and will provide 348 units. Allowing the number of apartment towers proposed in Block B to be built in the initial stages, following HG7 will set the stage for Heron Gate to be a neighbourhood that is not family-oriented, and the AVCA is not supportive of allowing Heron Gate to evolve in this fashion. The community today consists of many families residing in row and stacked townhouses, as well as singles, couples and some families who occupy the approximately 1000 units within the five apartment towers that are to be retained (2861, 2851 & 2840 Baycrest Drive and 2870 & 2850 Cedarwood Drive). The [most recent census information](#) from 2015 shows almost 25%² of Heron Gate's population consists of children under the age of 14 (1140 of 4680 total residents), and AVCA would like to ensure there continues to be a sufficient number of family homes available.

The HG7 units and Block B front on Heron Road, directly across from homes and townhomes in the Guildwood Estates community of Alta Vista, a residential neighbourhood previously directly across from the demolished Heron Gate townhouses that housed families. While the three apartment buildings required a slight variance for height, AVCA does not support exceeding the height of these buildings in any of Block B, as it will create a wall and not a bridge between the residential communities north of Heron and Heron Gate. The neighbours to the north also have significant concerns regarding the Sun and Shade studies that show their homes with large shadows in the

² We note these figures may have shifted given the demolition of the 235 townhomes in 2016 and 2018 that primarily served families.

already dreary, cold winter months due to the proposed tower heights. Overall, heights proposed for the entire Heron Gate development are not compatible with the family-oriented communities of Heron Gate nor Alta Vista overall, and heights over the current maximum in Heron Gate today (19 storeys) are not supported by the AVCA.

The AVCA therefore recommends:

1. That a significant decrease in density be put forward in the application
2. That the number of three- and four-bedroom townhouses proposed in Heron Gate be increased overall
3. That the height of any tower within the development not exceed the current tower height of 19 storeys
4. That the development area known as Block B not have any building exceeding the height of the HG7 buildings

Parking

The proposed parking allowance within the development application is for approximately 3850 spaces for 5500 units, for a total ratio of 0.7 parking spaces per unit (0.5 resident spaces and 0.2 visitor spaces per unit). Although the AVCA is in general supportive of the principles behind reduction in parking spaces over time, as it recognizes the importance of establishing walkable communities and promoting transportation beyond cars, the City of Ottawa is in the nascent stages of reduced parking allowances, and allowing a development of this size a parking allowance of 0.7 when it will be developed over the next two decades poses a number of risks. This is particularly true as the current public transit system for Heron Gate and Alta Vista residents is not reliable, and no service amendments have been proposed to meet the needs of an increasing population, other than a notation that Heron Road at Billings Bridge will eventually be supported by a Bus Rapid Transit plan. Parking is also a concern as visitor spaces offered by Timbercreek are currently paid parking and on-street parking on Cedarwood, Baycrest, and Sandalwood is limited. The current proposed allowance will also result in significant on-street congestion and parking in the communities north of Heron, in the Guildwood Estates community and this is a significant concern for residents.

The AVCA therefore recommends:

5. That the parking allowance be initially set at 1.2 and revisited on individual site plans once plans are confirmed and clear improvements to both transit and bike corridors are identified, with an eventual goal closer to the 0.7 allowance

Mixed Ownership

Throughout consultations with Timbercreek and Councillor Cloutier, much feedback was received regarding the need for mixed ownership within Heron Gate. Information on this would be helpful to determine impacts.

The AVCA therefore recommends:

6. That information be provided on the number and type of units that would be available for public ownership, as well as information on how ownership of these units would work (e.g. freehold vs. leasehold, condominium)

Commercial Considerations

The HG7 complex currently being built allows for a small retail space to be built at the intersection of Sandalwood Drive and Heron Road. The present application proposes additional commercial space in Blocks D and E, largely fronting on Walkley Road. In addition, live-work units are proposed in Block D, fronting on the new public park, that would allow for small offices, studios and home-based businesses. From the application, it is not clear whether there would be retail frontage for these live-work units.

While the AVCA is not opposed to some retail activity, it is important to the community that proposed retail units are in-line with the community wellbeing framework outlined in the proposal and that any retail and/or service activity promote quality of life within the community. As such, commercial development should be limited to essential, community-oriented services and small retail stores, and should exclude large-format (e.g. big box) retail, and predatory retail which targets more vulnerable populations (e.g. payday loan companies). Given the infancy of the regulation of the cannabis industry and the potential for privatization of the alcohol industry under the current government, the AVCA is not supportive of any retail related to these activities at this time.

The AVCA therefore recommends:

7. That Timbercreek provide clarification on the proposed live-work units and whether these would be considered storefront
8. That large-format retail stores not be considered in the Heron Gate development
9. That payday loan companies, pawn shops and other retail targeting vulnerable populations be disallowed in perpetuity and any cannabis/ alcohol retail business not be considered for a period of five years from application approval and until a full-scale evaluation of the landscape around these activities is completed

Environmental Considerations

AVCA has noted that the current application is somewhat silent on how the proposed development will meet the challenges we are facing with a changing climate and any steps that will be taken to address environmental sustainability, although Timbercreek's Well Being Framework mentions these considerations and notes environmental sustainability as a component of the City of Ottawa's Official Plan.

The AVCA therefore recommends:

10. That the applicant detail any steps it is undertaking to maximize energy efficiency and commit to sustainable development (e.g. green roofs, LEED certifications, providing electric vehicle charging stations)

Social Contract

AVCA applauds and supports the social contract announced by Timbercreek and Councillor Cloutier in February 2019 (Appendix A). However, to ensure continued support for current and future residents, AVCA would like to ensure the social contract is enshrined in law to ensure accountability for Timbercreek and protection for residents.

The AVCA therefore recommends:

11. That the City of Ottawa work with their Legal Services team and Timbercreek to ensure that all undertakings in the social contract are enshrined in law

Housing Security

Timbercreek has committed that "no further demolitions for occupied units will occur until affected tenants are able to transfer their leases and relocate within the community to newly constructed units at the same rents". It is not stated that homes offered to these residents be of a similar size and type as would be expected to guarantee housing security. Evicting a family occupying a four -bedroom townhouse and offering them a two- bedroom apartment, for example, does not provide housing security nor would it be in good faith. While AVCA accepts Timbercreek's intention is to provide similar housing, it should be stipulated. The proposed wording also doesn't recognize the 53 families evicted in early 2016 when 80 townhomes were demolished, and the 105 families evicted in 2018 when 150 townhouses were demolished.

The AVCA therefore recommends:

12. That it be explicitly stated affected tenants of future demolitions be offered newly constructed homes, compatible in size, to transfer their leases at the same rents and consideration for “right to return” be offered to families previously evicted

Affordability

Timbercreek has committed to “continue to work through the planning process with the City of Ottawa with the goal of building up to 20% of the total units as affordable.”

The recent report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) on [Rental Wages in Canada](#) determined Ottawa is one of the least affordable places in Canada to rent a home. Although Heron Gate is privately-owned and was never designated as housing for low income, the rents offered over many years were affordable. The most recent demographics of Heron Gate, in the [2015 Census](#), showcase a neighbourhood in which over 75% of residents identify as a visible minority, over 50% identify as immigrants, and over 50% report their mother tongue as a language other than English or French. This same population had a median after-tax household income of just under \$40,000 in 2015. The make-up has allowed for the creation of a vibrant and diverse community that has struggled with poverty. Indeed, the population of Heron Gate is included within the federal riding Ottawa South, one of two ridings in Ottawa that made the list of the top 30 federal ridings in Canada for child poverty per the [June 2018 report](#) by anti-poverty advocacy organization Campaign 2000.

Although AVCA is supportive of re-development in the Heron Gate community to bring the standards of homes to an acceptable level and to intensify the population to account for the changing demographics and growth in Ottawa, the AVCA would like to see the existing, long-standing community members in Heron Gate continue to be supported and clear parameters put around how Timbercreek will administer their affordable housing program. Additionally, the wording “up to 20%” allows for interpretation that minimal percentages of affordable housing could be offered. It is also not explicit how the proposed percentage will be distributed across housing types and sizes.

The AVCA therefore recommends:

13. That a minimum of 20% affordable housing be provided and not “up to 20%”, and serious consideration be given to providing a minimum of 25%
14. That Timbercreek define how their affordable housing program will operate, whether it will be operated in-house or via a service provider, what definition of affordable housing will be utilized and if there will be any tiering in the administration of this program (e.g. a certain percentage of rents offered at

different percentages of income) and how the distribution of “affordable housing” units will be determined (e.g. townhouses, apartments of various sizes)

15. That Timbercreek be required to report on an annual basis, to the Heron Gate Steering Committee, on the affordable housing programs to ensure this commitment is held in perpetuity

Housing Diversity

Timbercreek has committed to “provide a diverse mix of housing types and sizes that will include three- and four-bedroom family style units, as well as ground floor accessible units to accommodate wheelchairs and seniors’ needs”. As stated previously in the Density and Height sections, the AVCA doesn’t believe enough townhouses are proposed, both row and stacked, to allow for families characteristic of the family oriented neighbourhood of Heron Gate/Alta Vista. The proposal is largely focused on constructing new apartment towers of varying heights. The AVCA believes there should be a sizeable portion of units geared towards families with children.

There are a number of apartment buildings proposed or under construction within a 3km radius closer to central transit that will serve populations looking for studio, one- and two-bedroom units. These include 1161 Heron in Capital Ward (343 units); 1545 Bank Street (140 units); 1335 Bank Street (100 units); and 1695 Playfair Drive that proposes 120 units. Two other developments within Ward 18 will eventually see the establishment of a number of studio, one- and two-bedroom units: 1910 St.Laurent in Elmvale Acres (570 units in three towers); and 200 Steamline Street in Trainyards where two buildings of 414 units have been approved, with approval of future buildings expected.

AVCA is not aware of any rental communities that would serve families seeking three and four bedroom homes being proposed or built within Ward 18 or close to it. The Heron Gate community, surrounded by amenities such as the Ottawa Public Library, community schools and the Heron Road Community Centre provide an ideal environment for families. Family rentals are a much-needed requirement, and Timbercreek’s current proposal does not provide enough detail on how it will meet this need. While the AVCA is supportive of the addition of new development within Heron Gate to replace aging housing stock, we would like to reiterate recommendation one, that the number of three- and four-bedroom townhouses proposed in Heron Gate be increased overall. It is important for the AVCA to consider the impact that the Heron Gate development will have on the eventual redevelopment of the Federal Study Centre at 1495 Heron Road and ensure that large scale development projects include the need for family housing within the Alta Vista community.

Social Enterprise

Timbercreek commits to “continuing to work with the City of Ottawa and others to create training and employment opportunities for Heron Gate community members”.

Timbercreek is working to provide these opportunities to residents. Notably Timbercreek has promoted employment for high-school students through its Summer Painting program. It is hoped that Timbercreek will continue to develop and report on these programs and rely on community partners to help support these efforts.

The AVCA therefore recommends:

16. That Timbercreek continue to provide information and report on their social enterprise endeavours through the Heron Gate Steering Committee

Green Space

Timbercreek commits to “provide new amenities and green space and work with the city to improve Sandalwood Park- an important community asset”. Timbercreek’s application explicitly states that it also intends to create a new 1.6 hectare park, provide substantial new tree planting and coverage, create a number of privately owned publicly accessible open spaces (POPS), improve green connections and through this undertaking, commits to the improvement of Sandalwood Park. AVCA feels Timbercreek has made a strong commitment to the provision of green space and has included questions relative to park redevelopment within subsequent sections.

Facilities, Services and Programming

Within Heron Gate

Equally important to the development of housing units within a community is ensuring the community have the appropriate infrastructure including facilities, services and support to ensure a high quality of life for residents.

As stated above, AVCA supports Timbercreek’s construction of a new park as well as refurbishment of the existing Sandalwood Park. It is not stated, however, what this refurbishment will look like, nor is it clear on any details of the proposed pavillion in the new public park. Additionally, it is not clear if the existing outdoor pool is included in the future and no mention is made of the current facilities (e.g. The Hub and Party Room at 2850) and how they will be maintained. While the new build at HG7 features a gym, indoor saltwater pool, yoga room and other facilities, there needs to be information

available regarding the maintenance of facilities at existing buildings, for example the indoor pool between 2850 and 2870 Cedarwood that has not been operational in years.

The AVCA therefore recommends:

17. That the City and applicant detail the proposed renovations within Sandalwood Park (e.g. replacement of play structures, enhancement of field house, reconstruction of sports fields); provide details on facilities to be provided in the new park, including whether there will be a field house that can be used to deliver community-based programming; and provide details on facilities that will allow children to cool off in the heat (e.g. existing outdoor pool or a splash pad)
18. That Timbercreek commit to keeping the recently renovated Hub and Party Room in 2850 Cedarwood for programming, and provide information on how facilities in existing buildings (for example, the indoor pool and the gym in the building between 2850 and 2870 Cedarwood) will be maintained and enhanced in concert with modern amenities being added to new buildings

As noted from the census statistics above, the existing residents of Heron Gate represent a very diverse population, many of whom are new Canadians. Over the years, partnerships have been established with community groups to provide funding and coordination of programming within Heron Gate. Programming options have been diverse and included conversation groups, homework clubs, citizenship classes, a community gardens program and youth leadership programs. Timbercreek has also worked with community partners to deliver annual events to the community including the Winter Carnival, the Film Fest and Movie Night, and the Summer Fun Day. While funding for an organization is never secure, the programming required for the population needs to continue, in particular for more vulnerable populations such as English language learners and youth. Additionally, given the number of children within Heron Gate and the demographics, the expected population increase due to new builds, the focus on walkable communities, and low parking ratios, it is important the residents have an opportunity for additional services, including those related to child care.

The AVCA therefore recommends:

19. That Timbercreek and the City of Ottawa work with community partners, through the Heron Gate Steering Committee, to ensure ongoing and enhanced programming is offered to residents and ensure funding is in place to do so, whether it be from Timbercreek, City of Ottawa or a community partnership
20. That delivery of in-house community programming be reviewed and evaluated through the Heron Gate Steering Committee on a continuous basis

21. That Timbercreek work with partners, including the City of Ottawa, to continue to organize and sponsor a variety of activities for residents and report on these through the Heron Gate Steering Committee
22. That space for a daycare centre be allotted within the development and Timbercreek work with the City of Ottawa to determine how this would operate

Throughout consultations over the past 18 months, many comments were received regarding upkeep and maintenance of existing units, lack of weekend maintenance, absence of lighting in parking lots, and general sentiment that if Timbercreek built new buildings, that existing units would be further compromised by a lack of maintenance. Similar comments were provided by residents in neighbouring communities who felt the external upkeep was unacceptable. While out of scope for the development application, AVCA is hopeful Timbercreek will continue to improve maintenance and responsiveness to tenants and will not neglect existing buildings in favour of new ones.

Surrounding Community

The location of Heron Gate is an ideal one for family-oriented development, close to Heron Gate Square, the Ottawa Public Library, schools, the Heron Road Community Centre and the City of Ottawa Social Service Hub at 2020 Walkey. However, improvements are required to ensure modern and streamlined services can be offered to the vulnerable and expanding population of Heron Gate.

With respect to schools and daycare centres, the Timbercreek planning rationale did not identify Prince of Peace Catholic School and Heron Gate Early Learning Centre at 1620 Heatherington Road as nearby facilities. The planning rationale did, however, include nearby schools (Charles H. Hulse and Featherston) operated by the English public school board, the OCDSB. However, not all students in Heron Gate are eligible to attend these schools as enrollment in OCDSB is program-dependent, and students enrolling in French Immersion must bus to Pleasant Park, 4km away. Although this is outside the scope of the development application or Timbercreek's/City of Ottawa's responsibilities, AVCA will be writing a letter to the OCDSB regarding their concerns.

The Heron Road Community Centre, while conveniently located next to the Heron Gate site, is a dated facility featuring a small gymnasium and classroom sized rooms, as it was originally a school and not designed for community programming. The Community Centre is not well used by residents of Heron Gate, as much of the programming caters to older adults (the City of Ottawa website continues to refer to the centre as the [Heron Seniors' Centre](#)). With a vulnerable and continuously expanding population, it is imperative that a proper Community Centre be incorporated within the Heron Gate area.

Coordination of services for Heron Gate residents should be considered as the planning process for this development proceeds. The City of Ottawa offers services at its Hub at 2020 Walkley Road, at the Ottawa Public Library on Alta Vista Drive, and at the Heron Road Community Centre. Additionally, many service providers operate throughout the immediate community. Consideration should be given to centralizing some of these services and internal Heron Gate service delivery.

The AVCA therefore recommends:

23. That the City of Ottawa determine when renovation or redevelopment of the Heron Road Community Centre can be undertaken, and should leverage centralized citywide Cash-in-Lieu funds in order to complete this project
24. That the City of Ottawa examine consolidation of services within or close to Heron Gate to provide seamless service delivery and coordination of programming and services within a dense and expanding community

Transit and Transportation

The current development proposal will result in a great degree of density within the Heron Gate community that will put increased pressure on the transit and transportation infrastructure of the Alta Vista community. Currently, public transportation (OC Transpo) from Heron Gate is accessible via three routes, the 44 which snakes through the entire community of Alta Vista via Alta Vista Drive, the 112 that snakes through Heron Park before arriving at Billings Bridge, and the 291 which provides peak service only. Direct service to nearby LRT stations, downtown and reduced travel times need to be incorporated in advance of any future development in Heron Gate.

With respect to transportation, the traffic study with the application did not examine implications the development will have on adjacent streets, in particular the neighbourhood directly north of Heron Gate, where streets such as Jefferson and Briar Hill off Heron Road serve young pedestrians and families walking to Featherston Public School and nearby parks. The implications for traffic circulation and congestion on these streets and into Alta Vista (Featherston Drive, Kilborn Avenue, Haig Drive, Alta Vista Drive and beyond) will be extensive, and AVCA expects the City of Ottawa will engage with residents in the development of traffic management plans and mitigation strategies to ensure management of cut through traffic and minimization of traffic on already overloaded collector streets.

Although cycling infrastructure is proposed within Heron Gate by Timbercreek, the City of Ottawa has not defined a plan to improve cycling on nearby routes, including Heron

Road. It is imperative that residents of Heron Gate have safe cycling routes, in particular to key destinations, including future LRT stations and downtown.

The AVCA therefore recommends:

25. That the City of Ottawa work with OC Transpo to consult residents, develop transit management plans and implement improvements for Heron Gate before any further development at Heron Gate is approved
26. That the City of Ottawa undertake consultations with local residents and develop traffic management plans for the community surrounding Heron Gate to ensure mitigations are in place to manage the anticipated increase in traffic
27. That the City of Ottawa provide fulsome plans for how the community of Heron Gate will be incorporated into safe cycling networks across Ottawa

Conclusion

Although AVCA has prepared a number of recommendations in this report, we are well aware that many of these go beyond the scope of the current application. We do feel, however, that it is important that existing and future residents of Heron Gate are well-served by their community at all levels, that the development is consistent with the Alta Vista community as a whole and that proper plans are in place to support the development. We have been pleased over the past year with our collaboration with Councillor Cloutier, Timbercreek and all service delivery partners in this community. We look forward to continuing to work with all throughout the planning process and will continue to update our submission as further questions arrive from residents, and as answers are received from the developer and the City of Ottawa.

APPENDIX A

Social Framework Commitments:

1 Housing Security	No further demolitions for occupied units will occur until affected tenants are able to transfer their leases and relocate within the community to newly constructed units at the same rents.
2 Affordability	Continue to work through the planning process with the City of Ottawa with the goal of building up to 20% of the total units as affordable
3 Housing Diversity	Provide a diverse mix of housing types and sizes that will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 and 4 bedroom family style units• Ground floor accessible units to accommodate wheelchairs and seniors' needs
4 Social Enterprise	Continue to work with the City of Ottawa and others to create training and employment opportunities for Heron Gate community members.
5 Green Space	Provide new amenities and green space and work with the City to enhance and improve Sandalwood Park – an important community asset.