



Will OPL Board Members Put Taxpayers' Investment toward LeBreton Flats Development, Rather than Support the Public Interest with \$168 Million New Central Library?

Biased scoring criteria in favour of LeBreton over downtown sites supports this conclusion

OTTAWA, January 31, 2017 - The recommendation for a LeBreton Flats site for Ottawa's new central library is based on viewing the library as a driver for private-sector development, rather than seeing it as a public institution to meet the needs of city residents, said the citizen's advocacy group, Bookmark the Core, today.

There appears to be compelling evidence that a site in the downtown core (Site 6, located at Albert, Lyon and Slater) deserves a higher ranking than it received in a consultant's report by Deloitte and staff recommendation to the Ottawa Public Library Board, which will be discussed and voted on at the Board meeting tonight. Based on accessibility factors alone (worth 40 points of a total of 100), Site 6 should be the top-ranking site.

In a technical analysis of the Deloitte report, Bookmark the Core questions the biases in the assessment of the recommended Site 8, as well as Site 9, also on LeBreton Flats, as compared to Site 6 in the downtown core. For example:

- Why is Site 6 assessed lower than Site 9 when they share the same access to public transit?
- Why is Site 6 ranked lowest in terms of walking and cycling access when it has the best access of the three sites?
- Why is Site 8 ranked higher than Site 6 when it is clearly deficient in terms of cycling and pedestrian access?
- Why is Site 8 ranked highest when it is hidden against a cliff and out of site from the source of users from the east, which is the traditional and densely populated source of library visitors?
- Why is Site 6 penalized for being close to resident, worker and visitor users, consistent with the placement of new Central Libraries in other major Canadian cities?
- Why are Sites 8 and 9 obtained a maximum 100% score regarding existing or planned development, when the existing, immediately surrounding areas are empty and development is unlikely to take place for 20-25 years? Meanwhile Site 6, which received only a 70% score, is already well-situated where residents, downtown workers and visitors to the city can reach it.
- Private-sector development initiatives at LeBreton Flats are already advancing without the assurance the new library facility will be there. How relevant is it then to possibly compromise the success of the new central library for this reason?

(Bookmark the Core's full technical analysis of the Deloitte report is available separately.)

Support for sites in the downtown core was clearly evident at the public meeting on the central library, hosted by five urban Councillors on January 18, 2017. Over 200 people in attendance evaluated three zones of the central area, on a set of criteria used by city staff in formulating their recommendation for the central library location.

According to a summary of the electronically recorded evaluation, the area located between Bronson Avenue and the Rideau Canal was identified as:

- The most accessible by public transit, walking and cycling;
- Offering the closest proximity to the cultural and administrative centre of the City; and
- The best able to serve our most vulnerable populations.

From the outset of this process, Bookmark the Core has asserted the need to locate a central library where demographic data shows the largest number of people live, work and visit in order to maximize the success of the proposed \$168 million project.

Any vision that rests on the premise that the central library should serve as an anchor for private development on LeBreton Flats is seriously flawed. Such a vision misunderstands the mandate of libraries - namely, to be where people need them. To propose a room at City Hall for an alternative downtown branch is to ignore the reality of central libraries throughout North America: they are community living rooms, located where people actually are in large numbers. They are not located where people may be at some unknown date, decades from now, if ever.

“We urge the OPL Board not to rush this decision. It is imperative that we take the time to properly evaluate the prospective sites and get this hundred million dollar decision right,” stressed Bookmark the Core spokesperson Emilie Taman.

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