

LOCAL NEWS

Activists vow to bring Vanier on par with other communities

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Members of the Together for Vanier Working Group on Beautification strongly feel that their community is disenfranchised due to its lack of citizen activism.

The general consensus at the group's monthly meeting, held on Thursday, March 20th at the headquarters of Quartier Vanier BIA, 287 Montreal Road, was that Vanier needs to add its name to the list of more vocal and active communities.

The group had invited two Ottawa City Senior Planners, Don Morse and Richard Klitstrom, to make a presentation on the city's existing Community Design Plan (CDP). The objective of the presentation was to keep the group up to speed with what a community design plan was. Morse was of the view that Vanier needs a lot of space improvement, while Klitstrom advised that the community has to focus on primary tools such as land use.

With Vanier excluded from Ottawa's light rail project, Morse noted that the community does not have to worry about being bumped out of the queue in order to comply with the project for a future community design plan. He showed a re-modeled three dimensional (3D) pictorial view of the Vanier community design plan, which emphasized an open space strategy such as planting vegetation along the sidewalks and re-developing dilapidated structures.

The 3D model allowed the group to view pictures, put in real images of the streets and allowed them to actually take a view of all sides of the re-modeled buildings. This was to give the viewers an idea of what they can work towards.

"What I gathered from this presentation is that yes, we have something that was designed for this area so that when some people want to build something new in Vanier, they have a framework to refer to," said Suzanne Valiquet, Quartier Vanier Business Improvement Area (BIA) Executive Director. Her feeling was that the presentation would give her 300 member business organization a better idea of where the future of Vanier commercial arteries lie in terms of what is acceptable for future development. "This will provide guidelines for upcoming residential development such as what size of buildings can come in here," she said.

Juxtaposed to upscale communities within the vicinities of the downtown core, such as New Edinburgh, Sandy Hill and The Glebe, Vanier lags behind in terms of not having a registered residential community association which could be pivotal at the City Council. The Together for Vanier Beautification group members agreed that there is dire need for the creation of a residential community association for Vanier, which would be a working group that meets on a regular basis to create a voice for the community at City Hall. The group felt that once they have community association representation, they will be better heard at City Hall because the city works mostly with residential associations.

Commenting on the issue of Vanier being excluded from the light rail transit project, Valiquet noted that rapid transportation is part of linking an area, particularly a downtown area, to other parts of the city. She said that it is important that Vanier be well served by high quality transit since such an investment is a very important part of making a commercial area successful. "It would have been good, in my opinion, if we would have a light rail com-

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Members of the Together for Vanier Working Group on Beautification listen to a presentation from two Senior Planners from the City of Ottawa last month.

ing through Montréal Road, because you can move more people, with light rail, than you can in a car. What you have is that you have a main artery in Vanier which connects to Rideau Street which is the main artery in the downtown core, so you would have access from the downtown core to Vanier, in a very quick and easy way to carry a lot of people, which is good for business," she noted.

Valiquet said that creating dialogue is very important, even if it is not on a selling point, but because it is on an issue that has to be dealt with.

"Our business improvement in our area is very much for improving the area and we recognize that in order to attract new businesses we need to clean up," she said about the issue of making Vanier more attractive to businesses and citizens. Valiquet explained that this month, the BIA will take part in announcing the launch of some safety patrols on Vanier streets. The event will be marked by a breakfast with Police Chief Vernon White.

"The purpose of the patrols is to give our merchants some help in dealing with crime, because there are drug deals that are happening everyday on our streets. It is a big problem, as well as prostitution. We are working with the police. This is how all of the North American cities have managed to clean up," she concluded.

Meanwhile, the Beautification group's Park Clean Up sub-committee is planning to clean 10 parks in Vanier, as well as to clean Montréal Road on Saturday, April 26th. Volunteers will range from Scouts, church groups, schools and individuals. The event will coincide with the annual Capital City Clean Up.