

Traffic, intensification, crime major challenges in Ottawa West region

Ottawa West councillors

Councillors from Bay, Kitchissippi, College and River ward look back on the highs and lows of 2016, and what 2017 will bring.

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Last year, Ottawa West's councillors and residents grappled with issues around traffic, rising costs, intensification, violence and community safety.

In a year-in-review questionnaire, Couns. Mark Taylor, Rick Chiarelli, Jeff Leiper and Riley Brockington weighed in on the year's challenges, what they are looking forward to in 2017, some budget highlights for their wards and also some personal goals for the year ahead.

Bay Ward – Coun. Mark Taylor

Whether I am meeting with residents to discuss traffic calming measures, helping with housing issues or building awareness for our important community events, I am always encouraged by the kindness and generosity I see in Ottawa residents, particularly those from Bay Ward. 2016 was no different and I continue to feel honoured to represent the residents from my ward.

This summer we announced the environmental assessment for LRT from Bayshore to Kanata. The EA is starting in the New Year and is expected to take two years to complete. We are making large investments in our city while continuing to deliver improvements to our local neighbourhoods. This EA will help transform the west end of Ottawa by significantly increasing transportation options.

This fall I was re-elected to the Association of Municipalities Ontario board of directors, regional and single tier caucus. In this position, I will continue to help set policy for the association and serve as a key municipal leader in the province. AMO is a non-profit representing almost all of Ontario's 444 municipal governments and provides me an opportunity to share Ottawa's concerns and add a strong voice in discussions with the province.

One of the biggest challenges for Bay Ward and many of the wards across the city is traffic-related issues. Traffic is a significant challenge and has been vocalized at a number of the community and public meetings I've held over the past year. We've made a number of positive

changes, using our traffic calming budget and all other measures at our disposal to make Bay Ward a safer place. However, we still have a number of improvements left to make.

I often hear from residents with concerns about rising costs across the city. Bay Ward residents have been vocal in their desire to keep the city affordable to all who inhabit it. Our focus is on keeping people in their homes and keeping taxes stable, but we can always do more to help those residents in need.

I believe in a community where everyone matters and heading into 2017 our plans will help strengthen Ottawa's social infrastructure immediately and for years to come. A new low-income transit pass, an additional \$610,000 in funding for community and social service agencies and continued investment in affordable housing will all help our city support all Ottawa residents.

Bay Ward residents can also look forward to some improved transportation connectivity, safety improvements and parks programs and facilities upgrades including:

- \$12 million investment for the design and preparatory work for the West Transitway Extension
- \$3 million in funding being committed to look at delivering LRT from Bayshore to Kanata earlier than planned
- \$291,000 road resurfacing on Richmond Road, from Pinecrest to Carling Avenue
- 17 new buses rolling out to transit customers, improving reliability during peak hours
- Adding 25 new police officers and 24 new paramedics

The city is also investing \$21 million for rehabilitation of parks and recreation facilities, which includes: Foster Farm Community Centre, Belltown, Dome, Britannia trolley shelter, Frank Ryan Fieldhouse, Maki Park playground, McEwen Park playground, Carlingwood library, and others.

I am working hard to make sure that LRT serves residents in Bay Ward, with as few disruptions as possible. Over the last year we held a number of public consultations, and we will continue to keep the community involved in all future plans.

The Carling Avenue community improvement plan is an opportunity to provide a visual facelift to Carling west in the new year. Our primary goal is to stimulate business investment, urban renewal and property improvements in the area while creating good jobs and a walkable community. However, we still have a long way to go – but with sound working partnerships I think we can make some significant improvements.

I was honoured to be appointed as the special liaison on housing and homelessness for Ottawa. In this role I am continuing to push to end homelessness by 2023. I am eager to continue working with Coun. Diane Deans, Coun. Jan Harder, and Coun. Mathieu Fleury as we continue to collaborate with our provincial and federal counterparts and seek more ways to involve community and private partners too. I am encouraged by our early efforts, and am committed to ensure Ottawa is a community where everyone has a home, because everyone matters.

College Ward – Coun. Rick Chiarelli

Some of the highlights for College Ward in 2016 included beginning construction for a state-of-the-art pool and change room complex at Bob Mitchell Park in Crestview. There was also the street renaming initiative, which took off with two new streets being named after trailblazing women who should have been commemorated years ago. In Bells Corners, I helped to get council to pass a community improvement plan for Bells Corners that provides incentives for the modernization of the Bells Corners strip and seizes the opportunities of the upcoming influx of nearly 10,000 Department of National Defence employees.

The biggest challenge in 2016 was getting the city to move to a more fiscally responsible approach to the municipal debt, which has more than doubled in five years. Today's debt is tomorrow's tax increases. Another challenge was getting the police to recognize that there are members of council that are here to help if they need more resources to help fight against the record number of shootings that we have endured. Hitting a tax target is our job, but so is ensuring core services have the resources they need.

I am looking forward to Henry Burris leading Ottawa to a repeat Grey Cup appearance to cap off his phenomenal career and Canada's 150th birthday in 2017. As part of the group that highlighted some of the things missing in the 2016 budget, I am pleased to see them added in for this coming year, such as low-income bus pass, enabling residents to keep their jobs, get to appointments, helping them be more productive. Residents in my ward can also look forward to the money to complete the reconstruction of Doug Frobel Park.

The mayor's budget process included a promise of a new and responsible long-range financial plan for the city. We have more than doubled our debt in five years, and we still have to pay for much of light rail stage 1 and all of our share of light rail stage 2 while also dealing with a huge deficit in our basic infrastructure. We need a plan that addresses these things and sets out a repayment plan for the debt.

This year, we'll take major steps in our Bells Corners recovery plan by getting the most out of the influx of nearly 10,000 DND employees and our new CIP incentive program to revitalize Bells Corners. I also want to push for sensible elements to the new long-range financial plan.

Kitchissippi Ward – Coun. Jeff Leiper

The highlight of 2016 was opening the field house at Van Lang. My team and I had to be nimble and innovative to get that on track. We're trying a very interesting partnership to run it, and it's beginning to fulfill the promise of becoming a community hub.

Helping get the SJAM winter trail underway was another high point.

We just passed a budget that includes a greater level of funding for our community partners, and introduces a low-income transit pass. I was very pleased to see the fruits of so many key partners' and my and other councillors' efforts pay off in this budget.

Our Rosemount library consultations were also something of which I'm proud. The relationship between city hall and residents was becoming adversarial; our consultations helped develop that discussion into a collaboration.

Lastly, I'd say I was very happy with the co-operation I had with residents to stop a drive-through proposal at the corner of Island Park and Richmond. It wasn't clear for a couple of months that we were going to be successful in that, but the unified ward voice, for once, prevailed.

We've had a tough second half of the year. Beginning with Abdirahman Abdi's death in the summer, then recent incidents of hate graffiti and then the recent violence in Hintonburg have been challenging to deal with. I've done my best to help bring people together to re-assert our values in Kitchissippi around tolerance and generosity, and to help residents navigate the resources available to them. The circumstances around those are complex, but I hope residents know they have an ally at city hall.

Residents in this ward continue to face challenges around intensification without commensurate investments in our hard and soft infrastructure. The new residents keep coming, and we're not going to stop every new development. But growth has challenges around traffic, parks, recreation facilities, transit service and more. We're getting the infill and towers envisioned by the Official Plan, but the other end of the bargain isn't being held up.

My team and I, working with Wesley Petite, have undertaken a big consultation on how to spend future parks money. I've been looking forward to this almost since taking office. Based on the first round of workshops, it looks like residents are demonstrating empathy and generosity in considering the ward's needs, not just their local park. I'm encouraged, and looking forward to unveiling a final plan this year. If all the stars align, we might be able to join Champlain Park to the SJAM park by de-paving a portion of Pontiac. I'm cautiously optimistic on that front.

The snow budget is a critical item on my watch list. I believe that we've been underfunding snow operations by around \$10 million a year for many years now. This budget adds \$4.5 million to the envelope, and staff have assured us they've found better ways to deliver the service. I'm taking them at their word this year.

The other discussion that will likely ramp up in 2017 is arts funding. Lots of money is going into some worthwhile capital projects such as Arts Court, but operational funding – grants to artists, festivals and organizations – is lagging. Residents have heard me say many times that culture is critical to our sustainability. I hope 2017 is the year in which we make greater strides towards supporting it.

The intensification/sustainability question will be with us for years. Our willingness as a city to balance intensification in our neighbourhood with investments in the mitigations we'll need to maintain quality of life is still not there. If we continue to constrain tax growth to very low – and I consider arbitrary – levels, maintaining our parks or investing in traffic calming will be challenging. Development in Kitchissippi is still the wild west, and probably will be without some important culture shifts.

Affordability is only going to increase as an issue in the ward through 2017. My commitment is to continue to support initiatives such as John Howard, the Mission and Cornerstone have proposed for our community as a check on unrestrained gentrification.

I've been working closely with Ottawa's music industry to try to build a lasting and positive impact from the Junos this year. I'd like to move a new field house at Laroche Park from a consensus that it's something we need to do into more concrete planning. And, the complete street treatment for Scott post-bus-detour will be a challenging discussion this year. City hall and I have different understandings of the timing for that, and my job will be to accomplish that sooner rather than later.

River Ward – Coun. Riley Brockington

Some of the highlights in River Ward this year included the naming of the Heron Road Workers Memorial Bridge, getting the Sens Rink in Alexander Park, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Alexander Community Centre and moving forward with the partnership between the city and the Ottawa Mountain Bike Association on Carlington Hill. Some other highlights for residents also included expanding the Carlington Community Health Centre, adding new traffic calming initiatives, adding new Greek street sign blades for the Hellenic Festival and having Uber come to the city.

But issues relating to community safety also challenged River Ward.

A record number of shootings in the city and homicides in the ward have elevated concerns among residents and business owners. I have led a number of local, grassroots initiatives that encouraged Neighbourhood Watch programs, safety audit walks, education campaigns, safety night open houses with guest speakers, greater awareness and emphasized the need to report matters to the police or Ottawa bylaw and even to myself.

I look forward to working with the Ottawa Hospital as they commence their plans to relocate the Civic Hospital into River Ward and to encourage them to host preliminary meetings in the ward to foster positive relations with the local community, to better explain how the public will be engaged and their specific timelines for this project moving forward. I also look forward to continued progress on the LRT Stage 1 as the city gets closer to the Summer 2018 opening and local celebrations for Canada 150th birthday.

In the 2017 budget, residents should keep an eye on a major capital project to replace water and wastewater infrastructure under Dynes Road and a small section of Prince of Wales. There will also be major work done on the Carlington Hill water reservoir and preliminary work on the Baseline Road rapid bus corridor will continue.

Securing adequate resources from the Ottawa Police Services to serve the community – both reactively when needed and as importantly, proactively – to engage the community, make local connections with community leaders, residents and business owners and address matters before crime occurs will remain a challenge into 2017.

Through 2017, there will be a continued strong focus on community safety. I'll be pushing for new traffic calming initiatives and looking forward to the potential renovation and expansion of the Hog's Back Boys and Girls Club and planting of the Canada 150 maple garden in Moffat Farm Veterans Park. My goal is to continue collaboration with the local festivals that are held every summer to address and mitigate issues that impact the local residential communities.

The city will host an open house in the winter to unveil plans to create a community design plan for Merivale Road north in Carlington. I'll be pushing for increased efforts to work with Ottawa Community Housing to address delinquent issues with their housing units and to proactively address security issues with tenants and/or their guests, as well as working with the Caldwell Family House to secure a new site for an expanded centre to offer much needed programming and services to their clients.