

## **VISION FOR THE YEAR 2025**

*Imagine the Heart of the Capital as a unified space for working, living and celebrating Canada, a place that communicates the nation and creates spaces for Canadians to gather and celebrate their sense of country.<sup>1</sup>*

### **The Core Area of Canada's Capital in the Year 2025...**

The Core Area of the Capital is endowed with remarkable natural and urban characteristics, exuding a strong and unique identity. There is a sense of place, a uniqueness here that is palpable. Parliament Hill, dominated by the Parliament Buildings and the Peace Tower, presides as the most majestic and powerful symbol of this Capital: a magnificent assembly of buildings, breathtaking in their grandeur, atop the wild wooded escarpment, on the edge of the mighty Ottawa River. Open lawns surrounding these exemplary heritage buildings are filled with people, eager to touch this magical place, this heritage site, this bold representation of the Canadian democracy. There is a feeling of shared destiny, of nationhood, of common ground – this place belongs to all Canadians, it is home away from home.

A beautiful street passes in front of Parliament Hill – Confederation Boulevard – alive with animation and storytelling, commemorations to Canadian heroes and milestones, places for people to gather. This street encircles the core area of this Capital, crossing the Ottawa River, linking a spectacular collection of national museums and institutions of superior design that tell the Canadian story and showcase the nation's treasures. This is Canada's Discovery Route, its avenue of history and culture. Capital stages along this boulevard present festivals and celebrations to the amusement and enrichment of all.

Views northward to the ancient Gatineau Hills and along the Ottawa River bring the sense of Canada's wilderness into the heart of the Capital. Visitors experience a rare urban landscape rich with green and blue, open spaces and water - that shines forth in the splendour of autumn colours and in winter is transformed into a wonderland of snow and ice. This Capital is a four-season city, taking advantage of the different experiences that each season offers. It is also a city of lights, where the evening setting is enlivened by beautifully illuminated symbols and features that invite exploration, discovery and enjoyment. An integrated system of parks, open space corridors and pathway linkages provides a natural setting for the core area, bringing people to nature, to water edges, and onto the waterways themselves to connect to destinations and places of interest.

This capital showcase is linked with and knitted into the interesting and lively surrounding precincts and neighbourhoods, each with their own character and flavour. A unique blend of the old and new, stately heritage buildings are mixed with modern

---

<sup>1</sup> *Plan for Canada's Capital, 1999; Public Programming & Activities Vision for the Core Area of Canada's Capital, 2004*

structures, housing offices of government, business and special organizations. New mixed use developments restore and reconnect the urban fabric - in LeBreton Flats, in new residential and institutional projects on central sites, in the reclamation and reuse of industrial heritage buildings and spaces that 'build' the Islands "bridge" from Ottawa to Gatineau across the now publicly accessible Chaudières Falls, the connection and integration of *Vieux Hull* with the river shore at the old Scott Paper site.

Safe, well-designed pedestrian networks and public spaces, from the small to the grand, connect different precincts. To the people, these public places represent arts and culture, routes filled with history and interesting stories, and places to rest, sit and view the surroundings.

High standards of environmental stewardship and respect are evident everywhere - in the design of buildings, landscapes and streets, in the efficient use of infrastructure, in the sleek and integrated systems of transit and movement within the core and connecting to outlying urban areas.

This *is* a city, but it is so much more than *just* a city - it is the capital of a nation, proud and free, celebrating its achievements and the identity and aspirations of its people, in a setting of natural and built beauty.

To achieve this vision, the evolution of a Capital for future generations must continue, building upon accomplishments already realized, continuing to dream of what it can yet become.

## PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

The *Core Area Sector Plan* represents the lead policy document governing the planning and development of federal lands in the Core Area over the next twenty years.

The National Capital Commission has prepared the Plan on behalf of the federal government. The *Core Area Sector Plan*, prepared during 2003-4, represents the final stage of a three phase planning process; the first two phases comprised the *Vision for the Core Area of Canada's Capital Region* (1998), and the *Concept for the Core Area of Canada's Capital* (2000).

The Plan takes into account the products of the preceding phases, as well as numerous studies and plans produced by the NCC, other federal departments and agencies, and municipal and provincial governments. Though the Plan is focused on federally-owned lands, the Plan follows the spirit of intergovernmental harmonization, and encourages other federal and non-federal partners to recognize its policies in their own planning documents.

The Plan is oriented to the future, having a horizon of the year 2025, in terms of the policies and initiatives it presents. It is important to note that this Plan, and the goal of building the future Core Area, depends upon the involvement of many partners and stakeholders. The realization of numerous plans and individual projects has resulted in the creation of a beautiful and functional Core Area; this Plan aims to build upon and surpass these successes.

The Plan identifies a number of priority initiatives and targets a number of character areas that will be the subject of particular attention over the course of the next two decades. Character areas where the federal government and the NCC exercise a leadership role in terms of planning will be the priority for federal interventions and investments, both human and financial.

The Plan recognizes that the Core Area will be a constantly evolving meeting place, shaped by years of events, studies, visions and plans. It aims to preserve the symbolic and functional role of the Core Area by supporting the NCC's mission which is to plan the physical development and use of federal lands in the Capital and to promote and animate the Capital through public programming, interpretation and commemorations.

The primary purpose of the Plan is to define a framework for development through the statement of policies and initiatives that will orient development, programming, preservation, environmental integrity, transportation infrastructure, animation and design quality on federal lands in the Core Area. A key tool for the NCC and other federal departments and agencies, the Plan will guide the decision-making process and frame future development initiatives.

The Plan identifies a number of important issues and opportunities in the Core Area, some of which are relevant to the twenty year planning period, others of which are

pertinent beyond the twenty-year planning period. Some of the key issues and opportunities identified include:

- the renewed involvement of the federal government and the NCC in the planning and animation of the Core Area;
- the need for coordination of planning policies of all levels of government, federal, provincial and municipal;
- the continuing challenge to maintain a symbolic and welcoming character to the Core Area;
- the emergence and maturation of key concepts in terms of urban planning, development and sustainability that highlight Canadian expertise and know-how; and
- the setting of priorities for federal government and NCC initiatives and interventions.

In this context, the Plan seeks to :

- communicate the future perspective and view of the federal government respecting the Core Area;
- develop and set out principles, goals and realistic policies that guide decisions on land use planning in support of the key functions of the Capital;
- determine the land base necessary for the future Capital and define the optimum use of these lands in terms of future requirements;
- guide federal departments and agencies in decisions respecting future accommodations and facilities;
- reinforce the links between the Core Area and other attractions and parts of the Capital;
- target federal land use and investment strategies in the Core Area; and
- set the framework for the preparation and achievement of more detailed plans for federal lands in the Core Area.

The orientations and proposals of the Core Area Sector Plan reflect the ideas and interests of the following stakeholders:

- The Canadian people
- Residents of the National Capital Region
- The Government of Canada, notably the federal departments, cultural organizations, and custodians located in the Core Area
- Local and provincial governments
- Diplomatic missions and non-governmental organizations

### **The Vision and the Concept**

The Core Area Vision imagines the Core Area of the Capital in the year 2025. It envisions the Core Area as a place to live, work and come together, where Canada is celebrated, as a place to communicate Canada and offer to Canadians places to gather and celebrate their attachment to their country.

Three principal planning concepts grounded the development of the plan and its planning policies and proposals, and will continue to guide the NCC in the daily implementation of the plan. These concepts include *sustainable development*, the *healthy communities movement*, and *smart growth*.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Plan was prepared and guided by a vision particular to the environment of the Core Area. This vision statement advocates a sustainable development approach that focuses on the protection of natural features and improvements to the quality of urban life. Improvements to the quality of the urban setting, while ensuring the health of people, also benefit natural systems, which thereby contribute to the preservation of the Capital Core Area's natural features and setting.

The spatial concept for the Core Area combines:

- The physical and geographical foundations of the Core Area, including the landscape, the waterways, the Capital realm, the Civic realm, and Confederation Boulevard. These structuring elements constitute the physical and spatial organization of the Core Area.
- The activities and actions which influence the future planning of the structuring physical elements; these activities are grouped according to three themes: *celebrate, connect and consolidate/create*.

Through a series of more detailed objectives and policies, the Plan sets out directions related to the above-noted physical foundations and themes, for the Core Area as a whole, and for specific, smaller areas (called 'Character Areas') within the Core Area.

### **Priorities of this Plan**

The Core Area Sector Plan is a comprehensive document, addressing many policy areas and identifying a number of strategies and initiatives. There are several major priorities in the Core Area - programs, studies and strategies - upon which the National Capital Commission will place particular emphasis over the next two decades. These include the following.

- Reinforcement and strengthening of **Confederation Boulevard** -completion of landscape components, increased public land uses and activities, improved accessibility around it, enhanced linkages to the River edges from it.
- Completion, through support of Public Works and Government Services Canada, of long range plans that ensure the protection, accessibility and exemplary development of the **Parliamentary and Judicial Precincts**.
- Enhancement and expansion of the **public experience** in the Core Area, for national and international visitors - through the addition of new **capital stages**, increased **commemorations and public art, interpretation and programming**.

- Completion of the **LeBreton Flats** mixed use community redevelopment project.
- Promotion of **new Canadian cultural and public institutions** and consolidation and improvement of existing facilities - on Victoria Island east (aboriginal cultural centre), Jacques Cartier Park north, LeBreton Flats north and west, and Sussex Drive North.
- Completion of the Area Plan for and commencement of mixed-use development in the **Islands** area surrounding the Chaudières Falls.
- Study and promotion of **interprovincial transit integration** that connects the downtown areas of Ottawa and Gatineau and links the cities' public transit systems in the Core Area.
- Creation and promotion of enhanced **linkages and connections** throughout the Core Area - between the **Capital and civic realms**, and to the **Ottawa River**.
- Completion of gaps in the **recreational pathway network**, including Sussex Drive North, Rideau Canal North and through the Islands area.
- Preparation of **Area Plans** for **Rideau Canal north, LeBreton Flats east/Sparks Street west**, and the **Ottawa River Basin**.
- Development of an **illumination Plan** to highlight the key symbols and places in the Core Area and make the Capital come alive in the evening hours and winter months.

## **The Major Proposals of the Plan**

### *For the Core Area as a Whole*

The following bullets describe the principal orientations or priorities, by theme or subject, that apply to the *Core Area as a whole*:

- **Confederation Boulevard:** Reaffirm Confederation Boulevard as the location for the most important political and cultural institutions in Canada, as the Capital's ceremonial route, and as the centre of programming and interpretation activities in the Capital.
- **Symbolism:** Preserve and enrich the unique and symbolic character of the Core Area by the introduction of initiatives aimed at improving connections between the Capital (federal) realm and the Civic (municipal) realm, in a manner consistent with Canadian values and identity.

- **Land Use:** Define a coherent approach to the long term planning of the Core Area that supports a standard of quality in land use and urban design.
- **Capital Experience:** Enhance levels of participation, appreciation, animation and safety in the offering of memorable experiences to visitors in their exploration and discovery of the Core Area of the Capital.
- **Heritage:** Promote a comprehensive approach to the preservation of built heritage, cultural landscapes and archaeological resources in the Core Area.
- **Natural Environment:** Establish broad parameters that foster the safeguarding and the restoration of the Core Area's natural environment.
- **Open Spaces, Parks, Stages and Public Places:** Imagine, plan and manage these spaces and places in a sustainable fashion, by seeking to preserve, improve and use these resources in an optimum and responsible way.
- **Federal Accommodation:** Plan and manage the federal accommodations and facilities that support the administrative functions of the federal government in ways that are sustainable, effective and efficient.
- **Urban Design and Form:** Promote the role of the federal government as a leader in the field of quality design, development and sustainability in the exercise of its role as guardian of the Capital environment.
- **Sustainable Urban Transportation:** Improve linkages and connectivity, facilitate mobility and the movement of both residents and visitors to and around the Core Area, by seeking a better integration between transportation systems of Ottawa and Gatineau.
- **Commemorations & Public Art:** Enhance the symbolic role, the visual aesthetic and educational experience of the Core Area by increasing the number of commemorations and displays of public art.
- **Accessibility & Security:** Balance the need for accessibility, movement and security to ensure a pleasurable public experience in the Core Area.
- **View Protection:** Protect and improve, in cooperation with partner agencies, the primary views to the national symbols and the visual primacy of the Parliamentary buildings.
- **Illumination:** Establish a strategy for the illumination of symbolic buildings and places in the Core Area, in an environmentally responsible and financially sustainable way.

### *For Character Areas*

The following paragraphs describe the principal orientations or priorities that apply to the specific *Character Areas* within the Core Area.

Character Areas are discrete, smaller geographic units within the Core Area that can be identified by their unique physical characteristics in terms of land use, function, urban form, or natural features. Policies put forward in this Plan for each of these Character Areas recognize that, even though each area is unique, they must interact with those areas that surround them.

The organization of Character Areas in this Plan acknowledges the different role played by the federal government in each of the Character Areas, whether this role be one of leader, partner or supporter.

*Leadership Character Areas* are areas where the vast majority of property ownership is federal, and where the function and land uses are symbolic and Capital in nature. These Areas and their principal orientations are as follows.

- **Parliamentary & Judicial Precincts:** Plan, protect and interpret the Parliamentary & Judicial Precincts as the symbolic and political heart of the nation, as a national and international landmark, and as centre stage for national celebrations.
- **Gatineau Central Waterfront:** Plan the waterfront area as a potential location for national institutions, programs and open spaces, as an integral part of the Capital realm and a key urban place, linked to the Civic realm of a revitalized downtown Gatineau.
- **Sussex Drive North:** Preserve and enhance the sites and environs of the Official Residences of the Prime Minister and Governor General of Canada, reinforce ceremonial routes and functions in this area, and continue to plan the area as an important international precinct in the National Capital Region.
- **Sussex Drive South:** Maintain this area as home to a number of nationally-significant cultural institutions, commemorations, public programs and open spaces, as well as the location of several diplomatic missions.
- **The Islands:** Celebrate the industrial, aboriginal and natural heritage of this area, establish a land bridge between the downtowns of Ottawa and Gatineau, and plan for a variety of uses, programs and open spaces which create an unparalleled visitor experience.
- **The Rideau Canal:** Enhance the role of the Canal as one of the key structuring physical features of the National Capital Region, redefine the Canal area's open spaces and structures as urban waterfront parks oriented to the Canal, and work



with Parks Canada and the City of Ottawa to establish strong pedestrian linkages along and over the Canal and between the Canal and neighbouring streets and districts.

- **Jacques Cartier Park:** Pursue the development of the Park in accordance with standards befitting its role as a Capital park, as a stage showcasing programs and the natural setting, and as an important recreational space for different uses/users, ranging from national programs and large scale events to daily use.

*Partnership Character Areas* are areas where land ownership is shared between the federal and municipal levels of government and the private sector, and where certain Capital functions take place or exist. These Areas are often places of strong connection or interface between the Capital and Civic realms. These Areas and their principal orientations are as follows.

- **Sparks Street:** Promote the revitalization of the Sparks Street Mall and the realization of the potential of the blocks south of Wellington which face Parliament, improve the integration of this area with other areas in the Core, and promote a new identity for the area as a desirable destination by the encouragement of mixed uses, an increased level of programming and services for the public, and by accenting the sense of place and history.
- **LeBreton Flats South:** Plan and develop a lively, mixed-use neighbourhood which functions independently, but is also better linked with the Ottawa Central Business District, LeBreton North and the Islands.
- **The Ottawa River:** Protect and enhance the River as a witness of our cultural and natural heritage and protector of natural landscapes and features, as a guarantor of our quality of life, an economic development agent, and point of contact between places, communities and people.
- **Promenade du Portage:** Support the role of this area as a vibrant, animated downtown street in Gatineau's downtown, promote a visitor experience focussed on the francophone culture, and establish links to the Ottawa River and to neighbouring districts, cultural institutions and open spaces.
  - **Ruisseau de la Brasserie and Montcalm Street:** Enhance the area as an important destination in the Core Area through mixed-use (residential and cultural) developments and improved linkages that preserve and support the heritage and open space character of the area.

*Support Character Areas* are areas where the federal government owns little or no property, and where the principal activities and functions are municipal/urban or private (not federal and Capital). These Areas and their principal orientations are as follows.

- **Civic Arts, Theatre & Retail Precinct:** Support the City of Ottawa in efforts aimed at creating a centre or nucleus of local arts and culture in this location, at resolving problems of transportation (people and goods movement), and at improving the pedestrian experience along Rideau Street, all in a manner which achieves a respect for and balance with the character of the adjacent Sandy Hill neighbourhood.
- **The Ottawa Central Business District:** Support the City of Ottawa in actions to reinforce the CBD and enhance its quality, to consolidate links between the Capital and Civic realms, to diversify land use and increase the amount of residential development in the area, and to revitalize the urban fabric through enhanced design quality of both buildings and streetscapes.
- **The ByWard Market:** Support the City of Ottawa in the preservation and enhancement of the Market area as a lively, mixed-use, heritage district, and in the strengthening of linkages and relationships between the Market and the neighbouring Capital realm.
- **Hull Island (*Vieux Hull*):** Support City of Gatineau projects and initiatives directed at the revival of an “urban village” character in Vieux Hull, to maintain green links around and through the Island of Hull, and to promote the area as a distinctive entryway to Gatineau Park.

### **Plan Implementation**

The implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Core Area Sector Plan will take place over the coming years, through the use of a variety of tools and activities. For planners and other users of the Plan, these tools and interventions comprise processes and products that provide concrete ways to realize the intent and orientation of this Plan. The NCC will use this Plan in the exercise of its authority responsible for the planning and development of federal lands in the Core Area, and as a guide to support the range of planning, development and other decisions that the NCC makes or influences.