

519 371 2200
info@gbarts.ca



938 2nd Ave E
Owen Sound, ON
N4K 2H6

July 17th, 2023

Greetings City of Owen Sound Council:

I would like to voice my support for the River District Phase 2 and provide some important details. I am grateful to Councillor Dodd for motioning to defer any decisions until July 24th. Unfortunately, City Staff was unable to fit me in for a deputation at your council meeting due to the heavy schedule but offered me the opportunity to send this letter.

First, I would like to point out that I am the perfect candidate to talk about this section of street. I haunt the 1st Avenue East corridor between 8th Street and 10th Street. Nearly every day I walk from my home above the Owen Sound Farmers' Market, where I share managing duties with my husband, to my job as Executive Director of the Georgian Bay School of the Arts at 938 2nd Avenue East. I am familiar with every bump in the road, the regulars at Tim Hortons, traffic patterns on 9th Street, the abandoned debris, and the seasonal foliage of the riverbank.

I appreciate that a councillor came to speak to me before the Council meeting where the River District Phase 2 was to be discussed. However, I was stunned when it was indicated that it would likely be postponed or cancelled. With all the work City Staff put into it, and all the meetings we attended, it was not on my radar that it might be in jeopardy. If the businesses were going to be consulted and the information used at a council meeting, it should have been done in a more comprehensive and meaningful way. Perhaps scheduling times to visit with the owners to get a more representational response. Several businesses are not open on Mondays or are closed by 4pm. I was disheartened to realize that none of my very positive remarks and passionate support were mentioned.

In May of this year, I approached owners of the businesses that back onto this block of 1st Ave E. Some were unaware of the plans, as they were not the owners of the buildings, and had not been consulted originally. There seemed to be a lot of false or unsupported information. I spoke to 11 businesses, and all but two were in favour. The addition of a boardwalk along the river was lauded, better lighting and any improvement to help beautify the street was seen very positively. Right now, there is

GBARTS.CA

concern for staff safety going to their cars, particularly after dark. Parking seemed to be the biggest issue, and one business had heard that although parking would not be affected, they could not trust the City to uphold that promise. One business felt it would impede their unloading zone, and one said it would not make any difference to “a crappy downtown”, which was a very hard statement to hear.

I cannot see any downside to this redevelopment. I live downtown, I watch what happens in the market square. As with any downtown in Canada right now, I see the unfortunate waste and unsafe leftovers from the addicted and homeless. However, there are so many things to celebrate with the renovations on 1st Avenue East 800 block, and perhaps by illuminating and developing this back street, we can make it a safer place for staff, tourists, and locals to occupy.

With the renovated 800 block of 1st Ave E, Music at the Market and Movies at the Market attract so many people in the summer, and the businesses benefit from that traffic. The Farmers’ Market has over 1500 people every Saturday in the summer and would have struggled even more through COVID without the market square. Festival of Northern Lights, Earth Day, Pride, One World Festival, Bi-weekly Medical Clinic, and OSPS Bike Rodeos are only a few of the year-round events that take advantage of the renovated wide-open space. All summer, families sit at the picnic tables, enjoying ice cream and treats. With no outdoor living space, I often sit on the river’s edge to read a book or listen to music on my headphones. I would like to see the 900 block of 1st Avenue East enjoy the same health and bustling atmosphere of its sister block.

We need to populate downtown with people, and Phase 2 is an exciting and timely project that would encourage more people to experience a growing downtown Owen Sound. We have had serious vandalism, theft, fights, drug use (and its leavings) and all manner of tragic things happen in our back because it is quiet and hidden. The river needs to be celebrated, not ignored, dismissed, and desecrated. We need to continue pulling 1st Avenue into the light and celebrate our city’s relationship with the Sydenham River.

I should point out that we did have many trees along our riverbank, but they were cut down during the summer of 2021 in anticipation of RDP Phase 2. Now we have been left with a sad, scrubby, unfinished backdrop of bushes.

We have so many exciting ideas that this re-development could support, including a drop-down stage for outdoor theatre, outdoor classes, and family events. Imagine having the Hottest Street Sale on 1st Avenue East, so we don't have close off the 2nd Avenue to parking on one of the busiest sales-day of the week.

I can only think of positive results from this re-development and have attached letters from businesses in support of moving forward with this project.

I have also received unanimous support from The River District Board of Directors, who see the benefit of this important initiative.

I have also attached four letters of support that I received from property and business owners in the 900 block of 1st Avenue East.

Thank you for your time.

Carry on, Morag

Morag Budgeon
Executive Director, The Georgian Bay School of the Arts
Manager, The Owen Sound Farmers' Market

I have owned my property Jean Francis Studio, 986 1st Avenue East since 2002. For interest, the mayor at the time (2002) told me there were plans to implement improvements of the Street in the near future. I feel we have been led to believe from the City Council that this project was a project that they were supporting. I understand the financial reasons, however the cost will only escalate as years go by.

The upgrade will bring more visitors in my opinion. When people are walking along the harbour, or driving through Owen Sound the traffic is slow on 10th Street at 1st Ave E. and what they see is an unkept street, most often garbage strewn and not inviting to stop and take a walk around to the stores, art galleries and all there is to offer. For a thriving downtown, this street is key visually.

Last year, I was invited to the City to be shown the proposed development plans for the 900 block between 9th Street and 10th Street, later followed by a presentation at The Bayshore Arena to property and business owners, and from what I saw people were very enthusiastic and the plans were accepted. I was excited about the project.

Last year, over 20 trees were downed in preparation for the boardwalk and renewal project, if the boardwalk and upgrade of the parking lots are not completed, will this affect the embankment?

A few years ago, the water main was replaced, then the bridge.

When we visit other Cities, it is a well-designed Downtown that attracts people to come and explore, stay enjoy the restaurants and shops. It also attracts new businesses who will benefit with more walking traffic.

Melanie Middlebro' councillor stated in the meeting when this project was voted down, that she talked to many businesses along 2nd Avenue East, and as I understand it there wasn't a positive view. I wasn't approached and have owned for over 20 years. When talking to business owners, and Sydenham condo owners, I haven't found negativity to this project.

I hope you reconsider going forward with this project, with a possibility of doing it in stages and you can find the finances to support it.

Jean Francis
986 1st. Avenue East Owen Sound
[REDACTED]

Cathy DenTandt

When we bought Riverside Yarns in July 2019, the first part of the riverfront development plan was just being completed (Market to 9th Street). Since 2019, I have witnessed significant change in the downtown core. When we started, 2nd Ave was deserted by late afternoon, Saturdays were incredibly slow, and there was little leisure traffic. That has all changed and the downtown is a much busier and livelier place now than it was 4 years ago. I think there are many reasons for this, but one very big reason is our beautiful Market and riverfront down to 9th Street, along with the branding of the River District as a destination. I absolutely applaud the work of City Hall in this regard and I have seen the transformation.

As a business owner and someone who loves Owen Sound, I was thrilled to read through the plans for the continued development of the riverfront between 9th and 10th Streets. I think this is exactly what needs to be done and support this development fully.

I was very disappointed recently to hear that these plans are being reconsidered. I understand that cost is a huge issue, but we should not abandon the plan to develop our waterfronts. Not using this beautiful resource makes no sense.

I know that a councillor did come by the store one day when I was absent to ask about my views on the matter. I did not speak to her or make my views known.

To Whom it May Concern at Owen Sound City Council,

I am writing this letter to voice my approval for the cleanup/re-development of 1st Avenue East between 9th and 10th streets.

Having owned 3 buildings along 1st Avenue over the last 25 years I feel I have an intimate knowledge of its character.

The positive outcome from the work done on the market square is an encouraging indicator that the cleanup of this last stretch of downtown waterfront can only be good for the city.

With the street activation along 1st Avenue, downtown merchants will be the beneficiaries of a safer and more vital waterfront.

Thank you,

Alan McIntosh
Stephen Clarke
938 2nd Avenue East (owners)

**Sydenham Condominium Resident Input
River District Board of Management
Reconsideration of Phase 2 River District Project Delay**

The residents of the Sydenham Condominium appreciate the opportunity to provide input to the River District Board of Management to offer encouragement for asking Owen Sound City Council to reconsider postponement of Phase 2 of the River District plan.

The location of the Sydenham makes residents key stakeholders in this decision. Many residents made their decision to move into the building based on the anticipated timelines that were in place at the time they bought or leased a unit in the building. Easier mobility in the area was anticipated by some residents when this project was completed.

Currently there are 25 occupied units at the Sydenham. Residents from 17 of those units have provided input to encourage City Council to consider going forward as planned.

Rationale for this support includes inflationary costs that will only make this project more expensive in the future, the continued deterioration of the area between 9th and 10th street, the impact of investing in beautification of the city, the positive economic impact of walkable cities and the need for council to be more forward thinking.

In the short term as we await this project, residents expressed a need for cleaning up this area and continuing with regular maintenance. Consideration of what elements of the project that would improve the area that could be completed within budget was also put forward as a suggestion by some residents.

The residents appreciate the work of Jacquie Furtner and Morag Budgeon to gain support in moving River District Phase 2 forward as soon as possible.

May 3, 2023

Information compiled by Mary Anne Alton, Sydenham Condominium Board Member