

Lowertown Community Sustainability Plan



Ottawa Biosphere Eco-City, Ottawa, 2019



LOWERTOWN COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

In association with Lowertown community
and Ottawa Biosphere Eco-City

INTRODUCTION

The Lowertown Community Sustainability Plan has been developed to engage Lowertown residents in Ottawa to live more sustainably, by taking on various self-developed individual and community sustainability projects related to issues that matter to them. The projects in this plan were developed during community discussions held in Lowertown August 2019.

Below you may read more on sustainability, biosphere eco-cities and Lowertown. The projects then follow.

WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?

Sustainability is the ability of things to continue to exist. It applies to natural and human features.

We use the earth's resources to meet our needs, but we also want to leave enough natural resources and beauty for future generations to live healthy and happy lives. What we do matters. You impact the environment—the environment impacts you.

WHAT IS A BIOSPHERE ECO-CITY?

The Biosphere Eco-City (BEC) is an urban-centred region where people and organizations create a culture of sustainability. Biosphere means “sphere of life” and is the Earth’s outer shell of land, water and atmosphere that supports all life. The term Eco-City refers to an international movement for sustainable cities.

OTTAWA BIOSPHERE ECO-CITY

The Ottawa Biosphere Eco-City (OBEC) began in 2009 as a pilot study for an international program. It is a volunteer-based charity that partners with other organizations for sustainability.

OBEC has created a number of initiatives including: a database of hundreds of sustainability projects, a self-guided Ottawa Sustainability Tour, public workshops on individual Themes of Sustainability, School Sustainability Plans, and a Council of Stakeholders where anyone can

bring ideas for sustainability. More details may be found on the website (obec-evbo.ca).

WHAT IS THE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN?

This sustainability plan is an agenda for action – things that we can do individually or collectively.

In an evening of discussion, people who live or work in Lowertown identified what they thought were Key Issues and Projects to address the issues, related to OBEC's Ten Themes of Sustainability (see below). The sustainability plan contains their suggestions for projects you might try, both at an individual and community level and also a catalyzing tool for you to come up with your own projects to take on.

HOW DO I USE THE PLAN?

As you read the plan, you may find a Theme, Issue and/or Project you want to address. Or you may think of an idea for something different. What you do is up to you, but the plan is meant to be a tool for your reference to help you think of ideas and get started. Write your Issue and Project on the last page. This becomes your personal sustainability plan. Please tell OBEC (obec-evbo.ca) what you plan to do, so that we can share these with the community.

THEMES OF SUSTAINABILITY

OBEC's 10 Themes are all the areas of direct action for sustainability. They provide a framework for people to link their individual interests to sustainability and allow people with common interest to come together and develop solutions to issues. The Themes are Transportation, Energy, Design, Habitat, Food, Natural Capital, Waste, Health, Recreation and Sense of Place. Projects may relate to more than one Theme. But thinking in terms of the Themes helps to identify opportunities for action.

LOWERTOWN

Lowertown is the oldest community in the city of Ottawa, first settled in 1826 with the building of the Rideau Canal.

Lowertown covers an area of about 2.5 square kilometres. It is bounded by the ByWard Market to the south-west and residential homes and buildings to the north-east. Waterways pass on three of its four sides: the Rideau Canal, the Ottawa River, and the Rideau River.

Historically French Canadian and Irish, it is to this day a bilingual community.

Being the oldest community in the city, Lowertown is known for Ottawa's first marketplace, first general hospital, first park and first railway station among others. It is also the site of some of Ottawa's earliest and most historic buildings.

Lowertown is abundant in trees and gardens, charming courtyards, side streets and heritage houses; two heritage conservation areas including the ByWard Market; dozens of outdoor art installations and memorials; several embassies and federal government buildings; the National Art Gallery and Royal Canadian Mint; the historic Château Laurier hotel; and, eight parks, including the oldest in Ottawa, Majors Hill Park.

Lowertown is marked by duality: English and French-speaking residents, new condo towers erected alongside heritage homes and century-old businesses operating next door to start-ups among others.

It is this duality however and all of its various natural and historical features that make Lowertown undoubtedly one of the most vibrant and colourful communities in Ottawa.

Lowertown Demographics:

- 70:30 English to French ratio
- Population of 12,200
- 50:50 men to women ratio
- Less than 10% of population is under 19 years old
- Almost 40% of population is 20-39 Just under 25% are 40-59 About 25% are over 60

Source: <http://www.lowertown-basseville.ca/our-community--notre-communauteacute.html>



Issues & Individual Project Ideas

TRANSPORTATION

(Movement of goods and people)



Issues: Unwalkable, incomplete neighbourhoods - poor road design - overload of public transit – unsafe mix of bicycles and cars – big trucks passing through Lowertown

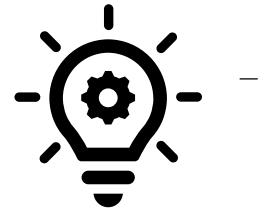
Things you can do:

- Walk or bike as often as you can to work, school, and your regular activities
- Rent cargo bikes from local shops if you don't have your own
- Rent [Virtu cars](#) if you are only an occasional driver
- Use public transit over personal vehicle whenever possible
- Plan daily or weekly carpools with friends, family, neighbours
- Campaign for better/more affordable transit (ex. [Free Transit Initiative](#))
- Campaign for a local shuttle bus in Lowertown or get together with a couple friends and create a volunteer-run carpool/shuttle service for regular activities in the community

ENERGY

(Buildings, production, energy sources)

Issues: poorly insulated buildings – lack of clean energy – high electricity consumption – no separate metres for utilities



Things you can do:

- Better insulate your homes (check [these ideas](#) out)
- Research solar power options you can implement in your home or garden (check out: <http://ottawasolarpower.com/osp2012/home.htm>)
- Turn off/plug out electronic equipment and appliances as soon as you are done using them
- Purchase energy-efficient-appliances (lightbulbs, certain brands of kitchen appliances, etc.)
- Check out [these ideas](#) on other ways to save energy at home
- Campaign to change laws to permit separate metres of utility consumption (write to your landlord, city councillor, talk to your friends and neighbours and raise awareness on the issue)

DESIGN

(built environment)



Issues: Affordability of housing, especially condominiums – old housing stock – nightlife/business focus in Byward Market takes away from community growth and development

Things you can do:

- Consider cooperative housing options in your community
- Home environmentally-friendly renovations – check these out: <https://www.styleathome.com/how-to/renovations/article/environmentally-friendly-renovations>
- Installation of solar panels & green roofs
- Bike and other infrastructure in your home/yard

HABITAT

(Urban and rural places for wild animals, & plants)



Issues: lack of green spaces – quick resident turnover – lack of development

Things you can do:

- Contribute to green spaces in communal areas of your community
- Convert unused spaces in your home for gardens or green/eco-spaces
- Build a balcony garden
- Install bird or bee feeders

- Connect with your community/condo board to find out what's habitat-related activities are underway

FOOD

(Farms & urban markets, heritage crops/animals, urban gardens)



Issues: absence of/insufficient local food options – lack of access to food & garden supplies – high costs for local, organic foods – lack of food choice and quality – lack of food culture education and awareness – food waste

Things you can do:

- Learn about food/gardening culture in your community and grow your own local, fresh food
- Pollinator Gardens (bees and/or butterflies)
- Buy “ugly” foods (cheaper and still good)
- Donate/share unused foods
- Harvest exchange/group cooking with friends & family
- Support bringing back Lowertown's historic farmer's market
- Campaign for more food options, accessibility and lower costs (write to your councillor, share your ideas with your neighbours, spread the word)



NATURAL CAPITAL

(Land, water, soil, natural material)

Issues:

overconsumption of resources - barrier between neighbourhood and river – uneasy access to parks – lack of green spaces



Things you can do:

- Reduce consumption of natural resources such as water – i.e. don't leave taps running
- Campaign for better access (a clear path) to river and to parks and for more green spaces (write to your city councillor, start a petition, spread the word)
- Feed the environment by planting gardens and trees in your neighbourhood
- Install permeable pavers to reduce run-off

WASTE

(Processing of wastes, recycling, design, and conversion to energy)



Issues: too much waste – food waste – plastic waste – lack of communications and awareness on waste management

Things you can do:

- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
- Actively practise composting: use city's green bin or compost your food and garden waste outdoors or indoors with a [vermicompost](#)

- Avoid plastic and packaging as much as possible (carry a water bottle/travel mug with you, re-usable bag for groceries, shop at whole food stores etc.)
- Practice "[Zero-Waste](#)" living
- Donate clothes, furniture, etc. that are still in relatively good condition (see [here](#) donating options in Ottawa) or host a garage sale/clothing swap
- Dispose electronics at an E-waste collection centre (see [here](#) E-waste options in Ottawa)

HEALTH

(Clean air/water, safety, healthy environmental access for all)



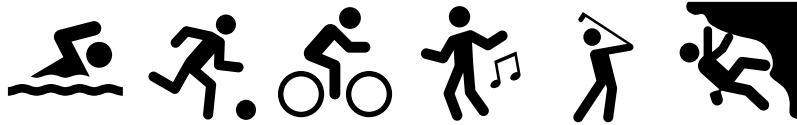
Issues: air and other pollution – lack of activities in nature – high cost of healthy foods > overreliance on food bank > poor nutrition

Things you can do:

- Use personal vehicles less often
- Support reduction of truck traffic in Lowertown
- Contribute ideas for a seniors' park (like Cumberland's) and for playground for children with disabilities (like Brewer's)
- Go out more often and take walks in nature
- Grow your own local, fresh food
- Share your harvests and extra, unused (but healthy and fresh) foods with your neighbours
- Write to your city councillors and MPs about neighbourhood pollution and other issues

RECREATION

(Urban and rural recreation, including farm visits)



Issues: quick resident turnover – not enough green recreation facilities/spaces, especially compared to rest of Ottawa

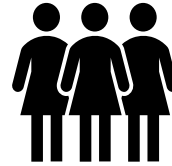
Things you can do:

- Research recreational activities (related to the outdoors or green living) in your community
- Join local sports team
- Create spaces in your home/yard for outdoor recreation
- Take nature walks by the river and through the forests around the Lowertown neighbourhood



SENSE OF PLACE

(Sense of belonging & stewardship)



Issues: quick resident turnover – divided / disconnected– economic gaps – knowledge of history

Things you can do:

- Say hello to your neighbours when you pass them by, start conversations and get to know them better, invite them over to your home for a meal, etc.
- Learn about the history of your neighbourhood and community (see here for Lowertown Community Association's page on Lowertown's history & heritage)
- Take walks around your neighbourhood
- Learn about the native types of fauna and flora and different elements of nature in your neighbourhood
- Identify community issues and projects you could take on to better address sense of place in your community
- Get involved with [Lowertown Community Association](#)



COMMUNITY PROJECTS

The following are community projects that were brainstormed during the whole group discussions (they are displayed here in relation to the themes they touch).

You will see that some of these have been further developed – leaders like yourself stepped up to take these on and imagine their implementation processes – which have been condensed in our plan here into 5 simple steps each (with exceptions if necessary).

If any of the following projects appeal to you, you are welcome to join and give them a go. For any of the projects that were not further developed during our discussions, you may develop a proposal and share with us on our [site](#). We are here to support you.

Transportation:

- Neighbourhood Shuttles Buses for Lowertown



- **Cargo-Bikes Building & Rental Start-up – further developed:**

Community Leader(s): **Felix W.**
Implementation Plan:



1. **Contact resources:** Lowertown Community Resource Centre, Lowertown Community Association, local bike shops, City of Ottawa, Ottawa Community Housing, Vélo Vanier Recycle Ottawa, etc.
2. **Develop** rental & maintenance systems
3. **Find space** to set up cargo-bike shop (garage space, etc.)
4. **Recruit** volunteers to set up project
5. **Fund** - for resources such as renting space and tools for fixing and building bikes – community fundraising, sponsorship through local organizations and businesses
6. **Promote/build awareness:** spread word about project and get people to come build or rent a bike, host bike-building workshops, use social media, posters, newsletters, door-knocking, word of mouth, etc.

Natural Capital / Habitat / Health / Recreation / Sense of Place:

- Community Tree Planting > especially fruit trees and re-planting and Lowertown's historic white pines (Lumbering) and birch (Aboriginal)
- Bee gardens and community space for beekeeping
- **Urban Gardens – further developed:**



Community Leader(s): **John W.**
Implementation Plan:

1. **Contact resources:** Lowertown Community Resource Centre, Lowertown Community Association, City of Ottawa, Ottawa Community Housing, landlords, Just Food (for materials, expertise), etc.
2. **Find spaces** for gardens and acquire required permissions to use the space (street sides, rooftops, individual spaces)
3. **Recruit** volunteers to set up project
4. **Fund** - for resources such as seeds, soil and gardening tools – get donations/ sponsorship through local organizations and businesses
5. **Promote/build awareness:** spread word about project, post sign-up sheets, host plant swaps and gardening workshops, use social media, posters, newsletters, door-knocking, word of mouth, etc.

Food:

- Restart Lowertown's Farmer's Market
- Lowertown Community Harvest
- Lowertown Community Kitchen



Waste:

- **Recycling Promotion – further developed:**

Community Leader(s): **John W.**
Implementation Plan:

1. **Contact resources:** Lowertown Community Resource Centre, Lowertown Community Association, City of Ottawa, Ottawa Community Housing, local recycling centres, Matt Fleury (city councillor), etc.
2. **Find space** for recycling drop-off points
3. **Recruit** volunteers to set up project
4. **Fund** – for resources such as drop-off spots and promotion– look for sponsorship through local organizations and businesses
5. **Promote/build awareness:** spread word about project – use social media, host recycling educational workshops, posters, newsletters, door-knocking, word of mouth, etc.



- **Community Compost – further developed:**

Community Leader(s): **Juliet I. & Alex H.**
Implementation Plan:

1. **Contact resources:** Lowertown Community Resource Centre, Lowertown Community Association, City of Ottawa, Ottawa Community Housing, landlords, local lumberyard (for materials), Matt Fleury (city councillor), Just Food (for expertise), etc.
2. **Find space** to place community compost
3. **Recruit** volunteers to set up project
4. **Fund** - for resources such building composter– get sponsorship through local organizations and businesses
5. **Promote/build awareness:** spread word about project to get people to compost – use social media, host composting-educational workshops, posters, newsletters, door-knocking, word of mouth, etc.

- **Furniture swap/recycling/upcycling – further developed:**

Community Leader(s): **Karim A.**
Implementation Plan:



1. **Contact resources:** Lowertown Community Resource Centre, Lowertown Community Association, City of Ottawa, Ottawa Community

Housing, landlords, local thrift stores (Ottawa Free Store, Ottawa Free net, etc.), online resources (Bunz, Kijiji), furniture donation drop-off centres, etc.

2. **Develop** furniture recycling/upcycling/ swapping system (ex. website)
3. **Find space** for hosting furniture recycling drop-off points, swaps/sales
4. **Recruit** volunteers to set up project
5. **Fund** – for resources such as renting space, promotion, etc. – get sponsorship through local organizations and businesses
6. **Promote/build awareness:** spread word about project – use social media, website, tabling at buildings, posters, newsletters, door-knocking, word of mouth, etc.

Recreation/Sense of Place/Other:

- [Hello Neighbour Initiative](#)
- Tool Library (for sharing gardening/yard tools)
- Opening up public facilities during heat waves/cold days
- Hosting Community Educational Workshops and Events on various sustainability issues:
 - Urban gardening “how-to’s”
 - Recycling/composting Education
 - Building sustainable infrastructure at home
 - Flora and fauna of the neighbourhood
 - Neighbourhood history
 - Sustainable arts & crafts session
 - Environment-themed movie-nights
 - Neighbourhood garage sales/swaps/drop-offs for donations, recycling, e-waste, etc.



CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

The Lowertown Sustainability Plan was designed to give you ideas on how to take sustainability action at home, at work or in your neighbourhood.

You can now make it your personal plan for action.

Please think of an issue that is meaningful for you. Then choose a project that addresses that issue. It could be something written in the plan, or something you invented. Once you have something started, let us know what you are doing.

We want to share statistics on the projects being taken on and progress being made, because it inspires others and gets momentum going.

By reaching out to us, we can also get you connected to team leaders (on aforementioned projects) and help you recruit volunteers.

What you do for sustainability will enrich your life, support your community and contribute to the world.

Let's get started and build a sustainable future in your community together!

Your Priority sustainability issue(s):

Your proposed project(s) is (are):

Send your information to:

<http://obec-evbo.ca/lowertown-community-sustainability-plan>

Thank you for contributing to the sustainability of your community!

Sponsored by **Ottawa Biosphere Eco-City & Ottawa Community Foundation**

Report by Ottawa Biosphere Eco-City

APPENDIX 1:

BIOSPHERE ECO-CITY THEMES
(Action Areas for Sustainability)

- 1 **Transportation** – Sustainable movement of goods and people
- 2 **Energy** – Sustainable use for buildings, movement, manufacturing, agriculture
- 3 **Design** – Sustainable design of buildings, communities and infrastructure
- 4 **Habitat** – Sustain living places for plants and animals
- 5 **Food** – local food, gardens, food access, heritage and organic crops and animals
- 6 **Natural Capital** – Water, soil and natural materials to meet human needs
- 7 **Waste** – Reduce, reuse, recycle, waste processing, conversion to energy
- 8 **Health** – Clean air, water and soil, safe and tranquil outdoor access, healthy indoor air
- 9 **Recreation** – Non-motorized, low impact, connected to nature, carbon offset for events
- 10 **Sense of Place** – Create public spaces, outdoor events, belonging and stewardship

APPENDIX 2:

**FIVE BIG MOVES OF THE CITY OF OTTAWA
In Relevance to Biosphere Eco-City (BEC) Themes**

<i>BIG MOVE</i>	<i>BEC THEME OF SUSTAINABILITY</i>
1. Growth Management – More by intensification than greenfield development, providing complete communities and affordable housing	3 – Design 5 – Food (preserving food land) 6 – Natural Capital (preserving green space) 10 – Sense of Place (complete communities)
2. Mobility – By 2046 majority of trips by sustainable transportation (walking, cycling, and public transportation)	1 - Transportation
3. Urban and Community Design – More sophisticated to create good urbanism at all scales (largest to smallest)	3 – Design
4. Climate, Energy and Public Health – Integrate all these in planning, and foster health and wellbeing, with resiliency of the natural and built environment	2 – Energy 3 – Design 6 – Natural Capital 8 – Health
5. Economic Development – Opportunities for economic development, with policies for employment lands, industrial areas and knowledge-based campuses	3 – Design (develop employment areas)