

Hamilton: On LeBreton Flats, we can still think big

The National Capital Commission should be applauded for deciding to move forward, but here's one piece of advice: Don't forget the scale of this opportunity.

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Tobi Nussbaum, CEO of the National Capital Commission, announces a new process for the rebuild of LeBreton Flats. Photo by Wayne Cuddington/ Postmedia

WAYNE CUDDINGTON / POSTMEDIA

As a group of Ottawa business and community leaders, we feel the collective slump of disappointment at the demise of the RendezVous LeBreton Group and their winning vision for LeBreton Flats.

Rather than point the finger of blame, though, we applaud the National Capital Commission for deciding to move forward in providing the citizens of Ottawa and Canada with a “a capital and city-building opportunity.”

One point of caution, however: We should not ignore the scale of this opportunity. The size of this development is a key element that makes LeBreton unique, providing the opportunity for the creation of a true place of impact.

Parcelling LeBreton is a safe road and perhaps understandable in the wake of recent events. The bigger risk, however, is to set the stage for the creation of development that does not capitalize on scale. As a city, we should not be satisfied with a “good” result, as good is always the enemy of great.

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To the NCC, we encourage you to have vision, have courage and be inclusive in your consultations – but please do not fragment this last great piece of real estate in the heart of the city. Size matters, and there is a responsibility to make a bold statement. You got it right in the first place by embracing the kind of wide-scale, integrated community the RendezVous LeBreton vision created in its proposal.

As Ottawans, we must not be discouraged. Yes, it is most unfortunate that the latest round was unsuccessful. Certainly the manner in which RendezVous LeBreton fell apart is disappointing. That said, the contribution that LeBreton Flats can and will make to Ottawa and to Canada remains unaffected. This is a large-scale opportunity and it stands to reason that it will take time and effort, even some scars and tears, to bring it to fruition.

The RendezVous LeBreton vision was not only the right sort of idea, it represented a \$5billion infusion of capital into our economy. Consider the thousands of good-paying jobs, the opportunities for training, social enterprise and the restoration of a vital community beside the parliamentary precinct. Let's keep this going.



LeBreton Flats: A wide open space with so many possibilities for a growing city. JEAN LEVAC /P OSTMED IA

LeBreton represents a unique development at a unique time. Our infrastructure development – with the LRT, the new public library and the whole upper west side – are in lock-step with Ottawa’s business growth, which is coming from a new and vibrant urban technology group as well as the federal government.

More business growth brings more people and all of the economic advantages that accompany this growth. Our city will soon hit one million people, and history has shown that cities experience an accelerating effect in growth once the million mark is reached; this will further add to our growth and evolution.

As it has always been for the Indigenous Peoples of the region, LeBreton Flats needs to represent a place of unity, as well as creating inter-provincial connectivity that brings together east and west, Ontario and Quebec.

The business community is becoming more engaged than ever, wanting to contribute to the growth and success of the city. Organizations like the Capital 2020 Task Force are believers in Ottawa and want to do our part to drive its growth. It is one thing for a city’s administration to believe in the city (they have to); it is altogether different when there is engagement by business and community leaders who also believe.

This belief creates magnetism, drawing people to the city to live and work, but also to visit and spend money. Magnetism is also the fundamental spirit that creates communities where we can live as families and people.

LeBreton needs to be great. The Capital 2020 Task Force is keen to contribute in every way to help the NCC renew its plan, and bring pride to the sons and daughters of Ottawa, making us all proud for generations to come.

Be brave.

***Shawn Hamilton** is sub-committee chair, LeBreton Flats Redevelopment, for the Capital 2020 Task Force. The task force represents business and community leaders from all sectors in Ottawa and Gatineau, aiming to make the National Capital a thriving, smart region.*