

# Meet The Helpers

**A community conversation**

**Prepared by the office of Ariel Troster**

# Doubling the affordable housing budget

- In December, Council approved a motion to double the 2024 affordable housing budget, raising the 2024 affordable housing capital budget to **\$30 million dollars.**
- This money will provide funding to help tackle the backlog of shovel ready affordable housing projects.
- This is in addition to a **\$5 million dollar** investment into transitional housing projects.

# Bridge funding for SWCHC

- As part of our office's consultations ahead of the 2024 budget vote we worked with the Mayor's office to get an additional **\$200,000** in funding for the Somerset West Community Health Centre.
- This money has helped the SWCHC expand the Homelessness Crisis Outreach program and increase outreach on Bank Street.

# Who to call

- **In August of last year our office put together a comprehensive “who to call” list for neighbours and businesses in Somerset Ward.**
- **This list has served as a critical tool for widening options for dealing with increasing need in the community. It has also served as a tool for us to better understand the types of resources neighbours are looking for and clarify who can provide the best response for different situations.**

# Non-police crisis response

- **In September, 2023, Centretown was chosen as the area for a response prototype to divert mental health and substance use calls from police.**
- **This pilot will be run by the Centretown Community Health Centre and the Somerset West Community Health Centre and will launch in the summer.**

# Working with city staff

- **Discussions with community partners frequently lead to us engage City staff on emerging issues around access to funding, space and other resources provided by the city.**
- **We facilitated conversations that resulted necessary funding increases for community partners such as Planned Parenthood Ottawa and improved access to city spaces for several local arts organizations.**

# Public realm improvements

- **As part of the 2024 budget we secured funding for a future park in the Lebreton Flats area, a new splashpad in Dundonald Park and funding for improvements at the St. Luke's basketball court.**
- **Earlier this year we secured **\$200,000** in funding for public realm projects in Centretown. This money will be used to expand community and pedestrian space on Somerset between Bank and O'Connor and improvements to Snider Plaza.**

# Public realm improvements

- **We've also worked to improve traffic calming measures in many areas of the Ward, including the recent installation of a new crosswalk at Norman and Rochester.**
- **Additional traffic calming measures will begin to roll out this spring, and residents are encouraged to flag areas of concern to the councillor's office on an ongoing basis.**



# Downtown Revitalization

- **Councillor Troster sat as a member of MP Naqvi's Downtown Revitalization Taskforce. This taskforce hosted elected officials and members across the housing and business sectors who worked together to produce a report "Revitalizing Downtown Ottawa - A Call to Action For Our City".**
- **In 2023 we brought a motion to Council directing staff to work across departments and with sector partners to explore ways to expedite potential office to residential conversions.**

# Conversions

- **In November, the Planning and Housing Committee approved the first set of recommendations stemming from staff's work in response to our motion.**
- **In addition to this, our office has been meeting with stakeholders and discussing how we can use conversions to benefit underserved sectors in our city as we await the federal government's disposal list.**

# Conversions

- **The city is in the process of signing a lease to convert an empty office building at 230 Queen Street into transitional housing for single newcomers. The intention is for this property to alleviate the pressure being put on community recreation centres and offer resources and support to help rapidly re-house people. Our office will provide more updates as this project progresses and we look forward to welcoming these new neighbours and helping them integrate into our community.**

# Poverty reduction for artists

- **Our office works closely with artists and arts organizations across Ottawa and have identified that poverty among artists is a key issue for the sector.**
- **In an effort to begin addressing this, we brought a motion to the Community Services Committee to direct staff to explore poverty reduction measures for artists that can be incorporated into the forthcoming Municipal Culture Plan.**

# **BIAs and community associations**

- **Our office works extensively with Business Improvement Associations to ensure that local businesses are supported and able to collaborate with our office.**
- **We also work with the Sparks St Mall Authority and Community Neighbourhood Development Planning Table.**
- **We also work closely with our community associations, collaborating with them around key issues such as public realm, transportation and planning.**

# Budget consultations

- **Every year our office engages neighbours and stakeholders around the city budget with sector specific meetings, public budget consultations and in 2023 we helped facilitate a budget survey.**
- **Engagement around the budget, through consultations, surveys or petitions is one of the most impactful ways neighbours can help build a better city. Many of our biggest wins have come from work we've done around the budget.**