

Manor Park Chronicle – Council President Feature

You might say Elizabeth McAllister is a globetrotter. With her husband, Frank Koller, she's lived in three countries and worked in over 100 during her 35-year career in international development. During her time both locally and abroad, however, McAllister has been proud to call Manor Park her home.

"We purchased our house from Frank's' mom in 1989," she said. "It was his childhood home from the time they arrived in Manor Park in 1950. I left Ottawa for Washington to work for the World Bank in 1997, and Frank joined me as a CBC Radio Foreign Correspondent in 1998. We returned about a decade later."

Her work abroad provided McAllister with crucial experience. It's something she hopes to leverage as she replaces Sébastien LaRoche-Côté as President of the Manor Park Community Association.

"I want to bring what I've learned on a global level to my local community," she said.

McAllister is no stranger to public service, having volunteered as a Strategy and Sub-Committee Lead for the MPCA. Recently, McAllister partnered with community leaders, MPCC and Manor Park Public School to build raised gardens for students and summer campers to learn about growing and eating nutritious food. In partnership with MPCC and RRCRC, she hopes to expand the project to other locations throughout the community, where plots can be rented for a minimum fee.

However, McAllister's time in office won't just be a walk in the park. Ottawa is growing up around Manor Park as Wateridge, the CFB Rockliffe development, gets underway. Nearby growth in developing communities also impact life in Manor Park. McAllister points out that densification will affect every aspect of life in Manor Park, from increased traffic to pressures on affordable housing and access to good schools.

Additional challenges include cuts to neighbourhood policing, limited public transit options, and demographic changes. Many elderly citizens are now living on their own, and several community households are headed by a single parent.

“Most troubling, we have high levels of child poverty in some pockets of our community. We also have unique natural assets to protect and to use for recreation in a sustainable way,” she said. “I think our greatest challenge is to bring people together in our end of Ottawa to ensure we can all enjoy a prosperous, safe and healthy place to raise families.”

Which is exactly what McAllister wants to do.

McAllister’s long-term goal is one based on building strong communities. She wants to drive better fundraising efforts and volunteer outreach initiatives. McAllister says that Manor Park isn’t alone in its challenges, pointing out that surrounding communities face similar obstacles. To solve them will require partnerships among Ottawa’s East End community associations and enthusiastic public participation.

“We live in an *especially* caring community but modern families are overwhelmed with the demands of work and family,” she said. “We need to hear from folks that may only have a few hours a month to spare or can contribute a special skill when we roll out our strategy.”

For now, though, McAllister is focusing on what she can do with what resources she has available. Quoting Arthur Ash, she says: “Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.”

*** The MPCC meets every second Tuesday each month from September to July at 7:30 PM. Times and locations are posted on the MPCC Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/ManorParkCommunityAssociation>)***

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This piece was originally published in the Manor Park Chronicle Community Paper, in Ottawa, Ontario.