

MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE



To Mayor and Members of Council

From Stephen Willis
General Manager
Planning, Infrastructure and Economic
Development Department

Subject Update on the NEW Official Plan Consultations and Early Decisions on Modifications for the next Draft Date: March 17, 2021

Re: Update on the NEW Official Plan Consultations and Early Decisions on Modifications for the next Draft

This memorandum is to inform Members of Council that staff have just completed consultations on the first draft of the New Official Plan. The results of these consultations, combined with Council's recent decisions on Growth Management, and considerable public and technical input, will allow staff to proceed into a re-write phase of the draft Official Plan between now and June.

As Council is aware, there has been an unprecedented level of public engagement on the draft New Official Plan, far surpassing anything we had projected and what occurred during the last Official Plan update. Some comments on the draft document were seeking clarification and suggesting different ideas. The highest concentration of comments focused on a few specific areas This memo highlights these areas of concentrated public interest.

The first concerns the new transect approach. While comments indicate there is broad support for the approach being taken, there are concerns where some of the boundaries between the Inner and Outer Urban transects lie. Currently, they cut certain neighbourhoods in locations that would create logistical or practical limitations. Those issues raised by Community Associations on boundaries will be reviewed in detail in the coming months and there will likely be some adjustments to some of the boundaries. Some of the concern associated with Transect boundaries comes from the density requirements associated with each Transect area, discussed further below.

Second, there is still concern being expressed over minimum density requirements, and some of the built form implications of multi-family housing in traditionally single-family home neighbourhoods. In reviewing these comments, staff are weighing these concerns with Council's two significant policy declarations that support intensification; the Climate Emergency and the Affordable Housing Emergency. These two declarations mean that the City needs to find ways to introduce 49,000 dwellings many of which need 3+ bedrooms into the existing built-up area to meet Council's ambitious 60% intensification target.

Council's 60% intensification target remains the most ambitious in Ontario and is one of the highest in North America for cities not built to their urban boundaries.

As Council is aware, new market-based development will not be the solution to end chronic homelessness and will not solve the need for deeply affordable housing alternatives. A diversification of our housing stock allows for a turnover in the rental housing market. Having more choices in housing options means that home ownership may be possible for workers of all income levels. The city needs different types of housing units in every neighbourhood, so that people who need to downsize can still find a place to live in their neighbourhood. Expanding housing options could depressurize the broader rental housing market. Additionally, if there are more dwellings with 3 bedrooms created through intensification/regeneration, younger families and new families coming to Ottawa from can find housing closer to services, amenities, and employment. This, in turn, reduces travel and GHG emissions.

Intensification is also the most effective form of housing in terms of implications on the cost of providing city services and hard infrastructure.

While Council is aware of these facts, consultation indicates that several stakeholders have concerns with the general language regarding how intensification is deployed in neighbourhoods in the New Official Plan. People want decisions on intensification to be made based on a local planning considerations with more time to consult and discuss.

In reviewing the comments received, staff believe that residents are looking for the same kind of assurances in the broader New Official Plan that they have been provided with Ottawa's infill planning processes. Namely that planning for intensification needs to be context-sensitive, which takes additional time. Ottawa is a leader in Ontario in planning for infill. Our Infill 1, Infill 2 and Coach House by-laws are models being used by other municipalities.

Staff are currently working on the main New Official Plan document to be less prescriptive and to help provide residents with assurances that intensification planning will be context-sensitive at the neighbourhood level. The New Official Plan will start the process of hitting our intensification target by implementing appropriate permissive policies for intensification near transit stations and major corridors.

The next draft of the New Official Plan will have more general language about the objectives and benefits of diversifying housing typology in neighbourhoods. We will continue to have minimum density at Transit Oriented Development (TOD) areas which we are calling Nodes, as specific density targets in TOD areas is a provincial requirement. We will revise the plan to have a range of density targets rather than requirements in neighbourhoods.

Furthermore, we intend to leave intensification rules in neighbourhoods to the Zoning By-law and updates to the Secondary Plans. This will give staff more time to find neighbourhood-customized approaches. Neighbourhoods are important in this plan, and although we need them to evolve and diversify their housing stock, the change can be context sensitive and gradual. This will give communities more time to participate in the discussion and provide input on the best ways to add density in their neighbourhoods.

Council's 60% intensification target is necessary to ensure measured growth of the urban boundary. As well, if the draft New Official Plan is adopted consistent with the Growth Management Strategy recently approved by Council, the City can meet the Provincial Policy Statement tests for the fifteen-year land supply and a mix of housing opportunities related to market demand.

As directed by Council, the land supply and intensification rates will be reviewed and monitored in detail in the coming five years. Council retains the options to meet the PPS requirements for a 15-year land supply by meeting the intensification targets, or by adjusting them and adding land at the boundary. This will be based on the additional information coming from the new Zoning By-law and updates to local plans.

In the coming months, staff will continue to receive and incorporate public input. Staff will need time to fully understand that input, balance requests and prepare a new draft.

Further public consultation on the next version of the New Official Plan continues and will include a Public Open House followed by a Joint Planning and Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee (PC-ARAC) on Sept. 13-14-15. The Joint Committee meeting will be the Statutory Public Meeting and constitute another opportunity for any stakeholder to make a presentation. We expect additional feedback from Council and delegations, at the Joint Committees after which final modifications to the plan will be incorporated before it is considered by Council.

Originally signed by

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