

Urban Boundary
City of Ottawa

Motion:

1. That HCCA send a letter (following) to Councillor Brockington to urge him to vote against the expansion of the current urban boundary and further to encourage him to advocate for measures of accountability as part of the urban boundary decision and their ultimate implementation.
2. HCCA provide boundary-related information (both from the city and from the POP) on its web site where HCCA members and email subscribers can find various proposals on the city boundaries issue, important dates (May 11th Committee meeting, May 27th Council meeting), and advise how HCCA community members might take action as they see fit.

Suggested Letter to Councillor Brockington from the HCCA

Dear Councillor Brockington;

Re: Urban Boundary

You are tasked with representing our ward on many complex, often delicate issues and the issue of possible expansion to the urban boundary is one of them. We are writing today to urge you to vote to maintain the current urban boundary in Ottawa's new Official Plan. It is a critical decision and holding the line will help us build the communities that grow differently, not out.

We understand saying no to urban boundary expansion means saying yes to some intensification in communities. That can be done in a way that invest in the type of housing, services and quality of life that every Ottawa resident deserves. As has been pointed out in studies by the People's Official Plan and the Federation of Citizens' Associations of Ottawa, there are opportunities for intensification in both the core and in the existing suburbs. The anticipated need in housing can be accommodated by investing in gentle- and medium-density development and high-quality urban design in our existing urban neighbourhoods and rural villages.

Containing the urban boundary is not an isolated issue. It is a structural decision that can accelerate progress on the City's stated goals for climate, transit-oriented development and more livable, walkable, healthy communities. We understand the need to plan for population growth over the next few decades. However, while extending the urban boundary to permit a proportion of these dwellings to be built on agricultural land or wildland might seem an easy solution it would undermine our City's goals and aspirations.

The current pandemic has laid bare the tenuous nature of our food supply and has magnified the issue of food insecurity particularly within certain populations. We need, more than ever, to produce as much nutritious food as possible close to home. We cannot continue to takeover rich farmland for the purpose of housing. The city staff proposed “balanced” scenario would see the loss of approximately 1500 hectares of rural land. Extending the boundary would impact our efforts to cope with and mitigate climate change in other critical ways. It would inevitably cause the loss of green spaces and woodlands that provide essential climate services, from forests that offer carbon sequestration to floodplains and wetlands that reduce or prevent floods. It would eradicate habitat, reducing biodiversity including an array of creatures that support our environmental well-being, as well as leading to increased interactions between people and wildlife. Furthermore, it would undermine the City’s Climate Change Master Plan by locking in a carbon emission future much higher than it needs to be.

Given the growing fiscal crisis Ottawa is likely to face due to the effects of the coronavirus, it would be less than prudent to expand the urban boundary and extend services we can’t afford to offer. Even before the current health crisis, there was evidence that expanding the urban boundary would represent a significant cost to taxpayers. A 2009 City of Calgary study indicated that it costs about 30% more to provide services to new neighbourhoods built on the edge of the city, compared to homes built within existing city limits.

We appreciate your thoughtful approach to issues along with your efforts ensure accountability, transparency and measurable outcomes are part of decisions and implementation at the city council table. In that regard we ask why staff city staff have not provided a financial analysis of the cost to the taxpayer of expansion versus no expansion of the urban boundary in the report. This information is key in making a decision. Further if we are to ever evaluate decisions the city must elaborate a set of principles ensure that intensification is done well, e.g. with mandatory greenspace retention, green roofing, proper water management.

Thank you for your dedication to your ward and to the city overall and for your attention to our views.

Background

Supporting background to Urban Boundary/Official Plan rationale to support a Hold the Line stance in a letter to Councillor Brockington. The information below comes primarily through the Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability (CAFES) which is part of the Federation of Citizen's Associations (FCA):

- Five reasons to hold the line on urban sprawl: <https://www.ottawaclimatesolutions.net/blog>
- If you wonder “what would hold the line on the current urban boundary mean to intensification in our neighbourhood and other neighbourhoods”, this presentation shows and tells the plan put forward by the people. It is easy to follow and clearly provides perspective: <https://www.ottawaclimatesolutions.net/video>
- Here is a guided tour of the current urban boundary: <https://www.ottawaclimatesolutions.net/video>

Community Association Advocacy

- Letters in support of maintaining the current urban boundary have been sent (as of April 28th, 2020) by the follow community associations:
 - The Glebe Community Association
 - Federation of Citizen's Associations (FCA),
 - Old Ottawa East
 - New Edinburgh Community Alliance
 - Hinton burg Community Association

City of Ottawa Report/Meeting Notification:

<https://ottawa.primegov.com/portal/#/agenda/8052?lang=en>