



April 22, 2020

Mayor Jim Watson, City of Ottawa
Councillors of the Agricultural and Rural Affairs Committee and Planning Committee
Copy: Councillor Shawn Menard

Dear Mayor Watson and Councillors,

The Glebe Community Association (GCA) supports maintaining the current urban boundary in Ottawa's new Official Plan and urges you to vote against any proposal to expand it.

The GCA believes that the City of Ottawa's targets for intensification can be met within the existing urban boundary in a sensitive, environmentally sustainable way, with respect for heritage character and in a way that is compatible with existing neighbourhoods. Ottawa has an opportunity to grow differently, without growing out. 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, the GCA believes that doing so would undermine our City's goals and aspirations.

A year ago the City declared a climate emergency. In January this year the City approved aggressive targets to curb greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Adding to urban sprawl would increase GHG emissions through the thousands of additional kilometres driven by new residents dispersed in the farthest reaches of the urban area. This would come at a time when the City's goal is to substantially reduce emissions from transportation.

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.

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The impacts on the agricultural sector may be perceived to be small. But reducing land availability would limit opportunities for farmers, including young people just getting into the business, and reduce local food supply.

Beyond these vital climate and environmental issues, there is the expense. Expanding the urban boundary to provide for new dwellings would cost the City and taxpayers for decades to come for new roads, new water and waste water infrastructure and other municipal services. 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.

The City has set out important policy directions in the *Five Big Moves* document. While these need to be fully articulated, it is clear that they lend support to an Official Plan and overall direction for the City that maintains the urban boundary, prevents urban sprawl, and promotes intensification conducive to complete, 15-minute neighbourhoods, with a diversity of dwelling options (including affordable ones) and enhanced sophistication in urban design.

The GCA stands ready to contribute ideas and proposals supporting sensitive intensification in our community and other communities across the City. As has been pointed out in studies by the People's Official Plan for the Climate Emergency and the Federation of Citizens' Associations of Ottawa, there are opportunities for intensification in both the core and in the existing suburbs. Sensitive or sophisticated intensification should take into account key factors such as look and feel, diversity in offer including affordable and accessible homes for individuals, couples and families, and ground-level access leading to paths designed for social interaction. Critically, it should also integrate green building principles, prioritizing opportunities to retain, renovate and energy retrofit viable existing dwellings, and requiring energy efficiency and low carbon footprint in new builds.

Ultimately there's no other way to meet critical City priorities to curb GHG emissions from transport and housing, and to deliver cost-effective, financially sustainable public services like transit, water, and wastewater that meet every neighbourhood's needs.

Focusing the City's future development within the existing urban footprint is the first step in building the future we want. Please vote to maintain the current urban boundary, so we can keep working together to make Ottawa a just, healthy and sustainable City for all.

Thank you for your attention to our views and your dedication to the well-being to our City and its citizens, current and future.

Yours sincerely,

June Creelman, Vice-President, Glebe Community Association
For Sarah Viehbeck, President, Glebe Community Association