

Hunt Club Community Association
Affordable Housing Committee

Southern Corridor – “Development Reserve” Zones

Executive Summary

- *It appears that the last remnants of protection for the greenspaces in the Southern Corridor have been removed in Draft 2 of the new Zoning By-law.*
 - *The new “Development Reserve” zoning for these spaces will increase the likelihood that the NCC will release these lands for residential and commercial development.*
 - *In the medium to long term, therefore, these zoning changes will have a major impact on residents of the Hunt Club and Riverside Park communities who make use of these meadows and wooded areas for recreational purposes.*
 - *These zoning changes illustrate the potential conflicts between the need for more housing and the need to protect greenspace. Owing to the scale and complexity of the Zoning By-law review, however, it is likely that most local residents are not aware of these proposed changes to their communities.*
 - *For this reason, the HCCA would pose the following questions:*
 1. *Why has most of the Southern Corridor been re-zoned as “Development Reserve” in Draft 2 of the new Zoning By-law?*
 2. *How does the City of Ottawa plan to meaningfully engage the local residents who live within a 15-minute walk of this urban greenspace?*
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1. Background

- **Accessible greenspace.** The “Southern Corridor” is a wide greenspace that stretches from the Rideau River to the Airport Parkway. It contains McCarthy Woods, several large meadows, a riverside walk, and a variety of thickets and open spaces.
- This urban greenspace is well used by residents of the Hunt Club and Riverside Park communities for recreational purposes. It also provides habitat for a wide range of native plants, birds, and other wildlife.
- The development of the Southern Corridor would lead to the loss of this biodiversity. By reducing the available pathway network, it would also increase the pressure by local residents on McCarthy Woods and the remaining greenspace.
- **NCC-owned land.** The NCC originally purchased this land in the 1950s to accommodate a proposed ring road around Ottawa. When that concept was abandoned, the NCC reached an agreement in 1997 with the former City of Ottawa to release the meadow for a new subdivision.
- Owing to opposition by local residents, this plan was revised shortly after the creation of the new City of Ottawa¹. In the current Zoning By-law, passed in 2008, the open spaces near the Hunt Club and Riverside Park neighbourhoods are largely zoned for recreational or leisure uses.
- Since then, all levels of government have been under pressure to expand the supply of affordable housing. In recent months, for example, the NCC’s lands between Merivale Road and Woodroffe Avenue have been released for development - and will be re-zoned as “Development Reserve” in the new By-law.

¹ John Sankey, the former President of the Hunt Club Community Association, has provided a very useful summary of these developments and a visual tour of the meadow: <https://johnsankey.ca/community.html>

2. Official Plan and Zoning By-law

- **Official Plan.** In 2022, the new Official Plan accelerated the push for development. It applied an “*Environmental Protection*” designation to McCarthy Woods and a “*Greenspace*” designation to a portion of the adjacent meadow.
- All of the remaining NCC-owned land received either a “*Neighbourhood*” designation (permitting residential uses), or a “*Minor Corridor*” designation for land along Riverside Drive (permitting both residential and commercial uses).
- **New Zoning By-law.** In 2024-25, the City of Ottawa launched consultations on a new Zoning By-law which will implement the policies in the Official Plan. In the first two drafts of this proposed bylaw, the zoning for the Southern Corridor has evolved from a focus on leisure uses to an open invitation for development.
 - **Draft 1.** In the first draft, many of the “Open Space” and “Leisure” zones in the Southern Corridor were converted to “Recreational”, “Greenspace”, and “Open Space Facility” zones. As a result, the changes in Draft 1 were relatively modest.
 - **Draft 2.** In the second draft, most of these zones were changed again – this time to “Development Reserve” zones². This proposed zoning indicates that the City of Ottawa views the open spaces of the Southern Corridor as suitable for a range of residential and commercial uses.
- The zoning changes in Draft 2 appear to be consistent with the Official Plan’s “Neighbourhood” designation for this area (see *Table 1*). Nevertheless, they will come as an unwelcome surprise to many residents of the Hunt Club and Riverside Park communities.

² Developers will still need to seek zoning amendments for specific lots (e.g. from “Development Reserve” to “Neighbourhood” zones), but they will be starting from a blank slate. See <https://engage.ottawa.ca/zoning>.

- **Competing priorities.** The consolidation of multiple zoning codes for the Southern Corridor is consistent with the goal of streamlining the new Zoning By-law. It also supports the goal of intensification within the Greenbelt.
- At the same time, the opening up of these lands for development illustrates the potential conflicts between the *need for more housing* and the *need to protect greenspace*.

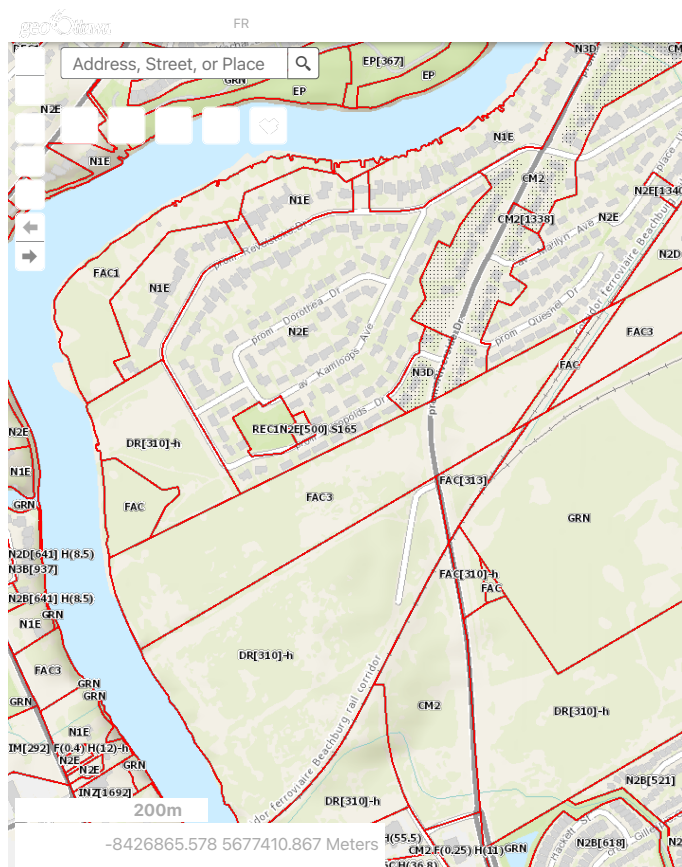
Table 1
Southern Corridor – Zoning Changes

Location	Draft 1	Draft 2
More intensive zoning:		
Rivergate Way (woodlot)	Development	Minor Corridor
Rivergate Way (near apartment towers)	Recreation	Development
Hunt Club Meadows (near housing)	Recreation	Development
Plante Woods (near housing)	Greenspace	Development
Revelstoke Woods (near river and housing)	Open Space	Development
Old Riverside Drive (north of CNR line)	Open Space	Development
Minimal change:		
McCarthy Woods	Environmental	Environmental
McCarthy Meadows (near woods)	Greenspace	Greenspace
Rivergate Way (entrance to Riverwood Park)	Greenspace	Greenspace
DND Marina (off Rivergate Way)	Recreation	Recreation
Hydro Corridors and Transformers	Open Space	Open Space
Revelstoke Woods (floodplain parcel)	Environmental	Open Space

Zones:

- *Development Reserve (DR).* Lands that are “set aside for future urban development”.
- *Environmental Protection (EP).* Lands which “must be protected for ecological, educational and recreational reasons”.
- *Greenspace (GRN).* Permits “conditional uses that contribute to park function”.
- *Open Space Facility (FAC).* Consistent with Section 7.1 of the Official Plan, permits functions such as transportation and utility corridors, “capital greenspaces”, or “passive open spaces”.
- *Recreation (REC).* Permits a range of “principal recreation uses”, including community centres, libraries, schools, and recreation and athletic facilities.

- The key changes near **Riverside Drive** include the following:
 - **Rivergate Way.** The woodlot on the west side of Riverside Drive, between Rivergate Way and the CNR line, has been converted from “Development Reserve” to “*Minor Corridor*”. This new zoning will permit mixed residential and commercial uses for buildings with up to six storeys. In addition, the open space between the towers and the CNR line will be rezoned from “Recreation” to “*Development Reserve*”.
 - **Hunt Club Meadows.** The strip of land (some 200-metres wide) bordering the Hunt Club neighbourhoods will move from the “Recreation” zone to “*Development Reserve*”. This large parcel of thickets and meadows is among the most heavily used by local residents. For comparison, it is twice the size of the Quinterra-Riverwood subdivision and more than four times the size of the proposed St. Mary’s development.
 - **Revelstoke Drive.** The wooded areas between Revelstoke Drive and the Rideau River will be rezoned from “Open Space” to “*Development Reserve*”, as will the open spaces near Old Riverside Drive. These woods and open spaces are well used by local residents and include a stand of endangered Butternut trees near the river’s edge. The wooded areas were recognized as an Urban Natural Area in 2005.



- The key changes near **McCarthy Road** include the following:
 - **McCarthy Woods.** The “*Environmental Protection*” zoning for these woods will be maintained in the new by-law. This is an Urban Natural Feature with a high environmental rating.
 - **McCarthy Meadows.** In 2003, the land which is immediately adjacent to McCarthy Woods was designated as “*Greenspace*” in the Official Plan. For some unknown reason, this parcel was zoned as “*Light Industrial*” in the current bylaw. In the proposed new bylaw, this land will be converted to a “*Greenspace*” zone.
- **Plante Drive.** The swampy woodland to the east of McCarthy Road, near the Plante Drive neighbourhood, will be rezoned from “*Greenspace*” in Draft 1 to “*Development Reserve*” in Draft 2. This land was recognized by the City of Ottawa as an Urban Natural Area in 2005.

3. Conclusion

- The major changes in Draft 2 of the new Zoning By-law will affect many residents of the Hunt Club and Riverside Park communities who live within a 15-minute walk of the Southern Corridor.
- The wooded areas, thickets, and meadows which comprise this area are well used by local residents for recreational purposes. They are also an important part of the City of Ottawa's greenspace network.
- It is unlikely, however, that many residents who live near the Southern Corridor - or are concerned about Ottawa's urban greenspace - are aware of these zoning changes.
- For this reason, the HCCA would pose the following questions:
 - *Why has most of the Southern Corridor been re-zoned as "Development Reserve" in Draft 2 of the new Zoning By-law?*
 - *How does the City of Ottawa plan to meaningfully engage the local residents who live within a 15-minute walk of this urban greenspace?*