16 October 2026

Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT-26-000364)
Barrhaven Town Centre v. Ottawa (City)

NCC Appeal Against the City of Ottawa
Comprehensive Zoning By-law (2026-50)

Participant Statement

Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital
October 2026

The Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital is a federally incorporated not for profit that has been dedicated to the protection and preservation of greenspace in Ottawa-Gatineau since 1997. It has over its entire history been actively engaged in advocacy for stronger protections for greenspace in municipal policies, plans and by-laws.

The Comprehensive Zoning By-law review initiated in 2024 by the City of Ottawa was one our major policy files throughout this period. Our focus was on the conversion of Open spaces and other greenspace adjacent zones under the current zoning bylaw to the new zoning bylaw draft 3. By and large we found that the vast majority of conversions were like for like with Environmental Protection (EP) to EP for example or various Open space (0) codes to new FAC codes (Open Space Facility).

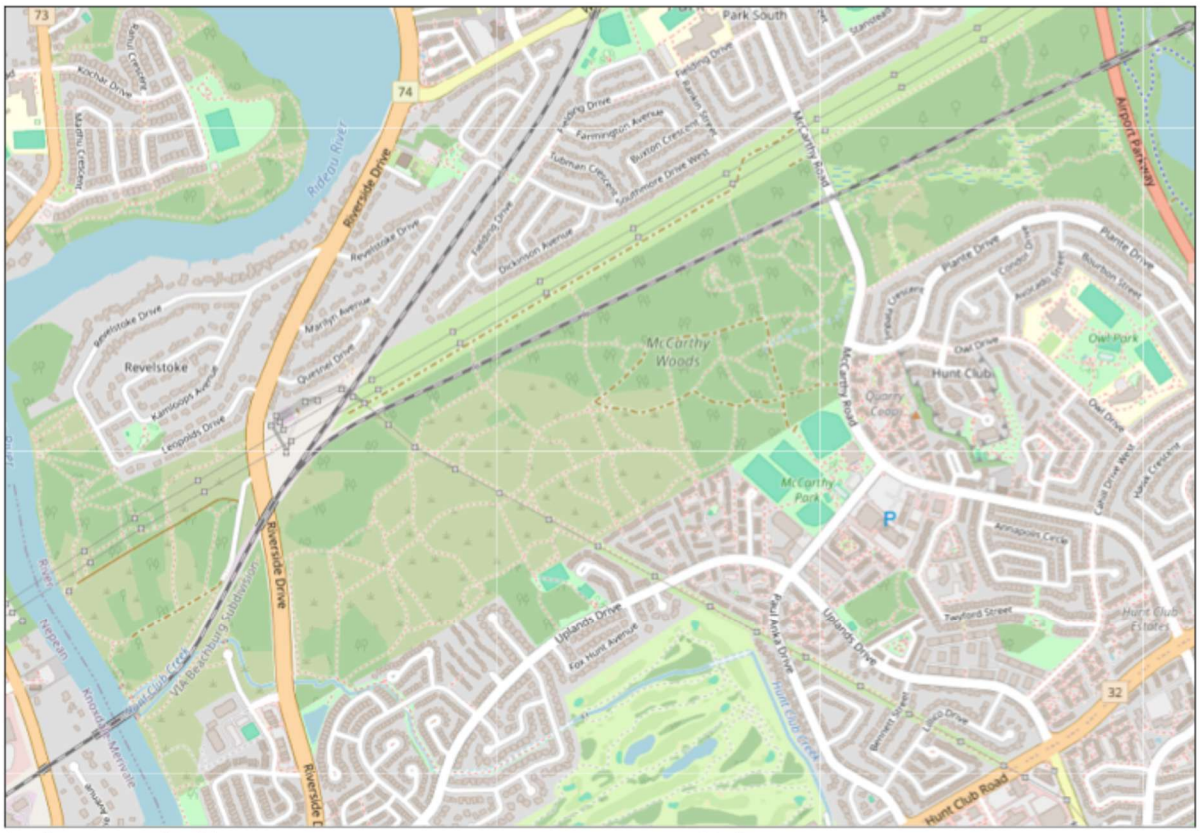
But two cases stood out, which are unique in the entire urban area, and these are conversions from various O and greenspace adjacent zones to Development Reserve. These parcels are the Southern corridor (Woodroffe-Merivale corridor) west of the Rideau River and in the east, the McCarthy meadow/woods corridor.

McCarthy Woods Corridor

- The NCC's greenspace corridor surrounding McCarthy Woods consists of land that was purchased in the 1950s for a ring road around the southern edge of the city. Over time, this corridor has become an urban natural area that has high ecological, cultural, and recreational value.

- McCarthy Woods, in particular, is one of the largest and most diverse forests in the urban area. The surrounding greenspace stretches from the Rideau River to the Airport Parkway. It includes a mix of riverfront lands, meadows, woodlands, and wetlands. There are many informal recreational trails in this corridor that are well-used by local residents.

Figure 1
McCarthy Woods Corridor



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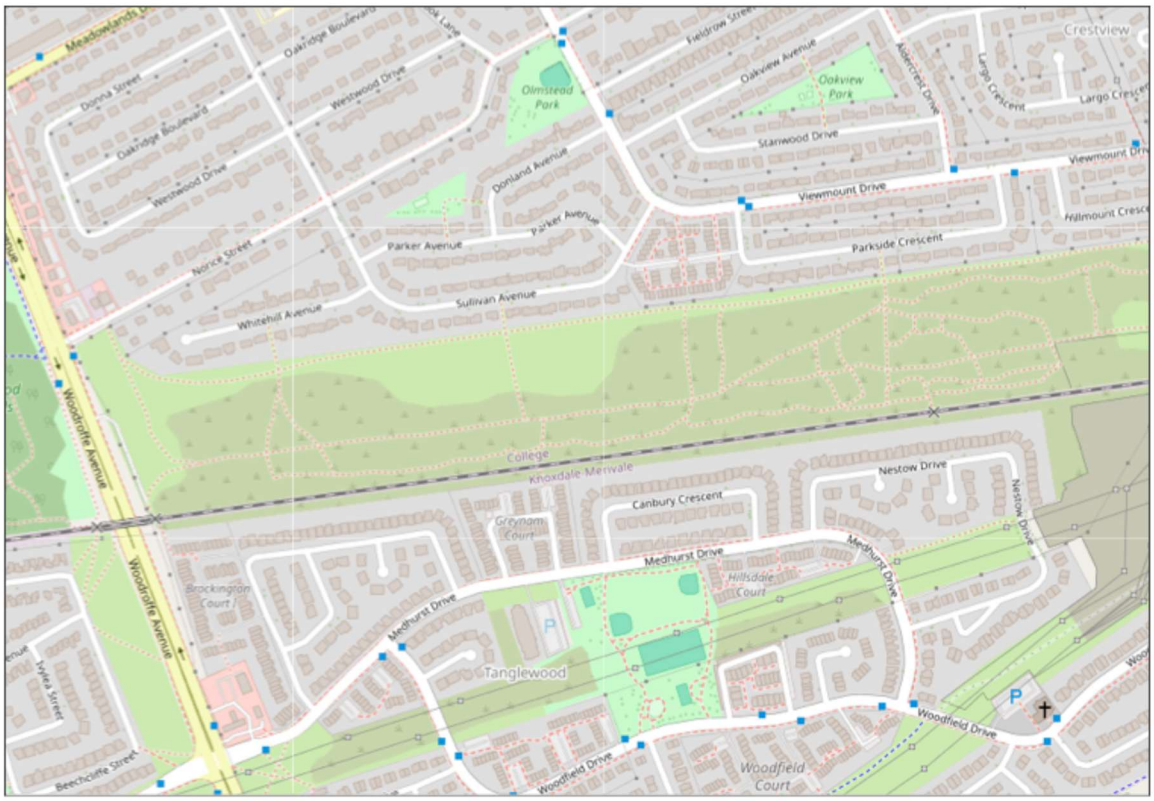
Southern Corridor

- The NCC's "Southern Corridor" is another remnant of the 1950s plan for a ring road. It runs parallel to the CNR rail corridor, between Woodroffe Avenue and Merivale Road. Although it is well-used by local residents, this corridor has lower ecological value than the land surrounding McCarthy Woods.

- The western edge of this corridor is close to a future Light Rail Transit (LRT) station. The NCC has placed this parcel in the Canada Public Land Bank and has designated this land for residential development. Until recently, it was co-operating with City staff on consultations for the Baseline-Merivale Secondary Plan (now on hold).

- Although local residents and stakeholders would like to see as much greenspace as possible preserved for public use, they recognize that most of this corridor is slated for residential development. The main concern with Development Reserve zoning for this land was that it would pre-empt the consultations on the Secondary Plan.

Figure 2
Southern Corridor



These are greenspaces prized and actively used by local residents. They are also part of the Poets' Pathway, a 37 km walking and biking trail that girds the urban area from Britannia in the west to Beechwood cemetery in the east.

The Greenspace Alliance was recently awarded a city grant to update and revitalize this green infrastructure and we are hoping that zoning in these areas will support the preservation of their natural character.

The Woodroffe-Merivale corridor is in scope of the Baseline-Merivale secondary plan, in which we are engaged. Given the status of this land, it made more sense to convert it like for like in the new zoning bylaw, and to update the zoning later in accordance with the secondary plan rather than moving it directly to Development Reserve Zone.

There is no current study or plan associated with the eastern parcel, the McCarthy Woods corridor. Similarly, it made sense to convert it like for like in the comprehensive review and to update its zoning later according to whatever planning process is eventually initiated,

whether a development application or other process that is subject to standard scrutiny and public engagement.

This is what the Brockington motion achieved, which we strongly supported.

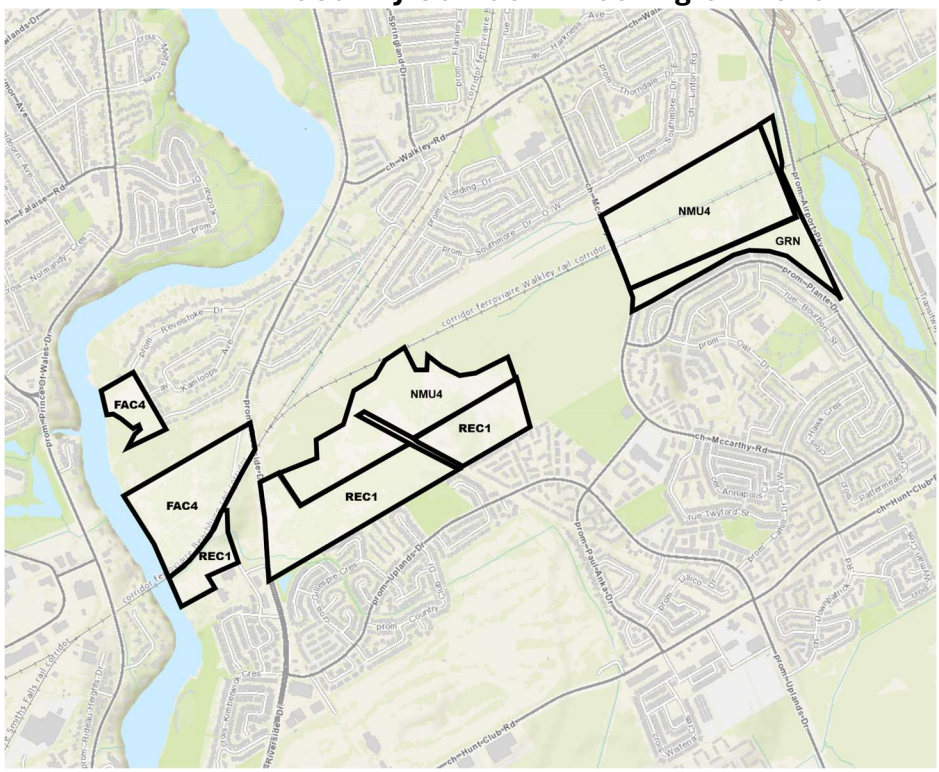
Councillor Brockington's motion

- On December 17, 2025, the City's "Joint Planning Committee" considered the final draft of the new Zoning By-law. At this meeting, after consultation with City planning staff, Councillor Riley Brockington tabled a motion which proposed changes to Draft 3 of the zoning map (see Figure 4).

- This motion provided a reasonable compromise - it struck a balance between Draft 1 (preferred by community groups) and Draft 3 of the new Zoning By-law (supported by the NCC).

  - **This motion recognized the value of these lands and the need for due process** by restoring Greenspace (GRN), Open Space (FAC4), or Recreational (REC1) zoning for lands along the Rideau River and near the existing housing. It also restored Institutional zoning for the Southern Corridor until the completion of the Baseline-Merivale Secondary Plan.

Figure 3
McCarthy Corridor – Brockington Motion



These zones, Greenspace, Open Space Facility, Recreation, and Neighbourhood Mixed Use zones are consistent with the City's Official Plan. Section 6.3.1, Policy 4 (f) states that within the Neighbourhood designation:

> *"the Zoning By-law shall allow…greenspace, including parks, open spaces and natural linkage areas meant to serve as public space".*

The meadows, thickets, and woods in the NCC's greenspaces provide valued access to natural areas for thousands of local residents. In the case of McCarthy Woods, for example, such areas offer an important amenity for residents of the five housing co-ops located within a short walk of the corridor.

Residents from across the City of Ottawa make use of the greenspace near Revelstoke Drive to launch kayaks and canoes in one of the few points of access to the Rideau River south of Mooney's Bay. Visitors from across the region follow paths down the hill from Old Riverside Drive to the river's edge or stop to admire the view from the limestone lookout.

Much like the ravine network in Toronto, the McCarthy Woods corridor provides direct access to natural areas that contribute greatly to the livability of dense urban areas. As the population of the region increases, we will need more such greenspaces – not less.

The City of Ottawa's studies have shown that McCarthy Woods is a unique urban forest, and that the surrounding meadows provide "prime feeding habitat" for Barred Owls, Cooper's Hawks, and Merlins which live in the woods. Together, the woods and the meadows are an urban natural area of "high" ecological value[1].

In addition, the McCarthy corridor's urban forests, meadows, and wetlands are valuable parts of the NCC's "green network". They provide a variety of ecosystem services, such as climate regulation, air quality, and wildlife habitat[2].

These urban forests will need continued protection if the City of Ottawa is going to meet its target of 40% tree canopy cover from Ottawa's Official Plan. The tree canopy in River Ward is already well under this target (25% in 2022).

The McCarthy corridor, moreover, is part of the *"green infrastructure"* that helps to prevent flooding when stormwater management systems (or "grey infrastructure*"*) are overwhelmed – as happened on July 1, 2026, when over 2,000 homes in the City of Ottawa were subjected to flooding damage during a "once in 200 years" rainstorm.

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[1] *Greenspace Master Plan* (2006), Map 1; *Urban Natural Areas Environmental Evaluation Study* (2005).
[2] See the NCC's *Sustainable Development Strategy*, *2023-2027* and its *Forest Strategy, 2021-2026*.

As the City's population increases, and as extreme weather events become more frequent, this large urban greenspace will become even more important for environmental protection, climate resiliency, and quality of life across the National Capital Region.

These greenspaces also have unique cultural significance. Indigenous peoples have been using the Rideau River for thousands of years as a transportation route and gathering place. As part of its conservation mandate, the NCC has a duty of care for these lands.

The Rideau Canal waterway, which borders on the McCarthy Woods corridor, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Poets' Pathway, a 35-km pathway commemorating Canada's Confederation Poets, traverses most of these lands and has been financially supported by the City of Ottawa for many years[3]. At the edge of McCarthy Woods, a plaque marks the setting of Archibald Lampman's poem, "Winter Uplands", which was composed a few days before the poet's death in 1899.

Conclusion

- **The approved zoning was good public policy.** Councillor Brockington's motion regarding McCarthy Woods and the Southern Corridor was a reasonable compromise. This motion was consistent with the Official Plan, was acceptable to City staff, and was approved by an almost unanimous vote of the full City Council.

- **The NCC's key arguments do not have merit.** The NCC has argued that City Council was obliged to accept the staff recommendation in the final draft of the new Zoning By-law, that the approved zoning was contrary to the Official Plan.
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    - ***The zoning approved by City Council was fully consistent with Section 6.3.1, Policy 4(f), of the Official Plan.***

    - ***Under the Planning Act, City Council was not obliged to accept the staff recommendation in Draft 3 of the new Zoning By-law.***

- For these reasons, the Greenspace Alliance urges the Tribunal to deny the NCC's appeal.

[3] https://www.poetspathway.ca/pathway.htm