



March 11, 2021

Ottawa Horticultural Society Record of a Board Resolution concerning the City of Ottawa's Draft Official Plan November 20 2020.

Whereas the Ottawa Horticultural Society has a membership of around 300 members and its mandate is to represent those Ottawa citizens interested in the preservation and cultivation of gardens in the urban environment, the Board has reviewed in a holistic manner the Draft Plan and wishes its concerns to be passed to Council.

The draft plan has 263 pages and contains 84,363 words. A search of the document revealed the count of these words that relate to private ownership of gardens in the urban landscape.

Biodiversity	5	Distinctive trees	3	Mature trees	5	Community/market gardens	6
Rooftop gardens	1	Front yards	0	Rear yards	0	Pollinators	0
Birds	0	Dogs	0	Residential gardens	0	Greenspace	53

The Society is concerned that the plan neglects the importance of residential gardens in the Inner and Outer Urban areas in particular as important reservoirs of biodiversity and necessary locations for mature and distinctive trees. While the plan talks about a 40% tree canopy coverage, this seems to be reserved only for Parks and publicly owned greenspace, indicating that mature trees will not be replaced in urban areas. Indeed, on P 126, the Table 6 of the Expected Built Form states that new buildings are expected to have:

- Zero or shallow front yard setbacks
- Small areas of formal landscape that often includes hardscaping
- Buildings attached or with minimal side yard set backs

The only gardens that planners seem to have considered are roof-top gardens that are no substitute for gardens containing shrubs and trees. The definition of "Regeneration" on P18 requires "the development of vacant and/or underutilized lots within previously developed areas." This statement directly targets existing urban gardens, leading to a loss of biodiversity and the loss of the urban tree canopy.

A few years ago, the Ottawa Horticultural Society supported a proposal that had been put forward to City Council asking that the City of Ottawa sign on to be a Bee City along with a growing number of Canadian communities. Council voted against the motion but pledged to support pollinators in other ways. This new Official Plan provides an opportunity for the City to make a meaningful commitment to planting native plants and supporting pollinators, and yet pollinators are not mentioned. Such a commitment would in turn support the biological food web that depends on pollinating and other insects, thereby helping prevent an urban core biological dead zone.

Maintaining and increasing the amount of both public and private green space integrated throughout the urban core would improve the City's ability to mitigate effects of climate change by reducing urban heat islands.

The City promotes the concept of 15-minute neighbourhoods; a reduction in both public and private green space would reduce the livability of our urban neighbourhoods and reduce residents' access to vital green space with all its benefits to both physical and mental health.

The Society is requesting the City to recognise the importance of residential and public gardens throughout Ottawa but in particular in the urban areas of the City. It is concerned that the existing areas of private greenspace and trees, especially in the downtown core, over time will be replaced by hardscaping and a sterile streetscape.

The City of Ottawa has a proud historical legacy as a green city. The Society is concerned that the proposed plan jeopardizes this legacy, and the many tourist activities that depend on it. We find the token mention of biodiversity deeply concerning at a time when world leaders are acknowledging the devastating global loss of biodiversity.

A plan that does not specifically call for retaining and indeed adding green space into Ottawa's already dense urban core implicitly supports the loss of green space and thereby threatens the mental and physical health and well-being of citizens living in the core. Those who have had to endure the recent COVID lockdowns can attest to the immense value of accessible green spaces, whether formal or informal.

The Society also states that the plan's failure to protect green space, including private and public gardens, threatens environmental services, such as the capture of storm water, on which the City currently depends.

We strongly urge the City of Ottawa to reconsider the proposed plan and include stronger and more explicit support for protecting and enhancing Ottawa's green spaces, celebrating public and private gardens, and protecting the biodiversity and natural beauty that make Canada's capital such a special place.