

Section 7. Greenspace Designation



Photo by : Amy MacPherson



Section 7. Greenspace Designation

The Greenspace designation identifies a network of public parks, other spaces within the public realm and natural lands that collectively provide essential ecosystem services to Ottawa’s residents, support biodiversity, climate resilience, recreation and healthy living. City planning and guidance documents refer to these areas collectively as “greenspace.”

Sub-designations are used to denote the different types of greenspaces, based on their various functions. Lands owned by partner agencies such as the National Capital Commission, local conservation authorities and other public bodies contribute to the richness and extent of the City’s Greenspaces and are included in this Plan. Privately-owned Greenspaces, while not publicly accessible, are still valued for their ecosystem services and are also included in this Plan.

The policies in this section outline the City’s intent to protect its Greenspaces and their various functions. Access to public Greenspaces will be preserved and enhanced where possible, especially in the urban area. In some cases, however, access to certain types of greenspaces may be restricted due to concerns for public safety or environmental sensitivity.

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

- 1) Provide convenient, inclusive access to a variety of greenspaces across the City
- 2) Design and animate certain types of publicly-owned greenspace to enhance their contributions to healthy, active communities
- 3) Protect the ecosystem services of natural features and recognize their role in building resilience to future climate conditions



Photo by: City of Ottawa

7.1 Provide convenient, inclusive access to a variety of greenspaces across the City

1) Urban and Rural Greenspaces are shown on the B-series of schedules. These Greenspace designations consist of sub-designations which appear on Schedule C11 for the rural area and Schedule C12 for the urban area. They include:

- a) Park;
- b) Open Space;
- c) Urban Natural Features;
- d) Significant Wetlands;
- e) Natural Environment Areas; and
- f) Conservation Areas.

2) Only Greenspace of 3.2 hectares or larger appears on Schedules B1 to B9. Smaller areas of Greenspace may appear on Schedule C12, in secondary plans, in the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan and in the Urban Forest and Greenspace Master Plan, as appropriate.

3) Lot creation shall not be permitted within the Greenspace designation and associated sub-designations, to protect and maintain their overall integrity and character.

4) Public access and connections to Greenspaces shall be facilitated and enhanced wherever possible, through the following mechanisms:

- a) Secondary, community design, master plans and area-specific policies shall refine priorities for the securement of land for specific greenspace purposes;
- b) Acquisition, conveyance or dedication of new Greenspaces through the development review process;
- c) Pursuing opportunities for public access and enhancing urban forest canopy cover, where appropriate, in the design of transportation corridors, infrastructure and other municipal facilities as directed in other sections of the Official Plan and capital budget processes;
- d) Permitted activities, for example ancillary uses, as directed by policies in other sections of this Plan; and
- e) The sale or disposal of municipally-owned Greenspace shall not be supported where:
 - i) It includes a natural heritage feature or is part of the Natural Heritage System;
 - ii) There is no demonstrated public benefit, either locally or city-wide;
 - iii) There is no equivalent amount of greenspace land provided to complement the existing supply of greenspace in the surrounding area;
 - iv) The potential exists to utilize the land for existing or future pathway connections;
 - v) Public access to a waterway or other greenspace component would be removed or restricted;
 - vi) A culturally significant landscape at the local or city-wide scale would be adversely affected; or
 - vii) There is unevaluated archeological potential.

5) To promote tourism and to provide convenient, inclusive access to large areas of public greenspace, the City shall support the improvement of public Greenspace Destinations in proximity to the following existing and proposed rapid transit stations: Bayview, Lincoln Fields, Moodie, Barrhaven Town Centre, Carling, Carleton, Leirtrim, Hurdman, Blair, Montreal and Trim. Such improvements:

- a) Should include the necessary amenities to support day use, including accessible washrooms and drinking water wherever possible; and
- b) May include small-scale commercial activities as ancillary or temporary uses at entry points.

6) Parks comprise a vital component of Ottawa’s Greenspace and make a critical contribution to its quality of life. The policies for Parks appear in Subsection 4.4 of the Official Plan.

7) Open Spaces provide many of the benefits associated with other Greenspaces but are not intended primarily for recreation or natural heritage protection purposes and are not suitable for dedication as Parks. The City shall:

- a) Seek to secure public access to, and enjoyment of, Open Space lands in a manner that supports this Plan’s goals for 15-minute neighbourhoods, through partnerships with other public landowners or through development;
- b) Identify the intended primary function(s) of Open Spaces as green transportation and utility corridors, stormwater management facilities, capital greenspaces, or passive open spaces, through the Urban Forest and Greenspace Master Plan, secondary plans or community design plans and the Zoning By-law as appropriate; and
- c) The Central Experimental Farm, west of the new Civic Hospital site, remains for scientific, educational and cultural purposes only and is not intended for non-Central Experimental Farm development.

7.2 Design and animate certain types of publicly-owned greenspace to enhance their contributions to healthy, active communities



1) The City may permit art and cultural activities, including temporary or permanent art installations, in any City-owned urban greenspace, subject to such restrictions and conditions as it deems reasonable.

2) The City shall collaborate with the Algonquin Anishinabe Host Nation, the urban Indigenous community and the National Capital Commission on respectful inclusion and representation of Algonquin Anishinabe Host Nation, First Nations, Inuit and Métis people’s culture and heritage in urban greenspace. This will include the identification and development of a safe and secure outdoor space(s) for Indigenous ceremony in Ottawa.

7.3 Protect the ecosystem services of natural features and recognize their role in building resilience to future climate conditions



1) Urban Natural Features are primarily publicly-owned urban natural areas that are managed for conservation or passive leisure uses. The following shall apply:

- a) Development and site alteration are prohibited in Urban Natural Features;
- b) Permitted uses in Urban Natural Features are: passive open spaces; scientific, educational, or conservation uses associated with the natural features; and forestry as defined in the *Forestry Act*;
- c) Notwithstanding the prohibition on development and site alteration, the City, at its discretion, may allow pathways and stormwater infrastructure within Urban Natural Features, where such pathways and infrastructure will not adversely affect the natural characteristics of the areas or their ecosystem services;



- d) The City may allow amenities and small-scale commercial operations as ancillary or temporary uses in Urban Natural Features for the purpose of supporting more intensive public use and equitable public access, subject to zoning and/or site plan;
- e) Development and site alteration within 30 metres of the boundary of an Urban Natural Feature must demonstrate no negative impacts on the natural features within the area or their ecosystem services;
- f) Where Urban Natural Features are privately owned, public use and access to these lands for any purpose requires the consent of the owner; and
- g) Urban Natural Features do not form part of parkland dedication.

2) The Significant Wetlands designation protects provincially significant wetlands and their ecosystem services. The following shall apply:

- a) Within six months of the identification or revision of a provincially significant wetland by the Province of Ontario, the City shall initiate an Official Plan amendment to designate the wetland area as Significant Wetland;
- b) The City shall consider the identification or revision of a provincially significant wetland by the Province in any applicable *Planning Act* process;
- c) Council may consider exceptions to the designation of new significant wetlands where the lands have current approvals under the *Planning Act* or are licensed under the *Aggregate Resources Act*;
- d) The City may initiate or require a wetland evaluation under the Ontario Wetland Evaluation System if:
 - i) It is recommended in a planning study, such as a watershed study, subwatershed study, environmental management plan, secondary plan, or an environmental assessment; or [Amendment 5, By-law 2023-403, Omnibus 1 item 26, September 13, 2023]
 - ii) A proposed development would reduce the area of the wetland by 2 hectares or more after mitigation and compensation;
- e) Development, lot line adjustments and site alteration are not permitted in Significant Wetlands;
- f) Permitted uses in Significant Wetlands are: passive open spaces; scientific, educational or conservation uses associated with the natural features; agricultural operations established prior to May 2003; and forestry as defined in the *Forestry Act*;
- g) The City shall permit a single-detached dwelling and accessory buildings on lots existing as of May 2003, where the lot fronts on an open, maintained, public road, and where a dwelling is permitted in the Zoning By-law. Where the lot lies partially within the boundaries of a designated wetland area, the new construction and on-site servicing shall occur outside the boundary of the feature to the greatest extent possible on the lot, disturbance of the natural feature shall be minimized and a conservation authority permit shall be required;
- h) Development and site alteration within 120 metres of the boundary of a Significant Wetland must demonstrate no negative impacts on the natural features or their ecosystem services within the area;
- i) Where Significant Wetlands are privately owned, public use and access to these lands for any purpose is not permitted without the consent of the owner; and
- j) Significant Wetlands do not form part of parkland dedication.

3) The Natural Environment Areas designation protects larger natural areas with multiple, overlapping natural heritage features and functions. The following shall apply:



- a) Development lot line adjustments and site alteration are prohibited in Natural Environment Areas;
 - b) Permitted uses in Natural Environment Areas are: passive open spaces; scientific, educational, or conservation uses associated with the natural features; agricultural operations established prior to May 2003; forestry as defined in the *Forestry Act*; and renewable energy generation as outlined in Subsection 4.11, subject to demonstration that the use will not compromise the character, form and ecological functions of the area;
 - c) The City may permit amenities and small-scale commercial operations as ancillary or temporary uses in Natural Environment Areas for the purpose of supporting more intensive public use and equitable public access, subject to zoning and/or site plan;
 - d) The City shall permit a single-detached dwelling and accessory buildings on an existing lot of record, which has open, maintained, public road frontage. The building shall be subject to site plan control. Where new construction occurs on a lot that lies partially within the boundaries of a designated area, the new construction and on-site servicing shall be located outside the boundary of the area to the greatest extent possible on the lot and disturbance of the natural area will be minimized;
 - e) Development and site alteration within 120 metres of the boundary of a Natural Environment Area must demonstrate no negative impacts on the natural features or their ecosystem services within the area;
 - f) Where Natural Environment Areas are privately owned, public use and access to these lands for any purpose requires the consent of the owner;
 - g) Where land designated Natural Environment Area is privately owned, the City shall acquire the land at the request of the landowner, in keeping with the City's acquisition policies;
 - h) The City may lease portions of Natural Environment Areas to another party for a permitted use, having regard for the interests of adjacent landowners and in accordance with other objectives and policies in this section;
 - i) The City may adjust the boundaries of Natural Environment Areas to reflect their features and functions based on new information as it is obtained. Where boundary adjustments impact areas of natural and scientific interest, the agreement of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry shall be required; and
 - j) Natural Environment Areas do not form part of parkland dedication.
- 4) The Conservation Area designation identifies provincial parks, conservation authority properties and other lands which are identified or protected through separate legislation, regulation, or convention for conservation, sport, recreation, leisure and cultural facilities, but does not include the National Capital Greenbelt. Examples include Fitzroy Provincial Park, the Baxter Conservation Area and the Beckett Creek Migratory Bird Sanctuary.
- 5) Where a Conservation Area is not subject to other land-use policies established under federal or provincial legislation and regulations, the policies for Natural Environment Areas shall apply.