



New Official Plan

Housing

Ottawa's housing situation is in some respects enviable compared to cities like Toronto and Vancouver. However, we still face challenges that left unaddressed can threaten Ottawa's long-term liveability and economic prosperity. Some of these include:

Low vacancy rates and rising rents. One in three Ottawa households rents their dwelling. But for almost a decade, rising rents, reduced affordability, low vacancies and lack of new supply have created pressures for tenant households.

Changing demographics and an aging population. Smaller households, single people and senior citizens all make up a growing share of Ottawa's population. We need new and innovative approaches to housing, different from what may have been appropriate in past decades.

Transportation and affordability. Cheaper housing may be produced in less central locations, but higher transportation costs may completely offset the savings. Meanwhile, the growing appeal of locations near the new Light Rail Transit system may make these areas unaffordable to the low-income households who rely on transit the most. Housing affordability cannot be considered in isolation, but hand in hand with transportation.

Aging building stock. The first houses built in the post-World War II suburbs are now over seventy years old. More and more owners face the question of whether to renovate, replace or redevelop their properties. Increasingly the city will face the question, not whether such buildings should be replaced, but what they can or should be replaced by.

Homelessness. Homelessness remains a persistent problem in major cities, and Ottawa is no exception. Any planning for housing must include those who, whether in the short or long term, cannot find housing at all.

Possible Strategic Directions

Inclusionary zoning and Section 37 agreements. Provincial legislation allows cities to require affordable units in new developments. How can and should these tools be best applied to address our housing challenges?

The Missing Middle. The economics of urban development tend to encourage either very low-density infills or very high-density towers. The in-between range of low-rise, mid-density urban housing could suit a wide range of households and budgets, but is harder to produce. How and where should the City encourage more of this "missing middle" range of housing?

Promoting mixed-use buildings in strategic areas. Should the City not just allow but require development in mixed-use centres and mainstreets to include housing?

