

Section 13. Definitions

Photo by: City of Ottawa



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The following definitions provide interpretation of Official Plan content and are to be used in understanding the intent of policies and preamble text. Definitions provided for in the *Provincial Policy Statement* and the *Planning Act* have not been duplicated in this Official Plan, therefore coordination with the *Provincial Policy Statement* and *Planning Act* are also required to provide intent to meaning of the Official Plan. Table 9 provides clarity on which terms used in this Plan follow the definitions of the *Provincial Policy Statement*.

Table 9

Terms Defined by the <i>Provincial Policy Statement</i> Used in the Official Plan			
Access standards	Active transportation	Adjacent lands	Adverse effects
Agricultural condition	Agricultural system	Agricultural uses	Agriculture-related uses
Airports	Archaeological resources	Areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSI)	Brownfield sites
Built heritage resource	Comprehensive review	Conserved	Cultural heritage landscape
Designated vulnerable area	Ecological function	Employment area	Endangered species
Erosion hazard	Essential emergency service	Fish	Fish habitat
Flood fringe	Flood plain	Flooding hazard	Floodproofing standard
Floodway	Ground water feature	Habitat of endangered species and threatened species	Hazardous forest types for wildland fire
Hazardous substances	Heritage attributes	Housing options	Hydrologic function
Impacts of a changing climate	Individual on-site sewage services	Individual on-site water services	Infrastructure
Intensification	Legal or technical reasons	Major facilities	Mine hazard
Minerals	Mineral aggregate operation	Mineral aggregate resources	Minimum distance separation formulae
Municipal sewage services	Natural heritage features and areas	Natural heritage system	Negative impacts
Normal farm practices	On-farm diversified uses	One hundred year flood	Partial services
Portable asphalt plant	Portable concrete plant	Prime agricultural area	Prime agricultural land
Protection works standards	Quality and quantity of water	Recreation	Redevelopment
Renewable energy source	River, stream and small inland lake systems	Rural areas	Rural lands
Sensitive	Sensitive land uses	Settlement areas	Significant cultural heritage
Significant wetlands	Site alteration	Threatened species	Transit-supportive
Transportation demand management	Transportation system	Two zone concept	Valleylands
Vulnerable	Watershed	Wayside pits and quarries	Wetlands

Wildland fire assessment and mitigation standards	Wildlife habitat	Woodlands	
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15-minute neighbourhoods:

Compact, well-connected places with a clustering of a diverse mix of land uses where daily and weekly needs can be accessed within a 15-minute walk; this includes a range of housing types, shops, services, local access to food, schools and child care facilities, employment, greenspaces, parks and pathways. They are complete communities that support active transportation and transit, reduce car dependency, and enable people to live car-light or car-free. Further context is found in Subsection 2.2.4, Policy 1).

2SLGBTQIA+:

The 2SLGBTQIA+ acronym in English stands for Two-spirited, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex and Asexual + (the plus is to include anyone who may not otherwise identify with the identities previously outlined). A person's sexual orientation relates to the gender(s) to which they are attracted, whereas gender identity is an internal and deeply felt sense of being a man or woman, both or neither. Gender identity may or may not align with the gender typically associated with one's assigned sex.

A

Access street:

A public or private street with a close relationship to its surrounding land uses that exhibits high vehicular friction and slow speeds and prioritizes sustainable modes of transportation

Active frontage:

Building frontages that animate the public spaces they face through:

- pedestrian-oriented retail, commercial or institutional uses, or residential uses whose main front door is on said frontage;
- doors that can be used by the general public directly from the sidewalk or public space to gain access to the building and use at all hours of regular operation, or to visit the residents of the dwelling;
- architectural features and details that enhance pedestrian safety and provide visual interest to enrich pedestrian experience; and
- the provision of a separate municipal address for each active entrance, where appropriate.

Affordable housing:

Includes market-affordable housing and core-affordable housing, as follows:

Market-affordable housing means, unless otherwise specified:

- A dwelling unit for which a household at or below the 60th percentile of household income pays 30 per cent or less of its gross income towards shelter costs; or
- In the case of shared accommodation, a rooming unit for which an individual at or below the median personal income pays 30 per cent or less of income in shelter costs; and
- Includes any housing meeting the definition of affordable housing in the *Provincial Policy Statement*.

Core-affordable housing means:

- a) A dwelling unit for which a household generally at the 30th percentile of household income pays 30 per cent or less of its gross income towards shelter costs for a residential unit with two or fewer bedrooms, and 40 per cent or less of its gross income for three bedrooms or more; or
- b) In the case of shared accommodation, a rooming unit for which an individual at the 20th percentile of household income pays 30 per cent or less in shelter costs

Agent of Change:

The Agent of Change principle is designed to safeguard existing music venues and mitigate the chances of noise complaints, particularly where local growth brings them into close proximity to new residential developments. Although the Agent of Change is often regarded as favouring venues over new developments, it places the burden of sound mitigation on the entity moving into the area. This means that new developments being planned next to existing music venues are responsible for implementing sound mitigation measures for the benefit of their residents, while on the other side, new music venues would bear responsibility for taking steps to prevent sound bleed.

Apartment:

A dwelling unit in a building other than a ground-oriented residential use building.

Arterial road

A roadway that serves through travel between points not directly served by the road itself and along which limited direct vehicular access is provided to only major parcels of adjacent lands.

C

Capacity and flow street:

A public street that plays a structural role in the overall street grid by virtue of its distance and its ability to link several areas of the City, and where the movement of people is an important part of its function.

Capital greenspaces:

Capital greenspaces are publicly accessible federal parklands and green linear corridors that are integral to the scenic and ceremonial character of the National Capital Region. They are owned and managed by federal agencies such as the National Capital Commission and can be accessed year-round. They provide attractive greenspaces for use by local residents, tourists and other visitors and may be suitable for a variety of gatherings and events at a neighbourhood, regional, national or international level.

City freeway

A limited access roadway where high-speed vehicular traffic travels cross-city.

Climate mitigation:

Interventions to reduce the human impact on climate change through strategies to reduce greenhouse gas sources and emissions.

Climate resilience:

The capacity of a community, business or natural environment to prevent, withstand, respond to and recover from changing climate conditions and extreme weather events.

Community energy plan:

A plan that identifies pathways and sets objectives and targets on energy and greenhouse gas emissions in support of sustainable and resilient design at the new community scale of development. This may include building energy use and source, wastewater, solid waste and transportation design solutions.

Community infrastructure:

Buildings and spaces that provide services, activities and opportunities that are generally provided by public or non-profit organizations, and include but are not limited to libraries, recreation facilities, schools and parks and greenspace.

Collector Street:

Collector streets (which include major collectors and collectors) are the principal streets in urban and village neighbourhoods and are used by residents, delivery and commercial vehicles, transit and school buses, and people walking and cycling.

Complete street:

A street whose cross-section design ensures the needs of all stakeholders – pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders and motor vehicle users – are addressed in a way that upholds the safety of the most vulnerable users above all other considerations, and of which the construction, maintenance and operation also uphold the needs of all intended users at the prescribed Level of Service.

Conservation areas:

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 lands or Capital greenspaces.

Core natural areas:

Lands in a predominantly natural condition, which the City intends to maintain in that state in the long term. They include lands designated as Significant Wetland, Natural Environment Area, Urban Natural Feature, other natural heritage features such as significant woodlands, and supporting lands in other designations.

Cultural asset:

A place, event, element or building that has value because of its contribution to a community's creativity, knowledge, traditions, culture, meaning, and vitality. It may include places that people visit to express their cultural identity and/or the resources used to pursue a creative practice. It may consist of tangible assets such as cultural facilities, specific buildings, or physical works of art; intangible and temporal elements such as annual events, shared cultural stories, or cultural landmarks and icons that no longer exist, or a combination of these.

D

Design Priority Areas:

Locations within the City that are of high importance and are intended to support the image of Ottawa as a Capital and major city and contribute to a positive experience for residents and visitors.

Development:

The construction of an addition to buildings, changes of or intensification in use, the addition of units on existing lands, and the creation of new lots. Development also includes redevelopment, and for the purposes of this Official Plan is meant to indicate where a planning application under the *Planning Act* is required.

Distinctive tree:

A privately-owned tree protected by the Tree Protection By-law (or any successor by-law), and defined in that by-law.

Distribution centres:

Facilities that intercept and temporarily store goods transported long distances by air, rail or truck and transfer them to smaller, more energy-efficient vehicles for distribution within the city.

E

Ecosystem services (ES):

Are the result of environmental processes, sometimes with human interventions. ES provide benefits that humans depend on to support life (e.g. because ecosystems produce air, water, and food), security (e.g. by mitigating extreme weather events), and well-being (e.g. by supporting mental and physical health, cultural identity, spirituality, recreation). Four commonly used categories of ES are: Provisioning ES – resulting in material goods; Regulating ES – supporting habitable conditions; Cultural ES – contributing to non-material benefits; Supporting/habitat ES – fundamental ecosystem and biological processes underpinning all ES.

Energy storage system:

means a system or facility that captures energy produced at one time for use at a later time to reduce imbalances between energy demand and energy production, including for example, flywheels, pumped hydro storage, hydrogen storage, fuels storage, compressed air storage, and battery storage. [Amendment 36, By-law 2025-071, February 12, 2025]

F

Flood vulnerable areas (FVAs):

Those areas and/or buildings that are vulnerable to riverine flooding within the regulatory area. Also referred to as Flood Vulnerable Clusters (FVCs), they are sub-areas within the regulatory flood plain that contain multiple existing structures and/or roads for which a single, comprehensive flood remediation approach may be viable.

Frequent street transit:

Street transit routes identified by OC Transpo that are provided at the next highest frequency after rapid transit, operate seven days a week and play a structural function in the overall transit system.



G

Green transportation/utility corridors:

Surface, underground and/or aerial corridors on or along land that are reserved for public transit, rail, roads, major sanitary collectors, Low Impact Development stormwater features and overland flow, Hydro One and Hydro Ottawa service, watermains, laneways and pathways. These can serve a permanent or interim greenspace function and can help achieve the City's network of pedestrian and cycling connections. They provide opportunities for linkages featuring pathways, vegetated areas and connections to City parks and other points of interest. New corridors are purchased, used by agreement, expropriated or conveyed to the City as part of the development review process. They do not comprise part of parkland dedication.

Ground-oriented:

With respect to housing, means housing forms and typologies where each principal unit has its own entrance on the ground floor of a building. Ground-oriented housing may include, but is not limited to: detached, semi-detached, linked-detached and townhouse dwellings including stacked townhouses and new forms not developed yet.

Groundwater features:

As defined by the *Provincial Policy Statement* and termed "ground water features".

H

Headwater drainage features:

Non-permanently flowing drainage features that may not have defined bed or banks, first-order and zero-order intermittent and ephemeral channels, swales and connected headwater wetlands, not including rills or furrows.

Health:

A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, as defined by the World Health Organization.

Height categories:

The corresponding storey height for a residential use is generally three metres, and for other uses is generally four metres, while at-grade uses may have higher storey heights.

Built Form Height Maximum

Low-rise up to and including 4 full storeys

Mid-rise between 5 and 9 full storeys

High-rise between 10 and 40 full storeys

High-rise 41+ 41 full storeys or taller

High-performance Development Standards:



Sets performance targets for new construction to improve air and water quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance the natural environment. Some of these targets can be directly achieved by incorporating sustainable and resilient design features into the plans and drawings submitted as part of the site plan approval process.

Historical Settlement:

A small rural cluster of residential homes established prior to 1900 on private services and anchored by existing or former central community uses such as a church, cemetery, cheese factory, school and/or post office. These historical settlements were identified by former townships and often have markers such as heritage signs identifying a community name. The known historical settlements and their approximate location are identified on Schedule B9. [Amendment 34, By-law 2024-506, Omnibus 2 item 61, November 13, 2024]

Human scale:

Describes the proportional relationship of the physical environment to human dimensions and abilities, acceptable to public perception and comprehension in terms of the size, height, bulk, and massing of buildings or other features of the built environment.

L

Licensed child care centres:

Licensed child care centres provide care for children 0 to 12 years old including full time, part-time and extended hours. Child care centres operate in a variety of locations including stand-alone buildings, community centres, schools, work places, and places of worship. The Ministry of Education licenses these programs and conducts inspections to ensure they meet specific provincial health, safety and developmental standards.

Local plan:

Secondary plans and area-specific policies that provide more detailed policies to guide growth and change in specific areas or neighbourhoods. Local plans adapt and implement the overall planning approach of this Plan but may deviate from specific policies to fit local contexts.

Low Impact development (LID):

A stormwater management strategy that seeks to mitigate the impacts of increased runoff and stormwater pollution by managing runoff as close to its source as possible. LID comprises a set of site design strategies that minimize runoff through distributed, small scale structural practices that mimic natural or predevelopment hydrology through the processes of infiltration, evapotranspiration, harvesting, filtration and detention of stormwater. These practices can effectively remove nutrients, pathogens and metals from runoff, and they reduce the volume and intensity of stormwater flows.

M

Master plans:

Long range plans which integrate their respective aspects to the direction provided in the Official Plan.

Missing middle housing:

In Ottawa's context and for the purposes of this Plan, missing middle housing generally refers to low-rise, multiple unit infill residential development of between three and sixteen units, or more in the case of unusually large lots and for the lower-density types is typically ground oriented.

Mitigation hierarchy:

The preferred sequence of steps for the protection of environmental features, areas, and ecological processes from the impacts of projects and activities. The preferred order of protection is avoidance, minimization, restoration, compensation.

Municipal nature reserve:

Are specific areas, ecosystems or habitats identified by the City whose sensitivity to human disturbance require uncommon or strict restrictions on uses or activities, beyond the protection normally accorded to Natural Environment Areas and other environmentally designated lands.

N

National Symbols:

The National Symbols are located within the Parliamentary and Judicial Precincts and include the Centre Block and Peace Tower; the Library of Parliament; the West and East Blocks, and the Supreme Court building. This Plan aims to protect the pre-eminence of these symbols as part of the cultural landscape of Ottawa.

Natural linkage areas:

Consist of lands in a predominantly natural, semi-natural, or rural condition, which the City intends to maintain in that state in the long term. They provide or have the potential to provide ecological or pathway connections between core natural areas or between core natural areas and the broader regional natural landscape. They include natural heritage features, rural and agricultural lands, and supporting lands in other designations.

Natural watercourses:

Naturally occurring drainage channels and includes rivers, streams and creeks.

Net residential density:

The total number of residential dwellings, including accessory dwellings, divided by the subject land area that will be proposed under private ownership, excluding private roads.

New mobility:

The technologies and business models that enable Automated, Electric, Connected, and Shared transportation.

No net loss:

Means, with respect to wetlands and forest, no loss in total area or ecosystem services as assessed in a landscape context over appropriate spatial and time scales.

Non-profit housing providers:

For the purposes of inclusionary zoning regulations, means:

- A corporation to which the *Not-for-Profit Corporations Act*, 2010 applies that is in good standing under that Act and whose primary object is to provide housing,
- A corporation without share capital to which the *Canada Business Corporations Act* applies, that is in good standing under that Act and whose primary object is to provide housing,
- A non-profit housing co-operative that is in good standing under the *Co-operative Corporations Act*, or
- An organization that is a registered charity within the meaning of the Income Tax Act (Canada) or a non-profit organization exempt from tax under paragraph 149 (1) (l) of that Act, and whose land is owned by the organization, all or part of which is to be used as affordable housing.

O

Ottawa Neighbourhood Equity Index:

The Ottawa Neighbourhood Equity Index is a tool to help residents, planners, key stakeholders and decision-makers identify disparities between neighbourhoods and tackle them in a systematic and organized way. For the purpose of the planning process, the tool provides a composite equity index score and geographically defines vulnerable areas as having ‘strong equity concerns’, where community-oriented projects and physical improvements can be identified.

P

Park:

A City-owned property that includes land to be acquired through the development review process under the provisions set out in the Parkland Dedication By-law, expropriated or purchased by the City for park or recreation purposes. Parks may include community buildings soft and hard surfaces and active recreational facilities such as play structures, water play and sports fields.

Passive open spaces:

Passive open spaces are greenspaces or linear corridors that may include lands owned by levels of government or public agencies other than the City of Ottawa or its agencies. These lands may be intended for other principal uses and maintained for passive recreation and leisure where agreements are in place with the landowners to permit public access. They play a supportive role in the open space and leisure system where public access may be facilitated predominantly by active transportation

Pedestrian priority measures:

Include, but are not limited to, street planning and design, traffic calming measures, street trees, allocation of space in a public right of way, signal delay measures, winter maintenance standards, and City investments in pedestrian infrastructure, as informed by the Active Transportation Plan.

Placemaking:

A process that seeks to strengthen the connection people have to their communities through ensuring the public realm,



public spaces and communal amenity areas benefit everyone by promoting people's health, happiness and well-being. It involves integrating the physical, cultural and social identities that define a place. Placemaking is about creating places people care about and want to be in.

Privately-owned public spaces:

A specific type of publicly accessible space (surface easement taken, publicly accessible in perpetuity, designed to be welcoming) that is negotiated as part of the development review process but remain privately owned and maintained.

Protected Major Transit Station Areas (PMTSA):

A discretionary tool for municipalities for the establishment of transit-supportive densities and uses in a defined area that surrounds rapid transit stations, and to which inclusionary zoning may be applied.

Public realm:

Refers to all of those private- and publicly-owned spaces and places which are freely available to the public to see and use.

R

Rapid transit:

The O-Train and Transitway network, including stations and any bus rapid transit line that is not fully grade separated.

Residential unit:

A dwelling unit that:

- a) Consists of a self-contained set of rooms located in a building or structure;
- b) Is used or intended for use as residential premises; and
- c) Contains kitchen and bathroom facilities that are intended for the use of the unit only.

S

Safe Systems Approach:

The principles of the Safe Systems Approach (SSA) are foundational to the Road Safety Action Plan. It ensures that human life and health are paramount and prioritize mobility and other road traffic objectives. Opportunities for human errors are minimized, and that harm is negligible when errors occur. It also established a shared responsibility of the road traffic system and that providers and regulators must do their utmost to guarantee all citizens' safety.

Social Determinants of Health:

The health of populations is influenced by a range of social and economic factors. They include income, social support networks, education, race and ethnicity, employment and working conditions, social environments, physical environments, food access, housing, gender, and culture, among others.

Stable top of slope:

The physical top of slope where the existing slope is stable and not impacted by toe erosion as determined by a qualified professional.



Street transit:

Public transit, typically bus, service that operates mostly on city streets.

Subwatershed:

An area of land draining to a tributary of a larger river. It is part of the watershed of the larger river.

Sustainable and resilient design:

Principles in site and building design to protect against the depletion of critical resources like energy, water, land, and raw materials, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, prevent environmental degradation throughout its life cycle, and create built environments that are liveable and comfortable while being safe and resilient to the impacts of a changing climate.

Sustainable modes of transportation:

Includes walking, cycling, transit and carpool, as well as the use of micro-mobility devices and mobility aids for people with disabilities.

Surface water features:

Water-related features on the earth's surface, including headwater drainage features, rivers, stream channels, drains, inland lakes, seepage areas, recharge/discharge areas, springs, wetlands and associated riparian lands that can be defined by their soil moisture, soil type, vegetation or topographic characteristics, including fish habitat.

T

Top of bank:

The maximum point to which water can rise within the channel before spilling across the adjacent land, also referred to as bank full flow. In places where the channel is confined by a valley on one or both sides, the top of bank can be inferred through upstream or downstream areas where the channel is well defined or through changes in vegetation, colour and/or surface markings.

Transit priority measures:

Strategies to increase transit operating speeds and transit travel time reliability in mixed traffic relative to car travel, such as traffic signal priority or queue jumps.

Transit priority network:

Corridors where frequent street transit is provided and are equipped with a set of coordinated transit priority measures that give transit vehicles preferential treatment over other vehicles.

Transition:

Refers to the integration of buildings that have greater height or massing than their surroundings. Transition is an important building design element to minimize conflicts when development that is higher or has greater massing is proposed abutting established or planned areas of low-rise development. Building height and massing transitions can

be accomplished through a variety of means, including: incremental changes in building height (e.g., angular planes or stepping building profile up or down); massing (e.g., inserting ground-oriented housing adjacent to the street as part of a high-profile development or incorporating podiums along a Mainstreet); and building setbacks and stepbacks.

Transportation demand management:

A range of strategies that support individuals to reduce the number of trips they make, to travel more often by non-driving alternatives, to travel outside peak periods and to reduce the length of their trips.

Transportation terminal:

In the Ottawa context, refers to ground transportation (bus or train) stations that act as a hub for inter-city passenger transportation.

Tree:

Any species of woody perennial plant, including its root system, which has reached or can reach a minimum height of four hundred and fifty centimetres at physiological maturity.

U

Urban forest canopy cover:

A measure of the layer of tree leaves, branches, and stems that provide tree coverage of the ground when viewed from above. It is typically expressed as a percentage of total land area covered.

Urban heat island effect:

Describes built-up urban areas that are hotter than nearby rural areas or greenspace because buildings and paved surfaces amplify and trap heat. The average air temperature of a city with 1 million people or more can be 1 to 3°C warmer than its surroundings. In the evening, the difference can be as high as 12°C. Heat islands can exacerbate the impact of an extreme heat event, putting additional stress on the health of vulnerable people.

Urban Natural Features:

Features such as woodlands, wetlands and vegetated ravines throughout the urban area, protected and managed primarily for their environmental values. These features may occur on City, federal, provincial and privately-owned lands.

V

Vehicular Friction:

Elements in the right of way or on abutting properties that are likely to slow motor vehicle speed, such as on-street parking, traffic calming, street trees, presence of other modes of transportation, or proximity of building facades.