

Will this Official Plan Do the Job?

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The New Official Plan promises to transform Ottawa into “one of the most liveable mid-sized cities in North America.” Councillors and residents now have one last chance to see if the plan put forward by City staff can do the job. It will be tabled at the Joint Meeting of Planning Committee and Rural Affairs Committee on October 14 and at full Council on October 27.

The People’s Official Plan (POP) coalition thinks this version cannot keep neighbourhoods liveable as intensification unfolds or address housing needs for large segments of the population. It will not foster food security and fails to do our part in the climate crisis. We call on Council and residents to support motions during the upcoming committee and Council meetings that will increase our chances of making Ottawa an inclusive, affordable and liveable city for all.

POP is an informal alliance of organizations and individuals focused since April, 2019 on bringing greater urgency and ambition on climate and social justice issues to the development of Ottawa’s Official plan. We have created over 200 pages of policy analysis, mobilized hundreds of residents through workshops and campaigns, and surveyed and lobbied Councillors across the city.

Draft motions for Council from the alliance are presented at ottawaclimatesolutions.net

Liveable for who?

“Ottawa needs a plan that includes a strong understanding of social justice, with goals and assessments that are specific and action-oriented” says Lucia Morales of the City for All Women Initiative (CAWI). “That means reconciliation with Anishinabeg and other indigenous peoples, racial equity, equity for people with disabilities and equity for women and gender diverse individuals. It also means understanding how these factors combine in individuals and communities to create different experiences of discrimination and privilege.”

A City of Towers, Corridors and Cars, or a City of Walkable Neighbourhoods?

“Our Official Plan needs to provide a framework for the renewal of our neighbourhoods, with low-rise “missing middle” infill housing. Infill should enhance the valued characteristics of neighbourhoods and must be balanced with a transition to delightfully walkable and complete communities” says local architect and Walkable Ottawa’s lead animator Rosaline Hill. “Our neighbourhoods hold the key to addressing climate and housing emergencies through thoughtful, balanced and contextually appropriate growth. The Official Plan doesn't yet provide clear direction for walkable neighbourhoods.”

Is a Shelter a Home?

“Affordability means different things for different people” notes Laura Shantz of the City for All Women Initiative (CAWI). “We need to create an affordable housing supply with a variety of dwelling options for different household types, which prioritizes deeply affordable housing for lower-income families and individuals to address the City’s housing and homelessness emergency. This would be in keeping with efforts to achieve the right to adequate housing by 2046 and to eliminate chronic homelessness by 2030.”

Can we Live in an Urban Desert?

“Liveability means the ability to access not only the housing we all need but also the security and enjoyment that comes from a healthy urban and rural environment” says the Greenspace Alliance’s Chair Paul Johanis. “The Official Plan needs to be amended to provide all urban residents with a minimum standard for access to high quality greenspace and urban tree canopy in support of health, climate resiliency, accessibility, and gender and social equity.”

Where will our food come from?

“Food security is more than just rural cash cropping or a retail supply issue. The Official Plan needs an integrated, food systems vision with targets to both protect farmland, (including for diversified small and medium farms) and create urban foodlands (including community gardens in parks and other City-owned lands)” says Just Food Executive Director Moe Garahan. “Equitable access to food must be planned for.”

Are we really going to “Blah, Blah, Blah” with No Action?

“The climate emergency is here, and will only deepen unless we act now” says Daniel Buckles, a POP co-animator. “Council has already approved a Climate Change Master Plan that sets targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. What is missing in the Official Plan is a policy to align intensification targets and urban expansion plans to progress on the reduction of GHG emissions. Results on emissions must drive development decisions.”

“Mid-sized” Ottawa or mid-sized ambition?

“To get real climate action, we’ll need to see an ambitious vision for 15-minute neighbourhoods in the new Official Plan, along with protections and enhancements for Ottawa’s tree canopy” says Robb Barnes, Executive Director of Ecology Ottawa. “We’ll need to embed density, sustainable mobility and mixed-use planning into Ottawa’s urban fabric while moving forward on ambitious tree canopy cover targets. We’re urging Council to be bold and respond to the climate crisis with an ambitious city-building policy.”

Buildings with Holes, or Whole Buildings?

“The current draft leaves a loophole in the energy efficiency and green standards for new infill buildings” notes Joan Freeman of Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability. “To help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the Official Plan needs to apply a simplified version of high performance standards to small, low-rise developments and renovations of existing housing. Energy savings and economic opportunities for both owner and builders are significant for these building types.”

Is the Plan Planning to Fail?

"The problem with the draft Official Plan is that while it talks about 15 minute neighbourhoods it has no way to assess the impact of development at a neighbourhood level" says Alex Cullen, President of the Federation of Citizens Associations (FCA). "Ambiguities abound, making it near impossible to hold Council and staff accountable and creating uncertainty for residents and developers. This draft needs to be amended to direct staff to engage stakeholders in defining progress and how it is measured. Having a senior manager at the City responsible for producing an annual "Vital Signs" dashboard on each of the Official Plan's policy objectives would be a great help."

For details on all the specific motions drafted by the People's Official Plan see links at www.ottawaclimatesolutions.net

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