



## **Barrhaven BIA in Support of the Balanced Option for the City of Ottawa's Residential Growth Management Strategy**

As part of drafting its new Official Plan, the City of Ottawa is trying to determine how to best plan for the additional 400,000 people who will live here by 2046. The Barrhaven Business Improvement Area (BBIA) recently submitted a report to the City of Ottawa's Planning and ARAC Committees in support of the Balanced Scenario in the Residential Growth Management Strategy for the new Official Plan. This Balanced option, being recommended by City staff, offers ambitious intensification rates and will ensure that there is more growth through intensification, surpassing current targets. The infill and intensification would be balanced by a modest expansion of the current urban boundary (about 1650 Ha over the next 25 years).

Geographically, 90% of the City is built up but our population is at 60% of the target. How do we bridge this gap? The trend is in the correct direction, but how do we continue? Barrhaven, Riverside South, Kanata and Stittsville represent almost a quarter of the City's population of 1 million people. These communities will continue to be a major component of greenfield growth, and with that will be the need to provide them with the necessary infrastructure. Ottawa needs to smartly expand its suburban communities using current and planned infrastructure in order to accommodate the projected growth and, in fact, guide that growth. Expanding the urban boundary in Ottawa, in the balanced way that City Planning Staff are recommending, is not sprawl when smart growth and community planning principles are applied.

Builders are currently responding to an unprecedented surge in demand for affordable homes just outside of the City of Ottawa. This kind of development can truly be described as sprawl. Generally, these people work in Ottawa and use our City infrastructure and services but do not contribute to our municipal tax base. We need to offer affordable homes within the City's boundaries to stop people from moving to adjacent communities.

The current COVID-19 crisis has introduced, to many, a new way of working and of doing business. There are viable alternatives to reducing personal vehicle emissions that don't involve prescribing what type of home we have to live in or where in the City this should be:

- increase the number of suburban remote work hubs like those the Federal government had begun to pilot before the crisis hit,
- encourage and reward employers, who are able to, to allow staff to work from home some or all of the time,
- decentralize employment by creating strategically placed nodes- allow people to work closer to where they live and reduce stress on the transit system by having people travelling in various directions at peak hours,
- encourage transit use as the main mode of transportation by improving service for both commuters and for intra-community trips- we offer a massive opportunity for new ridership here in Barrhaven, if we get it right.

We need to focus on expanding and completing Ottawa's suburban communities with continued smart growth planning, leveraging the investments that the City has already made in these communities. There will not be additional pressure put on City servicing by expanding the southern boundary to Barnsdale Road, bringing in both residential and strategic Highway 416 employment lands. Doing so will generate approximately \$35 M in development charges that will not have to be spent on servicing, thereby maximizing existing municipal investments in roads, sewers, schools, and recreation infrastructure.

With both the City's Infrastructure and Transportation Master Plans currently under review, the timing for this needed boundary expansion will lend perfectly to smart growth planning in the updates to both plans. It is our understanding that the Balanced Scenario recommended by Staff would see that expansion lands only be developed after land within current boundary is exhausted, so closer to the 2046 timeframe, thereby giving the City time to update all relevant plans accordingly.

When looking at intensification and infill, this should be done throughout the City; many existing Suburban Community Design Plans have aggressive targets for intensification. They also are mixed-use in nature, promote sustainable forms of transportation and fit into the 15-minute neighbourhood model. As "how we do business" changes, and bricks-and-mortar retail downsizes, the City should look to incorporate an array of affordable building models into the renewed spaces. Decentralization of employment in Ottawa is desperately needed. We can look to the suburban Community Design Plans, and the flexible housing options embedded in those plans, as a model for potential redevelopment areas in the suburban cores. For instance, the convergence of



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two rapid transit corridors in Downtown Barrhaven, along with a greenfield slate, offers unique opportunities. Barrhaven is almost complete, BUT, we need to take the final steps to finish it in the way that it was intended: as a sustainable, Live, Work, Play suburban community.

Currently, Barrhaven is home to 28 schools, 2 large Public recreation complexes, an abundance of green space and parks, 2 golf courses, 2 rivers and a variety of connected multi-use pathways. The planned transition of the mall in our Town Centre to a mixed-used, transit-oriented gathering place in heart of this large suburban community will support the 15-Minute Neighbourhood concept. The development of Downtown Barrhaven, along with the current influx of development applications to bring much-needed employment opportunities, will serve to make Barrhaven sustainable. We are excited for our downtown, offering high-density, mixed-use housing and employment, main street style retail-commercial offerings and a place for the community to gather.

All of these investments make Barrhaven a place that people want to live, which speaks to the need to take our Barrhaven boundary south to Barnsdale Road and to support future mixed-housing growth. The current residential land supply in Barrhaven can only accommodate about 6% of the City's growth. Residents of our suburb want to age-in-place in this great community. Their family and life-long friends are in these communities. Some may wish to downsize, but still want room to have their loved ones come "home" to gather. Many of our houses are home to multi-generational families. We need a variety of housing options in the suburbs, as not everyone wants compact living options.

The Balanced Scenario offers the smartest growth decisions: complete this master-planned community where development charges are collected yet no additional, unplanned servicing will be required. The centre of the community sits at the confluence of both the east-west and north-south rapid transit lines. We already have the hard and soft infrastructure investments: parks, pathways, schools, recreation centres as well as the municipal servicing. Extending our southern boundary to Barnsdale Road offers both a smart and an affordable growth plan for the City.