



Submission to the public consultation on The 5 Big Moves and Policy Directions

Submitted by: Ottawa Coalition of Business Improvement Areas (OCOBIA)

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Introduction

The City of Ottawa is rewriting its Official Plan—the strategic document that describes how the city will grow over time, where we will place major infrastructure, and what policies will be in place to support economic growth and guide the development and evolution of communities. The purpose of the review is to position Ottawa to be flexible, resilient, and, a city where people want to live, work, and play. The new Plan will horizon in the year 2046 and seeks to set the stage for the City and Region to reach a population of two to three million people.

The City is proposing to make a number of significant policy changes through the Official Plan to make Ottawa the most liveable mid-sized city in North America. Known as the ‘Five Big Moves’, the following statements capture the most significant policy proposals for the new Official Plan:

1. **Growth:** Achieve, by the end of its planning period, more growth by intensification than by greenfield development. This growth will provide a variety of affordable housing options for residents.
2. **Mobility:** By 2046, the majority of trips in the City of Ottawa will be made by sustainable transportation.
3. **Urban Design:** Improve our sophistication in urban and community design, and put this knowledge to the service of good urbanism at all scales, from the largest to the very small.
4. **Resiliency:** Embed public health, environmental, climate and energy resiliency into the framework of our planning policies.
5. **Economy:** Embed economic development into the framework of our planning policies.

City staff are seeking feedback from Ottawa residents on the major policy moves being considered for the next Official Plan. Feedback on this document will help develop a set of comprehensive policy directions that will be considered by Council in late 2019.

About OCOBIA

The Ottawa Coalition of Business Improvement Areas (OCOBIA) is a newly-established organization created to enable the city’s 19 Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) to speak with a unified voice on urban, suburban and rural issues impacting local communities. OCOBIA aims to support members by shaping policy, sharing best practices and strengthening relationships with the City of Ottawa and other key stakeholders.

BIAs are place-management organizations embedded in the areas they serve. They are community builders, neighbourhood champions and economic drivers. Ottawa BIAs represent more than 6,400 businesses who employ 120,000 people and are funded by nearly \$7.4 million in private sector funding. These resources are re-invested through initiatives that include on-street beautification, programming, promotional campaigns, public safety, and other activities. Globally, there are more than 4,000 like-minded organizations with 2,500 in North America alone.

OCOBIA met with City officials in June and September 2019 to learn about the Official Plan and consultation process. OCOBIA members have hosted several internal discussions and agreed to compile feedback into one document for consideration by City officials.

Feedback

Big Move 1

Growth Management: Achieve more growth by intensification than by greenfield development. This growth will provide for achieving complete communities and a variety of affordable housing options.

While there should always be more population inside the Greenbelt than outside, growth must continue to happen both inside and outside the Greenbelt. There is a need to set new growth targets for the urban population within walking distance of rapid transit. While Ottawa is achieving its existing intensification targets, new opportunities should be considered such as low-rise, ground-oriented residential redevelopment in the existing built-up area and a review of employment and underdeveloped lands (malls, extensive storage areas, etc.), especially those located near rapid transit. Intensification should be directly related to mobility, as the City continues to grow, and mobility should be inclusive of all modes (vehicular, public transit, cycling and walking).

Strengthening the link between growth, planning and economic development

We must continue to build on the City's Economic Development Strategy; consider and address urban, suburban and rural strategies, including providing consideration of the importance of Employment Lands and economic drivers like arts & culture and signature projects across the City.

From a growth management perspective, the City should focus growth around BIAs. BIAs can assist with identifying what priorities, projects and economic development initiatives would provide a benefit to our communities and to business development in Ottawa. BIAs are nodes and corridors, which positions us to play a key role for both street-front retail and service sector growth. The way that people access their retail/services should support the City's policy goals. Embedded in the Official Plan is the concept of the 15-Minute Neighbourhood (walk, bus ride or drive to access your daily needs). BIAs should be proactive in helping to identify those areas that can be transitioned to such a corridor. The role of BIAs has expanded: we are central community pillars and drivers of place-making, and destination growth in Ottawa.

When looking at intensification and infill this should be done throughout the City; many existing 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. We need to look at decentralizing employment, repurposing urban office buildings to residential uses and locating more employment outside of the core. We need to make it possible and practical for more people to walk, cycle or use public transit. Our City is unique in that we cover a very large area and have three distinct identities: urban, suburban and rural. Could the Official Plan speak to all three, preserving their identities while strengthening the links between them?

POLICY 1: While the environment and affordable housing is embedded throughout the document, it will be economic development that is the engine that drives the City to afford that vision. We need to build on completing our town centres (business, jobs, housing, retail mixes in close proximity to transit).

The spine of our rapid-transit system will define smart growth for business. As business areas evolve to smaller and more unique centres in the heart of neighbourhoods, so too will growth at larger plazas undergo change to benefit from transit, to maximize liveability and to create the desirable 15-minute neighbourhoods.

POLICY 2: The City should move forward with identifying the number of jobs and residents per hectare and the authorized use of land and buildings near transit station areas. It makes good sense to review our employment land strategy to ensure that it fits this theme.

POLICY 3: Smart growth is just that, affordable and in support of all goals. It will matter to the environment, to families, to workers and those who play in Ottawa, that we have taken advantage of the investments that Ottawa has made in infrastructure above, at, and below grade and in the facilities that keep Ottawa's active and healthy.

POLICY 4: In the City's effort to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions, we can consider new opportunities to congregate light industrial, retail and commercial uses and give them better and faster destination access.

POLICY 5: As business changes, and bricks-and-mortar retail downsizes, the City should look to incorporate an array of affordable building models into the renewed spaces. 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 core.

POLICY 6: Opportunities for collaboration of multi-use accommodations should always include all aspects for a healthy, walkable neighbourhood.

POLICY 7: As per Policy 5, we can refer to the principles in the various Town Centre Design Plans to ensure that a residential component is included in City infrastructure projects.

POLICY 8: Not all rural villages and hamlets should change. Strategic smart investments need to be made to take advantage and benefit from their existing services. Ottawa needs to smartly define its NEXT suburban community using current and planned infrastructure in order to accommodate the projected growth and, in fact, guide that growth.

Big Move 2

Mobility: By 2046, the majority of trips in the City of Ottawa will be made by sustainable transportation (walking, cycling, transit or carpool)

On its own 2046 may seem like a long way away but in relation to the lofty goals set out in this statement it is just around the corner. Its reality is built on reliance on a city-wide coordinated effort led by investment in light rail and tying key city policies such as growth management, housing, climate action, energy and development so that they are in sync to achieve the goals set out in the plan.

Strength of Ideas:

1. Building and expanding on a higher-order transit system;

2. Less reliance on single vehicle use;
3. Integrating City policies that are essential to achieving these goals;
4. Lowering of emissions to meet climate goals;

Weaknesses:

- Reliability of the higher-order transit system. In order to make people move the system has to perform well, comfortably, safely and efficiently. People will continue to use their vehicles if this is not the case, no matter the cost.
- Affordability : The City has yet to demonstrate the strength to require affordable housing from developers in new developments. Marginalized communities need to have affordable transit and housing.
- Climate – Ottawa weather does not lend itself well to walking and biking year-round.
- Funding and cost of transit in Ottawa is one of the highest in the country.
- Movement of Goods – Intensification is built on the premise that all your needs will be within walking distance. As such main street businesses are essential to healthy communities in providing these amenities to residents. Delivery of products to these businesses is critical to their operation and survival.
- Waste Management – Waste-diversion programs are not well-used by both residential and commercial clients.
- Weak Para transpo service: Improvements needed for residents with mobility issues.

Proposed Policies and Rationale

- Is it possible to time development contingent on the provision of new higher-order transit to serve it?
- Has higher density development near higher-order transit resulted in less vehicle use? What studies have been produced to support this statement?
- Affordable Housing – there is no mention of how affordable housing will be incorporated into these higher density developments. This demographic would be a large group of transit users.
- Funding – consistent funding from all levels of government is essential to the development of an integrated transit system. What are the funding models expected from each level of government to reach the targets?
- There is much talk about the extreme growth in the suburban areas outpacing the urban core yet the rationale states, “Enhancing transit inside the Greenbelt supports land use intensification objectives, since the urban area provides the highest potential for intensification”. This statement contradicts the foundational premise of the Big Move 2: Mobility where complete communities can be developed with intensification around reliable transit services.

Big Move 3

Urban and Community Design: Improve our sophistication in urban and community design, and put this knowledge to the service of good urbanism at all scales, from the largest to the very small.

Positives

- Recognizing the Importance of being a capital city
- Acknowledging and supporting the different needs of urban, suburban and rural neighbourhoods
- Integrating the emphasis of culture into the Plan

Policy 1: It is important to recognize the importance of Ottawa as a capital city. At the same time, it is important to not lose ourselves in the shadow of the federal government. New federal government buildings should be integrated into the neighbourhoods they move into rather than creating isolated campuses

Policy 2: It is important to recognize that as a community of communities, the Plan must be flexible to support the specific needs of each community. Whereas a 50,000 square foot retail space might work in new communities, requiring spaces of this size in the core or inner urban area does not.

Many of Ottawa's neighbourhoods are already known by the name of the local BIA. Often, the BIA takes its name from the main street in the community or the community itself. It is recommended to work with the BIA in marketing efforts and to create a sense of hyper-local community.

Policy 4: It is encouraged to develop policies supporting owners of heritage buildings by providing support of use-changes and tax offsets to help reduce the cost of maintaining buildings that are important to the city's heritage.

Policy 5: A 15-minute community must have a well-rounded business district to provide jobs, goods, services, and spaces for cultural and community activities.

Policy 8: It is important that policies within the Plan include long-term support and funding to ensure that this noble goal is achieved. As has happened in the past, public places have been built for the purpose of cultural expression without a proper long-term plan to manage. Public Art is installed without the long-term funding to maintain and repair. BIAs are community-builders and reflect the local heritage and culture of the neighbourhoods of which they are a part. Given the BIAs partnerships and relationships, they are uniquely suited to support the cultural mission of these community spaces and installations cultural hubs, if they have municipal support.

Big Move 5

Economy: Embed economic development into the framework of our planning policies.

Support for the proposed "form and context" policy framework including as an economic development tool.

- Ottawa's 19 BIAs mirror the diversity of Ottawa's business community and Ottawa in general. The BIA model is already, essentially, a form and context model. The unique context of each of Ottawa's 19 BIAs guides our individual work programs, community support events, business attraction efforts and our work to support our member's business success. While defined by a

- boundary, each BIA includes in context the community surrounding the BIA as well as the physical, social, historic and economic linkages adjacent to and well beyond our business areas;
- A well-defined and well-implemented form and context policy framework will provide particular benefit to BIAs in more dense areas of the City where redevelopment in and adjacent to the BIAs is becoming a major driver of change;
 - A form and context approach is already evolving many of our member’s business areas, for instance: in permissions for makerspaces and breweries along commercial and traditional mainstreets, and in-house retail permissions in light industry and manufacturing areas;
 - “Robust data” is noted as important to Big Move 2. Robust data on economic development is equally important in particular when economic pressures and opportunities are rapidly changing. Ottawa’s 19 BIAs are already collecting data within their business areas and are prepared to contribute that to the City. **Please consider adding text** and a future policy directing the City to collect, maintain and analyse data in support of economic development

The goal to embed economic development in the planning framework:

- We propose that intent **include naming Ottawa’s BIA community as a significant economic driver** and including policies stating an intent to explore new roles for BIAs as a partner in City building. While awaiting a first draft, sample ideas from staff would be very helpful to us in understanding how this goal will be implemented. As part of the preparation of this input we have looked at other Official Plans:
 - **Embed:** A scan of Ottawa’s existing plan shows no mention of the term “business association”. Other Official Plans provide examples of how Ottawa can embed and leverage the economic development roles BIAs play. Toronto’s Official Plan, Sec 3.5 Toronto’s Economic Health includes a policy “*encouraging and supporting effective business associations*”, and Sec 2.2 Structuring Growth to “*encourage and support business associations that promote and provide a voice for businesses within Employment Areas*”
 - **A partner:** In 2007, Bill 130 amended the Municipal Act including explicitly making reference to BIAs as local Boards (Sec 204.2.1). The Act includes the authority of municipalities for “delegation of power or duty to the board” (Sec 216.5). A City policy intent to “seek to” or “continue to explore” or “nurture” the role of BIAs in contributing to the City’s economic development goals would provide a post-OP avenue to enact stronger economic development roles for BIAs. Windsor’s Official Plan includes an example of a policy which would open the door for new and innovative partnerships and economic development leadership roles for Ottawa’s BIAs. “*Council may pursue partnerships with neighbourhood groups, non-governmental organizations, institutions and business associations to improve areas of the city.*” (11.8.4.15)

Proposed additional Policy Direction – further content on how the City can support the significant volume of employment which occurs outside designated employment areas (and where the majority of our members are located):

The preamble of Big Move 5 recognizes that a significant volume of employment exists outside of designated employment areas, yet there is no subsequent comment on those in Policy Direction 1, nor in any of the other Policy Directions provided:

- **Policy Direction 1** provides an opportunity to those BIAs which are well-aligned to Employment Area designations e.g. Kanata North and Carp Road Corridor

- Proposed **new policy direction** stating the specific policies the City with use to support employment growth opportunities and diversity in employment hubs and, in particular, along the main streets where many of our members are located

Policy Direction 4: This direction will recognize/formalize what is already happening in most of Ottawa’s designated BIA areas. All of Ottawa’s BIA business areas are seeing existing businesses evolve and new types of businesses looking to locate in a vibrant and identified business district:

- **Please consider adding wording** so that both new businesses and the evolution of existing businesses are recognized and supported;
- Policy 4 includes a reference to “cost control” however we do not understand the intent. Certainly, like other references in the document (e.g. a number of references to transportation and housing affordability) the affordability of commercial space is a critical factor in the success for small businesses. The City’s land use, transportation, other infrastructure and permits and fees processes all have an impact on affordability.

Add a stand-alone section on Rural Economic Development – is a section on Suburban Economic Development warranted? If a stand-alone section on rural economic development provides better insight into the City’s planning objectives related to economic development, might a stand-alone section on suburban economic development provide a similar opportunity? As noted above, BIAs located in denser areas of Ottawa will perhaps obtain maximum benefit from the “form and function” framework, and some will obtain considerable benefit from proximity to the LRT. But like rural BIAs, members in suburban Ottawa and in particular those beyond the current and planned reach of LRT may have different and unique economic development drivers and opportunities worthy of specific OP policies;

The stand-alone section on Rural Economic Development is positive but current content is very limited in scope: Carp Road Corridor and Manotick and Carp Village BIAs are located in rural Ottawa. There are elements of economic development unique to rural Ottawa with Policy Direction 5 bringing a focus to the principal one – land intensive agriculture operations. There are, however, many other elements of the economy outside Ottawa’s urban boundary including how that economy interacts and supports the economy inside the urban boundary – logistics centres being just one example:

- BIA members have participated in the new Rural Economic Development Strategy project. How has that project been incorporated into these policy directions?
- Under Big Move 5 and other Big Moves text tends to bring a focus on understanding the distinctions of form and context or “type of place”. Less focus seems to have been placed on how those different “types of places” depend and interact with each other. Perhaps urban Ottawa and rural Ottawa are the biggest “types of place” categories yet under Big Move 5, however there is little text or dedicated policy directions which would lead the City’s land use planning to seek to understand and plan to foster the economic development potential of interactions. There is a considerable body of academic and practical literature as well as recognized experts who the City could engage (as George Dark contributed to our understanding of planning for evolution of urban Ottawa) to further the success of planning for these areas.

Policy Direction 7 is limited in scope: The Big Moves document proposes bold innovation for economic development potential of the urban core that will provide significant benefits to the evolution of urban

BIAs into more complete communities and economic development engines. There is limited bold innovation for suburban and rural economic development. The stated intent to calculate the number of jobs and land supply in rural employment area is similar to the current regular Vacant Industrial Land Survey:

- As noted in the comment on Policy Direction 1, employment and economic development growth opportunities in rural Ottawa extends well beyond the designated employment areas. **Please consider adjusting wording** to bring distinction to Ottawa’s 4 designated rural employment areas and the many other employment growth opportunities in rural Ottawa;
- Policy Direction 7 speaks to the “entire spectrum of employment ...”, however the inventory perpetuates a parochial view of “rural”, names types of employment not typically located in designated employment areas, and perhaps limits recognition and understanding of “changing nature of work”. Our members in rural Ottawa are seeing innovative new types of companies purposefully locating in rural Ottawa for quality of life reasons.
- We support the broadest interpretation of the first listed rationale – increasing employment in rural Ottawa including in BIA areas provides many benefits to the City. One of those benefits is “TDM” however text in this Policy Direction regarding a role for employers “to pay for transportation programs” is of considerable concern to our members and does not align with the goal to grow employment in rural Ottawa. Ottawa has not completed a comprehensive study of rural transit options. BIA members Carp Corridor and Carp Village brought to the attention of the City innovative transit alternatives, such as the Innisfil Uber model and the Belleville on-demand bus model. **Please consider adjusting this wording** to maintain the potential for a City and OC Transpo role until such time as an appropriate level of investigation of all alternatives has been completed.