

# Investigation of Allegations Related to Planning Activities for the Conservancy Development

## ? Why we did this investigation

Through the City's Fraud and Waste Hotline (FWHL), the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) received allegations in relation to planning activities and approvals related to the Conservancy residential development. Our office undertook an investigation to assess concerns raised in the FWHL report and to determine whether the allegations had any merit.

This investigation was limited to the City's activities and does not include any third parties.

### Background

A portion of this planned residential development was in an area previously designated as conservation land because it is in the Jock River floodplain and where, development is not typically allowed. To enable the development, an unbalanced cut and fill application (which involved filling more volume in the floodplain than what was excavated) was approved by the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA).

## Q What we found

The work we performed highlighted gaps in City processes, including:

- Issuing a letter of endorsement for a cut and fill application to the RVCA, which we believe contributed to the RVCA's approval of the application.

- Excluding specific key City specialists from certain steps of the application review process.
- Issuing a letter of support to the RVCA to continue a floodplain mapping which had already been deemed to be paused as a result of a preliminary assessment that indicated that the flood line would not significantly change.
- Not bringing the decision to pause the floodplain mapping back to Council, who had originally requested its completion.

## 💡 We made three recommendations to ensure:

- That the City does not take an advocacy or endorsement position for any developer or development as it could be utilized by a third party in their decision making;
- If a consultant is leveraged for the conduct of a peer review, a formal role for City subject matter experts is established; and
- Key decisions and results associated with directions from City Council are communicated back to Council in a timely manner.

For more details on this report please visit our [website](#).

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