

Subject: Central Experimental Farm Working Group Update

File Number: ACS2024-PDB-PS-0081

Report to Planning and Housing Committee on 19 June 2024

and Council 26 June 2024

**Submitted on June 10, 2024 by Derrick Moodie, Director, Planning Services,
Planning, Building and Development Services Department**

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Ward: Citywide

Objet : Mise à jour - Groupe de travail sur la Ferme expérimentale centrale

Dossier : ACS2024-PDB-PS-0081

Rapport au Comité de l'urbanisme et du logement le 19 juin 2024

et au Conseil le 26 juin 2024

**Soumis le 2024-Jun-10 par Derrick Moodie, Directeur, Services de la planification,
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Quartier : À l'échelle de la ville

REPORT RECOMMENDATION

**That Planning and Housing Committee receive this report for information as an
update on an ongoing workplan item.**

RECOMMANDATION(S) DU RAPPORT

**Que le Comité de la planification et du logement prenne acte de ce rapport
décrivant un point actualisé du plan de travail actuel.**

BACKGROUND

Direction to Staff

On September 20, 2023, a direction from Planning and Housing Committee, introduced by Councillor Brockington, was issued to City staff to work in consultation with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and the National Capital Commission (NCC) to develop the terms of reference for a plan to assess and mitigate potential impacts of future development as permitted by the Official Plan policy framework surrounding the Central Experimental Farm (CEF) on the scientific and heritage values associated with the farm as a National Historic Site of Canada and research institution. The motion directed that staff report back on timing, financial resource requirements, and impact on the overall department workplan no later than Q2 2024. This report satisfies this direction to staff by providing an update to Planning and Housing Committee on workplan activities related to the CEF.

Policy and Development Application Context

Recent development applications at 780 Baseline Road and at 1081 Carling Avenue for high-rise building proposals raised discussions about shadow impacts on the Central Experimental Farm (CEF) research fields. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) asserted during each of these development applications that shadows from new high-rise buildings will have a detrimental impact on the research activities at the CEF and put in jeopardy long-term scientific experiments by adding additional variables and introducing fluctuations in annual solar exposure.

The Official Plan allows for high-rise buildings up to 40 storeys in height on the Baseline and Carling Mainstreet Corridors, subject to urban design transitions to the adjacent low-rise residential Neighbourhood. To the west, Area-Specific Policy number 41 in Volume 2C of the Official Plan limits heights to four storeys on Fisher Avenue, with the exception of 1110 Fisher Ave, which allows for a mid-rise building up to nine storeys, and the three properties to the south, which allows for building heights up to six storeys. The intersection of Baseline and Merivale is designated as a Hub and allows for building heights up to 40 storeys. As such, significant height and density have been provided for in the policy framework for the area. This is further reinforced by the designation of Carling and Baseline as rapid transit corridors in the Transportation Master Plan and in Schedule C2 of the Official Plan.

The Central Experimental Farm (CEF) is designated as Open Space within the Greenspace Designation in Section 7 of the Official Plan, and policy 7(c) identifies that these lands are to remain for scientific, educational and cultural purposes only and are not to be used for non-CEF development. Furthermore, policy 4.5.2(4) states that

development on or adjacent to National Historic Sites shall have regard for their cultural heritage value, as defined in the Federal designation documentation, and the City may require demonstration that development does not adversely impact these resources.

The Official Plan designation is consistent with the designation of the Central Experimental Farm (CEF) in the National Capital Commission's Capital Urban Lands Plan which applies an Agricultural and Horticultural Research Designation to the farm, and notes that it holds National Historic Value. Neither plan provides discussion on the manner in which the CEF lands are to interact with development external to the CEF, and there are no comments with respect to minimizing adverse impacts associated with development external to these lands. Further, there are no City policies or guidelines that provide additional differentiation to the review of shadow impacts on the CEF other than those generally applied towards shadow impacts associated with development on Open Space lands.

Central Experimental Farm Working Group

The Joint City of Ottawa, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and the National Capital Commission Working Group will identify, assess, and explore opportunities and municipal and federal planning tools to find strategies towards mitigating impacts and balancing the ongoing and long-term research activities associated with the scientific and heritage functions of the Central Experimental Farm (CEF) with the approved policy and density framework of the Official Plan aligning high-density housing opportunities with transit. Working towards these solutions will include identifying the potential impacts from building shadows on the CEF operations as well as identifying the existing legal frameworks and landowner rights for the CEF and adjacent property owners.

The Vision of the joint City of Ottawa, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and National Capital Commission Working Group is to identify mitigating strategies, policy and/or regulatory interventions to the associated land use planning frameworks of the City and/or the National Capital Commission (NCC) and/or the operations of the Central Experimental Farm (CEF) that will allow for high-density transit-oriented development to proceed with clarity and certainty in keeping with the intent of the Official Plan, and maintaining the viability of the scientific, historic and cultural nature of the CEF.

DISCUSSION

Workplan and Timing

The joint City of Ottawa, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and the National Capital Commission Working Group has developed and approved a Terms of Reference that establishes a workplan to achieve the Vision of the Working Group, which can be summarized as follows:

Summer 2024

- The City will fund and hire independent consultants to prepare objective development scenarios on lands surrounding the Central Experimental Farm (CEF) at several different timeframes, considering the City's planning framework and market conditions, and to recommend mitigation strategies that could minimize development impacts on the CEF. The funding for the consulting assignment, estimated at up to \$50,000, can be accommodated from existing budgets as a result of the re-prioritization of planned studies.
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) to map Central Experimental Farm research activities and study timelines and provide geomatics support.
- City, with support from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, to have geomatics team(s) use development scenarios prepared by the consultants to create digital 3D models, conduct shadow analyses, and show shadow impacts on specific research activities on the Central Experimental Farm.

Fall 2024 / Winter 2025

- Following the identification of potential impacts on the Central Experimental Farm, all stakeholders in the Working Group will collaborate on the development and evaluation of options and recommendations to implement the Vision of this Working Group.
- Options may include but are not limited to: City policy and/or guideline revisions or procedural changes, and considerations by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada regarding the future use of impacted Central Experimental Farm lands.

Spring 2025

- Report to Planning and Housing Committee by Q2 2025 (late June) that presents the recommendations of the joint City of Ottawa, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and National Capital Commission Working Group, including any changes to City policies, guidelines or procedures.

Impacts to Department Workplan

The additional workload on staff in the Planning, Development and Building Services Department may cause minor delays to other ongoing work, such as secondary plans.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications with receiving this report. Funding for the

consulting assignment, estimated at \$50,000, will be funded from within Planning Services operating budget.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

No legal impediments arise from the proposed implementation of the direction.

COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR(S)

Comment from Councillor Brockington:

I am pleased to see the Working Group take shape and present an outline of their work. As lands abutting the Farm are developed over time, a concrete understanding of how prime agricultural research lands may be impacted and mitigation strategies to employ, is very much needed. I support this wholeheartedly.

CONSULTATION

Public consultation will depend on the options and recommendations that are proposed by the Working Group. If the recommendations include policy amendments that would require a development application under the Planning Act, such as an Official Plan Amendment, the appropriate public consultation processes will follow.

Prior to the conclusion of this study, if the City receives a development application that would impact the CEF, the application will be shared with the Working Group, which may provide joint comments to the City.

ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no asset management implications.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

At this point, there are no environmental implications. Once options and recommendations are identified in the follow-up report in Q2 2025, any relevant environmental implications will be identified.

TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The Joint City of Ottawa, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and the National Capital Commission Working Group could provide recommendations that impact all four 2023-2026 Term of Council Priorities:

- A city that has affordable housing and is more liveable for all;
- A city that is green and resilient;
- A city that is more connected with reliable, safe and accessible mobility options;

- A city with a diversified and prosperous economy.

The detailed impacts on the Term of Council Priorities will be provided in the follow-up report in Q2 2025, once Working Group recommendations have been identified.

DISPOSITION

Planning, Development and Building Services will implement any direction arising from considerations of this information report, as appropriate.