

**Ottawa Public Health Support of New Zoning By-law, Draft 3:  
Report to Joint Housing and Planning & Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee  
December, 2025**

Ottawa Public Health has maintained strong and collaborative partnerships with Planning, Development and Building Services (PDBS) throughout the development of the New Zoning By-law. From the outset of developing the new Official Plan, OPH has worked with PDBS to shape policies that promote health, equity and well-being through the built environment, culminating in this final draft of the new Zoning By-law. This partnership has been supported through the co-location of OPH staff within PDBS, enabling the integration of public health expertise.

OPH's engagement in the development of the Zoning By-law is grounded in the evidence that the built environment has a direct influence on population health. Where and how people live, move, and connect affects rates of chronic disease, mental health outcomes, exposure to environmental hazards, and access to essential services.<sup>1</sup> Zoning decisions can either reinforce or reduce health inequities, making this work an important means to contribute to OPH's mandate to promote conditions that support well-being across all communities. OPH has contributed supporting documents for Drafts [1](#) and [2](#) of the Zoning By-law, and now offers this submission in support of the final draft. The directions in this draft are strongly aligned with OPH's Strategic Plan goal to "Create the Conditions to Live Well and Thrive," and reflect a shared commitment to building a healthier, more inclusive Ottawa.

The final draft of the Zoning By-law includes many provisions that support healthier built environments and walkable 15-minute neighbourhoods. The citywide permission for three-storey buildings in Neighbourhood Zones enables larger, family-sized units and more flexible housing forms. This supports aging in place, multi-generational and multi-family living, and housing stability, key determinants of mental and physical health. The by-law also introduces increased residential densities in built-up areas, which will help expand housing supply and improve access to a wider range of housing options. These changes support Ottawa's population growth which has intensified pressure across the housing spectrum, including increased demand for housing that accommodates multigenerational living or larger family units.<sup>2</sup> These changes contribute to more inclusive neighbourhoods and support affordability by enabling more efficient use of land. The soft landscaping standards support the growth of canopy trees, which help mitigate urban heat, provide shade, support climate resilience, improve air quality, and contribute to mental well-being through exposure to green space. Together, these directions help advance the development of healthy, walkable 15-minute

neighbourhoods, a key goal of Ottawa's Official Plan, supporting physical activity, social connection, equitable access to housing, services and greenspace.

The by-law continues to support mixed-uses which enables access to amenities. It also allows for co-located services, allowing residential uses to be integrated with community centres, daycares, schools, libraries, and recreation facilities. These permissions improve access to daily needs, supports, and fosters social connection, which is protective against social and physical isolation and poor mental health. Expanded permissions for home-based businesses, including low-risk food establishments, enhance access to local goods and services and support economic opportunity, particularly in underserved areas.

The inclusion of communal parking options and the removal of parking minimums in the urban area will reduce surface parking, help reduce the urban heat island effect, improve walkability, and support a transition away from fossil fuels. Provisions for electric vehicle parking infrastructure continue to support a gradual shift toward lower-emission transportation, contributing to long-term climate and health goals. The by-law also includes enhanced requirements for bicycle parking, including long- and short-term spaces and accommodations for cargo and electric bikes. These provisions help make cycling a more accessible and viable option for daily travel, supporting physical activity and reducing reliance on personal vehicles and can help mitigate climate change.

Additional zoning provisions contribute to protecting vulnerable populations and promoting equity. This includes requirements to protect outdoor play areas at childcare centres from traffic-related air pollution, such as locating play areas away from high-traffic corridors. It also supports the removal of separation distances and caps that have historically excluded supportive and transitional housing from communities. These changes help create more opportunities for alternative housing forms that support people living in group settings, which contributes to access to stable, inclusive environments that support their health and well-being. By enabling a broader range of housing types and uses, the Zoning By-law contributes to the development of neighbourhoods where people of all incomes, ages, and abilities can thrive.

Several zoning directions emerging from the Housing Innovation Task Force are aligned with public health goals. These include efforts to remove regulatory barriers to diverse housing forms and streamline zoning permissions that enable more flexible, inclusive, and adaptive housing. Such directions support healthier communities by improving access to stable housing and fostering environments that promote well-being.

OPH supports the final draft and remains committed to supporting the City in building a healthy and resilient Ottawa. As a critical tool for shaping the built environment, the By-law promotes walkable, climate-resilient, and socially connected communities, and helps create the conditions for people to live well and thrive. By enabling 15-minute neighbourhoods and

inclusive housing forms, the by-law helps realize a future Ottawa that is healthier, more equitable, and better connected. OPH will continue to provide public health expertise to PDBS and other departments as the Zoning By-law moves toward approval and implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> Ottawa Public Health. State of Ottawa's Health: 2023 Report. Ottawa (ON): Ottawa Public Health; 2023. [STATE OF OTTAWA'S HEALTH 2023 REPORT](#)

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<sup>2</sup> City of Ottawa Housing Needs Assessment. Ottawa, ON: City of Ottawa; June 2024 Available from: [Housing Needs Assessment | City of Ottawa](#)