

Ditch Alteration – 7 April 2022 Public Meeting – As We Heard It Report

A public meeting was held on April 7, 2022 for residents of Carleton Heights and Courtland Park. 18 participants attended, including Councillor Brockington, the virtual open house to view the proposed ditch alteration policy recommendations and provide feedback

The City of Ottawa has approximately 8,500 km of watermains and sewers, with a further 6,010 km of roadside ditches. The current Ditch Alteration Policy was put in place in 2008 and is being updated to better align with other City of Ottawa policy's related to storm water and sewage systems.

To begin, the City updated the Local Improvement Policy and has initiated the review of the Ditch Alteration Policy. The updated Ditch Alteration Policy will provide direction for ditch alterations and alignment with the City's enforcement activities. Council has directed the City to update the Ditch Alteration Policy to increase consistency and transparency, better educate property owners about the importance of ditches, and increase protection of public and private property.

The current mechanism to alter a ditch is through a Local Improvement or Development Agreement. The Ditch Alteration Policy will focus on lot-by-lot requests and protecting the City of Ottawa's stormwater management system.

At the request of Councillor Brockington, City staff hosted a public information session to the residents of Ward 16 to present the proposed recommendations and obtain feedback from residents.

The meeting was hosted by the City's Planning, Real Estate and Economic Development Department with Councillor **Brockington**. The following outlines comments provided during the meeting including the submission of written comments after the meeting.

Issue 1:	City Budget
Comment:	Is the budget adequate to maintain the ditches?
Response:	The City budgets for various maintenance programs each year including the ditch maintenance program. The ditch maintenance program is based on priority.

Issue 2:	Safety
Comment:	Is there safety standards for the ditches? Are they public?
Response:	The City does not have specific standards for the safety of ditches, although there are standards for the construction of ditches. The standards are meant to create robust infrastructure and consider the safety of users. The City does not have standards for older ditches; standards exist for new infrastructure. When the City inspects and renews a ditch system there are a lot of factors to consider, including safety. The City does try to achieve modern standards for ditches that are renewed.

Issue 3:	Ditch Renewal Prioritization
Comment:	How are ditch renewals prioritized?
Response:	For existing neighborhoods, the City uses a risk-based approach. A ditch alteration project is prioritized based on the following criteria (not exhaustive): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. standing water in ditch ii. roadway degradation iii. other ditch alterations that have occurred in the catchment area iv. condition of ditch (i.e. water flow, obstructions, depth, etc.)

Issue 4:	Ditch Renewal Prioritization
Comment:	Are these (Courtland Park / Carleton Heights) ditches on a list to be studied?
Response:	Yes, the ditches in the neighbourhood have been identified as potential areas requiring a broader City-wide study. The City will need to request funding to take on these studies.

Issue 5:	ROW Maintenance
Comment:	What is the process to ensure the boulevards are walkable and maintained properly?
Response:	The original design of this roadway included a gravel shoulder. If you are experiencing issues, please call 311 and the City can open a service request to review. The City does not maintain grass out to the roadway in this scenario. Residents are responsible to maintain the grass in this area.

Issue 6:	Safety
Comment:	The rebuilt ditch was given a 1:1 slope. This is inherently unsafe.
Response:	The original ditch system that is there was accepted at the time. The City works within the existing land while considering the needs of the utilities, land owners, and other requirements.

Issue 7:	City Organization
Comment:	Why are so many departments involved in a single culvert? How has this policy addressed that?
Response:	The City has a broad range of departments, each with their specialty and area of focus. The departments work together to ensure the proposed requests are completed properly and safely.

Issue 8:	Priority Status
Comment:	What is the reinstatement goal? And how can we work together to be a priority?
Response:	Please call 311 to report any immediate hazards; the City can attempt to address any issues immediately or escalate if a broader study is required to find a solution. The City generally does not upgrade infrastructure systems in neighbourhoods; rather it tries to make improvements within the existing drainage system.

Issue 9:	Standards
Comment:	Would clearer design and safety standards help this issue?
Response:	When the City looks at the reinstatement possibilities, safety is always a factor. The City standards are followed however, new standards are not retroactive to existing infrastructure.

Issue 10:	Priority Status
Comment:	We have been asking for neighborhood level assessments for several years. When will we get it?
Response:	The study is on a list of priorities and aims to begin within the next couple of years based on approved budget.

Issue 11:	Intensification
Comment:	Will there be a stoppage of intensification while we wait to see what our capacity is to handle water in the deteriorating ditches?
Response:	The City is working on solutions for intensification where it will not have any new or exasperated risks in any neighborhood, including Courtland Park. Additional information can be obtained from the Infrastructure Master Plan Team (https://engage.ottawa.ca/infrastructure-master-plan)

Issue 12:	Development Applications
Comment:	Should Development Applications look at the whole area for drainage?
Response:	The City requires applicants to have their consultants look at the drainage in the area, identify the controls, and work out a safe change in imperviousness for that area. As part of the Infrastructure Master Plan, the City is looking at changing how things are done in terms of development approvals at the scale of intensification. The proposal includes on-site storm water management be imposed on development that is currently not subject to Site Plan Control so that discharges from the site do not exceed existing conditions.

Issue 13:	Intensification
Comment:	The corner lots in the neighbourhood are attractive for increased density. Is there a timeline for work before there is an increase in density?
Response:	Lexington Street is one of the streets the City is assessing for ditch rehabilitation work this season.

Issue 14:	Priority Status
Comment:	How do we get the City to look at our areas as a network? How do we uphold maintenance standards that are unknown? Is the Local Improvement Plan the only solution?
Response:	The study of your area is on a list of priorities and aims to begin within the next couple of years based on approved budget. The City is assessing maintenance work required in the Lexington area. If water is sitting in the ditch 24-48 hours after a rainfall event, please call 311 and create a Service Request.

Issue 15:	Maintenance
Comment:	What will the City do if City maintenance makes the ditch worse?
Response:	The City maintenance focuses on ensuring positive water flow through the infrastructure. The City will always do their best to reinstate the ditch in a manner that is safe. There could be significant grade changes in ditch lines when re-establishing ditches.

Issue 16:	Maintenance
Comment:	For infrastructure that has not been maintained by the City, are the costs passed along to the homeowner?
Response:	The City asks homeowners to maintain the ditches as best they can, and to call 311 if they run into any issues. The maintenance program funding is requested in the Public Works Departmental budget each year as part of the annual budget cycle and not as an additional cost on taxpayers over and above the regular funds collected.

Issue 17:	Maintenance
Comment:	Is ditch gardening allowed?
Response:	No, ditch gardening is not allowed. Under the <i>Use and Care of Roads Bylaw</i> , the City requests that the boulevards be kept as sod.

Issue 18:	Local Improvement
Comment:	If we lived in a neighborhood with hard storm sewers, and our storm sewers were 100 years old and needed replacing, would we have to pay for their replacement?
Response:	The City would be responsible for infrastructure that needs replacing. If the City proposes upgrades and a renewal of the ditch system, then any costs associated to this work are borne by the City and not the residents.

Issue 19:	Enforcement
Comment:	If a homeowner has inherited an altered ditch, how does enforcement happen in that situation?
Response:	The City does not take a proactive approach in uncovering those ditch infills. If a previously approved altered ditch is causing an issue, the City would be responsible to fix the issue. The City would not proactively remove a previously approved and altered ditch unless it is causing a problem.