

**7. Significant Woodlands Guidelines**

**Lignes directrices sur les boisés d'importance**

**COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That Council:**

- 1. endorse the proposed settlement with the appellants of the Significant Woodlands policies approved by Council on 14 December 2016, as described in this report; and**
- 2. approve the attached Document 1, Significant Woodlands: Guidelines for Identification, Evaluation, and Impact Assessment [Significant Woodlands Guidelines].**

**RECOMMANDATIONS DU COMITÉ**

**Que le Conseil :**

- 1. souscrive à l'entente proposée avec les parties ayant interjeté appel des politiques relatives aux boisés d'importance approuvées par le Conseil le 14 décembre 2016 et décrites dans le présent rapport; et**
- 2. approuve le document 1 ci-joint, intitulé Boisés d'importance : Lignes directrices en matière de désignation, d'évaluation et d'étude d'impact [Lignes directrices sur les boisés d'importance].**

**FOR THE INFORMATION OF COUNCIL:**

**The Planning Committee also approved:**

- 1. the following report recommendation:**

That Planning Committee direct the Planning, Infrastructure, and Economic Development staff to initiate a review of the implementation of the Significant Woodlands Guidelines within three years of approval.

- 2. the following motion :**

That Planning Committee amend the staff report, Document 3, before it

rises to Council, to include the summary and responses to the eight additional public submissions, as detailed and distributed to committee members in a staff memorandum on February 26, 2019.

POUR LA GOUVERNE DU CONSEIL

Le comité a également approuvé :

1. la recommandation du rapport suivante :

Que le Comité de l'urbanisme charge la Direction générale de la planification, de l'infrastructure et du développement économique de procéder à l'examen de la mise en œuvre des Lignes directrices sur les boisés d'importance dans les trois années suivant leur approbation.

2. la motion suivante :

Que le Comité de l'urbanisme modifie le document 3 du rapport du personnel avant qu'il ne soit présenté au Conseil, en y ajoutant une synthèse des huit commentaires du public et les réponses, présentées dont il est question dans une note de service distribuée aux membres du Comité le 26 février 2019.

DOCUMENTATION/DOCUMENTATION

1. Director's Report, Economic Development and Long Range Planning Services, Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Department, dated February 14, 2019 (ACS2019-PIE-EDP-0003)

Rapport du directeur, Services de Développement économique et planification à long terme, Direction générale de la planification, de l'Infrastructure et du développement économique, daté le 14 février 2019 (ACS2019-PIE-EDP-0003)

2. Extract of draft Minutes, Planning Committee, February 28, 2019

Extrait de l'ébauche du procès-verbal, Comité de l'urbanisme, le 28 février 2019

**Report to  
Rapport au:**

**Planning Committee / Comité de l'urbanisme  
February 28, 2019 / 28 février 2019**

**and Council / et au Conseil  
March 6, 2019 / 6 mars 2019**

**Submitted on February 14, 2019  
Soumis le 14 février 2019**

**Submitted by  
Soumis par:  
John Smit,**

**Director / directeur**

**Economic Development and Long Range Planning / Développement économique  
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**Ward: CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE      File Number: ACS2019-PIE-EDP-0003**

**SUBJECT: Significant Woodlands Guidelines**

**OBJET: Lignes directrices sur les boisés d'importance**

**REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Planning Committee:**

- 1. Recommend that Council endorse the proposed settlement with the appellants of the Significant Woodlands policies approved by Council on**

14 December 2016, as described in this report.

2. **Recommend that Council approve the attached Document 1, Significant Woodlands: Guidelines for Identification, Evaluation, and Impact Assessment [Significant Woodlands Guidelines].**
3. **Direct the Planning, Infrastructure, and Economic Development staff to initiate a review of the implementation of the Significant Woodlands Guidelines within three years of approval.**

## **RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

**Que le Comité de l'urbanisme :**

1. **Recommande au Conseil de souscrire à l'entente proposée avec les parties ayant interjeté appel des politiques relatives aux boisés d'importance approuvées par le Conseil le 14 décembre 2016 et décrites dans le présent rapport.**
2. **Recommande au Conseil d'approuver le document 1 ci-joint, intitulé Boisés d'importance : Lignes directrices en matière de désignation, d'évaluation et d'étude d'impact [Lignes directrices sur les boisés d'importance].**
3. **Charge la Direction générale de la planification, de l'infrastructure et du développement économique de procéder à l'examen de la mise en œuvre des Lignes directrices sur les boisés d'importance dans les trois années suivant leur approbation.**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Significant Woodlands Guidelines in Document 1 implements the significant woodlands policies approved by Council on 14 December 2016. The changes were required to provide for consistency with the Provincial Policy Statement 2014 (PPS).

This report and the guidelines respond to direction given by Council at the December 14, 2016 meeting to work with community and industry stakeholders to:

- Review Urban Expansion Study Area Policy 3.11(6b) [since renumbered to Policy 3.11(4b)] and Developing Community Policy 3.12(3b), and to return with recommendations for any necessary changes to implement the directions proposed in Building Better and Smarter Suburbs, Greenspaces policies,

Drainage and Stormwater Management policies, and Air Quality and Climate Change policies.

- Return with recommendations for revisions to the City's Environmental Impact Statement Guidelines.

Three parties have appealed the Official Plan Amendment. The Local Planning Appeals Tribunal is scheduled to hear the appeals in June 2019. Staff have reached agreements with the appellants, conditional upon approval by Council. Under the agreements, Policy 2.4.2(1.c.iii) would change as highlighted:

1.c. Significant Woodlands defined as the following... iii. In the urban area, any area 0.8 hectares in size or larger, supporting woodland ~~40~~ 60 years of age and older at the time of evaluation

Policy 2.4.2(3) would change as highlighted:

Regardless of whether the features are designated in this Plan, an Environmental Impact Statement is required for development proposed within or adjacent to features described in policy 1 above, with the exception of surface and groundwater features. Development and site alteration within or adjacent to these features will not be permitted unless it is demonstrated through an Environmental Impact Statement that there will be no negative impact on the feature or its ecological functions. Where the proposed development or alteration is for the establishment or expansion of mineral aggregate operations within or adjacent to a significant woodland, the demonstration of no negative impact may take into consideration final rehabilitation of the mineral aggregate operation, including any on- or off-site compensation. Rehabilitation of the mineral aggregate operation would need to be planned to occur as soon as possible and be suited to the local natural environment. The Policies regarding Environmental Impact Statements and the definition of terms are contained in Section 4.7.8.

The agreement includes the changes made to the Significant Woodlands Guidelines in response to comments and suggestions from the Greater Ottawa Home Builders Association (GOHBA), of which one of the Appellants is a member. It also includes the process for consideration of significant woodlands

in a future urban boundary expansion, as outlined in this report, should an expansion be necessary.

### **Assumptions and Analysis**

On December 14, 2016, Council approved an Official Plan Amendment to change the definition of significant woodlands in Section 2.4.2 (1c) of the Official plan, and to amend Sections 3.11 – Urban Expansion Study Areas and 3.12 – Developing Communities for consistency with the new definition. The changes were required for consistency with the Provincial Policy Statement 2014 (PPS).

When it approved the Official Plan amendment, Council directed staff to work with community and industry stakeholders as noted above.

In response to the directions from Council:

- Staff do not recommend any further changes to Official Plan Policies 3.11 and 3.12.
- Staff have prepared Significant Woodlands Guidelines (Document 1) as a proposed replacement for the current guidelines in Appendix 8 of the City's Environmental Impact Statement Guidelines.

The new Significant Woodlands Guidelines provide detailed guidance on the application of the significant woodlands policies in the rural and urban areas. In the opinion of City staff, the proposed Significant Woodlands Guidelines:

- Reflect the current scientific knowledge regarding the multiple ecosystem benefits provided by urban woodlands.
- Implement the approved policies in a way that is consistent with the PPS and which will lead to more effective protection of significant woodlands and their ecological functions.

### **Public Consultation/Input**

Over the past two years, staff have consulted with a 10-member working group of City staff and stakeholders from industry and the community to develop the Significant Woodlands Guidelines. Staff also consulted with other City Branches and Departments as required.

The guidelines were posted to Ottawa.ca on November 23, 2018, for three weeks of public review and comment.

Staff provided the guidelines directly to the appellants of the significant woodlands policies, as well as other major stakeholders and contributors. Staff made direct presentations on the new guidelines to the following groups and agencies:

- The Federation of Citizens Associations.
- The Greater Ottawa Home Builders.
- The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (Kemptville District Office).

Staff reviewed all input and comments, which resulted in changes and improvements to the guidelines.

## **RÉSUMÉ**

Les Lignes directrices sur les boisés d'importance, figurant dans le document 1, mettent en œuvre les politiques relatives aux boisés d'importance approuvées par le Conseil le 14 décembre 2016. Les modifications apportées étaient nécessaires pour en assurer la conformité à la Déclaration de principes provinciale (DPP) de 2014.

Le présent rapport et les lignes directrices font suite à la directive, fournie par le Conseil lors de la réunion du 14 décembre 2016, de travailler de concert avec la collectivité et les intervenants de l'industrie aux fins suivantes :

- Examiner la politique 3.11(6b) relative au Secteur d'expansion urbaine à l'étude [depuis renumérotée politique 3.11(4b)] et la politique 3.12(3b) relative aux collectivités en développement, en vue de recommander des modifications à apporter pour mettre en œuvre les orientations proposées dans *Bâtir des banlieues meilleures et plus intelligentes*, ainsi que dans les politiques relatives aux espaces verts, à la gestion du drainage et des eaux pluviales et à la qualité de l'air et au changement climatique.
- Recommander des révisions aux Lignes directrices de la Ville en matière d'études d'impact sur l'environnement.

Trois parties ont interjeté appel de la modification au Plan officiel. Le Tribunal d'appel de l'aménagement local devrait examiner ces appels en juin 2019. Le personnel a

conclu avec ces parties des ententes, conditionnelles à l'approbation du Conseil, en vertu desquelles la politique 2.4.2(1.c.iii) ferait l'objet de la modification suivante (en surbrillance) :

1.c. Terrains boisés d'importance ainsi définis .... iii. En secteur urbain, toute zone d'une superficie d'au moins 0,8 hectare, où se trouve un boisé dont le peuplement est âgé d'au moins 40 60 ans au moment de l'évaluation

La politique 2.4.2(3) ferait l'objet de la modification suivante (en surbrillance) :

Que les caractéristiques soient désignées ou non dans le présent Plan, une étude d'impact sur l'environnement est exigée pour tout aménagement proposé dans les caractéristiques décrites précédemment à la politique 1 ou les jouxtant, sauf dans le cas des plans d'eau de surface et d'eau souterraine. L'aménagement et la modification d'un site situé dans ces caractéristiques ou les jouxtant sont interdits à moins de démontrer, dans le cadre d'une étude d'impact sur l'environnement, qu'il n'y aura pas de répercussions négatives sur la caractéristique ou sur ses fonctions écologiques. Si l'aménagement ou la modification d'un site vise la création ou l'expansion d'opérations d'extraction d'agrégats dans un boisé d'importance ou le jouxtant, la preuve d'absence de répercussions néfastes peut prendre en compte la remise en état définitive des exploitations de ressources minérales en agrégats, y compris toute compensation sur site ou hors site. La remise en état des exploitations de ressources minérales en agrégats devrait être mise au calendrier le plus tôt possible et adaptée au milieu naturel environnant. Les politiques relatives aux études d'impact sur l'environnement et les définitions des termes se trouvent à la section 4.7.8.

L'entente comprend les modifications apportées aux Lignes directrices sur les boisés d'importance par suite des commentaires et des suggestions de la Greater Ottawa Home Builders Association (GOHBA), dont l'un des appelants est membre. Elle décrit également la pratique à adopter pour prendre en compte les boisés d'importance en cas d'éventuelle expansion des limites urbaines, comme le décrit le présent rapport, si une telle expansion était nécessaire.

## Hypothèses et analyse



Le 14 décembre 2016, le Conseil municipal approuvait une modification au Plan officiel visant à modifier la définition des boisés d'importance proposée à la section 2.4.2 (1c) du Plan officiel, et à modifier les sections 3.11 – Secteurs d'expansion urbaine à l'étude et 3.12 – Collectivités en développement, à des fins de cohérence avec cette nouvelle définition. Ces modifications sont nécessaires pour en assurer la conformité à la Déclaration de principes provinciale (DPP) de 2014.

Lors de l'approbation de cette modification au Plan officiel, le Conseil a chargé le personnel de travailler de concert avec la collectivité et les intervenants de l'industrie, comme il est mentionné plus haut.

Par suite des directives du Conseil :

- Le personnel ne recommande aucune autre modification aux politiques 3.11 et 3.12 du Plan officiel.
- Le personnel a élaboré des Lignes directrices sur les boisés d'importance (document 1) en remplacement éventuel des lignes directrices actuelles figurant à l'appendice 8 des Lignes directrices de la Ville en matière d'études d'impact sur l'environnement.

Les nouvelles Lignes directrices sur les boisés d'importance fournissent des directives détaillées sur l'application des politiques relatives aux boisés d'importance dans les zones rurales et urbaines. Le personnel de la Ville estime que les lignes directrices proposées sur les boisés d'importance :

- tiennent compte des connaissances scientifiques actuelles concernant les multiples avantages pour les écosystèmes découlant de la présence de boisés urbains;
- permettent l'application conforme à la DPP des politiques approuvées, une application qui offrira une meilleure protection des boisés d'importance et de leurs fonctions écologiques.

### **Consultation publique et commentaires**

Au cours des deux dernières années, le personnel a consulté un groupe de travail de dix membres, formé d'employés de la Ville et de représentants de l'industrie et de la collectivité, en vue d'élaborer les Lignes directrices sur les boisés d'importance. Le

personnel a également consulté, au besoin, les employés d'autres directions et directions générales.

Ces lignes directrices ont été affichées pendant trois semaines sur le site Ottawa.ca à partir du 23 novembre 2018, aux fins d'examen et de commentaires.

Le personnel a directement transmis les lignes directrices aux parties ayant interjeté appel des modifications aux politiques sur les boisés d'importance, ainsi qu'aux autres principaux intervenants et collaborateurs. Le personnel a fait des présentations directes aux groupes et agences suivants au sujet des nouvelles lignes directrices :

- la Fédération des associations civiques
- la Greater Ottawa Home Builders Association
- le ministère des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts de l'Ontario (bureau de district de Kemptville)

Le personnel a examiné l'ensemble des commentaires reçus, qui ont donné lieu à des modifications et à des améliorations aux lignes directrices.

## **BACKGROUND**

On December 14, 2016, Council approved an Official Plan Amendment to change the definition of significant woodlands in Section 2.4.2 (1c) of the Official plan, and to amend Sections 3.11 – Urban Expansion Study Areas and 3.12 – Developing Communities for consistency with the new definition. When it approved the Official Plan amendment, Council directed staff to work with community and industry stakeholders to:

- Review Urban Expansion Study Area Policy 3.11(6b) [since renumbered to Policy 3.11 (4b)] and Developing Community Policy 3.12(3b), and to return with recommendations for any necessary changes to implement the directions proposed in Building Better and Smarter Suburbs, Greenspaces policies, Drainage and Stormwater Management policies, and Air Quality and Climate Change policies.
- Return with recommendations for revisions to the City's Environmental Impact Statement Guidelines.

## DISCUSSION

The Significant Woodlands Guidelines in Document 1 implement the significant woodlands policies approved by Council on December 14, 2016, and respond to direction given by Council at that meeting. Staff are also seeking Council approval of proposed settlement of the appeals to those policies.

### Council Direction and Response

On December 14, 2016, Council approved an Official Plan amendment to change the definition of significant woodlands in Section 2.4.2 (1c) of the Official Plan, and to amend Sections 3.11 – Urban Expansion Study Areas and 3.12 – Developing Communities for consistency with the new definition. The changes were required for consistency with the Provincial Policy Statement 2014 (PPS).

Under the policies approved on 14 December 2016, significant woodlands were defined as:

- i. Any treed area meeting the definition of woodlands in the *Forestry Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. F.26 or forest in the Ecological Land Classification for Southern Ontario; and
- ii. In the rural area, meeting any one of the criteria in the Natural Heritage Reference Manual, as assessed in a subwatershed planning context and applied in accordance with Council-approved guidelines, where such guidelines exist; or
- iii. In the urban area, any area 0.8 hectares in size or larger, supporting woodland 40 years of age and older at the time of evaluation;

Three parties appealed the significant woodlands policies. Two parties from the aggregate industry sought clarity regarding the application of the policies to existing aggregate licenses and planning applications for new or expanded aggregate operations. The third party from the development industry argued that the 40-year exemption for significant urban woodlands was not long enough to achieve its intended purpose of protecting urban land supply within and adjacent to the urban boundary.

The proposed settlement with the appellants from the aggregate industry recognizes and reflects the specific guidance provided by the Province in the Natural Heritage Reference Manual (NHRM) regarding the application of the Provincial Policy Statement

to conflicts between natural heritage features and aggregate resources. The NHRM says that rehabilitation of aggregate resource licenses may be considered in the evaluation of natural heritage impacts.

The proposed settlement with the appellant from the development industry also responds to similar concerns raised by some members of the Significant Woodlands Working Group and by other members of the Greater Ottawa Home Builders Association. These parties expressed concern that the 40-year exemption might still capture very young woodlands which, though meeting the technical definition of a woodland, would not meet the intent of the policy. For example, 40 years ago some densely regenerating old fields may have met the definition of woodland under the Ecological Land Classification but consisted entirely of saplings under 4.5 meters in height. The parties argued that a longer time period would better achieve the intended outcome. Following discussion and consideration of these concerns, staff support a change to 60 years.

When it approved the Official Plan amendment, Council directed staff to work with community and industry stakeholders to:

- Review Urban Expansion Study Area Policy 3.11(6b) [since renumbered as Policy 3.11(4b)] and Developing Community Policy 3.12(3b), and to return with recommendations for any necessary changes to implement the directions proposed in Building Better and Smarter Suburbs, Greenspaces policies, Drainage and Stormwater Management policies, and Air Quality and Climate Change policies.
- Return with recommendations for revisions to the City's Environmental Impact Statement Guidelines.

Over the past two years, staff have consulted with a working group of stakeholders to carry out these directions. The Working Group consisted of representatives from the following groups:

- The Greater Ottawa Home Builders Association (two representatives);
- An environmental consultant recommended by the Greater Ottawa Home Builders Association;
- The Federation of Citizens Associations;

- Ottawa Public Health;
- The City of Ottawa's Natural Systems Unit (two Environmental Planners and one Planning Forester);
- The City of Ottawa's Zoning and Interpretation Unit.

Staff consulted with other City Branches and Departments as required.

The Working Group operated on the basis of consensus, on the understanding that no member of the group would be obliged or expected to support the final recommendations from staff. The discussions were very constructive, with positive contributions from all members.

In response to the directions from Council:

- Staff do not recommend any further changes to Official Plan Policies 3.11 and 3.12.
- Staff have prepared the attached Significant Woodlands Guidelines (Document 1) as a proposed replacement for the current guidelines in Appendix 8 of the City's Environmental Impact Statement Guidelines.

The new Significant Woodlands Guidelines provide detailed guidance on the application of the significant woodlands policies in the rural and urban areas. In response to requests made by community and industry stakeholders when Planning Committee recommended the policies, the guidelines:

- Include a flowchart illustrating the significant woodlands evaluation process.
- Establish planning areas and thresholds for application of the Province's Natural Heritage Reference Manual (NHRM) criteria in the rural area;
- Address the application of the NHRM criteria to aggregate licenses and aggregate-related development applications in the rural area;
- Address the application of the significant woodlands policies in the context of other PPS and Official Plan policies related to matters such as urban intensification and efficiency of land use;
- Reconfirm respect for past planning decisions;

- Address the interpretation and application of the PPS's "no negative impact" test, especially in the urban area;
- Provide examples illustrating the application of the guidelines in the urban area;
- Describe how the guidelines reflect and capture the full suite of ecosystem services provided by urban woodlands.

In the opinion of City staff, the proposed Significant Woodlands Guidelines implement the approved policies in a way that is consistent with the PPS and which will lead to more effective protection of significant woodlands and their ecological functions.

**Evaluation Criteria and the Natural Heritage Reference Manual**

The Provincial Policy Statement 2014 requires municipalities to evaluate significant woodlands using criteria in the Natural Heritage Reference Manual (2010). The NHRM contains 13 criteria organized into four categories: size, ecological functions, uncommon characteristics (chiefly biodiversity), and economic and social functions. The NHRM recommends that a woodland meeting any one of the criteria should be considered significant.

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Sub-criteria</b>
1. Size	Woodland size
2. Ecological Functions	Woodland interior
	Proximity to other natural heritage features
	Ecological linkages
	Water protection
	Woodland diversity
3. Uncommon Characteristics	Unique species composition
	Provincially significant vegetation community
	Rare, uncommon, or restricted plant species
	Older woodlands
4. Economic and social values	High productivity of economically valuable products (while maintaining native natural attributes)

	High value in special services, such as air-quality improvement or recreation at a sustainable level
	Important identified appreciation, education, cultural or historical value

Several of the criteria have their own size thresholds. For example, a woodland that does not meet the minimum threshold for significance based on size alone may still qualify as significant on the basis of woodland diversity or maturity (or any other criterion), provided that it meets the smaller, minimum size thresholds for those criteria. The NHRM suggests that minimum size thresholds for the different criteria should be based on overall forest cover in the surrounding planning area. It suggests that planning areas should reflect watershed and subwatershed boundaries, whenever possible.

The Significant Woodlands Guidelines splits the City into six planning areas: five watershed-based, rural planning areas, and the urban area. For each of the rural planning areas, the Guidelines provide size thresholds for each criterion, based upon forest cover in the planning area. Using these size thresholds, proponents will be required to apply all of the NHRM criteria in the evaluation of rural woodlands.

For the urban area, the Guidelines reflect the significant woodland policies in the Official Plan (as proposed for modification), which define any urban woodland of at least 60 years of age and 0.8 hectares in size to be significant solely based on economic and social values. This definition reflects an ecosystem approach to the valuation of urban woodlands.

### **Urban Woodlands and Ecosystem Services**

#### *Ecosystem Services Toolkit*

The adoption of an ecosystem services approach to the evaluation of urban woodlands follows directly from the rationale for the 2016 Official Plan definition of urban woodlands. Based on current science, that definition presumes that any woodlands in an urban area qualify as significant for their social, cultural, and economic benefits to the surrounding community, and for their contribution to the urban tree canopy, in addition to any biological values.

In order to determine which ecosystem services are most applicable to the evaluation of urban woodlands, the Working Group followed the approach and process recommended in the Ecosystem Services Toolkit (Value of Nature to Canadians Study Task Force, 2017) published by the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Governments of Canada. In particular, the Working Group used worksheets 1 to 4 of the Toolkit to assist in the identification and characterization of the important ecosystem services:

- Worksheet 1: Define the Issue and Context.
- Worksheet 2: Ecosystem Services Priority Screening Tool.
- Worksheet 3: Summarize Screening Results and Confirm Priority Ecosystem Services.
- Worksheet 4: Characterize the Priority Ecosystem Services.

The Working Group found the Toolkit invaluable for establishing a common understanding of the project objectives, for establishing a common vocabulary, for setting out a comprehensible process, and for arriving at an agreed set of ecosystem services.

The main outcomes of this approach were: (a) a list of ecosystems services and, (b) a matrix identifying measures and indicators for each service (Table 4 of the Significant Woodlands Guidelines, Document 1).

### *No Negative Impact*

Policy 2.1.5 of the Provincial Policy Statement 2014 says that:

Development and Site Alteration shall not be permitted in...

(b) significant woodlands in Ecoregions 6E and 7E (excluding islands in Lake Huron and the St. Marys River)...

unless it has been demonstrated that there will be no *negative impacts* on the natural features or their *ecological functions*.

Application of no negative impacts policy poses substantial challenges in an urban land use context, especially in circumstances where:

- Previous planning decisions have created a legal right of development or reasonable expectation of development;



- A woodland has been identified under the new City of Ottawa definition as significant solely on its social, cultural, and economic values;
- A woodland has come into the urban area through an urban boundary expansion.

In the first case, after consideration of all PPS policies and priorities, there are instances where Council has made prior planning decisions that conferred development rights on a property prior to its identification as significant woodland. Ontario Municipal Board decisions have established in respect of lands in the urban area prior to OPA 76 that the City cannot remove those rights in order to protect significant woodlands except through acquisition of the affected land (e.g. Official Plan Policy 5(cii)). If acquisition of the land is not a viable option for the City, then it would have to approve development.

In the second case, the City may have identified an urban woodland as significant for its socio-economic and cultural benefits, even though it does not qualify as significant under any biological or ecological criteria. Under some conditions, modification of a woodlot might increase its socio-economic and cultural benefits. Conversely, retention of some woodlots may have unintended impacts on urban form, land use efficiency, transportation, or public health and safety that could result in a net, socio-economic loss to the community.

In the third case, a small woodland may come into the urban area through expansion of the urban boundary to include the surrounding lands. In such a case, the development of the surrounding lands will have unavoidable, long-term impacts on the physical condition of the woodland and its ecological functions, simply through the isolation of the woodland within an urbanized landscape.

Attempts to adhere strictly to the *no negative impact* standard in such cases will likely result in failure or in superficial measures with little real benefit. However, a focus on ecosystem services – especially socio-economic and cultural benefits – allows the identification of trade-offs: mitigation and compensation measures that could provide greater community benefits than would otherwise result from an inflexible approach. In the first case, for example, the City would have the authority and power to require enhanced tree planting, green roofs, or publicly accessible private space to replace some of the ecosystem services formerly provided by the woodland. In the second and third cases, the City could approve modifications to the woodlands to make them more accessible and functional for the public, even while changing their physical size or form.

Such an approach is more consistent with the overall intent of the PPS, than strict adherence to the *no negative impact* standard.

#### *Integration with other Official Plan Policies*

In many cases, urban woodlands fall under several environmental policies, which may provide equal or greater protection than designation as significant woodlands. In particular, woodlands frequently lie within hazard lands or watercourse setbacks. Examples include:

- Woodlands in valleylands or ravine lands: e.g., Voyager Creek, Green's Creek, Stillwater Creek.
- Woodlands in floodplains: e.g., the Shirley's Brook Corridor
- Woodlands within watercourse setbacks (e.g., the Thomas Gamble Drain, Riverside South).

The City is not obligated to purchase such woodlands in order to protect them. In the event of a development application, they would be conveyed to the City as constrained lands.

#### **Consideration of Significant Woodlands in an Urban Expansion Process**

Any requirements for future urban expansion will be determined through the Official Plan review process. Should that process identify the need for urban expansion, then it is in the public interest to retain forested areas in potential urban expansion areas until they can be evaluated for their potential as significant urban woodlands. However, retention of potential significant urban woodlands in an area should not prejudice the consideration of that area for urban expansion, notwithstanding other constraints.

Should the Official Plan review process identify the need for urban expansion, the following process will be followed.

1. Identification and screening of potential urban expansion lands:
  - a. Woodland cover will not be used for the preliminary screening and scoring of potential urban expansion areas.
2. Final screening and selection (determination of developable area):

- a. The City will contract an independent forestry consultant to identify and map the forest in each candidate urban expansion area that meets the definition of urban woodland (*i.e.* 60 years of age and 0.8 ha), independent of property boundaries.
  - b. The amount of such woodland will be subtracted from the developable area, up to a limit of 15% of the gross area, independent of property boundaries.
3. Post-expansion process (*i.e.* concept plan, community design plan, *etc.*):
- a. The determination of the final area and boundaries of significant woodlands will be determined through the evaluation process described in the significant woodlands guidelines. The total, retained area of significant woodland may be less than 15% of the gross area.

The 15% limit for significant woodlands is based upon the Official Plan target for accessible greenspace of 16% to 20% of the gross urban area, after accounting for parkland dedication.

### **Three-Year Review**

Staff recommends a review and report on the implementation of the Significant Woodlands Guidelines no later than three years after their adoption by Council. A three-year review will provide accountability to the current Council, while providing sufficient time and experience with the Guidelines to allow an informed assessment of their effectiveness.

### **Future Workplan**

Approval of the Significant Woodlands Guidelines, along with improvements to the City's mapping of wetlands and forests, makes possible three subsequent changes to the City's policies and procedures for rural land use and development applications.

#### *Standard Conditions for Low-risk, Rural Development Applications*

The City's Official Plan requires the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for several types of low-risk, rural development applications, such as severances and site plans adjacent to, but outside of, natural heritage features. Many of these EIS reports result in exactly the same recommendations, consisting chiefly of mitigation measures to protect the adjacent natural features. In many cases, the applicants are individual, rural property owners, for whom the cost of an Environmental Impact Statement may be burdensome. The Natural Systems and Rural Affairs Unit will work

with industry and the Development Review Branch on a set of standard conditions for development approvals and development agreements to replace the requirement for an EIS on low-risk, rural development applications.

#### *Update of Natural Heritage Schedules L1, L2, and L3*

Official Plan Schedules L1, L2, and L3 already identify a natural heritage system in the rural area, including significant woodlands. Some changes to significant woodland boundaries will result from the revised significant woodlands criteria and the receipt of new city-wide, forest cover mapping (anticipated March 2019). Staff will bring forward a subsequent Official Plan Amendment to reflect the changes in the natural heritage system overlay in Schedules L1, L2, and L3 of the Official Plan.

#### *Elimination of the Rural Natural Feature Land Use Designation*

The Rural Natural Feature designation in the Official Plan serves as a trigger for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement. Rural Natural Features were drawn to follow artificial boundaries, such as roads or lot and concession lines, in order to encompass and protect areas of natural or semi-natural landscape where the boundaries of natural features were poorly defined. However, now that the City has reliable, current information on the location and boundaries of woodlands, wetlands, and other natural features (as represented in Official Plan Schedules L1, L2 and L3), the Rural Natural Feature designation serves little purpose. The Natural Systems and Rural Affairs Unit, and the Policy Planning Branch, will investigate elimination of the Rural Natural Feature designation as part of the current comprehensive Official Plan Review.

### **RURAL IMPLICATIONS**

The report has minimal implications for the rural area. Official Plan Schedules L1, L2, and L3 already identify a natural heritage system in the rural area, including significant woodlands. Some changes to significant woodland boundaries may occur. The new guidelines will provide greater clarity in the evaluation of significant woodlands, where required under the Official Plan and the Site Alteration By-law.

### **CONSULTATION**

Over the past two years, staff have consulted with a working group of industry and community stakeholders to develop the Significant Woodlands Guidelines. The Working Group consisted of representatives from the following groups:

- The Greater Ottawa Home Builders Association (two representatives);
- An environmental consultant recommended by the Greater Ottawa Home Builders Association;
- The Federation of Citizens Associations;
- Ottawa Public Health;
- The City of Ottawa's Natural Systems Unit (two Environmental Planners and one Planning Forester);
- The City of Ottawa's Zoning and Interpretation Unit.

Staff consulted with other City Branches and Departments as required.

The guidelines were posted to Ottawa.ca on November 23, 2018, for three weeks of public review and comment.

Staff provided the guidelines directly to the appellants of the significant woodlands policies. In addition, staff provided the guidelines directly to the following major stakeholders and contributors:

- All members of the working group.
- The Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority, and the South Nation Conservation Authority.
- The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.
- The National Capital Commission.
- Smart Prosperity (University of Ottawa).
- Environment Canada.
- Dr. Andrew Kenney, University of Toronto.
- Tom Hilditch, Savanta Consulting.

Staff made direct presentations on the new guidelines to the following groups and agencies:

- The Federation of Citizens Associations.

- The Greater Ottawa Home Builders.
- The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (Kemptville District Office).

Staff has reviewed and considered all of the input and comments received from the public and stakeholders. Document 2 summarizes the City's response and the resulting improvements to the Significant Woodlands Guidelines.

### **COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLORS**

This is a city-wide report - not applicable.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal impediments to the adoption of the Guidelines. It is anticipated that reference to the Guidelines will be made during the upcoming Natural Systems Phase of the hearings on Official Plan Amendments 150 and 179.

### **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

### **ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct asset management implications with recommendations of this report.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications.

### **ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS**

Staff anticipate that implementation of the Significant Woodlands Guidelines will result in more effective consideration of accessibility impacts in the planning and management of significant woodlands within the urban area.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Staff anticipate that implementation of the Significant Woodland Guidelines will result in more effective environmental protection and management of woodlands and enhancement of their ecosystem services. The guidelines are consistent with the City's

other environmental initiatives, in particular the Urban Forest Management Plan, low impact development, and promotion of a healthy built environment.

### **TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

This project supports the following 2015 – 2018 Term of Council priorities:

- Environmental Sustainability;
- A Healthy and Caring Community;
- Planning and Decisions Making.

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION** *(distributed separately)*

Document 1 Significant Woodlands Guidelines -- English

Document 2 Significant Woodlands Guidelines -- French.

Document 3 Summary of Public Comments and Responses.

### **DISPOSITION**

Planning, Infrastructure, and Economic Development will be responsible for implementing the new Significant Woodlands Guidelines.