

## **City of Ottawa New Official Plan Input**

### **Summary from OWBA (Osgoode Ward Business Association)** **Round Table Sessions – March 20, 2019**

**Moderator:** Deanna Parisi – Vice President OWBA

**Officials:** George Darouze – Osgoode Ward City Councillor  
Alain Miguelez – Program Manager – Community Planning  
Ian Scott – Economic Development Officer

**Facilitators:** Gib Paterson, Tracey D’Aviero, Laina Jez, Clay Crepin, Gino Milito, Judy Beltzner, Klaus Beltzner, Bill Parisi

**Attendees:** Approximately 60 Business and Community Members

**Location:** Orchard View Wedding & Event Centre  
6346 Deermeadow Dr, Greely, ON K4P 1M9

Early 2019, members of the Planning Department spoke at one of OWBA’s breakfast meetings outlining the process for consultation and creation of a completely New Official Plan for the City of Ottawa. They brought the message that they sought and welcomed input from rural constituents in shaping the new Official Plan, leading to the idea to hold a series of round tables to seek input from our members and community members.

The following summarizes input from OWBA members collected during Round Table Sessions conducted on the evening of March 20, 2019 over the course of approximately 4 hours. Participants rotated through 4 of 8 tables of interest in order to engage in discussion and have their voices heard on 8 key topics impacting rural stakeholders.

The evening opened with an introduction of the purpose for the Roundtable being the open discussion and sharing of grassroots public input, intended to provide a tangible and relevant rural perspective of how rural stakeholders would like to see the New Official Plan incorporate their needs and address their concerns. The end results would then be summarized into a complete document to be provided to City of Ottawa Officials in order to influence the direction and development of the City of Ottawa New Official Plan.

The workshop was organized around eight primary themes below. The respective discussion was captured on pad boards and was summarized in the following pages (3-14). Additional input provided by stakeholders who could not attend has also been incorporated.

## **1 - Demographics & Social Services**

What initiatives and programs would benefit the diverse demographic groups in our rural community?

## **2 - Arts, Culture & Recreation: Quality of Life**

What are the most important Artistic; Recreational & Cultural Activities we need to improve quality of life in rural areas?

## **3 - Economic Development & Employment**

What factors impact & influence local employment & what can be done to address the challenges?

## **4 - Roads, Transit & Transportation**

What is unique about transit and transportation needs in rural areas & what are potential remedies?

## **5 - Planning Policies: Development Constraints & Restrictions**

What changes are needed to help rural areas?

## **6 - Rural Agricultural & Industry**

What are the challenges facing rural agriculture & industry & potential remedies?

## **7 - Rural Tourism – Activities; Festivals & Events: Rural Identity**

How can we evolve our rural community to become a destination for local & global tourism?

## **8 - Environment & Climate Change**

How do we conserve & protect our natural environment, while adapting to climate change?

## **1 - Demographics & Social Services**

**What initiatives and programs would benefit the diverse demographic groups in our rural community?**

(Facilitator: Bill Parisi)

- Recurring theme: "Should not need to go downtown to live or for services"

- **City Planners to Stimulate Building of Homes to offset impending housing crisis**
  - Planners to work with applicants to find ways to make things happen (not look for ways to shut them down).
  - Allow specific local variances from general Official Plan Guidelines where they make sense (not get stuck in dogma).
  - Allow for creative arrangements (e.g. shared facility services).
  - Relax 2-acre minimum within already developed neighbourhoods.
  - Allow a variety of housing types (e.g. small apartment).
  - Rural can absorb the impending demand bubble if Planning guidelines are varied intelligently.
  
- **Young Families Priorities:**
  - Require more recreational facilities (i.e. Pools, Activity Fields, Arts).
  - Access to Day Care (building accommodations, and support to private daycare).
  - Mental health services within the community.
  - Sidewalks for safety (e.g. children walking to school or bus).
  - Keep young people in the community with programs and opportunities minimizing commuting to all activities.
  
- **Seniors Priorities:**
  - Must be able to remain in the rural community where they have spent their entire life.
  - Continuum of housing types: Independent -> Supported -> Long Term Care, close to amenities, support services.
  - Provide signage opportunities to post senior themed community events, shows, news (i.e. relax restrictions on access to sign boards in community centres and city-owned facilities).
  - Increase funding for ROSSS support, expanding opportunities for Seniors and increased communication, support (e.g. some people don't have access to internet or are not tech-savvy). Promote social, clubs, educational events and field trips to continue healthy social engagement.
  - Encourage Coach houses by minimizing red tape; removing prohibitive development fees and streamlining application process.
  
- **Commuting Workers Priorities:**

- Provide incentives to expand High Speed Internet availability.
- Stimulate housing availability and types.
- Create village hubs with access to restaurants, retail and services to encourage “Live, Work, Play” within the community.
- Emergency Services:
  - Ensure rural area services are staffed and funded adequately and protected from redirection of First Responders including Paramedics; Fire Department and Police creating delayed response for emergencies.
- Health Services:
  - Create incentives and hubs for Health Professionals to locate in rural areas to offset challenges in attracting Doctors and other health services.
  - Consider offering Health Clinics with Nurse Practitioners from the Public Health Unit to promote healthy living and improve healthcare accessibility.

## **2 - Arts, Culture & Recreation: Quality of Life**

**What are the most important Artistic; Recreational & Cultural Activities we need to improve quality of life in rural areas?**

(Facilitator: Gib Paterson)

- Increased funding for development of arts in the rural environment.
- Fully-utilize recreational facilities by removing barriers to booking and make more affordable rental of space.
- Consider partnering with schools for better use of facilities, gyms, etc.
- Improved communication to increase awareness of existing program availability (e.g. 4H, Scouts, Girl Guides, Cadets, Service Clubs, etc.)
- Changing demographics will increase leisure time and demand.
- Encourage creation and support of local arts & culture groups with a City Liaison and accessible funding.
- Improve Parks & Recreation offerings to the rural sector, currently, there are minimal programs offered, requiring extensive travel to access programs.
- Create and support local Youth Organizations (such as Osgoode Youth Association (OYA) to offer activities), meeting venues and special events for rural youth.
- Currently there are no public indoor or outdoor pools or recreational facilities other than ice pads in Osgoode Ward. Encourage Public-Private Partnership. Consider allocating local development fees to support this initiative. The East has Shenkmann, Ray Friel Rec Complex, the West has Nepean Sportsplex; Richcraft Rec Complex; Minto Rec Complex and many more, while the South and Rural areas are sorely lacking, requiring extensive travel for many programs.

- Consider Rural-centric Festivals to celebrate arts and achievements such as Music, Fine Arts, Performing Arts, etc. (e.g. Kemptville Live; Smiths Falls Music Festival)
- Create exhibition space in the Community Development Centres to display and promote Arts and Recreation within the rural community.
- Create a “Maker Space” similar to Nepean Sportsplex Arts Room for painting, photography, sculpture, and workshops.
- Unify a network of safe cycle/multi-use paths connecting all communities where possible to create a way to travel from separate subdivisions/communities without the need for dangerous travel on 80 Km/Hr. roadways with no shoulders.
- Increase parkland development for recreational activities.
- Create central website hub to bring people together – Local events; Clubs; Classified Ads; Employment Opportunities; Local Services; Local Producers (e.g. Agricultural/Food Products).
- Invite NCC to bring Arts to Rural Ottawa with travelling shows, mini-concerts, art exhibitions, engaging workshop opportunities.

### **3 - Economic Development & Employment**

**What factors impact & influence local employment & what can be done to address the challenges?**

(Facilitator: Tracey D’Aviero)

#### **Issues Summary:**

- Access to employable talent requires transportation (especially for youth).
- Need to be able to compete for talent with urban areas.
- Planning approvals take too long.
- Need people to be able to work where they live.
- Villages and neighbourhoods should be self-sufficient, everything you need in one place.
- Increased access to energy resources (e.g. natural gas deployment).
- Business & Property taxes are too high to for business to remain in store fronts and main streets.
- Empty buildings on main streets mean no foot traffic.
- Taxes are the same as urban in spite of fewer and reduced services.
- Youth demographic is moving out of the city, we need to get them back.
- Require better infrastructure in all villages and developed areas.
- Lack of availability of rental properties in villages.
- Need to proactively recognize and enforce the Official Plan & Bylaws rather than waiting for complaints (e.g. weddings in bars, storage areas on farms).

#### **Biggest Issues:**

- Employees – transportation, supply & demand (i.e. trades) and work ethic.
- Planning approvals slow growth or stall business and building projects.

- Villages should be self-sufficient including business services generating vital foot traffic on main streets – People need to work where they live.
- Need incentives to keep/bring back youth from moving to urban environments.
- Need incentives for business to come to villages.
- Lack of affordable meeting spaces for small businesses.

#### **Solutions:**

- Faster Planning approvals, less Red Tape.
- Framework for business development that applies to everyone.
- Wider roads for traffic management.
- Housing that is more affordable for the youth demographics we are losing (consumers for business).
- Economic stimulus for youth and families.
- We need to actively promote the rural lifestyle.
- Business development incentives for rural (tax breaks, programs).
- Acknowledge that rural environments have different economic development needs (e.g. Parking spaces, bathrooms, etc.).
- Main street beautification programs to stimulate foot traffic and business.
- Consider liaison with Invest Ottawa to encourage rural offerings, job fairs, investment, and training to support local economic development.
- Create Maker's Spaces in Rural Ottawa to encourage entrepreneurship, networking, meeting spaces, workshops, educational events, etc. Liaise with Invest Ottawa to bring seminars to the country! Business Development Days with local Business Associations, BIA's.

## **4 - Roads, Transit & Transportation**

### **What is unique about transit and transportation needs in rural areas & what are potential remedies?**

(Facilitator: Laina Jez)

- **Maintenance**
  - Band-Aids vs actual long-term fixes (costly and only stop gap).
  - Transparent schedule for maintenance with improved communication.
  - Is Privatization a better option? Toll roads?
  - Accountability on Road Maintenance.
- **Public Transportation**
  - Is LRT a benefit, Park-N-Ride at LRT, a shuttle destination to LRT?
  - Collector roads are insufficient – traffic to get to LRT.
  - Tourist destinations (like museums) suffer without public transit.
  - Are there sufficient people (youth, seniors or commuters)?
  - Innovative, creative alternative to Bus models – supplemented by Uber or other Ride Share services.

- Special Event transportation from urban hubs to bring Urban people to Rural Tourism Events (e.g. Metcalfe Fair; Farmers Market, Festivals).
- **Traffic Pains**
  - Commuter traffic passes through but makes no tax contribution.
  - Truck routes for large volume suppliers like Amazon, Hard Rock, and Aggregates.
  - Bank St at Findlay Creek is especially bad area.
  - Victoria Street east to York's Corners - city failed to continue the cycling network that links to our neighbors in Russell Township where cycle lanes exist.
  - Stagecoach Road repaving - again our city failed to widen with cycle lanes. These two roads link the villages of our ward.
  - Heavy trucks on 8th line Road are extreme harmful to our village of Metcalfe.
  - Eighteen wheelers making the turn from Victoria St to 8th line Rd. This intersection does not support these large vehicles turning.
  - Prohibition of truck traffic for 8th line road is required.
- **Seasonal Maintenance**
  - Budget concerns – use sand instead of straight salt.
  - Climate change – look to other outcomes?
  - Are roads built properly in our climate to withstand heavy trucks, half loads, and truck routes.
  - Collapsing shoulders and pot holes create safety issues.
- **Planning**
  - Build roads before subdivisions, wider, etc.
  - Open Bowesville/Alert as additional path to Limebank
  - Ring Rd – Earl Armstrong, South/North and North/South routes.
  - Connect Villages.
  - Align Community Development Plans with Official Plan or consider review/exceptions when not aligned.
- **What Should Rural Roads Look Like?**
  - Wide paved shoulders for cyclists, plows and equipment.
  - White lines on outside.
  - Signs set back from roads so farming and heavy equipment can get past.
  - Beautification: trees, landscaping, fencing, setback light industry, solar street signs.
  - Reduction in visual sign pollution, e.g. Mitch Owens, Hwy 31/Bank Street is a major eyesore and needs to be cleaned up through tighter signage laws/enforcement.
- **Village Traffic Calming**
  - Find ways to slow traffic coming from highways (80Km/Hr) through residential zones and main streets.
  - Equip Stop signs with flashing lights.

- Speed limits should be reduced to 40 Km/Hr from 50 or 60 Km/Hr.

## **5 - Planning Policies: Development Constraints & Restrictions**

### **What changes are needed to help rural areas?**

(Facilitator: Clay Crepin)

- Flexibility is required for rural property zoning and change of use.  
Examples:
  - Converting a large single-family home to have a rental apartment
  - Being able to operate a low impact business
  - Building a coach house
- New recreational facilities should be constructed for rural families (including pools, rinks, gyms, arts).
- CDP's often at odds with Official Plan, constraining and stalling development (e.g. subdivision expansions; rezoning applications) when OP takes precedent. Consider individual situations from a rural perspective vs. urban perspective.
- Review Village Boundaries logically and revise if not logical or no longer relevant/current.
- Rural employment areas were an important subject. We require incentives put in place to attract rural employment areas.
- Extending City services such as sewer and water are critical for growth such as retail stores, community and rec centers and senior's residences.
- Support from the City planning department to work with rural development instead of against it is required to grow the rural areas that residents want.
- The City needs to become more responsive with respect to the processing of rural development applications. The following are a list of sever areas requiring improvement:

#### **- Cost of Studies to Support Development Applications**

A thorough review should be done and flexibility provided so that the cost of providing rural housing and locations for businesses are not unnecessarily increased. Significant increases in application costs over the last decade with additional study requirements have occurred. For example, an Archaeological Stage 1 Study used to cost \$1,500. It is not unusual now for a complete clearance to cost \$100,000.

We did not see an opportunity for the rural development industry to participate in the creation of these guidelines which in some cases do not have regard to common sense and simply wind up increasing the cost of housing. The consultants who are hired by the applicants are in an inherent conflict of interest because more onerous study requirements generate larger retainers and the more complex and longer duration of comment letters also create additional fees. The additional charges for responding to comments are now on a non-competitive bidding basis since the consultant is now the sole source supplier for that task.

A working group that involves a rural development industry could possibly benefit in reviewing the need and scope of the studies and the methodology regarding comments.

**- Sensitivity to Timing Issues and Accountability to Clients and Taxpayers**

The overwhelming perception of the rural business people is that there is a lack of sensitivity to the impact these delays have on operating a business, on the cost of building a home and on the supply of goods and services to the rural consumer. Once a demand is made by municipal staff it is generally supported by other staff members without adequate regard of the impact to the other side of the table. Once a position is taken by staff it is very difficult to obtain a conciliatory review of the demand no matter how little sense it makes once all of the facts are made known.

**- Time to Respond**

(a) There seems to have been an increase in the amount of time it takes to provide simple responses to move things forward. By adding more people to the chain each staff participant is given an effective veto in being able to arrest the progress of the application. Once a single staff member digs in the other staff members respect the right of this veto at the apparent expense of the concerns of the applicant and its customers.

(b) Deeming Applications Complete

Originally the planner in charge of the file would do a review to ensure all necessary studies on the checklist were included in the application and if so the application would be deemed complete and circulation commenced.

Now it appears for at least some of the files that a rigorous review and pre-circulation occurs and some of the studies are deemed inadequate with comments that are normally reserved for a comment letter. It is now even using experts an arduous procedure to have an application deemed complete.

**- Impact of Delay on Staff Processing Time**

More importantly this also has the effect to keeping applications for months and years longer than is necessary. Many of the files sitting on staff desks and clogging up the system could have been processed and discharged efficiently freeing up staff time for more efficient process of current and future applications.

**- Flexibility**

(a) Applications and processes should encourage and make it easy for businesses to start. Some zoning or site plan restrictions create additional delays which discourage commencement of new initiatives.

(b) Overrule Junior Staff

Reluctance of senior staff to overrule unnecessary or unreasonable demands made by junior staff.

(c) Lack of Continuity

From one application to the next, new staff members come in with new perspectives, new written objectives and sometimes different understandings of the facts and decisions on a file, imposing inconsistent requirements on applications and processing protocols.

**- Rural Working Group**

At one time in the past there was a rural working group composed of engineers, consultants, developers and builders. This group met regularly with John Moser and the group was very effective in giving insight and coming up with more collaborative approaches to applications and processes. A meeting has not been called for this group in over ten years and it might be worthwhile to consider reviving. Something that is informal, responsive and effective.

**- Serve the Customer / Serve the Taxpayer**

Rather than focusing on meeting the needs of clients, taxpayers and customers, the rural business person sometimes is concerned that this perspective is overwhelmed by the need to meet the demands of staff without due regard to the key objective. The key objective is meeting the needs of the taxpayer. We need to keep in mind who we are working for

## **6 - Rural Agricultural & Industry**

### **What are the challenges facing rural agriculture & industry & potential remedies?**

(Facilitator: Gino Milito)

- **Infrastructure:**
  - Extend Natural Gas to ALL the rural areas in Osgoode ward
    - Sewer, water, high speed internet, etc., natural gas (80% of Alberta farmers have N.G. and only 20% of Ontario)

- Rural road signage is too close to the road to allow large farm equipment to pass by. These need to be moved back a few feet.
- **Permits & Red Tape:**
  - There are insufficient residences for seniors within the rural environment. More need to be constructed to allow seniors to retire in the communities within which they have lived their entire lives and within reach of their extended family care network.
  - Reduce red tape and time for permits for rural development (support from city for rural development). It sometimes is taking weeks and months for city staff to get back to you even though they already have the answers. Making staff aware that they are working for the tax payer and to help build better communities in a timely fashion is important.
  - Bylaws need to be adapted to fit the rural environment. An example relates to noise bylaws prohibiting noise in early mornings and late evenings. The very nature of farming necessitates work in these windows with large machinery. The neighbours affected are typically also farmers and are unperturbed by such activities.
  - Official Planning guidelines need to have flexibility to recognize the unique character of the rural environment. An example of this relates to restrictions on additional buildings on properties greater than 2 acres (e.g. special events). The demands for completing applications and meeting requirements are far too onerous.
  - Reduce fees for rural business development
  - Try to group heavy industry together i.e. Bank & Rideau
- **Industry**
  - Balance protecting current industries (aggregates & agriculture) with bringing in new industry ie. Tourism ideas. Consider new tourism use alongside existing, such as: Water Parks, Horseback riding, Animal farms, Petting Zoos (e.g. Stanley's Old Maple Lane).
  - Low impact recreational activities that preserve rural lands (ie. Hiking, bungee jumping, children's petting zoo, agri-tourism - where does our food come from etc.)
  - Where land use is considered marginal, allow development (rather than on good farm lands).

- Add a second truck route to 416 (Dalmeny and Snake Island) develop both.

## **7 - Rural Tourism – Activities; Festivals & Events: Rural Identity**

**How can we evolve our rural community to become a destination for local & global tourism?**

(Facilitator: Judy Beltzner)

- **Awareness**
  - Increase awareness of rural communities and what they have to offer.
  - Counter misinterpretations about distance.
  - Create video promoting our rural communities, Farmers Markets, Festivals, the Arts and special events. Currently the Ottawa Tourism Video promotes activities outside of Ottawa – Whitewater Rafting; Bungee jumping, while ignoring activities such as Farmer’s Markets; Agricultural Fairs, etc.
  - Incorporate budget for promotion through Invest Ottawa calendars and events; Ottawa Tourism, etc. Spotlight Rural.
- **Support from the City**
  - More support from the City for rural businesses -> more foot traffic
  - More focus by City Tourism office to promote rural areas
- **Attract People & Business**
  - Build on and leverage existing assets (e.g. Vibrations Studios, Hard Rock, Metcalfe Fair, Walking & biking trails.
  - Transportation is crucial
  - Make zoning easier and less costly, with less red tape. Implement flexibility for rural areas and considerations. Encourage expanding zoning allowances for Agri-tourism, Vineyards, Breweries, etc.
- **Uniqueness**
  - Celebrate being rural, e.g. Farm Holidays, eco-tourism, local produce in restaurants – use our strengths.
- **Infrastructure**
  - Improve the area and add other mid-sized venues.
  - Improve infrastructure, e.g. foot print for High Speed Internet

## **8 - Environment & Climate Change**

**How do we conserve & protect our natural environment, while adapting to climate change?**

(Facilitator: Klaus Beltzner)

- **Flooding:**
  - There is an increase in flooding happening evident by water levels in ditches and creeks. Need to actively clear vegetation obstructions.
  - Flood plain re-evaluation – do the current flood plain maps reflect recent flooding?
- **Wind & Rain Damage:**
  - There is a need to anticipate and prepare for impacts. Consider conducting rainfall studies, rainy day fund education
- **Natural Disasters:**
  - Create a robust Emergency Plan with fully developed roles and responsibilities, communication plans, volunteer engagement and coordination of support before, during, and after events.
  - Consider creation of a FEMA like body to address emergencies.
  - Consider relief assistance and preparedness to limit the requirement to relocate post- disaster.
  - Can a program be introduced to offset preparedness measures (e.g. raising homes; creating barriers)?
  - Protect infrastructure for City Services made vulnerable by natural disasters (e.g. water purification plant)
- **Subdivision Development:**
  - Drainage is an issue in many existing subdivisions. Consider improving standards for drainage.
- **Urban-centric Bylaws:**
  - Many Bylaws were created with the urban environment in mind (e.g. the tree cutting laws). These must be adapted into separate policies and bylaws for the rural environment.
- **Cost of Climate Change:**
  - We need to consider the cost implications of climate change. This will impact wells and water availability.
  - Don't apply urban policies in the rural environment where they often don't make sense.
- **Energy:**
  - Need to find ways to decrease energy costs and dependence. City should be promoting policies and grants in support of alternate sustainable sources (e.g. solar panels, carpooling, transportation).
- **Salt in Ground Water:**
  - Need to find alternatives to the use of so much road salt. Also need to promote non-salt fertilizers.
- **Supportive City Hall:**
  - Too often ideas get blocked through Red Tape and a “No” attitude. We need City staff that has a “can do” approach and actively tries to find ways to move ideas forward with minimal resistance.
- **Retail Packaging:**
  - Consider banning single-use plastics, including straws; packaging; shopping bags, in favour of reusable containers; bags; biodegradable packaging.

- Work with Health Department to ensure safety standards and best practices are developed.
- **Buy Local:**
  - Encourage and promote the Buy Local movement, reducing reliance on transportation of goods while supporting local producers.
  - Relax extreme restrictions on local producer sale of food products while maintaining food safety standards.
- **Recycling:**
  - Review the efficacy of existing recycling programs and improve effectiveness while maintaining a cost-effective system. Vet recycling providers thoroughly.
  - Green bin incentives - offer free compostable organic waste bags to encourage higher participation in redirecting waste from the landfills.

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**The Osgoode Ward Business Association - OWBA**

The Osgoode Ward Business Association (OWBA) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization created by concerned businesspersons and supported by our local politicians. We support a vision of turning rural economic development into a positive and sustained opportunity for networking, support and growth for the more than 600 businesses that are a vital part of economic development in Osgoode Ward.

OWBA is focused on providing business management resources, access to a network of business services, newsletters, information sessions, quarterly informative breakfast series, advocacy at all levels of government, and political support along with other services to be determined by its membership. OWBA’s mission is dedicated to ensuring that the business community will have a forceful voice in the rural economic development of Osgoode Ward that includes all types of businesses, including agricultural businesses and self-employed individuals.

Additional information or comments regarding this document can be directed to [info@owba.ca](mailto:info@owba.ca)