

Submission to Planning Committee and Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee

Re: Growth Management Strategy

Manotick Village and Community Association

May 2020

Overview

The Manotick Village and Community Association is in general support of the City's proposed balanced scenario for the Growth Management Strategy. We appreciate that the City has tried to balance the needs for development of affordable housing while trying to limit costs for infrastructure, making better use of land within the urban boundary and reducing the impact on the environment over the long term. We recognise the need for new development within the urban boundary but both this type of development and intensification of underutilized land should be done with the creation of 15 minute walkable communities.

To add to the discussion, we would like to highlight a few areas that are of vital importance to Manotick residents as well as some areas that require clarification moving forward. Briefly, these are the key comments for us:

1. We strongly support the protection of agricultural land.
2. We strongly support the 1 km buffer around rural villages.
3. We support the increased emphasis on intensification but have concerns about creating ghettos of apartment buildings and believe that a number of options for intensification should be considered.
4. We support the concept of 15 minute walkable communities and would like to see a stronger commitment from the City on achieving those types of neighbourhoods.
5. We want to ensure that areas of intensification also include sufficient green space for local residents.

We would like to raise the following questions for consideration:

1. Will the City adhere to local Community Development Plans or Secondary Plans when considering expansion of the urban boundary or intensification?
2. What is the City doing to ensure that future development takes into consideration future pandemics?

Comments

Following is a brief overview of why the five comments are key for Manotick and area residents.

1. Protection of agricultural land

Residents of Manotick have watched past development eat away at the surrounding agricultural land and are concerned about the impact this has on the ability to supply sufficient food for future generations. It is important the City recognize this valuable asset in determining where to expand the urban boundary in future years. Although the Provincial Policy Statement does allow for development of prime agricultural land if no other options exist, we believe that there

should be no development of prime agricultural land. We will already lose some agricultural land as it is not possible to expand the urban boundary without utilizing agricultural land.

As the Strategy notes, continued expansion into agricultural lands will increase infrastructure costs for the City, and ultimately taxpayers, at the same time as it reduces our capacity to have walkable communities. While we recognize that it is necessary to expand into the rural areas of the City in order to accommodate future population growth, we encourage the City to utilize existing greenfields, emphasize intensification in built up areas and encourage development within the existing boundary before considering further expansion of the urban boundary into agricultural land.

2. Protection of 1 km buffer around rural villages

The decision by the City in 2013 to establish a 1 km buffer around rural villages does two things – helps to protect agricultural land and green space and also helps to ensure that the rural lifestyle continues to exist. Ottawa is unique among major Canadian cities in the inclusion of a large rural area – which is too easy a target for housing developers who want to build large tracts of housing. This rural area takes in several villages which offer a different lifestyle than what is offered in urban or suburban areas.

The amalgamation of rural areas within the City of Ottawa was a difficult decision for many village residents and we continue to struggle with the impact of suburban growth on our community. As suburban neighbourhoods in Barrhaven and Riverside South inch ever closer to rural villages, the increase in traffic is already having a negative impact. The rural lifestyle is one that is cherished by existing residents as well as other Ottawa residents who prefer to live in established villages with a strong sense of community. This is something that is worth protecting.

In the case of Manotick, the urban boundary has already inched into the 1 km buffer zone and this needs to be stopped. This City is made up of many unique neighbourhoods and several rural villages that need to be preserved so that Ottawa residents have options for the type of housing and community in which they want to live. This is definitely achievable with the proposed balanced approach outlined in the Growth Management Strategy.

3. Types of intensification

While we applaud the City's commitment to making better use of existing land and greenfields through intensification, we want to ensure that intensification is done in a sustainable manner. In the Village of Manotick, there are areas that have been designated in the Secondary Plan for higher density development in the Core area. This would ensure an increase in lower cost accommodation within walking distance of amenities while still maintaining the Village feel through height restrictions and design guidelines. We support this type of development moving forward but want to ensure that development in Manotick and other parts of the City take into neighbourhood characteristics, are well integrated into the existing housing types, and help to develop 15 minute walkable communities.

The concept of the 613 flats is one idea that might work in certain neighbourhoods, but it should not be the only concept that would be considered for intensification projects. The City needs to be open to other options as well.

Construction of high rise buildings adjacent to transit stations makes sense but we want to ensure that these do not create “ghettos” which could become centres for increased crime or housing solely for lower-income families. The recommendation to create a mix of housing types at transit hubs is a positive step in avoiding ghettoization of certain populations.

4. Support for walkable communities

Manotick residents consider the Village to be a walkable community. However, City policies to date have prohibited us from truly achieving the 15 minute walkable neighbourhood. The City needs to do more to achieve this concept through the construction of appropriate walking/cycling options within new and existing neighbourhoods. These types of communities are more than just a housing concept - they include how residents move from one area to another and also how close they are to amenities such as groceries, essential goods and schools. Developing these types of communities in older neighbourhoods that lack any type of retail or services will prove challenging and we would ask that the existence of these amenities should be part of the consideration for intensification projects.

5. Protection of green space

The current pandemic situation has highlighted the importance of having accessible green space within every neighbourhood. Discussions around intensification, particularly high-rise development adjacent to transit hubs, needs to include the provision of green space for apartment dwellers who do not have access to a yard. Any intensification proposal should include a commitment to availability of green space within a 15 minute walk radius.

Our Questions

In reviewing the strategy documents, we have identified the following areas that require clarification.

1. Will the City adhere to local Community Development Plans or Secondary Plans when considering expansion of the urban boundary or intensification?

In the past, we have seen too many instances where communities have spent hours developing a plan for their community, only to see it ignored. And there is no indication in the Strategy that development will be done in line with these plans.

The City needs to adhere to these Plans once approved and give residents a sense that their neighbourhoods and their opinions matters. The Manotick Secondary Plan recommends an integrated walkable community with differing housing styles to be built over time and is very much aligned with the directions of the Official Plan. There are similar CDPs throughout the City that are working to achieve the same thing and the City needs to be consistent in its consideration of development applications within those communities.

2. What is the City doing to ensure that future development takes into consideration future pandemics?

The strategy lacks any reference to how development can mitigate the impact of future pandemics. The current situation highlights the need for future development to factor how we can limit community exposure while still meeting the housing needs of the future. The concept of 15 minute walkable communities is one way to be able to restrict individuals to their neighbourhood and limit contact to a more controlled area. It would be appropriate to integrate reference to future risk of pandemic, as well as other risks, as part of the growth management strategy.

Conclusion

The Manotick Village and Community Association supports the balanced scenario proposed by the City with the three caveats noted about – recognition of CDPs and Secondary Plans, ensuring the inclusion of adequate green space in intensification projects and the integration of pandemic risk when developing intensification plans.

Often these debates about future growth of cities come down to a standoff between home developers who want to expand the city and environmentalists who don't want any expansion. Unfortunately, the views of thousands of residents who lack the resources to participate in a meaningful way is often missing from the debate. We speak for those residents in the village of Manotick.