Federation of Citizens' Associations of Ottawa fca-fac Fédération des associations civiques d'Ottawa

June 23, 2025

To: Carol Ruddy <carol.ruddy@ottawa.ca> and the New Zoning Team <newzoning@ottawa.ca>

CC: Jeff Leiper <jeff.leiper@ottawa.ca>
Jason Burggraaf <jburggraaf@gohba.ca>
Marcia Wallace <marcia.wallace@ottawa.ca>

Subject: FCA comments on draft 2 Rezoning document

Dear Ms Ruddy,

On behalf of the Federation of Citizens Associations (FCA), we are pleased to provide comments on Draft 2 of the new Comprehensive Zoning By-law. We appreciate the opportunity for input. These comments reflect feedback gathered from our recent FCA Zoning Workshop on May 24, 2025, which engaged over 30 participants, nearly half of our total membership. Our June monthly FCA Planning & Zoning Committee meeting then reviewed the outcome of those May 24th discussions and also surveyed member associations' opinions on the City's proposed zoning "issues and options".

The outcome of zoning reform will have profound and lasting implications for the livability, sustainability, and unique fabric of Ottawa's diverse communities for decades to come. We have identified several concerns within Draft 2 of the New Zoning By-law which, if left unaddressed, could significantly compromise the livability within Ottawa's neighbourhoods.

The FCA acknowledges that Draft 2 aims to facilitate intensification and housing diversity within our city. However, our review highlights areas where further clarity is needed to ensure the by-law supports sustainable, livable, and equitable community development. The member zoning opinion survey results discussed below will be released on our website soon.

1. Alignment of Zoning with Essential Infrastructure

A primary concern among our members and the broader community is the apparent disconnect between proposed zoning changes and infrastructure capacity. While the by-law's primary role is to enable density and regulate built form, there appears to be few explicit mechanisms to integrate zoning with crucial infrastructure planning, which is managed through separate municipal master plans and programs.

The City's proposed "Infrastructure Capacity Management Program" is intended to address servicing concerns. However, as a future initiative, its ability to genuinely ensure adequate capacity is still unclear. Critically, it appears likely to exclude social and green infrastructure, and its effectiveness remains to be seen. Questions persist regarding how much density without

proven infrastructure readiness should be acceptable and how decisions on trade-offs between remedying housing shortages and community quality of life will be made, by whom, and based on which criteria. The FCA urges the City to better integrate the zoning approach explicitly with confirmed infrastructure (including social and green) capacity. Without such integration, zoning regulation's legitimacy is weak and unlikely to contribute to improved "livability" for all residents.

Staff acknowledges receipt of this comment.

2. Protection of Greenspace and Urban Tree Canopy

The draft By-law introduces new requirements for minimum soil volume and offers flexibility for alternative setbacks to retain protected trees. However, there remains concern that the by-law's failure to mandate sufficient amenity space and its emphasis on maximizing buildable area could lead to a net reduction in functional greenspace and impede the achievement of the City's urban tree canopy target. The FCA recommends that the new Zoning By-law should seek to preserve significant urban greenspaces where possible. Such green spaces, many of which have well-used informal trails, are essential amenities for 15-minute neighbourhoods and a truly "liveable" city.

The FCA recommends strengthening protections for greenspace and the urban tree canopy. Specifically, we advocate for increasing mandatory soft landscaping areas (not percentages of a yard) and contiguous areas of soil (not volume) requirements, particularly in front and rear yards, to genuinely support mature tree growth on adjacent properties, as well as the redeveloped property. For Section 210 - Provisions for Underground Structures, we recommend specifying the required surface area of 5.5 x 5.5 m in the provision. We support the required 30 m3 of soft landscaping with 1 - 1.5 m depth above underground structures with the intent on providing space for a canopy tree. The 1 m minimum and 1.5 m maximum depth will ensure the soil depth does not go too deep, reducing the amount of surface area.

Staff acknowledge receipt of this comment and note that the proposed Section 210 is not dependent on percentages of a yard and is intended to scale based on the width of the lot.

3. Practical Parking Solutions Meeting Diverse Community Needs

The removal of minimum parking requirements is widely understood to promote sustainable transportation and reduce development costs. However, our members express varied opinions on how to implement this.

Regarding transitional shared parking permissions ('communal' was an unfortunate mislabelling of our proposal), 45% of respondents to an FCA survey favored allowing shared parking in all N zones, with another 41% who suggested studying it for later consideration. This strong support for broader transitional shared parking solutions underscores its potential as a practical solution.

In seeking block- or neighbourhood-level shared parking solutions, the current requirement for parking to be located on the "same lot" as the use in Neighbourhood zones, represents a key limitation. The Federation of Citizens Associations requests that the New Comprehensive Zoning By-law planning staff explore options for how and if "neighbourhood parking lot" or other like parking facility, as a use within residential zones might be permitted. Such provision could remove a prime barrier to intensification in areas not well-serviced by transit.

If shared neighbourhood-level parking is to be allowed, further regulation (either through the zoning by-law or some other process) could be applied. This could require access control, limiting use to neighbourhood residents and their guests, and might include elements such as soft landscaping including trees and fencing to ensure compatibility and fit within neighborhoods. There would seem to be no purpose in requiring that a residential building occupy the same lot as a parking lot or facility, nor should such be prohibited.

With respect to rural villages, in our latest survey, over 40% of respondents supported having no parking requirements for rural villages, while a substantial 27% still believe one parking space per dwelling unit is necessary. This indicates significant support, although not a plurality, for maintaining some parking mandates in rural villages.

Staff acknowledge these comments with respect to neighbourhood parking and are developing regulations for conditional permissions for stand-alone parking lots for neighbourhood residents within Neighbourhood zones for the final draft. These may include but not necessarily be limited to soft landscaping requirements to ensure compatibility with the surrounding residential neighbourhood.

4. Housing Quality and Genuine Affordability

The by-law's current emphasis on "units per hectare" and "maximum units per building," coupled with only a modest requirement for "Large Dwelling Units" (5-15% of units to be 3+ bedrooms or 80sqm+), raises questions about prioritization of unit count over household diversity or family-friendly housing.

While the City states that proposed height increases are necessary for Official Plan intensification targets and that ZBL performance requirements are sufficient to mitigate impacts, our survey reveals continued concerns. For "Maximum Building Height in N1 and N2 Zones" 36% of respondents favoured retaining the 8.5-meter height limit, while another 27% supported increasing it to 11m while still retaining lesser height limits from secondary plans. Concerned members noted the application of additional height outside of the Evolving Neighbourhood Overlay would be without the necessary proximity to transit and services. Our results indicate a desire by our members for growth, but with careful consideration of its impact on existing communities.

For "Building Height Transition Framework", there was some preference, with 36% supporting a model where a tall building has a 7.5m rear yard setback and its form is stepped within a 45-degree plane. Furthermore, our members generally agree that zoning in highly dense neighborhoods should limit unit density and require larger family-sized units. There is a strong belief that building height and unit size significantly impact affordability and that the new zoning by-law must better address how to promote family-friendly dwelling units**.**

Staff acknowledge receipt of these comments and in particular the input provided during the FCA's workshop.

With respect to concerns with respect to the application of additional height outside the Evolving Neighbourhood Overlay, Staff would note that the question of building height in the N1 and N2 zones is independent of the number of units contemplated in each zones: the N1 zone is proposed to permit up to four units per building, and the N2 zone is proposed to permit

up to six units per building. Therefore, the effect of permitting additional height in these zones would be to permit a larger building envelope for the same number of units, which among other things could allow for some or all of the dwelling units to be larger in size.

5. Legal ambiguities

1. Minor Corridor/Hub interface - Under s. 6.1.1(6) of the Official Plan, only building height policies applicable to the hub prevail in the case of overlap between a minor corridor and a hub, and all other policies and regulatory requirements for minor corridors apply. This is not obvious from the Zoning Map. Resolve this ambiguity either directly on the Zoning Map or through addition of new provisions in the Zoning By-law.
Staff acknowledges receipt of this comment.

2. Evolving Neighbourhood Overlay (ENO). Draft 2 of the Zoning By-law contains no provisions explaining how the Evolving Neighbourhood Overlay (ENO) is applied to lots or if exceptions are permitted. Yet, the Official Plan (s. 5.6.1.1) requires that such provisions on the ENO be included in the Zoning By-law. Hence there is a disconnect from the intention of the Official Plan. Staff have explained that the ENO is embedded or implicit in the Zone By-law through assignment of a higher code (N3) based on several criteria, including consideration of walking distance to a transit station. However, the silence of the Zoning By-law and therefore the opaqueness of this criteria on the ENO creates a legislative gap that needs to be corrected by setting out criteria in the Zoning By-law that details a consistent and objective approach with city-wide application.

The purpose of a Zoning By-law is to set out land use regulations for what is permitted to be developed or built on a given parcel of land. Discussion of underlying approaches to the zoning mapping, while important in communicating the underlying intent of the Zoning By-law and the Official Plan, are not appropriate to include in the text of the By-law itself.

The fact that the Official Plan uses an overlay does not compel the Zoning By-law to also implement these regulations in the form of an overlay; the N1-N6 primary zones and A-F subzones are designed in part to provide a framework to address both “existing” neighbourhood context as well to provide development standards in line with future “planned characteristics” as referenced in policy 5.6.1.2 for properties within the ENO.

The intent of Section 5.6.1, as noted in policy (1), is to provide “guidance for a gradual change in character based on proximity to Hubs and Corridors”, and to shift towards “more urban built form patterns and applicable transportation mode share goals”. Given that the primary zones and subzones address permitted density and built form character respectively, Staff are of the opinion that the intent of the Evolving Neighbourhood Overlay can be achieved through the use of a different primary zone/subzone combination for Overlay properties than the remainder of the neighbourhood.

Consequently, the ENO is reflected in the new Zoning By-law via the application of higher-density Neighbourhood (N) zone designations. For example, where a currently R1-zoned neighbourhood in the Outer Urban transect is generally proposed to be zoned N2 in the draft By-law, areas subject to the ENO would instead be proposed to be zoned N3, which would permit a greater level of density. The same applies to subzones, as there is direction in the ENO policies to gradually shift development

towards a more “urban” character compared to the interior of the neighbourhood.

6. City's Communication Strategies and Capacity

The FCA also wishes to raise concerns about the City's communication strategies and its capacity throughout the planning process. These issues directly and regularly affect the predictability and fairness of how planning decisions are made and understood by communities. Clear, consistent, and proactive communication is essential for meaningful public engagement and to build trust in the by-law's implementation.

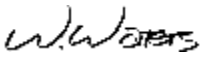
Staff acknowledges receipt of this comment.

Conclusion

The Federation of Citizens Associations commends the City for undertaking the complex task of revising the Zoning By-law. Our comments and survey findings underscore the importance of ensuring that the by-law not only facilitates growth but also preserves and enhances the quality of life, protects essential infrastructure, and promotes truly diverse and family-friendly housing options within Ottawa's communities.

We look forward to continued engagement and are available to discuss these comments further.

Sincerely,



Warren H. Waters, Chair,
FCA Planning & Zoning Committee