

## **The Selby Plains - City of Ottawa Planning**

Author: Peter Campbell

Date: May 1, 2004

The Selby Plains are zoned EW(693)-h. EW (693)-h is a Waterfront Environmental zone from the former City of Ottawa Zoning by-law. The (693) exception provides for a large list of government or quasi-government type uses. This same zone applies to the parkway land as well. While this zone is still in effect, the new City Official Plan seems to show part of the land as Major Open Space and part as General Urban. This split may permit the development of part of the land subject to the zoning being amended.

The City is on record as saying that it will not consider any zoning changes until its "Greenspace Master Plan", as called for in the Official Plan, is in place.

Unfortunately lack of money may mean that the City is unable to do the full Greenspace Master Plan. Details of what they will do instead are still uncertain, but preliminary indications are:

- Due to time and budget constraints city staff are looking at formulating the Greenspace Master Plan as a "Greenspace Strategy", and anticipate having this in place by the end of this year. The Strategy will provide the criteria by which greenspaces in the City are assessed, ensuring that each City department's lands decisions are taken within a common context and policy. What the Strategy will not do is make judgments on all greenspace parcels within the City. It seems unlikely, therefore, that the Strategy will make recommendations with respect to small parcels, including the Selby Plains.
- The City's data base is being developed, but may not be built sufficiently until after the completion of the Strategy to inform more detailed decision making. They hope to take the principles of the Strategy down to finer level towards the end of the year (October?) in a small number of locations to test policies and techniques. This may involve workshops with Community Associations to determine how the Strategy would work at the local level.

Greenspaces are likely to be assessed, in part, with the following considerations in mind:

- As the City does not want to expand its boundary again soon, in general it will be looking for more intensification of housing within the current boundaries.
- As the City does not have much cash, it is necessary to prioritise any land acquisitions.. Greenspaces will have to have a high ranking or fulfill a need in terms of programmed recreational space for the City to spend money to purchase them from the NCC.
- Criteria for ranking greenspaces will include: links to other greenspaces (corridors for recreation and other species); whether an area needs more "recreational destinations"; suitability for sports fields; and environmental considerations (tree cover, valuable or rare plant and animal species).

The main uses for greenspaces are recreational and environmental. With respect to the environmental elements, open houses have just taken place (April 14, 15 and 21) to inform City residents about the "Urban Natural Areas Environmental Evaluation Study" (Natural Spaces in Urban Areas). The Selby Plains are currently not included as an area to be considered for protection, nor were they evaluated in the context of the study. The City may be open to our asking that they be evaluated.

Key City committees dealing with greenspace issues are:

- Ottawa Forests and Greenspace Advisory Committee (<http://ottawa.ca/cgi-bin/docs.pl?&Elist=3805&lang=en>)
- The Environmental Advisory Committee (<http://ottawa.ca/cgi-bin/docs.pl?&Elist=3793&lang=en> <http://ottawa.ca/cgi-bin/docs.pl?&Elist=3545&lang=en>); and
- The Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (<http://ottawa.ca/cgi-bin/docs.pl?&Elist=3545&lang=en>)