



City for All Women Initiative (CAWI)
Initiative : une ville pour toutes les femmes (IVTF)
Promoting an inclusive and women-friendly Ottawa that respects diversity
Pour qu'Ottawa soit respectueuse de la diversité, inclusive et accueillante pour les femmes
www.cawi-ivtf.org

Growth Management Strategy: Intersectional Equity and Inclusion Analysis

Meaningful Outreach and Engagement

The City staff released its Growth Management Strategy and **CAWI is concerned that what is being presented as a balanced scenario lacks meaningful consultation with equity-seeking groups, particularly those who rely the most on the city's social and physical infrastructure.** Particularly regarding the discussion on May 11, we are concerned that making critical decisions on the city's future whilst the most vulnerable are knee-deep in surviving challenges such as income and food insecurity is a disservice to many members of this city.

- The Official Plan (OP), and particularly the Growth Management Strategy are key pieces of policy that should entail significant outreach to the most marginalized communities.
- Robust engagement from communities at intersections of marginalization would ensure that the new OP is not spatializing poverty, ableism, and discrimination through planning and implementation processes.
- Growth Management decisions need to be more equitably communicated.
- We are interested in knowing what steps have councillors and city staff taken to communicate Growth Management to equity seeking groups in Ottawa?
- How have the implications of the growth management scenarios been communicated and translated for people who will be impacted the most?

A Robust and Comprehensive Equity and Inclusion Lens throughout the Planning Process

Equity and Inclusion (EI) goes beyond consultation and engagement, from the social to the spatial. Planning can reinforce city-wide/local inequities or mitigate them – these are political choices influenced by municipal plans, policies, infrastructure, design, and decision-making processes. We feel the Planning Department would benefit from a comprehensive EI tool specific to planning. We recommend the City develop a more robust Equity and Inclusion Lens tool for the planning department which walks through all steps of the planning process. Well-resourced and robust equity tools and assessments must be embedded in all planning processes to ensure that plans, policies, and indicators are aligned to achievable equity and inclusion goals.

- Assessment of equity and inclusion issues needs to happen often. Conventional “ways of doing things” tend to maintain the status quo or reinforce existing inequities. Equity checks are commonly done at the beginning of a process and never returned to, even if there are major changes.
- We are concerned that the Growth Management Strategy was not vetted through a comprehensive and robust tool that incorporates equity and inclusion considerations into the various stages of planning.
- Tools, such as the [Neighbourhood Equity Index](#), that assess and compare inequities in neighbourhoods can be utilized to measure the impacts of each growth management scenario on

equity and inclusion in existing and upcoming neighbourhoods. Other examples include tools such as Seattle's [Race and Social Justice Initiative](#) and [Portland's Racial Equity Toolkit](#). Both focused on early assessments and integration of racial equities in all stages of planning.

- Without tools and mechanisms to assess equity throughout the process, recommendations presented to the City Councillors may not contain knowledge and perspectives needed to make decisions that meaningfully addresses equity issues.

Social and Financial Costs of Urban Expansion

Cost to Taxpayers

Many have already expressed the concern that the three scenarios in the Growth Management Strategy do not include a comparative cost analysis. The lack of a cost analysis makes it difficult to assess the tax implications of each scenario on taxpayers. Examples of cost analysis from cities like London, Ontario [demonstrate](#) that over 50 years municipal capital costs of a sprawling growth scenario are an additional \$2.7 billion, or 180% higher, than a more compact growth scenario. This estimate does not account for ongoing maintenance costs of physical infrastructure or the lost opportunity costs, making \$2.7 billion a conservative estimate.

- Urban expansion is expensive – building physical infrastructure (such as roads, sewers etc.) is expensive and costs tax-payers millions of dollars and diverts money from other sectors.
- Building sprawl infrastructure costs taxpayers valuable dollars and depletes investments from social infrastructure, affordable housing stock, strengthening transit infrastructure and services, providing active transportation infrastructure and accommodating gendered mobilities in existing communities.

Social Infrastructure

One opportunity cost is social infrastructure. Ottawa's social infrastructure is in critical need of increased sustained funding to fulfill its central role as the foundation for wellbeing in Ottawa, for both individuals and the community at large. According to the [Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centre's \(CHRCs\) Social Infrastructure Campaign](#), the City of Ottawa currently needs to bridge a 5-million-dollar gap in investment over this term of council, to meet the complex needs of a growing population. The no-expansion scenario offers two key opportunities:

- Redirection of costs associated with building new infrastructure into strengthening social infrastructure in existing neighbourhoods; and
- A meaningful incorporation of equity and inclusion goals when planning healthily intensified 15-minute neighbourhoods.

Accessibility to social infrastructure can be improved through intensification.

- People living with disabilities, seniors, and women in single family structures all represent vulnerable populations and are disproportionately impacted by the lack of accessibility to critical social infrastructure.
- Locating population growth in existing neighbourhoods, alongside a concomitant investment in infrastructure, will improve accessibility of services - at a neighbourhood level - for the most vulnerable community members.
- Planning processes can play a critical role in ensuring neighbourhood planning is representative of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in Ottawa.

- [Transit Village](#) is an example of an innovative mixed-use development project located in Fruitvale, California. The Transit Village is next to the Fruitvale transit station, a major transit hub, and the planned Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line.
 - It includes a mixture of housing, shops, offices, a library, a child-care facility, a senior center, a medical clinic, a pedestrian plaza, and other community services surrounding the transit station
 - The Fruitvale Transit Village project is the result of a broad-based partnership among public, private, and non-profit organizations working together to revitalize a community using transit-oriented development and participatory planning processes.
 - From a planning perspective, this clustering of transportation, affordable housing and social services incorporates the concepts of mobility and accessibility.

Suburban Lens

Paul Gawlak at Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre has compiled a suburban analysis of the impact of the 15-minute neighbourhoods and the Official Plan. According to the [Ottawa Neighbourhood Study](#), many suburban neighbourhoods fall in the quintile of highest socioeconomic disadvantage (socioeconomic index of 4 or 5). The city's growth management strategy will have implications on the accessibility and mobility for many suburban neighbourhoods.

- Suburbs lack accessible and adequate social infrastructure needed to support complex needs of community members that need it the most. Suburbs are not well-resourced with services such as food banks, community-based youth programs, addictions and mental health supports and senior supports.
- Limiting urban boundary expansion and building 15-minute neighbourhoods in the suburbs can lead to increased accessibility and mobility for households and communities that need it the most.
- Expansion of the urban boundary and development of new suburbs would mean a thinning out of already stretched social infrastructure in order to serve new populations.

COVID-19

With COVID-19, the need for resilient neighbourhoods and social infrastructure has become more pressing than ever.

Food Insecurity

- Food insecurity, resulting from food deserts and lack of accessible food options for low-income households, highlights a strong need for food accessibility to be spatialized through city planning.
- Limiting urban expansion has several positive implications for food security including an increased emphasis on community gardens, local foods, and preserving farm and agricultural land.
- The Ottawa Neighbourhood Study notes that residents in suburban and rural neighbourhoods lack access to walkable grocery stores and food markets.
- With COVID-19, lack of accessibility to grocery stores has led vulnerable residents such as lone-parent families, seniors, and those with disabilities reliant on food delivery services.

Access to outdoor spaces:

- Access to outdoor green spaces and active transportation infrastructure is increasingly being recognized as a determinant for people's mental and physical health and an equity issue.
- Limiting urban expansion is an opportunity to locate more people within walking distances to parks, walking paths, trains, and cycling infrastructure.

- Planning green spaces within neighbourhoods can further ensure that everyone has access to public green spaces for their physical and mental health needs.

Focusing our future growth within existing neighbourhoods provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build resilient neighbourhoods through investing in social infrastructure and locating diverse populations within 15-minutes of all critical needs.

Intensification and Transportation Equity

A [Transportation Equity Report produced by CAWI and Healthy Transportation Coalition](#) pointed out that women are disproportionately impacted by the lack of an affordable, well-connected and frequent transit system.

- When taking transit, women are more likely to engage in [trip-chaining](#) (making multiple stops in their commute) as many of them shoulder primary care-giving responsibilities (childcare and school drop-offs, groceries, medicine pickup etc.).
- Women are more likely to benefit from an inclusive transportation infrastructure such as wider sidewalks and separated marked bike lanes due to use of strollers and bike extensions for young children.
- Healthy intensification can significantly improve accessibility for women, particularly those at intersections of various marginalization (single mothers, low-income, disabilities etc.).
- Limiting urban expansion would ensure that population growth is accommodated within transit-served, walkable, and bike-accessible neighbourhoods.
- The City of Vienna is a great example of a city where women’s labour and care responsibilities are integrated in various planning mechanisms. With a gender expert embedded in the city’s planning department, the City of Vienna actively prioritizes mainstreaming gendered urban design.
- The Portland Bureau of Transportation provides another good example of how equity assessments can be used in transportation planning to transform inequality. Portland developed project prioritization criteria that included equity measures for its new transportation plan. Using census-track data, the city developed a vulnerability index (e.g. a higher number indicates higher vulnerability).

Housing Affordability

There are multiple examples, from all across the world and here in Canada, of density and intensification done right.

- While many fear that intensification makes housing more unaffordable, housing affordability within the city can be managed through zoning by-laws and an emphasis on mixed-income housing.
- Limiting urban expansion and promoting housing affordability through zoning by-laws can not only reduce the cost of housing, but the cost of living for many as well.
- Transit-oriented housing, with a special emphasis on deeply affordable, accessible housing within 1 km of rapid transit stations is critical to manage gentrification at transit nodes and ensure affordable housing is made available to groups that are highly reliant on transit infrastructure.
- By filling in the [missing middle](#) (mid-rise apartments and condos) and adding affordable units within close proximity to transit, the City can increase the quality of life for residents while preserving the green space outside of the urban boundary.

Housing affordability surfaces as a key concern when discussing urban expansion. Developers argue that the lack of affordable housing is a key reason to look further when developing new housing projects. This

argument relies primarily on projecting the cost of housing without accounting for other increases in costs accompanying urban sprawl.

- A [housing policy paper published](#) for the Official Plan, notes that accounting for just the cost of housing alone is misleading.
- Lower housing costs are often offset by higher transportation costs, especially when a less expensive but less central location requires residents to own one or more cars.
- Affordable housing in less central locations thus does not tackle housing insecurity, as many vulnerable community members seeking affordable housing do not have the means to afford a car and/or drive a vehicle.
- Moreover, those reliant on public transit as their primary mode of transportation are reluctant to move to less central locations.

Holding the Line is an Equity and Inclusion Issue

Holding the urban boundary line – accompanied by proper zoning laws and land around transit dedicated to affordable housing - is necessary so that many in this city can live an improved quality of life. Urban expansion is expensive for the City and taxpayers. Investments in healthy intensifications and social infrastructure will save the City and taxpayers money, improving the quality of life for all in the City of Ottawa.