

<http://ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/public-consultations/planning-and-infrastructure/land-evaluation-and-area-review> -- retrieved 9 May 2015

Note: The June 20, 2009 date below should be June 10. ED

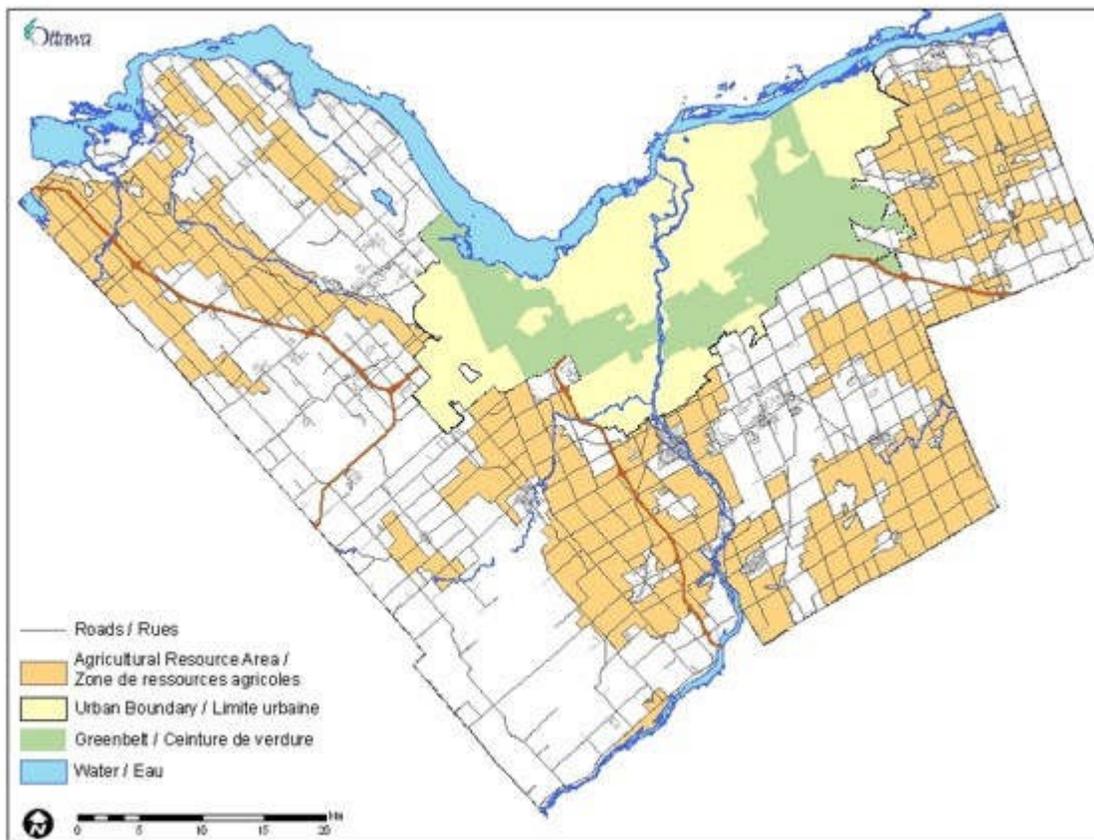
City Hall

1. » [Public consultations](#)
2. » [Planning and Infrastructure](#)
3. » [Rural review](#)
4. » Land Evaluation and Area Review (Project Delayed)

Land Evaluation and Area Review (Project Delayed)

See: [Ottawa-OMAFRA Agricultural Soil Mapping Pilot Project](#)

The purpose of a Land Evaluation and Area Review is to identify prime agricultural areas using several factors in addition to soil class, in order to establish an agricultural designation in the Official Plan.



[Enlarge \[PDF 647 KB\]](#)

Provincial policy requires municipalities to protect and designate prime agricultural areas in their Official Plans through a land evaluation system. The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) developed an evaluation system called Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) that serves as a model for municipalities. The City's LEAR, based on the guide prepared by OMAFRA, was developed in 1997 for the former Region of Ottawa-Carleton (OC-LEAR).

On June 20, 2009, City Council stated that a review of the LEAR criteria, weighting and model will result in a city wide, standardized update and recommitment to agricultural resource areas. They directed that the LEAR be reviewed and consequently will inform the next update of the Official Plan in 2013.

Study Objectives

- Determine land capability for agricultural uses
- Distinguish between classes of land of differing capability to enable the identification and mapping of prime agricultural areas
- Be consistent and not subject to changes in crop yields, farming methods, prices or interest rates
- Address changes that have occurred since the first LEAR was completed:
- OMAFRA's (Draft) LEAR Guidelines
- LEARs created by other Ontario municipalities using unique factors
- Updated land use data (2005)
- Rural Summit identification of issues and a community desire to review the LEAR
- Revisions to Canada Land Inventory (CLI) mapping
- Pressure to expand the urban boundary

Study Process

Local involvement is fundamental to the development and implementation of a successful evaluation system. Together with members of a local Working Group, staff will review the factors and weighting that were relied upon in the OC-LEAR to ensure that the scores generated continue to reflect the true value of the land within the Agricultural Resource Area Boundary. We will update the land use information and determine whether slight changes in scoring will impact the potential shape of the Agricultural Resource Area boundary.

LEAR Process

There are two components to the LEAR system:

1. Land Evaluation measures the importance of the property's soil resources in terms of their use for agriculture. The soil capability for agriculture is evaluated according to the most recent Canada Land Inventory soil capability information approved by the OMAFRA. The soil capability for agriculture was identified by the Agricultural Advisory Committee as the most important factor in evaluating the agricultural potential of a property. A good soil base is critical for long-term agriculture use. The land evaluation is given a weight of 70 per cent in the LEAR evaluation.

The 1997 OC-LEAR Included:

- The soil capability for agriculture was evaluated according to the Canada Land Inventory soil capability classification established in reports by the Ontario Institute of Pedology.

- The scoring of the soil capability information was based on the percentage of the property in a particular soils class (CLI1).
- Points were allocated for each soil class - 1 through 7.

2. Area Review identifies other important factors such as land use, parcel size and adjacent land uses that contribute to the suitability of a property for agricultural activities. The area review is given a weight of 30 per cent in the LEAR evaluation.

The 1997 OC-LEAR included:

- **Land Use** - The degree of agricultural use of a property indicates the property's ability to sustain farm operations.
- **Conflicting Land Uses** - uses on lands adjacent to the property may have negative impacts on farm operations - calculated by determining the % of the property within 305m of an approved urban or village boundary or a registered or draft approved residential subdivision.
- **Parcel size** - Larger farm parcel sizes assist in maintaining the flexibility to accommodate a range of agricultural activities and ensure long term viability. A perfect score was given to parcels 90 acres or larger in size.

LEAR Scoring

- The application of the LEAR System results in the combined LE and AR scores for each evaluation unit
- These scores then form the basis for determining the significance of the study area for agriculture
- A predominance of high scores within the study area is then an indicator of significant agricultural potential and suitability for long term farming activities.
- The relative importance of Land Evaluation and Area Review, in terms of total score, is used to determine the desired ratio between them.
- OC-LEAR used a 70:30 ratio
- In all cases, the final ratio should be field tested and results documented to ensure that results meet the intended objectives.

Outcomes

- Upon completion of the scoring for all evaluation units, thresholds are set by City staff, the Working Group and OMAFRA to indicate which lands warrant long-term protection for agricultural use.
- OC-LEAR set a threshold score of 130 out of 200 points for inclusion in the Agricultural Resources Area. This does not mean that parcels with a lower score could not be included, or that all parcels meeting this threshold would be.
- The degree of change will depend upon the decisions of City staff and the Working Group in determining whether the criteria, weights, and scores that were used in 1997 still reflect the value of the protected agricultural lands.
- Changes in criteria, weights, etc., may not mean a big change in the ARA boundary.

Next Steps/Schedule

Work on this project will resume once the Soil capability mapping for the City has been reviewed and updated. At that time the steering groups will be reconstituted and the updated soil capability data will be input in the latest versions of the LEAR model and tested.

For further information regarding this project and the Ottawa-OMAFRA Agricultural Soil Mapping Pilot Project contact:

Bruce Finlay
Planner
Planning and Growth Management
Infrastructure Services and Community Sustainability
City of Ottawa
110 Laurier Avenue West
613-580-2424, ext. 21850
E-mail: plan@ottawa.ca

+++++

N.B.:

Report to Planning Committee, dated March 15, 2013 - Ref N°: ACS2013 - PAI - PGM - 0076, for 26 March agenda
PC Report 46A to Council, 10 April 2013:

... Agriculture areas now in the Official Plan were identified through a LEAR developed in 1997. Since then, Provincial guidelines for LEAR have changed and new soils and land use information has become available. Revisions to Ottawa's LEAR began in 2010 and continued through 2012, with the expectation that the new system and soils data would lead to additions and deletions to the Agricultural Resource Areas now protected in the Plan.

What was heard

Although a working group has been advising on development of the revised LEAR, there was little discussion about it during the consultation on the preliminary proposals.

Going forward

Staff has concerns about the new Provincial soils data and recommends that the LEAR project remain on the Department's work program until these concerns are resolved.

The project may be delayed until the next Term of Council Work Plan.

A stand-alone Official Plan amendment will be prepared to implement the revised LEAR when it is complete