

# Significant Woodlands Policy Review

“Development and site alteration shall not be permitted in... significant woodlands... unless it has been demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on the natural features or their functions.” -- Provincial Policy Statement

September 12, 2016

Nick Stow



## Why is an OPA necessary now?

- Planning decisions must conform to the Provincial Policy Statement.
- The City's Official Plan Policies for significant woodlands do not fully conform to the PPS 2014.
- The Province has requested that we update our policies.

## Minimum Requirements

- The policies must apply to the entire City, including the urban area.
- We must use the Natural Heritage Reference Manual (NHRM) criteria for significance: size; ecological functions; uncommon characteristics; economic and social functional values.
- “Woodlands that meet a suggested minimum standard for any one of the criteria... **should** be considered significant.” - NHRM

## Other Objectives

Support the PPS and Official Plan objectives for “effective and resilient land use patterns.”

- Provide a 20 year supply of land.
- Minimize growth of the urban boundary.
- Increase density and “net to gross” land use efficiency

## Key Assumptions

- Rural woodlands are most significant for biological and ecological values
- Urban woodlands are most significant for social and economic functions in their surrounding communities.\*

\*Corollary: modifications that increase the social and economic functions of urban woodlands can enhance their value and significance, relative to a natural condition.

## Context of Urban Policies:

The Official Plan sets out three objectives for urban greenspace:

- Publically accessible urban greenspace: 4 ha/1000 population or 16 – 20% gross land area.
- 100% of residences within 400 m of publically accessible greenspace.
- *Pending completion of a Forest Strategy, 30% forest cover for the entire City*

## Definition of Woodland

- The definition of woodland will reference both the Ecological Land Classification system and the Forestry Act.
- The addition of the Forestry Act definition will close a loophole that has sometimes allowed woodlands to be classified as cultural ecosites under the ELC.

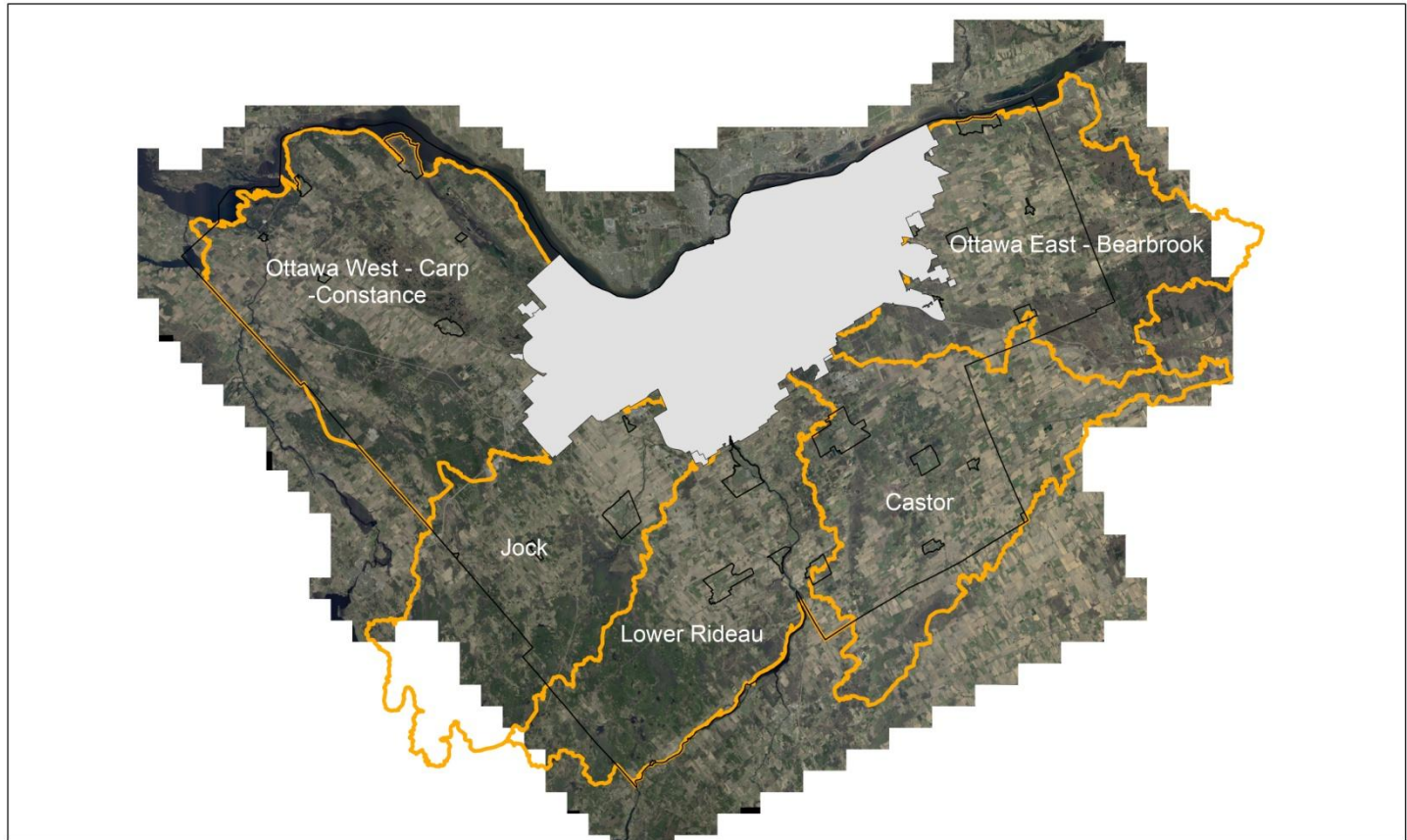
## Rural

- Urban and rural areas will be treated differently
- In the Rural Area, the NHRM criteria will be used for assessing significance and “no negative impacts”, based on subwatersheds.
- Preliminary mapping by the City and Province suggests that we won't see big changes in the rural area.



# Rural Subwatersheds

Rural Subwatershed Boundaries



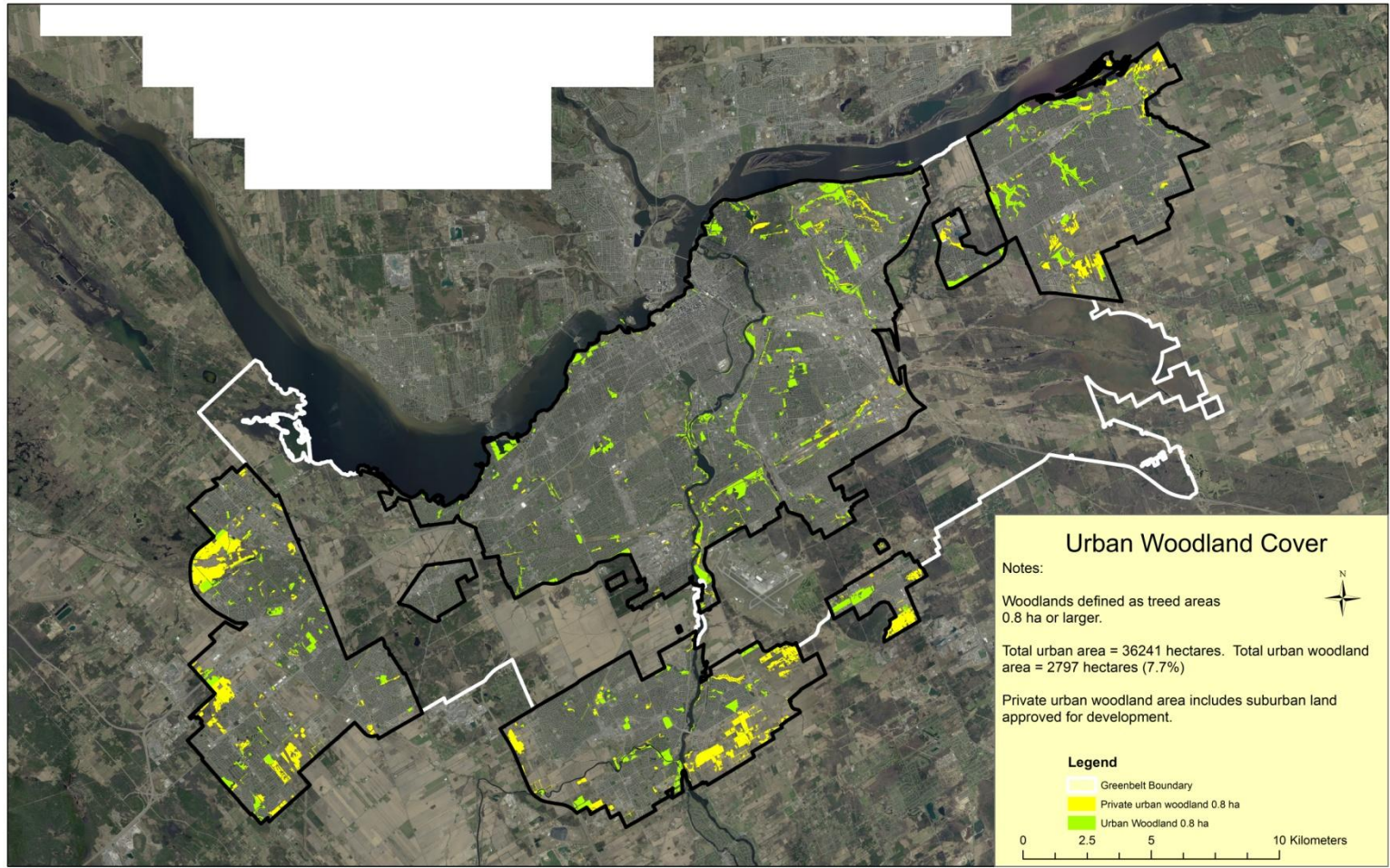
## Urban

- In the urban area (including urban expansion areas and developing communities):
  - Any woodland 40 years of age or older at evaluation and 0.8 ha or larger will be deemed significant for its economic and social values in the surrounding community
  - Any area which has been cleared of woody vegetation within 10 years of evaluation and which is 0.8 ha or larger will be deemed significant woodland for planning purposes.

## Precedent

“No adjustment of boundaries or removal of the identification of Natural Areas in the City of Peterborough Official Plan Consolidated December 31, 2015 will be considered by Council if the environmental features on the property identified in the Natural Areas Strategy are willfully altered, damaged or destroyed as determined by Council. Where such acts occur, Council may require the replacement or rehabilitation of such features as part of the approval for development involving the property.”

# Urban Woodland Cover

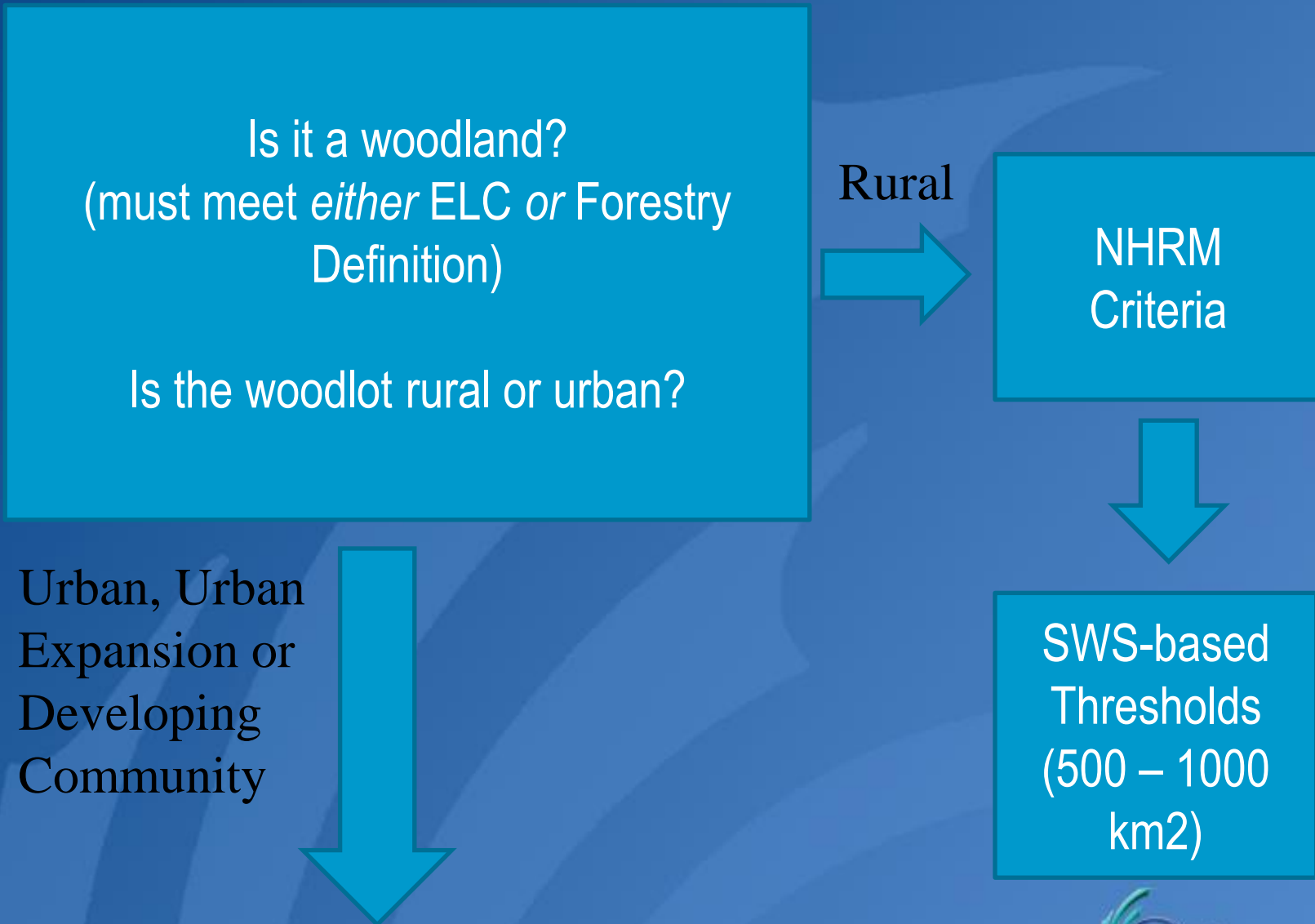


## Urban Expansion/Dev. Comm.

- Council may modify the current requirement to convey significant woodlands to the City, conditional upon an EIS that addresses:
  - Conservation of unusual biological values or contiguous natural heritage system features.
  - OP Greenspace policies, with an emphasis on tree retention in parks and school sites.
  - Drainage and stormwater management services, especially the dual use of woodlands as green infrastructure.
  - Mitigation and adaptation to urban heat island effects for vulnerable populations.

# Different Policies for the Rural and Urban Areas

## Policy Implementation



# Urban, Urban Expansion or Developing Community

Is the woodlot urban, urban expansion, or developing community?

Urban

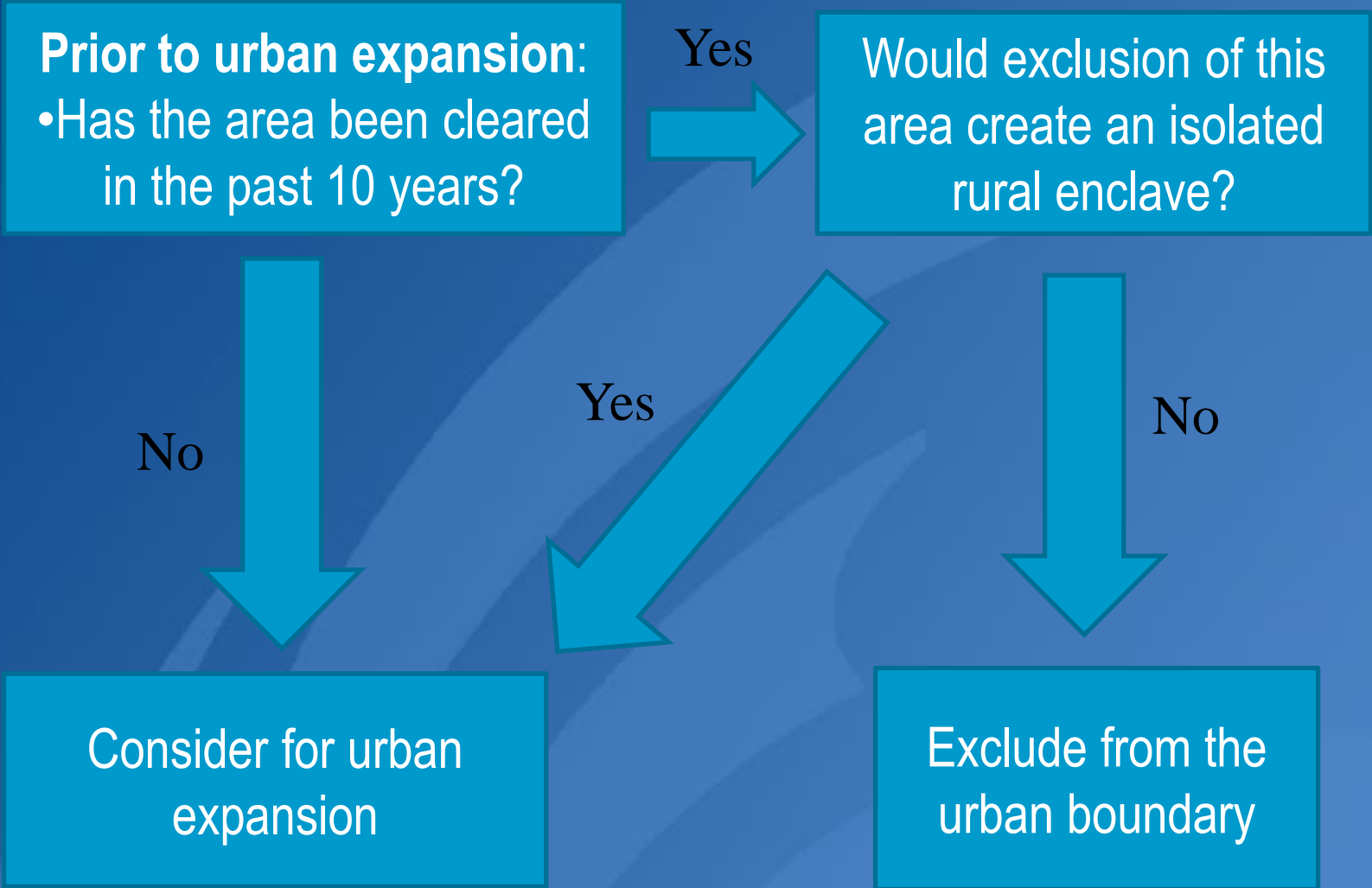
Any woodland that is 0.8 ha in size or larger, which is at least 40 years old or which has been cleared in the last ten years, is significant.

Urban  
Expansion or  
Developing  
Community

## Environmental Impact Statement

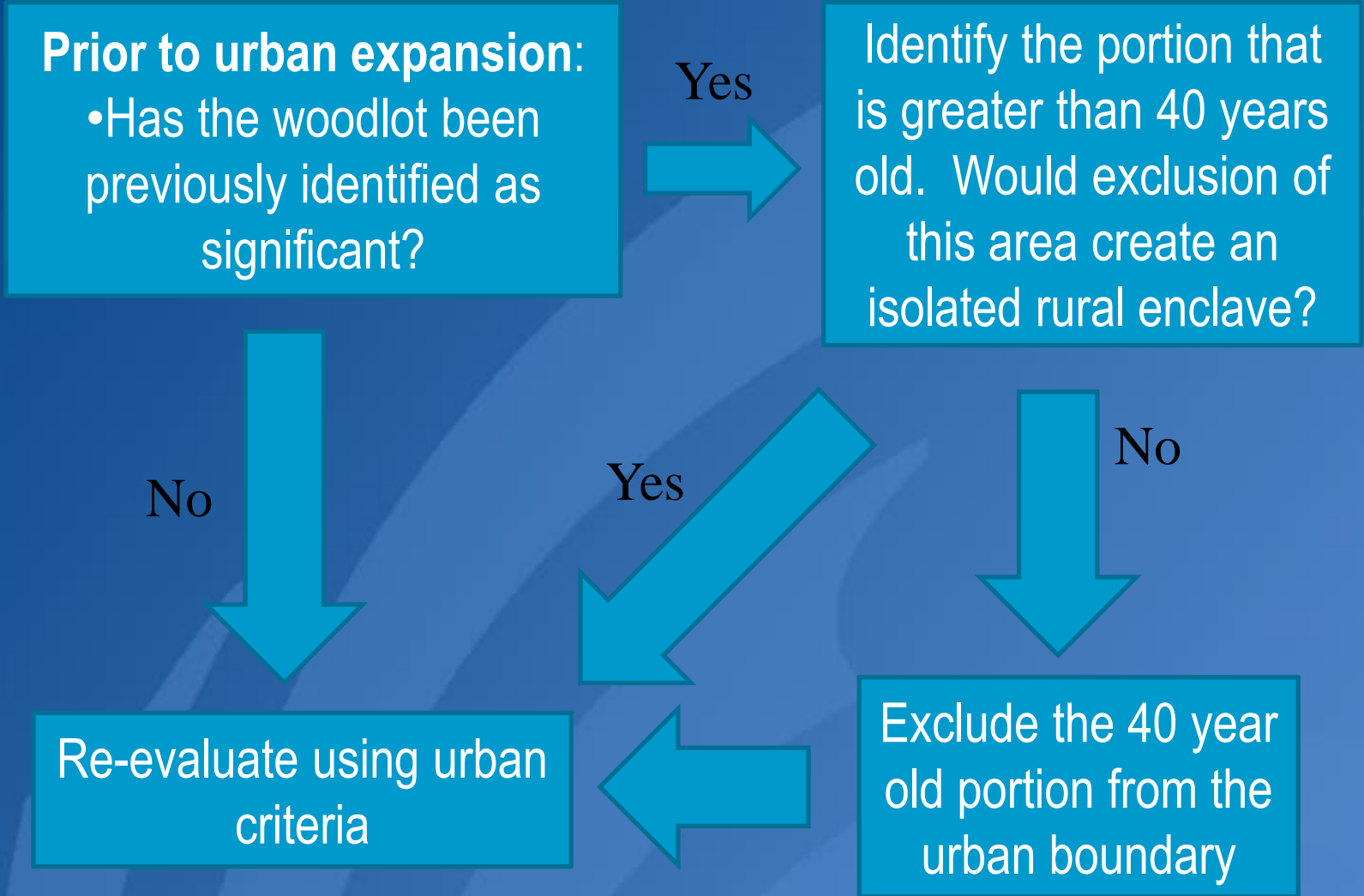
- Assess how modification of the significant woodland will affect any biological values, other NHS features, greenspace, stormwater management, and air quality and climate change adaptation, relative to current conditions.

# Urban Expansion

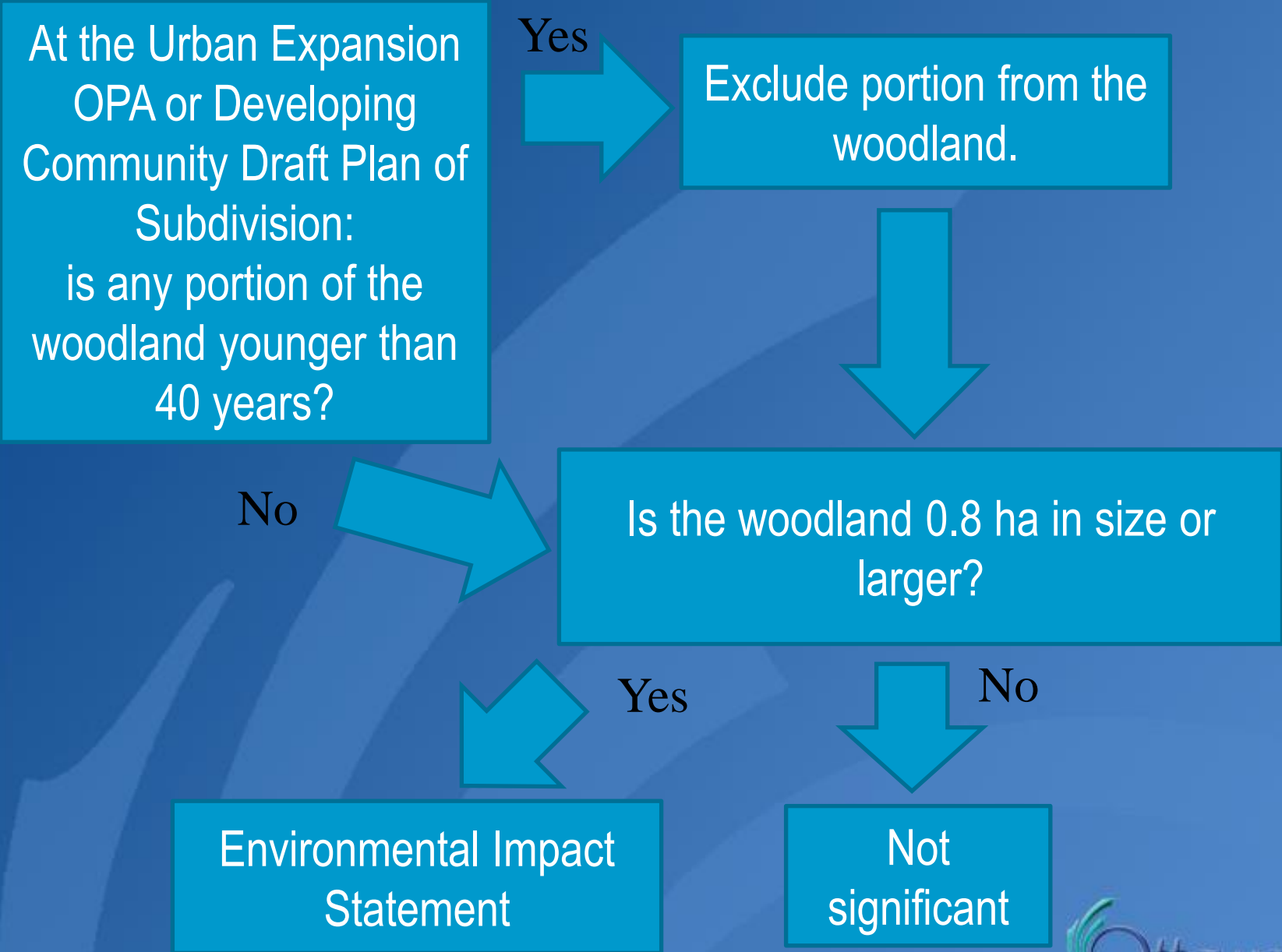




# Urban Expansion



# Urban Expansion and Developing Communities



# Urban Expansion and Developing Communities

## Environmental Impact Statement

• In terms of any biological values, other NHS features, greenspace, stormwater management, and air quality and climate change adaptation, does the EIS demonstrate that modification of the significant woodland would produce greater community benefit than retention of the woodlot?

Yes



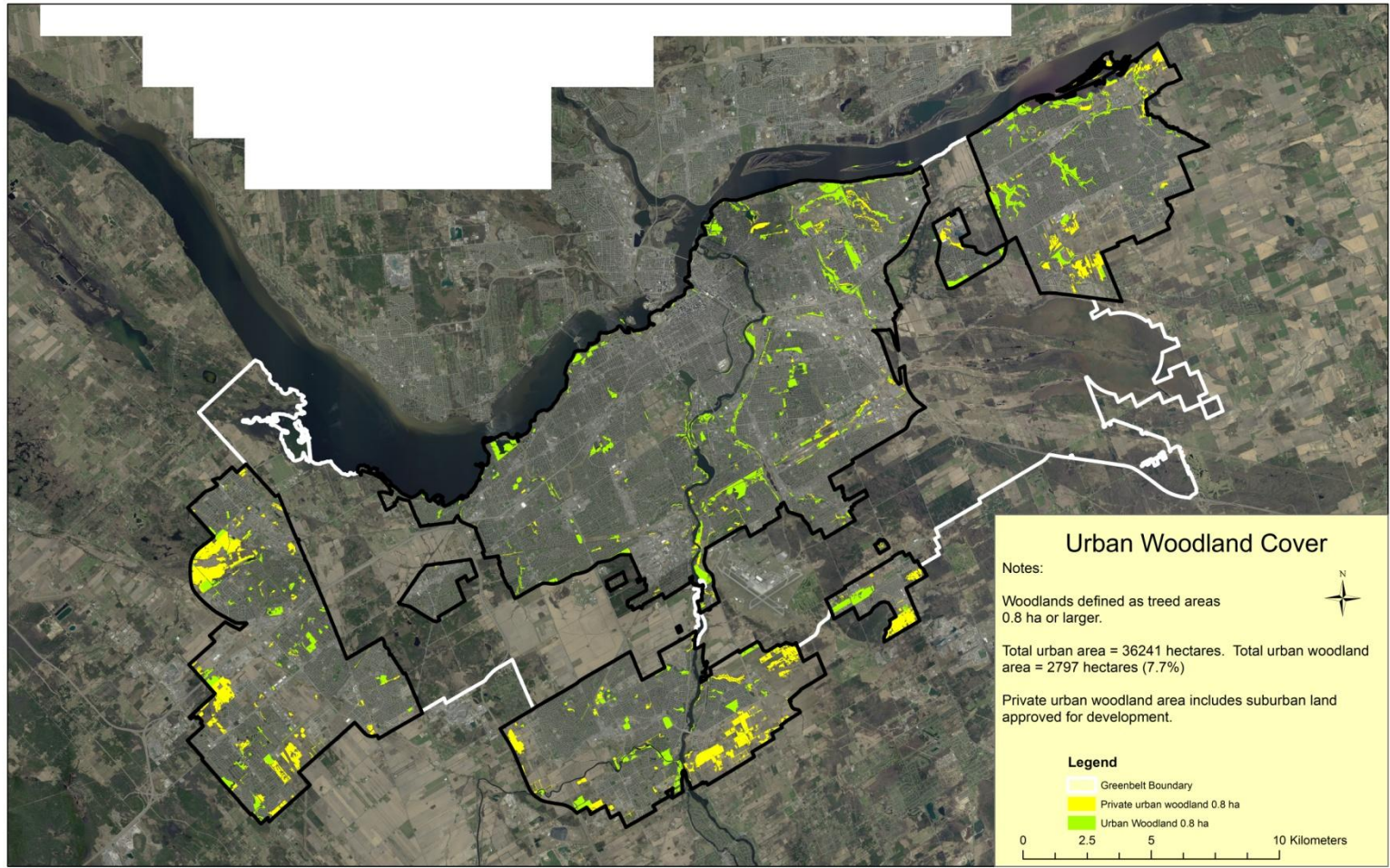
Staff may recommend that Council waive conveyance of some or all of the woodland, consistent with the EIS and underlying plans.



No

The City will require conveyance of the woodland for \$1 as per OP policies.

# Urban Woodland Cover



## Proposed Implementation

- New CDP Areas, urban expansion study areas, or developing communities where the City *has not* yet accepted and agreed with an existing conditions report: **new policies will apply.**
- New CDP Areas, urban expansion study areas, or developing communities where the City *has* accepted and agreed with an existing conditions report: **new policies will not apply.**
- Areas with existing Secondary Plans, CDPs, Plans of Subdivision: new significant woodland policies would apply to major updates, OPAs, re-zoning applications.

## How would the policies have applied in:

- Kanata North?
- Cardinal Creek?
- Riverside South?
- Leitrim?