The State of Ottawa's Greenspace in 2026

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City of Ottawa

Land Recognition

- Ottawa is located on unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe Host Nation.
- The peoples of the Algonquin Anishinabe Host Nation have lived on this territory for millennia.
- Today, Ottawa is home to approximately 40,000 First Nations, Inuit and Métis people.
- Ottawa's indigenous community is diverse, representing many nations, languages and customs.
- The City honours the land of the First Peoples, as well as all First Nations, Inuit and Métis in Ottawa and their valuable past and present contributions to this land.

Reconnaissance du territoire

- Ottawa est située sur un territoire non cédé de la nation hôte algonquine Anishinabe.
- Les peuples de la nation algonquine Anishinabe vivent sur ce territoire depuis des millénaires.
- Aujourd'hui, Ottawa compte environ 40 000 membres des Premières Nations, Inuits et Métis.
- La communauté autochtone d'Ottawa est diverse et représente de nombreuses nations, langues et coutumes.
- La Ville rend hommage au territoire des premiers peuples, ainsi qu'à l'ensemble des membres des Premières Nations, des Inuits et des Métis d'Ottawa, de même qu'à leurs précieuses contributions passées et présentes à ce territoire.

What is Natural Systems?

- Nick Stow, Program Manager and Ecologist
- Martha Copestake, Senior Planning Forester
- Tara Redpath, Senior Planner and Biologist
- Mark Richardson, Planning Forester
- Nancy Young, Planning Forester
- Hayley Murray, Planning Forester
- Julian Alvarez-Barkham, Planning Forester
- Zoe Bedford, Planning Forester
- Amy MacPherson, Environmental Planner and Biologist
- Adriana Hulse, Environmental Planner
- Dom Marcil-Ferland, Wildlife Resource Coordinator



Ottawa's Natural Environment: Key Facts

- Total City Area: 2850 km^2
- 1/3 urban
- 1/3 agricultural
- 1/3 natural or semi-natural
- Wetlands: 450 km^2 (15%)
- Provincially significant: about 50%
- Swamp > marsh > fen > bog
- Forest: 36% city-wide, 28% urban, 39% rural.
- Water: 4500 km of watercourses



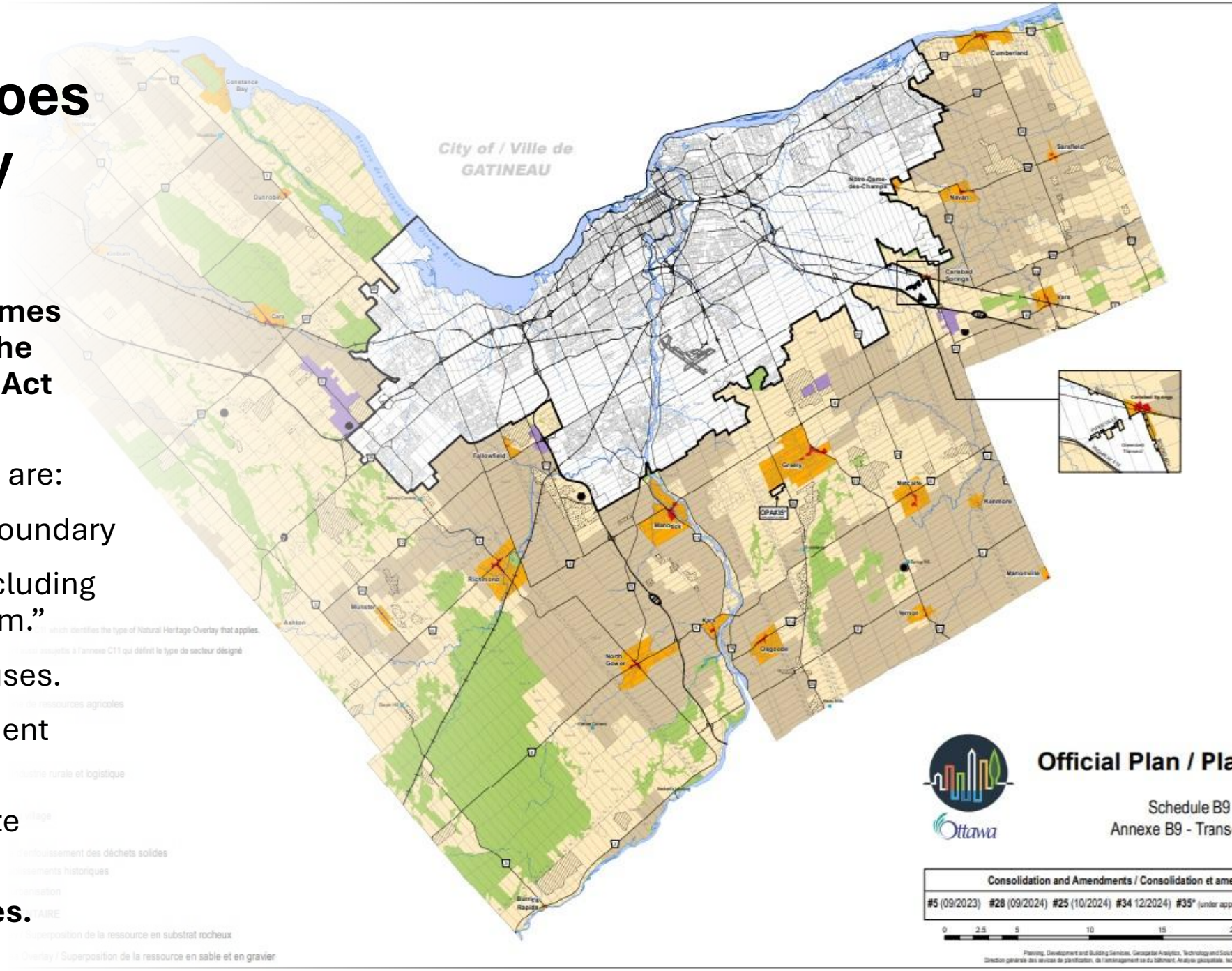
Biodiversity

- Specialized habitats:
  - fens, bogs, alvars, rock barrens, escarpments, sand dunes, coldwater and coolwater streams, karst
- Plants and wildlife
  - Plants: 1069 species, of which 1014 are native (2005)
  - Birds: 230+ resident species, 368 species in eBird.
  - Mammals: 50+ species
  - Fish: 80+ species
  - Species at Risk: 80+ species.



What Powers Does the Municipality Have?

- **All the City's authority comes from the Province through the Municipal Act and Planning Act**
- For protection of natural ecosystems the chief powers are:
  - Establishing the urban boundary
  - Identifying land uses, including a "natural heritage system."
  - Zoning to regulate land uses.
  - Conditions on development approvals.
  - By-laws: Tree By-law, Site Alteration By-law
- **The Province sets the rules.**



Conservation Authorities

Primary responsibilities:

- Regulate natural hazards such as floodplains
- Regulate watercourses and wetlands

They no longer have natural heritage planning responsibilities.

Wetland regulation:

- All provincially significant or formerly significant wetlands
- The MVCA regulates all *connected* wetlands, regardless of status
- The Province intervened to prevent the RVCA and SNC from regulating all wetlands

Consolidation should have no impact on regulation



Recent Provincial Changes

Ontario Wetland Evaluation System

- Elimination of wetland complexing and reduction in the scoring for species at risk.
- Harder to qualify as significant
- Easier to remove identification as significant

Endangered Species Act/Species Conservation Act

- Restricted definition of *habitat*
- No protection for federally-regulated migratory bird and aquatic species
- Expanded *registration* process

Applications for urban boundary expansion at any time

Expanded exemptions from provincial policy regulatory processes



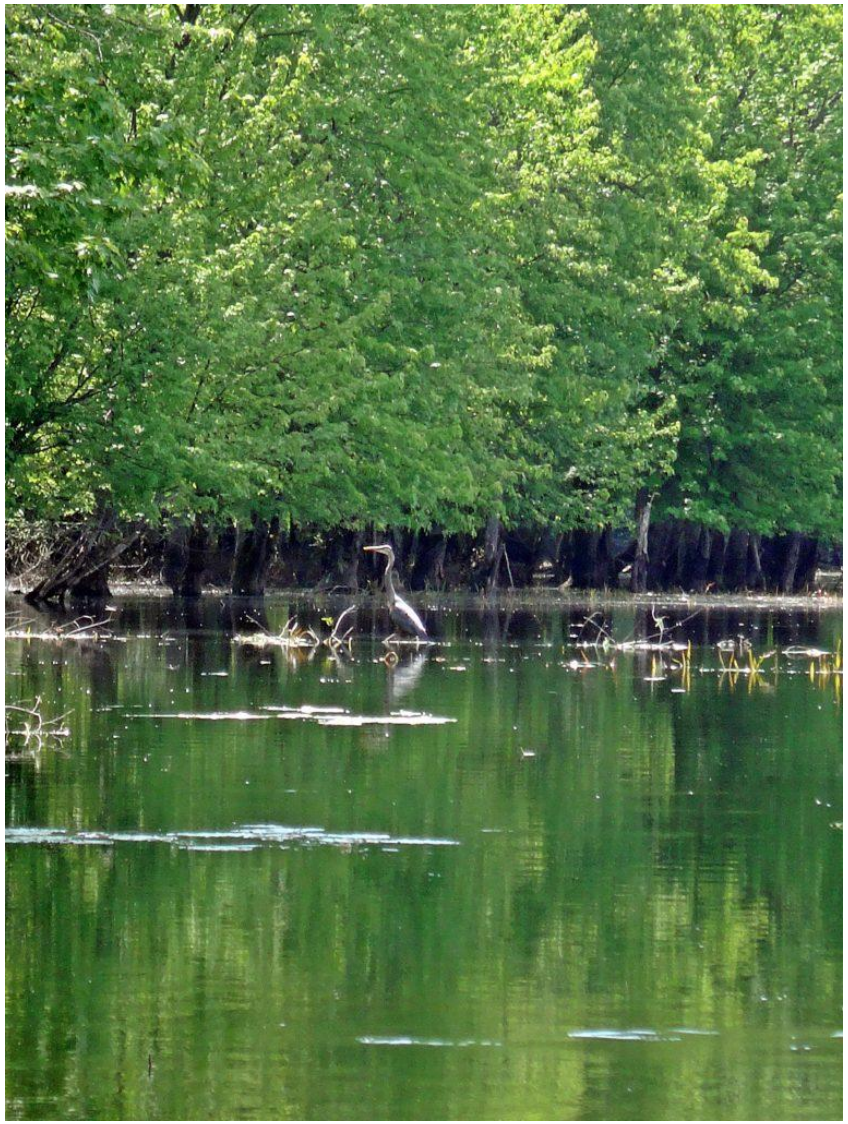
Potential Future Provincial Change

Establishment of a natural heritage *offsetting* framework

- Compensation for impacts on natural heritage *features*

Questions:

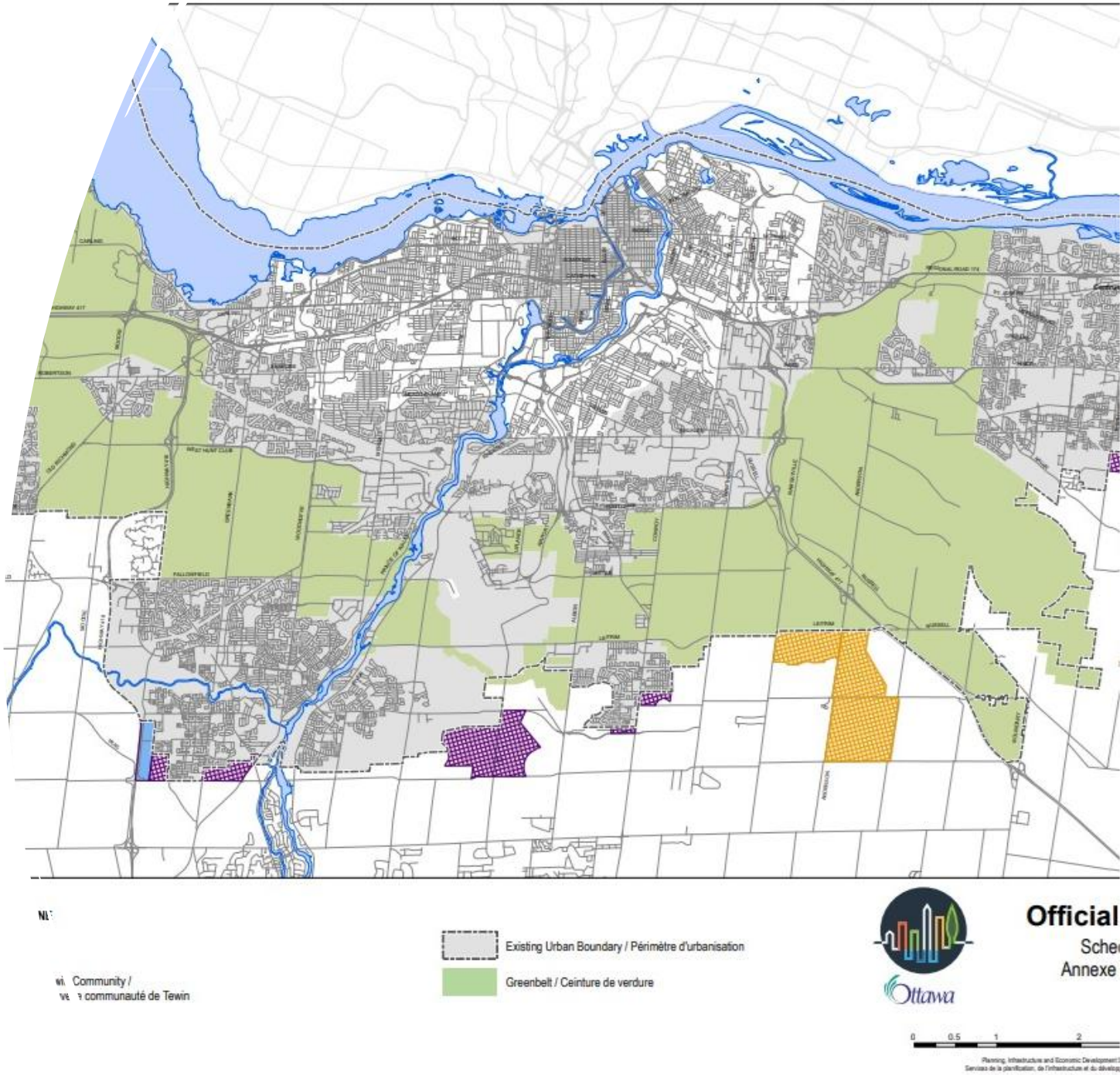
- Does it include monetary compensation?
- Who would administer it?
- What types of features would it cover?
- What does it mean for natural heritage *systems?*
- Would it mark the end of significant wetlands?





One critical question: how will Ottawa accommodate 530,000 more people?

- Ottawa's population will grow by about 530 K by 2051.
- 300,000 new households
- Under the current plan:
- 60% is targeted for the existing urban area.
- 40% must come through urban growth.
- Land supply for population growth is a provincial requirement.



Natural Heritage

Natural heritage system overlay

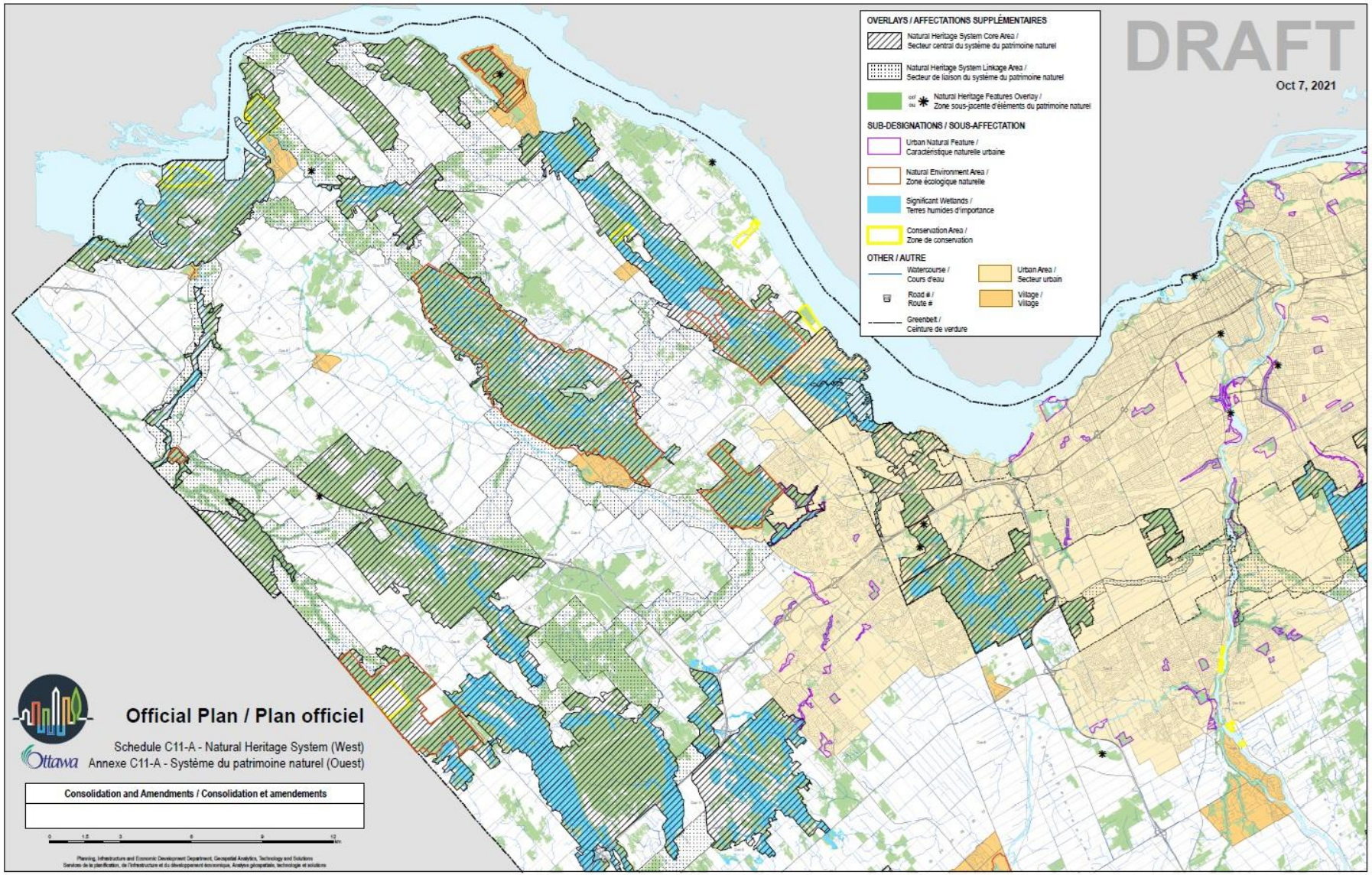
- Core Natural Areas
- Linkage Areas

Official Plan designations

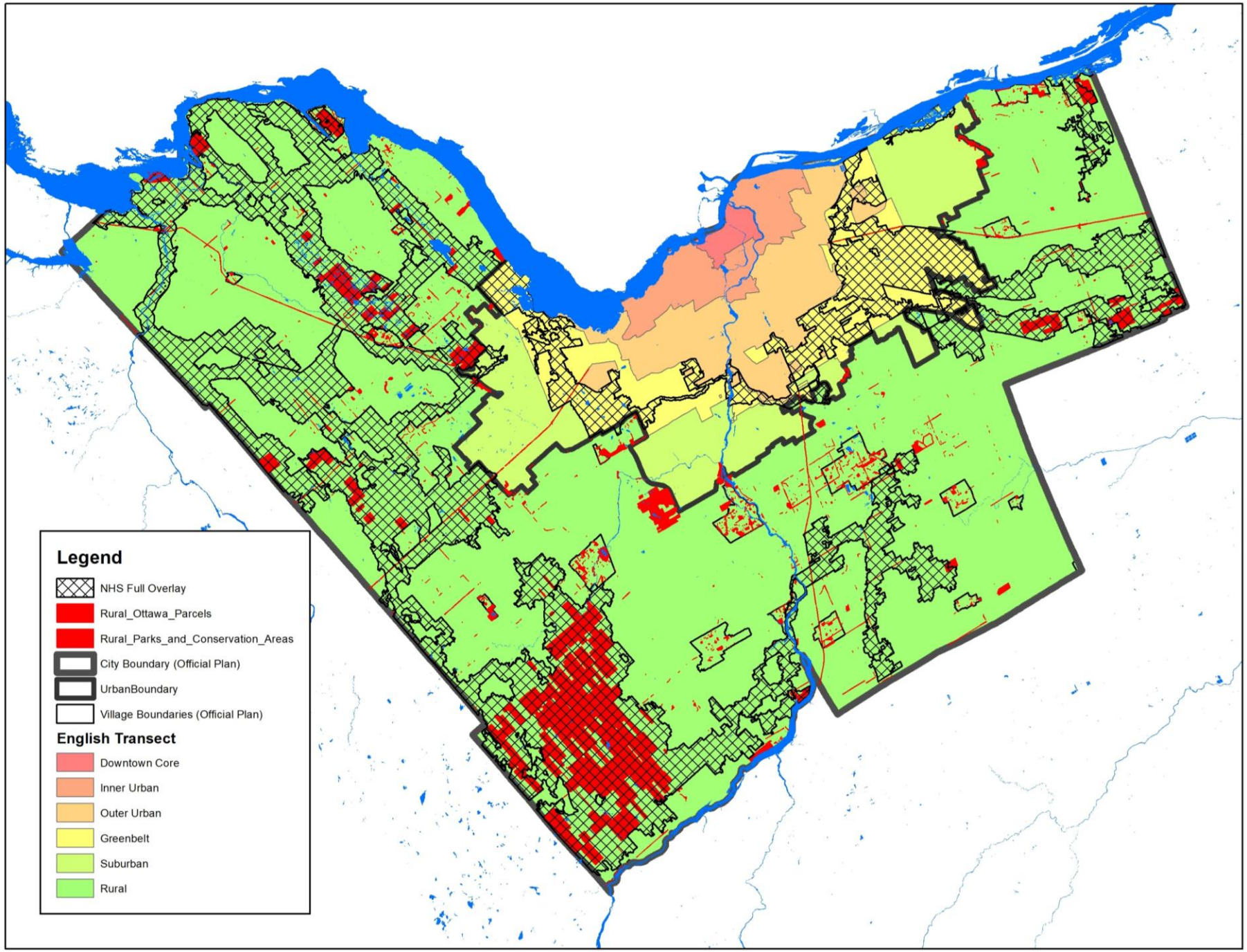
- Natural Environment Areas
- Significant Wetlands
- Urban Natural Features

Natural heritage features

- Significant woodlands
- Surface water features
- Valleylands
- Escarpments
- Significant habitat

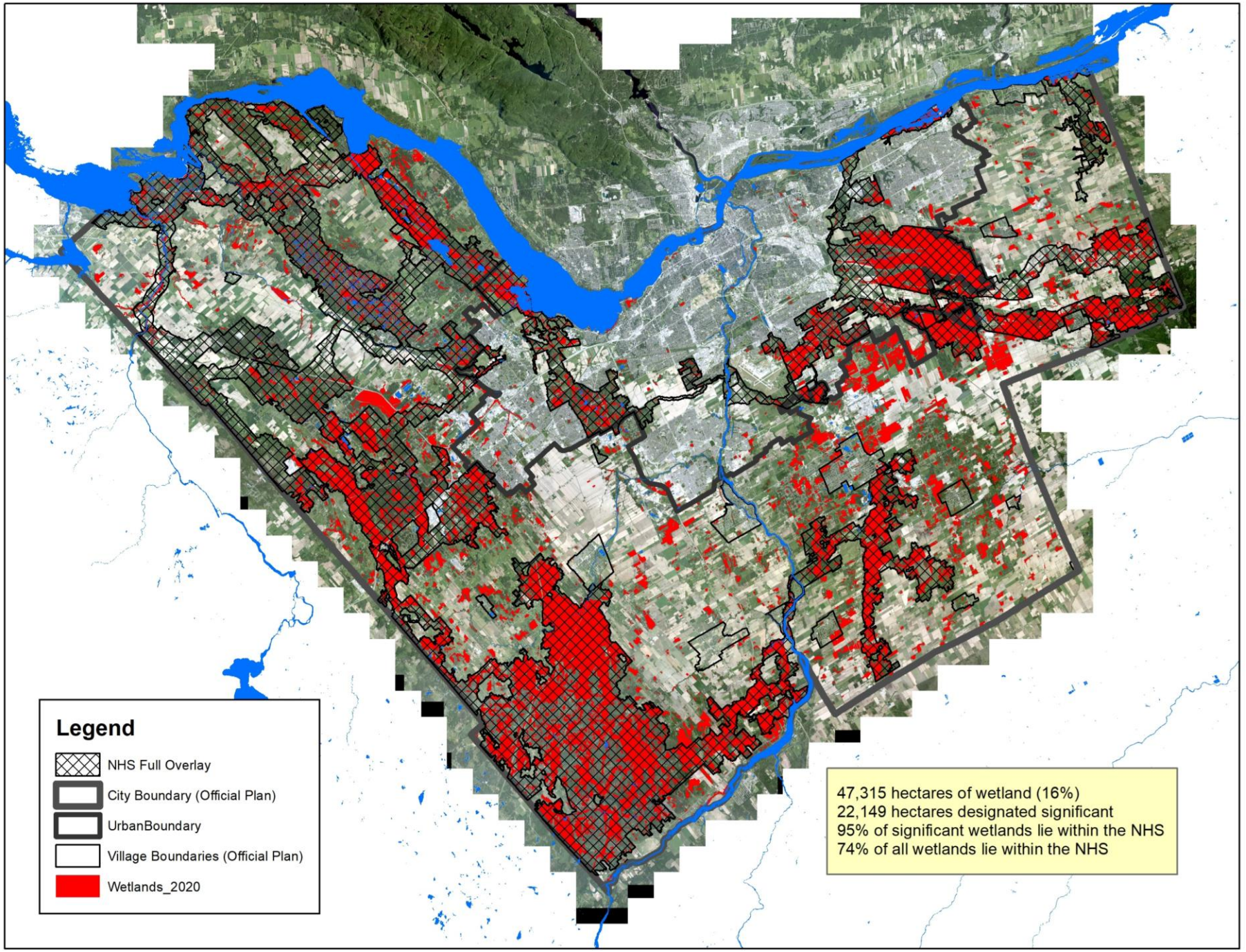


Natural Heritage System and City Ownership



Natural Heritage System and Wetlands

- 47,315 hectares of wetland
- 22,149 hectares of designated significant
- 95 of significant wetlands lie within the NHS
- 74% of all wetlands lie within the NHS



Protection Outside the Planning Act

What stops people from altering or clearing their property in the absence of a Planning Act application?

In much of the City, only personal choice and responsibility.

CA Regulations

- Regulated areas, but not natural heritage (recent Provincial change)

Tree Protection By-law

- Only the urban area and urban expansion areas

Site Alteration By-law

- Only the urban boundary + 1 km



No net loss policy

- The Official Plan sets a goal of *no net loss* of rural forests and wetlands.
    - It is aspirational goal.
    - It does not include new urban expansion areas
    - It does not apply at a site level.
- City Councils have not sought to regulate all property.
- We already exclude the NHS, NEAs and PSWs from urban expansion. We cannot meet our urban land supply needs if we exclude all forests and wetlands.
- We cannot normally achieve no net loss on property-by-property basis.



How to achieve no net loss

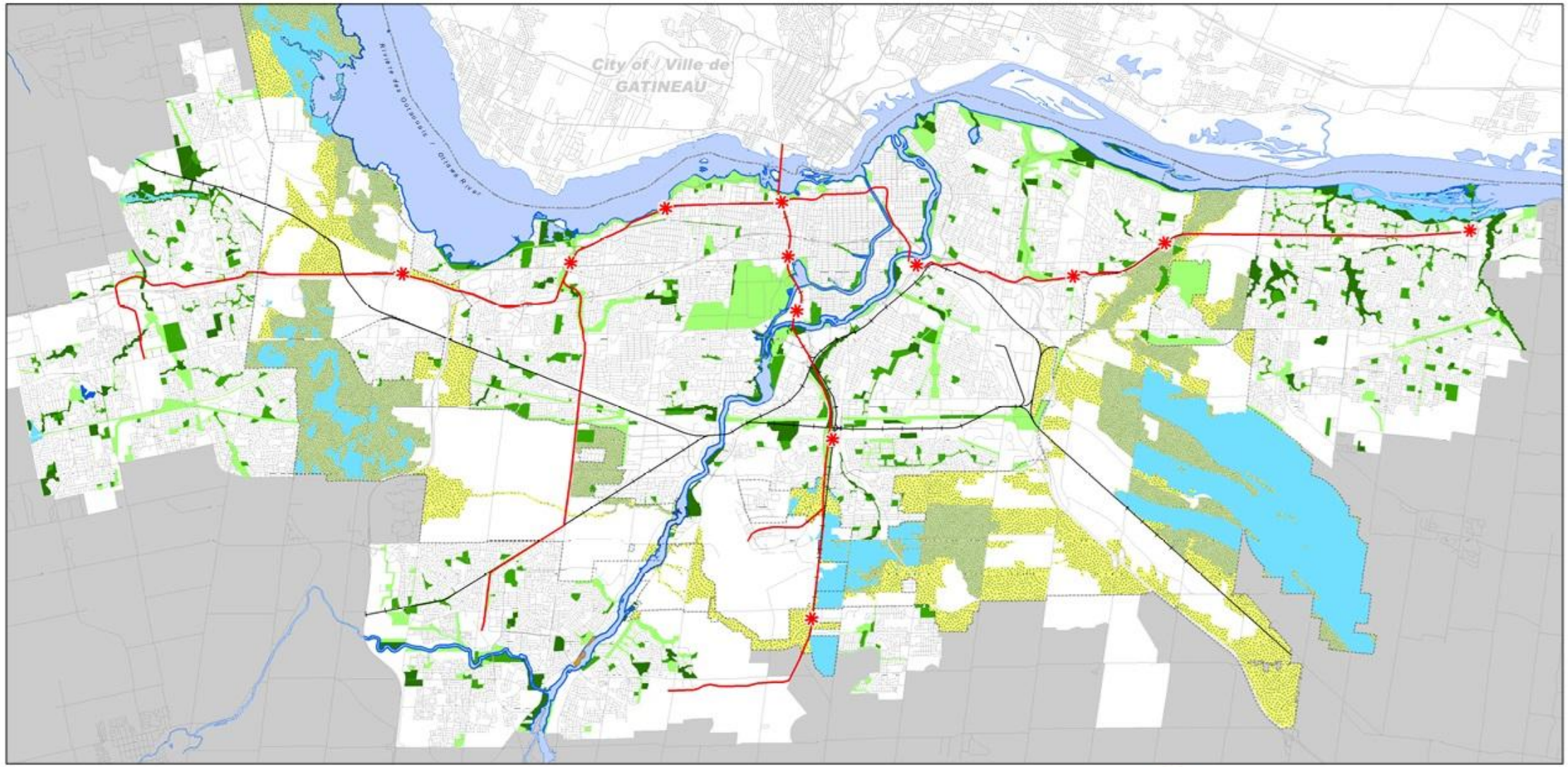
We use all the tools at our disposal.

- Planning tools
- Regulatory tools
- Public outreach and education
- Support for private land stewardship
- Environmental land acquisition and restoration

Rural Environmental Land Acquisition and Stewardship Program

- $1.8 million and a dedicated position
- Recent examples: Ferry Road, Galetta, Carp Hills, Marlborough Forest, Manion Corners
- DUC, CAs, Nature Conservancy





SUB-DESIGNATIONS / SOUS-AFFECTATION

- Park / Parc
- Open Space / Espace vert
- Urban Natural Features / Caractéristique naturelle urbaine
- Significant Wetlands / Terres humides d'importance
- Conservation Area / Zone de conservation
- Greenbelt Natural Area / Aire naturelle de la Ceinture de verdure
- Greenbelt Natural Linkage / Lien naturel de la Ceinture de verdure
- Water Linkage / Cours d'eau de liaison
- Greenspace Destination / Espace vert de destination
- Greenbelt Transect Boundary / Limite de la Ceinture de verdure
- O-Train

Official Plan / Plan officiel

Schedule C12 - Urban Greenspace
Annexe C12 - Réseau urbain d'espaces verts

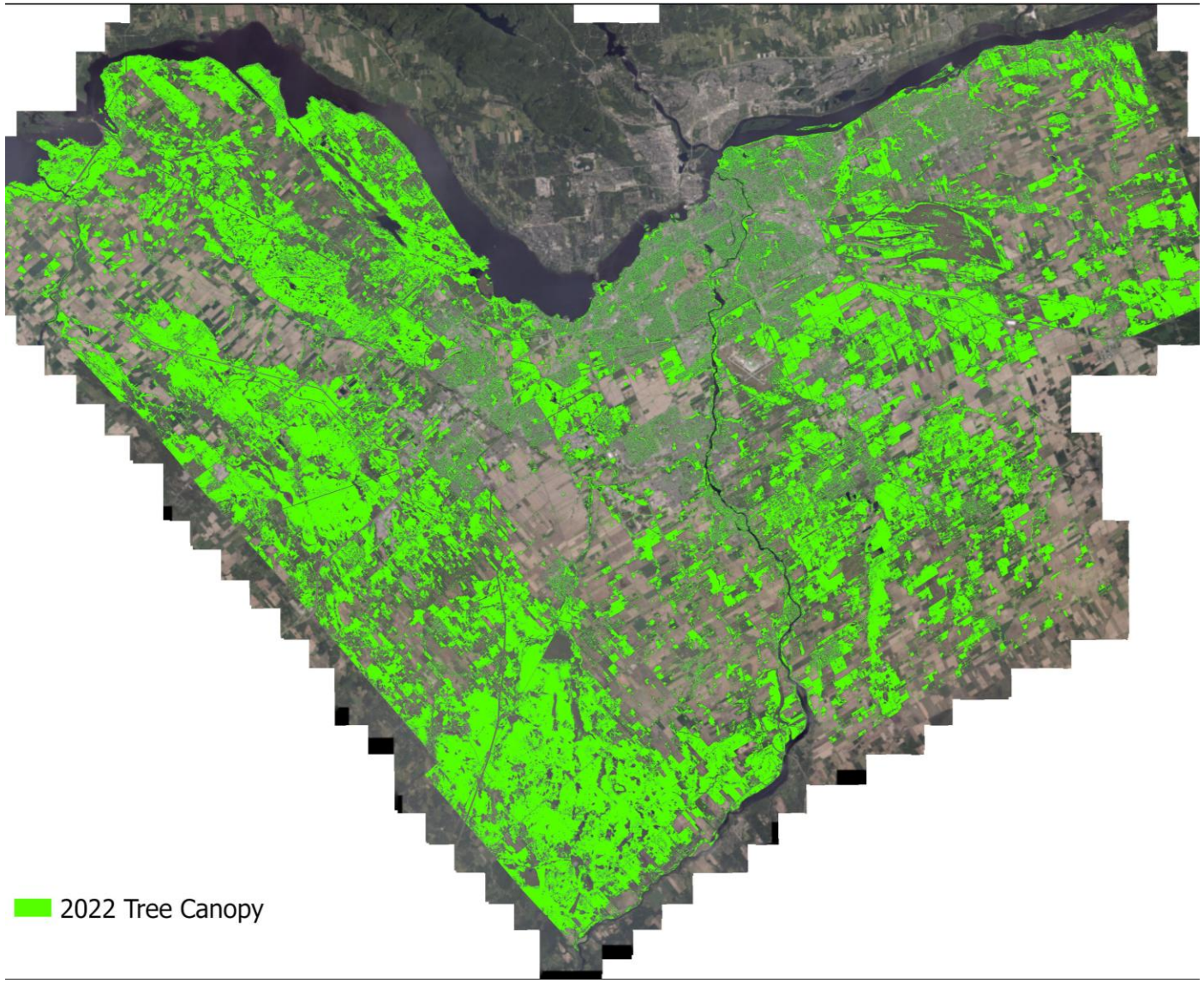
Consolidation and Amendments / Consolidation et amendements
#5 (09/2023) **#34** 12/2024) **#23** (03/2024)

0 0.5 1 2 3 4 5 km

Planning, Development and Building Services, Geospatial Analytics, Technology and Solutions
Direction générale des services de planification, de l'aménagement et du bâtiment, Analyse géospatiale, technologie et solutions

Canopy Cover

Geography	2017 Canopy Cover	2022 Canopy Cover
City Wide	34%	36%
Urban Boundary (2017)	28%	28%
Urban Boundary (2025)	28%	28%
Downtown Core Transect	16%	16%
Inner Urban Transect	26%	25%
Outer Urban Transect	23%	22%
Greenbelt Transect	42%	42%
Suburban Transect	18%	17%
Rural Transect	36%	39%



What's Next?

- Future Neighbourhoods
    - Planning for approved urban expansion areas
- Urban Growth Strategy
    - Coming forward in 2026 – 2027
    - Consideration of new urban expansion areas
- Prepare for the Province's next moves
    - The City's natural heritage policy framework was developed to respond to an offsetting framework if one comes forward
- Continuation of the Acquisition and Stewardship Program
    - More focus on support for private land stewardship, especially in linkage areas
- Implementation of the Tree Planting Strategy with a focus on priority areas









Questions?