

Ottawa's Significant Woodlands Policies and Guidelines

EIS Workshop, February 26, 2020

Key Messages

- Yes, we really mean it.
- The new policies and guidelines reflect a substantial change in Ottawa's approach to trees, the urban forest, and woodlands.
- Staff and consultants will need to learn new approaches, new skills, and a new perspective.
- The Guidelines provide a detailed "how to".
- Yes, we really mean it.

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- The new policies and guidelines have been approved by Council.
- All outstanding appeals have been settled.
- We have the full support of the Chief of Planning, the General Manager, and the Chair of Planning Committee.
- We have already rejected our first big EIS that ignored the policies and guidelines.

What are significant woodlands in the OP?

- Any treed area meeting the definition of woodland in the ELC or forest in the Forestry Act.

AND

- In the rural area, *meeting any one criterion* in the Natural Heritage Reference Manual.
- In the urban area, any woodland or portion of woodland that is 60 years old at the time of evaluation *and* 0.8 ha or larger.

Rural Area

Criterion	Sub-criteria
1. Size	Woodland size
2. Ecological Functions	Woodland interior
	Proximity to other natural heritage features
	Ecological linkages
	Water protection
	Woodland diversity
3. Uncommon Characteristics	Unique species composition
	Provincially significant vegetation community
	Rare, uncommon, or restricted plant species
	Older woodlands
4. Economical and social values	High productivity of economically valuable products (while maintaining native natural attributes)
	High value in special services, such as air-quality improvement or recreation at a sustainable level
	Important identified appreciation, education, cultural or historical value

Rural Planning Areas

Rural Planning Area	Size (km ²)	2011 Forest Cover (km ²)	Percent Forest Cover
Ottawa West	722	278	38.4
Jock River	348	128	36.7
Lower Rideau River	469	179	38.0
Castor River	360	97	26.9
Ottawa East - Bearbrook	329	99	29.9

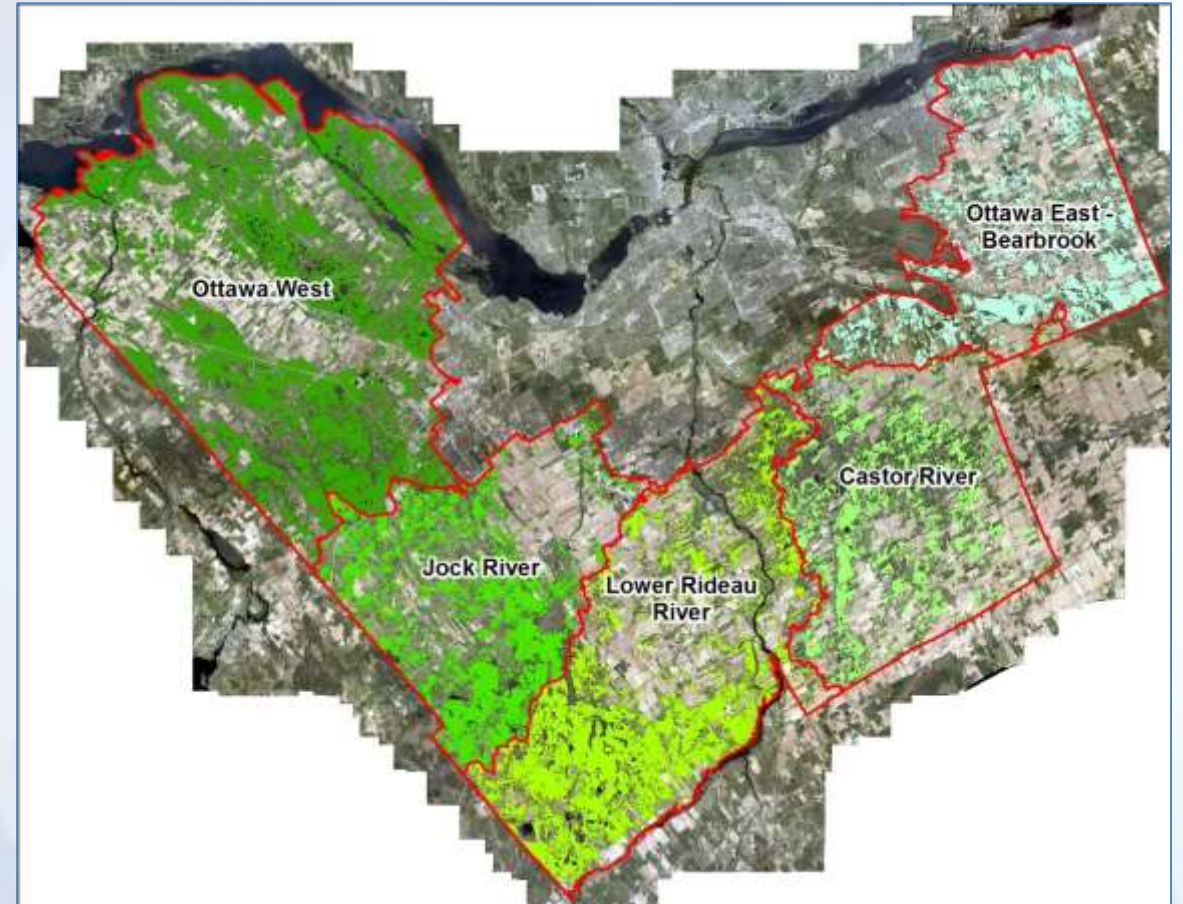
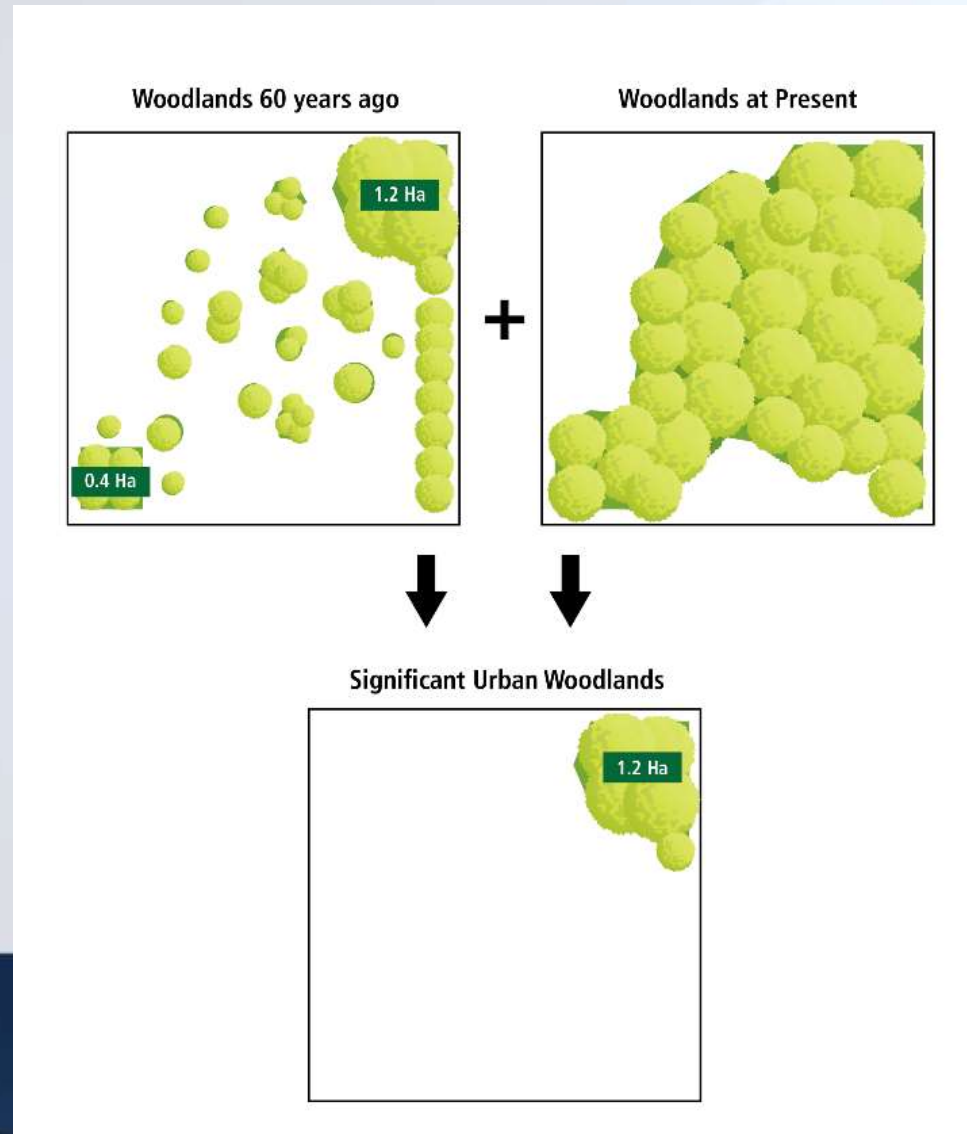


Table 3. Significant Woodland Evaluation Criteria and Size Thresholds (Rural

	Woodland Cover in Rural Planning Area	5% or less	5 – 15%	15 – 30%	30 – 60%	Greater than 60%
Criterion 1: Size	Woodland Size	2 ha	4 ha	20 ha	50 ha	N/A
Criterion 2: Ecological Functions	Woodland Interior	Any	Any	2 ha	8 ha	20 ha
	Proximity	0.8 ha	2 ha	5 ha	10 ha	20 ha
	Linkages	0.8 ha	2 ha	5 ha	10 ha	20 ha
	Water Protection	0.8 ha	2 ha	5 ha	10 ha	20 ha
	Woodland Diversity	0.8 ha	2 ha	5 ha	10 ha	20 ha
Criterion 3: Uncommon Characteristics	Unique Species Composition	0.8 ha	0.8 ha	0.8 ha	0.8 ha	0.8 ha
	Provincially Significant Vegetation Community	0.8 ha	0.8 ha	0.8 ha	0.8 ha	0.8 ha
	Rare, Uncommon or Restricted Plant Species	0.8 ha	0.8 ha	0.8 ha	0.8 ha	0.8 ha
	Older Woodlands	0.8 ha	1 ha	2.5 ha	5 ha	10 ha
	Economic and Social Values	Economic and Social Values	0.8 ha	2 ha	5 ha	10 ha

Application of the Size Threshold and Age Exemption in the Identification of Significant Urban Woodlands



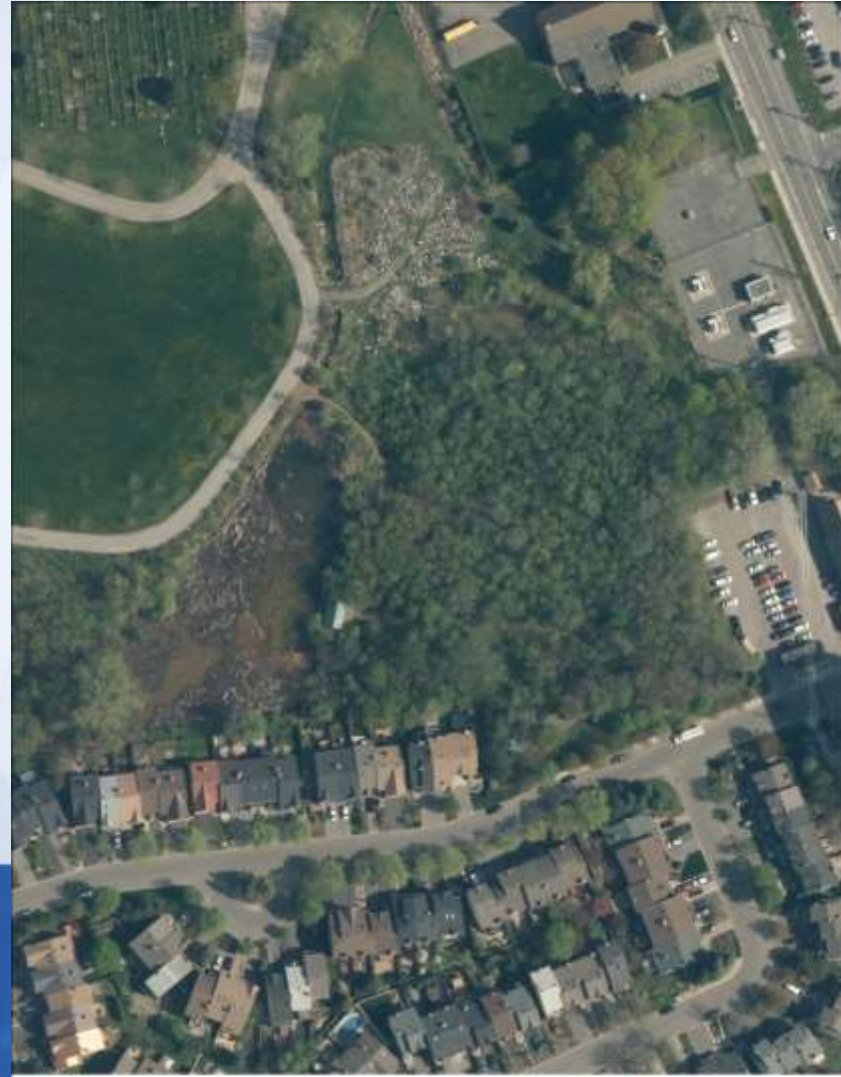
Why must urban woodlands be 60 years old? That's not in the NHRM

- Correct. The NHRM does not set a minimum age.
- However, the PPS encourages efficiency of land use.



Why are there no other urban criteria?

- The City's policy assumes that any urban woodlot is significant under Criterion 4: Economic and Social Values.



Exemptions for Approved Plans

- “When it approved the new woodland policies in 2016, Council exempted those urban areas where it had already identified the natural heritage system through Secondary Plans, Community Design Plans, approved Plans of Subdivision, or Existing Conditions reports submitted and accepted by the City in support of on-going development applications. In such areas, new significant woodlands will not be identified.”

Evaluation of Impacts – Rural

- Significant woodlands *are not* “no touch” features.
- At minimum, the EIS must demonstrate that the proposed development or site alteration will have no negative impacts on the values or ecological functions for which the triggering environmentally significant lands or natural heritage features have been identified. – EIS Guidelines, p. 7.
- Environmental reports must explicitly address how the mitigation hierarchy has been applied in the proposed development or site alteration.
 - Avoidance
 - Minimization
 - Mitigation
 - Compensation

Urban Criteria for the Evaluation of Impacts

- Significant woodlands *are not* “no touch” features.
- *Screening criteria* represent important ecosystem functions and services that cannot be replaced or substituted, or for which impacts cannot be adequately mitigated.
- *Comparative criteria* represent those ecosystem services that can be replaced, substituted, or adequately mitigated through urban design or engineering.
- The criteria appear in Table 4 of the Guidelines

Modification or Removal of Significant Urban Woodlands

- Modification or removal of a significant urban woodland should be considered only where it can be demonstrated that the woodland has limited public value in its natural state or poses a potential risk to public health and safety that cannot be mitigated.
- Any proposed modification or removal of an urban woodlot should provide a net environmental and socio-economic benefit to the community. When proposing such trade-offs, the City will require proponents to consider:
 - Opportunities for more efficient design of stormwater management systems, especially low impact development (LID) in combination with tree retention and tree planting;
 - Opportunities for more efficient design of park and pathway systems;
 - Opportunities for increased community access to wooded greenspace through strategic compensation, improved or expanded pathways, or greenspace enhancement;
 - Opportunities for enhanced tree planting, especially in combination with active transportation, transit, public spaces, and privately-owned public spaces.
 - Examples: Developing Community, Existing Urban Area.

Yes, we really mean it.

- We have public and Council support for “maintaining and growing” the urban forest.
- Section 26 report:
 - Ensure that growth and intensification will not compromise the urban forest.
 - Develop a new high-performance development standard (HPDS) for buildings
 - Establish a goal of no net loss of rural forest cover and functions, and provide direction on the development of implementation guidelines.
- Consider trees at the outset: retention, minimization, mitigation... and only then compensation.