



CAFES Ottawa

Community Action for
Environmental Sustainability

Zoning for Tree Viability

New Comprehensive Zoning By-law - Final Draft
Joint Planning & Housing and Agriculture and Rural
Affairs Committee

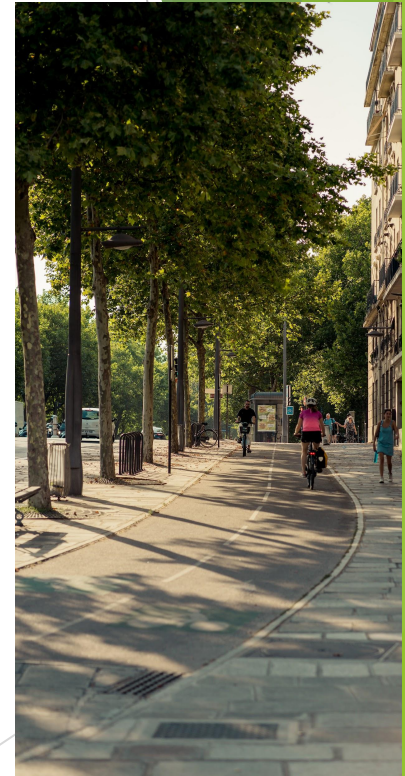
Wednesday, December 17th, 2025

Erica Shardlow
Trees & Greenpace Coordinator, CAFES Ottawa
eshardlow@cafesottawa.ca



High-level priorities

- ➔ **Compact, green and livable city - we support density and not sprawl**
- ➔ **Livable, healthy city - clean air, shade**
- ➔ **Ottawa's natural assets are under threat and being degraded**
 - ▶ **New trees face increased threats**
- ➔ **Equity - 40% canopy target in each neighbourhood**





Zoning for Tree Viability: Summary of Recommendations

1. Soil Volume Requirements
2. Soft Landscaping Minimums in Neighbourhood Zones
3. Front Yard Setbacks
4. Re-zoning of NCC Southern Corridor Greenspaces





Recommendations - Soil Volume

Objective: Ensure canopy trees have adequate space and depth to thrive to maturity in the face of increasing density.

Recommendation:

- Re-introduce 'soil volume' metrics in Sections 802 (for rear yards) and 210 Underground Structures
- Change the language from '30 square metres' back to '30 **cubic** metres with a minimum 1m planting depth'

Soil Volume Requirements for Trees

Size of Tree	Tree Height at Maturity	Soil Volume	Surface Area (if 1 m depth is provided)
Small	5–9 m	10 m ³	3.2 x 3.2 m
Medium	10–15 m	30 m ³	5.5 x 5.5 m
Large	15 + m	50 m ³	7 x 7 m

See the [CAFES Trees and Zoning position paper](#) for sources and more information.



Recommendations - Soft Landscaping

Objective: Ensure there is adequate space for a medium-large canopy tree to thrive in both front and rear yards of each residential lot in neighbourhood zones.

Recommendations:

- Front yard soft landscaping minimum - should be increased to 50% of the total front yard space
- Rear yard soft landscaping - all lots must have a minimum of 30 cubic m contiguous soft landscaping, up to 50%
- 'Square metres' should be changed in Section 802 to 'cubic metres' with 1m planting depth, to reflect soil volume and not just surface area.
- Soft landscaping space must be in a square or rectangle with minimum width, not a narrow strip that would be useless for a tree.





Recommendations - Setbacks

Objective: Provide space for canopy trees along dense urban streets to provide necessary shade, cooling, carbon capture, stormwater attenuation, walkability and more.

Recommendations:

- Residential zone front yard setbacks should be 4.5m, ideally 6m for a tree
- Ensure 30 cubic m soft landscaping is provided in **the combined space from the City Right of Way and front yard setbacks** on all lots to provide space for a street-facing tree.
- Trees especially important in Hub Zones, Main Streets and Minor Corridors (901-908) for livability, walkability, overall public health



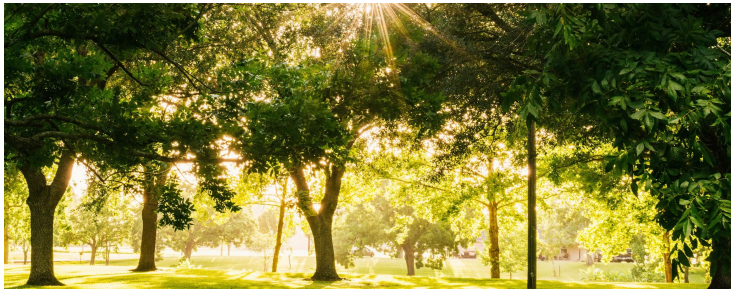
Prince Albert
Street in
Overbrook



Recommendations - “DR” zoning of NCC Southern Corridor areas

Recommendation:

- Defer the change that re-zoned the Woodroffe-Merivale and Hunt Club-Riverside corridors to “Development Reserve”
 - City should not pre-zone / pre-judge the outcomes of planning processes and public engagement
 - Greenspaces are highly valued
 - Prime feeding habitat for Barred Owls, Cooper’s Hawks, and Merlins
 - Contribute to 40% canopy goal
 - Public greenspace with walking and biking trail
 - Provides access to Rideau Canal; World Heritage Site





Background: CAFES Working Group, Zoning Paper, draft submissions

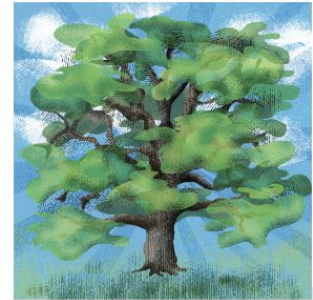
- A CAFES team of experienced volunteers co-wrote a position paper
- Version 3.0 was submitted in October 2024
- As part of Peoples Official Plan Coalition (POP), we submitted detailed recommendations on Draft 1, 2
- CAFES submitted detailed recommendations on Draft 3 in October 2025



CAFES Ottawa
Community Associations for
Environmental Sustainability

Zoning By-law Position Paper:

How Zoning can Regulate Trees



By: Community Associations for Environmental
Sustainability (CAFES Ottawa)

April 2024



About CAFES

- Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability (CAFES) was founded in 2010 and is a network of local and neighbourhood environmental leaders and community builders
- Our members include representatives from urban, sub-urban and rural communities
- The network includes over 250 representatives from across all wards and over 50 neighbourhoods



CAFES Ottawa

Community Action for
Environmental Sustainability

Thank you!

Visit us at
www.cafesottawa.ca

