

July 18, 2008

Carol Christensen
Manager Environmental Sustainability
City of Ottawa

Subject: East Urban Community -- UNA #97 Navan Road at Page Road

Current events where the highest quality portion of the forest was clear-cut in May 2008 by the developers/property owners.

The clear-cutting of the most significant portion of the UNA #97, which occurred in early May in the midst of the birds' nesting season (1), is a clear violation of the intent of the Community Design Plan, the Tree Preservation and Protection Plan for Renaud and Eden Park Subdivisions of the East Urban Community. This sensitive environmental land is forever lost to the residents of the City of Ottawa.

The property owners did not show good faith, as it was our understanding that negotiations were underway with City Officials at the time of the clear-cutting. It is a clear betrayal, we are outraged that they did not have the decency to wait until the discussions were concluded. It is most unfortunate that this has happened and, all efforts should be made to avoid similar catastrophe in the future.

Why did the property owner have this site cleared at this particular time?
Was the City given a timeframe to reach a decision during these negotiations?
Does the clear-cutting not constitute a serious violation against the principles of the approved Community Design Plan?
Will there be any penalties brought forward to the property owner?
What kind of mitigating measures will be imposed?
How can property owners be dissuaded from destroying highly rated ecological sites?
What can be done by the City to prevent this type of destruction by the developers in the future?

This is an excellent example, as to why the City needs a serious policy and bylaw to prevent occurrences such as this from happening in the future. It is also a great example why the Tree Preservation and Protection Plan provided at the Plan of Subdivision stage, is submitted much too late in the Development Application Process at the City. Current standard practice of subdivision construction is to completely clear the land to prepare for the installation of storm water and sewage services and other infrastructure. Application for approval of a plan of subdivision comes later and, sometimes is accompanied with the required Tree Preservation and Protection Plan, but by that time the property has been so severely altered (tree clearing, drainage and grading), there is seldom any vegetation left to preserve. The public should be made aware that the process to preserve trees and significant greenspaces is fundamentally flawed. We need to find a much better process to protect our environment in this City.

OFGAC have participated in the Community Design Plan consultation and submitted its comments and recommendations in 2005 and 2006, as well as, completed and submitted to the city planner our review of the Development Proposals (Zoning Amendment and Plan of Subdivision) in October 2007. OFGAC's submissions clearly identified our concerns and recommendations for the protection of the UNA #97 and, as such, are very dissatisfied that it appears to have fallen on deaf ears, especially considering recent events.

Nicole Parent
Chair Ottawa Forests and Greenspace Advisory Committee

(1) Environment Canada recommends that tree clearing occur outside the peak breeding bird season, 1 May to 31 July.