

CIELAP's 4th Partnering for Sustainability Workshop
Achieving Resilient Agricultural Systems: Innovation, People and Partnerships
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Case Study: Sustainable Agriculture in the Nation's Capital Greenbelt

Name and Organization: Cynthia Levesque, SENES Consultants
On Behalf of the National Capital Commission

About the case study

The NCC is updating the Greenbelt Master Plan, between 2008 to 2011. The current policy is:

“To foster a wide range of viable and well-managed farms as a way to conserve large, open and diverse rural areas in the Greenbelt” and “To enhance the Greenbelt's contributions to the regional farm economy, agricultural research and related visitor experiences”.

Of the total 20,000 ha within the Greenbelt (see map below), 5400 ha (27%) is dedicated to agriculture uses in 62 farms. Almost half the farm operations are in row crops, with 3 dairy farms, 6 beef, 14 horse farms, 4 greenhouse operations and approximately 20 operations for fruit, vegetables, flowers. There are 4 pick-your-own operations and 9 produce stands adjacent to the City's urban area.

How this case study advances sustainable development and fosters resilience

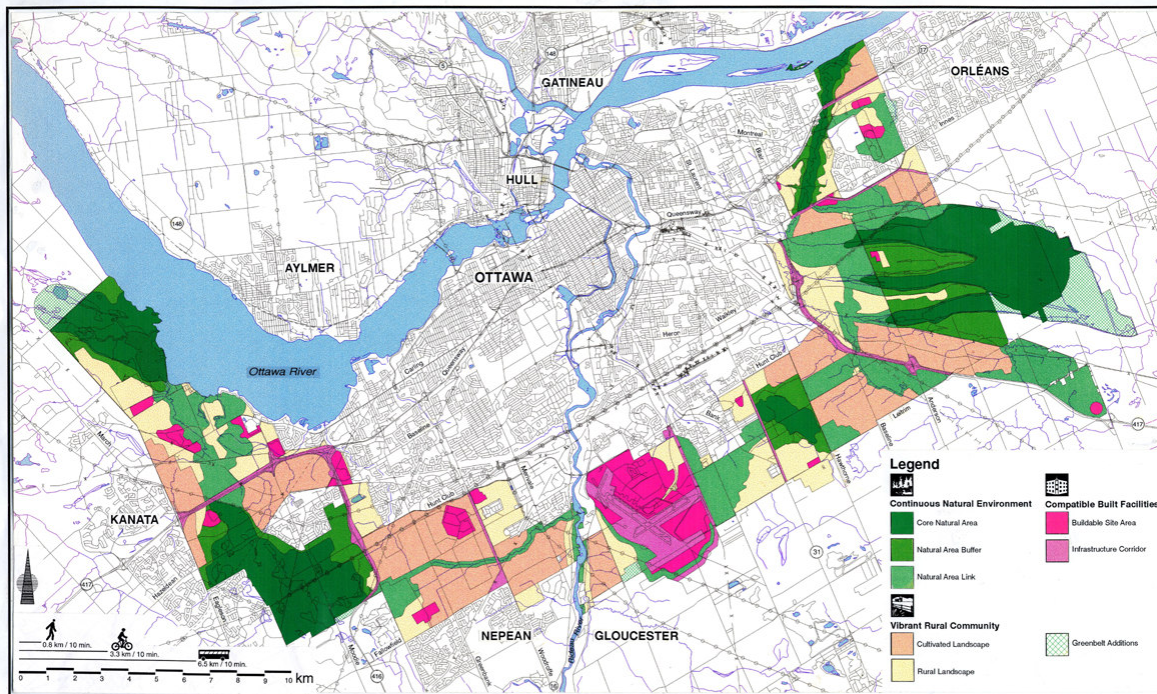
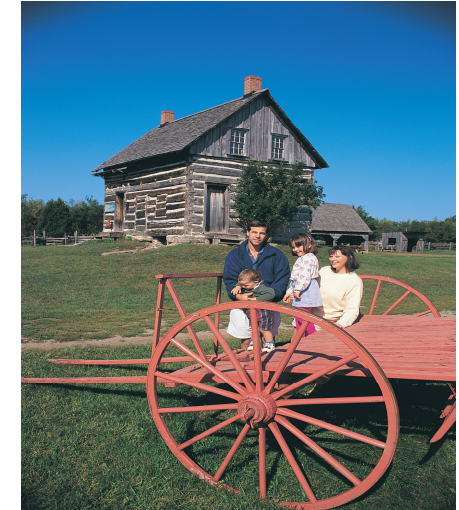
The existing Greenbelt Master Plan policies provide strong direction and protection for long term agricultural use of these largely Class 2 and 3 lands located immediately adjacent to a large urban area. The current update provides an opportunity to strengthen agricultural production to meet sustainable agricultural practices and to foster pride in the provision of local food products to the City of Ottawa.



Barriers / Challenges: The extent of agricultural production and knowledge of products from the Greenbelt is not widely known. Development pressures are very high with agricultural lands described as easy targets for development (infrastructure, housing, commercial, institutional). The strong policies within the Plan are helpful to form the basis of the update. Row crops form a large part of the visual aspects of the Greenbelt and the trend to larger farms has held true here as in the rest of Canada

Interesting Lessons

Although the plan update is just starting, lessons have been gathered over the life of the Greenbelt, much of which was in place by the mid 1960's. Longer term leases have encouraged more capital investment and strong policies along with appropriate valuing of agricultural land is needed to prevent it from being seen as the solution for development needs.



Moving Forward

The Master Plan will be updated over the next 2.5 years, with sustainability, food security and resiliency considerations a focus for updating of the agricultural policies and for providing direction to these lands for the next 50 years. Best practices research will be compiled to support the update.

Remaining Comments and Questions

How to enhance agricultural diversity within the Greenbelt?

How to improve public experiences and interaction with local area farms to improve their understanding and valuing of food production and ecological processes?