

Ottawa Resilient: Protecting Vital Infrastructure and Our Shared Greenspace

A Proposal by Community Groups for the Kanata Lakes Greenspace Lands (formerly the Kanata Lakes Golf Course)

Submitted on

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Submitted to

His Worship Mark Sutcliffe
Mayor of the City of Ottawa

Submitted by

**Kanata Greenspace Protection Coalition
Kanata Lakes Community Association
Kanata Beaverbrook Community Association**

and

Supported by

Cathy Curry
Councillor for Kanata North



Kanata Greenspace Protection Coalition



Kanata Beaverbrook
A GARDEN CITY COMMUNITY

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Our Shared Commitment to Kanata Lakes Greenspace

The Kanata Lakes Greenspace Lands matter deeply to both the community and the City. Over many years, residents and the City have demonstrated a strong and constructive partnership, working diligently together to preserve and protect this valuable greenspace for current and future generations.

Today, as community leaders in Kanata North, we are asking the Mayor to continue that collaborative approach to identify a long-term solution that reflects the public interest in preserving these lands.

To support a prudent, reasonable, and solutions-focused path forward, the community is asking the Mayor to consider three collaborative requests:

1. **Conduct a Feasibility Study to Assess Acquisition.**
2. **Establish a Collaborative Working Group.**
3. **Continue Intergovernmental Collaboration.**

This proposal will outline why these lands continue to matter to the community and the City, why further action is warranted, and what each of the three requests could entail.

Why Continued Action Is Needed

For decades, the 173-acre Kanata Lakes Greenspace Lands (formerly the Kanata golf course) have functioned as **natural municipal infrastructure supporting stormwater management, flood mitigation within the Kizell watershed, climate resilience, recreation, and public health and well-being** for thousands of Ottawa residents.

The Kanata Lakes community was planned on the principle that approximately 40% of the development area, including the golf course lands, would remain open greenspace. This principle was reflected in planning approvals and agreements executed between the original developer and the City in 1981, 1985, and 1988.

The City, supported by the Kanata Greenspace Protection Coalition (KGPC) and local community associations, defended these agreements through 7 years of litigation and Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) proceedings.

In 2025, the courts confirmed that elements in the 1981 agreement were unenforceable, and the **OLT approved residential development subject to 192 conditions** (many relating to unresolved drainage, stormwater, easement, and infrastructure matters).

While the legal process clarified development rights, Ottawa City Council retains responsibility for determining the broader public-interest outcome for these lands.

In early 2026, community concerns increased following preliminary activity by the developers on the site. Residents near the former golf course observed and documented:

- Use of heavy machinery, including bulldozers, backhoes, graders, dump trucks and trenching equipment;
- Scraping and removal of topsoil;
- Extensive trenching and grading;
- Installation of culverts;
- Construction of temporary or permanent roads;
- Alteration of site topography and drainage patterns; and
- Formation of large pools of standing water across the site.

This prompted enhanced City monitoring and oversight, including the City commissioning an independent engineering assessment of drainage and stormwater management across the site; the assessment is ongoing.

With 185 of the 192 conditions currently unsatisfied, the proposed development now presents increased technical and financial risk. These unresolved conditions create an opportunity for the City to evaluate whether long-term public ownership would better serve Ottawa's infrastructure, environmental, and fiscal interests.

At this stage, a City acquisition may be a more viable path forward than continuing through multi-year technical, engineering, and approval processes. It could also reduce the risk that the City ultimately inherits complex, costly long-term infrastructure liabilities.

Throughout, we have seen dedicated engagement by Kanata North Councillor Cathy Curry with City Council and City staff, which continues to advance this discussion toward a solution that considers community interests along with long-term environmental, infrastructure, and fiscal sustainability.

The community groups would like to continue working with the City to explore all viable solutions that would keep these lands as greenspace.

The Community Vision: A Multi-Use Urban Park

Consistent with the City's Official Plan, Greenspace Master Plan, asset management goals, and climate adaptation commitments, **community groups are requesting that the City explore all viable options to protect and enhance this greenspace.**

Over recent decades, many golf courses across Canada and the United States have been converted into urban parks and natural areas (see Appendices B and C). This proposal envisions transforming a challenging development site into a lasting public asset that delivers infrastructure, environmental, and recreational benefits for Ottawa residents.

Our Three Requests (Continued Collaboration)

Now is the time to take the next steps forward together with clear, practical actions to assess what may be possible. This is about more than process; it is about people and protecting a greenspace that has been woven into the daily lives, health, and well-being of the surrounding community for decades.

In support of a forward-looking, solutions-oriented approach that fully considers the impacts on surrounding neighbourhoods, we respectfully request that the City of Ottawa explore our three requests as potential pathways to protect this 173-acre Kanata Lakes Greenspace Lands as a multi-use urban greenspace.

Request 1 - Conduct a Feasibility Study

Conduct a Feasibility Study to assess land swap and acquisition options, including reviewing land valuation, long-term infrastructure lifecycle costs and risks, and potential funding pathways.

Acquisition of the site would align with several existing City policies and strategies including the **Official Plan**, which directs the City to protect, maintain and enhance greenspaces, the **Greenspace Master Plan**, which mandates Council to ensure public ownership of greenspaces through acquisition where appropriate and practical, and the **Real Property Acquisition Policy** which recognizes that the City may acquire real property to ensure the sustainability of its greenspace values.

The feasibility study should evaluate the following:

- **Acquisition models**, including full versus partial acquisition by the City, phased acquisition, public-private partnership, and joint ownership or conservation authority acquisition.
- **Land evaluation and appraisal** taking into account development constraints and unresolved OLT conditions, including stormwater and drainage issues, potential contamination and remediation needs, restrictive covenants, a lack of municipal easements, and uncertainty about the fulfillment of remaining OLT conditions.

- **Long-term lifecycle costs** (50 to 75 years) against municipal liabilities and the cost of development such as:

Risk Category	Potential Municipal Liabilities
Infrastructure	Costs for new or upgraded infrastructure (roads, sewers, water systems, and emergency services necessitated by 1,500 new homes). Cost of damage to existing infrastructure.
Systemic Performance & Climate Change	Costs of risk of stormwater system failure, flooding, and climate-related extreme weather impacts (Kizell watershed and Beaver Pond).
Physical Damage	Potential damage from blasting, vibration, and construction-induced flooding to roads, culverts, and surrounding homes.
Litigation & Claims	Potential legal exposure related to flooding, uncertain contamination or infrastructure failures
Ongoing Maintenance	Long-Term operating and maintenance costs for stormwater infrastructure, including the proposed four on-site water retention ponds.

- **Potential funding sources and partnership opportunities may include:**
 - City capital budget contribution
 - Land swaps involving development-ready land;
 - Public fundraising and private donations;
 - A Special Area Levy (*similar to the process of community consultation and approval that was used in the Stonebridge community*);
 - Corporate and philanthropic partnerships;
 - Public-private partnerships;
 - Provincial funding from programs relating to greenspace or conservation;
 - Federal funding from programs supporting urban green infrastructure (e.g., the federal government's new strategy to protect nature, which contemplates federal-municipal financial partnerships).

Request 2 - Establish a Collaborative Working Group

We propose that the City facilitate the formation of the **Kanata Lakes Greenspace (KLG) Working Group**.

This working group would provide a structured forum for collaboration among elected officials, City staff, technical experts and community representatives, including the KGPC, Kanata Beaverbrook Community Association (KBCA) and Kanata Lakes Community Association (KLCA). This group would support broader community engagement, informed exploration of acquisition options and funding mechanisms while respecting Council's formal decision-making authority.

Request 3: Continued Intergovernmental Collaboration

In parallel with the above requests, the Mayor and Council should continue discussions with all orders of government on formal mechanisms to permanently protect this greenspace, including recognition of the property's vital role as natural stormwater infrastructure. Options may include:

- Recognition of the land as a **new national urban park** within a federally protected area under the federal government's newly released strategy to protect nature ([A Force of Nature: Canada's Strategy to Protect Nature - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/nature/strategy/strategy.html)).
- A **Minister's Zoning Order (MZO)** from the Province of Ontario to protect the site from development and preserve its functions related to stormwater management, flood mitigation, and environmental resilience.
- **Land swap arrangements** involving other properties that are more suitable for development.
- **Provincial acquisition or expropriation of the lands**, including potential designation as a provincial park or other protected area.
- **Financial assistance** from federal, provincial, or other governmental partners to support acquisition, protection, and long-term stewardship of the lands.

Conclusion

The Kanata Lakes Greenspace Lands present City Council and the City of Ottawa with a long-term policy decision. While residential development has received conditional approval, substantial infrastructure, drainage, and environmental concerns remain unresolved.

Exploring acquisition and protection options now would allow the City to evaluate whether preserving these lands as public greenspace better serves Ottawa's long-term public, infrastructure, environmental, health and recreational, as well as fiscal interests.

This proposal does not request an immediate acquisition decision. Rather, it requests that the City of Ottawa undertake the analysis and collaborative planning necessary to ensure informed decision-making at the appropriate time.

We look forward to working alongside the City of Ottawa on the next steps.

APPENDIX A

Reasons for the City to explore the acquisition of the Kanata Lakes Greenspace Lands

1. **PROTECT VITAL NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE:** A 173-acre permeable surface that absorbs and attenuates stormwater; mitigates flooding and drainage risks for the community, for the Kizell drain/watershed, and for downstream landowners; and supports climate resilience and adaptation (e.g., heat reduction and tree canopy essential for urban cooling; buffering between dense urban areas).
2. **COMMUNITY IMPACTS NOT MITIGATED:** The permeable greenspace is a highly effective natural infrastructure, and development on these lands could increase flood risk to surrounding homes and communities.
3. **PUBLIC HEALTH & WELLBEING:** For decades, the site has functioned as a park and “urban lung,” supporting the physical health and well-being of those in Kanata North. To grow and nurture the health and well-being of residents by providing an opportunity to enjoy nature, lowering stress, enhancing mental health, promoting physical activity and fitness, and enabling social interaction and recreation.
4. **SUPPORT ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS:** This greenspace makes the Kanata North community a desirable place to live, work and do business. This supports the recruitment of top global talent for the nearby Kanata North Tech Park, helping to attract investment and stimulate economic activity in Kanata North.
5. **ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS:** This greenspace provides a number of environmental benefits: protecting groundwater, supporting biodiversity and climate adaptation, providing wildlife habitat and enabling wildlife movement. The City can retain the environmental benefits and limit the environmental risks by keeping the site as greenspace.

APPENDIX B

Examples of golf courses converted into parks - in Canada

Name of Golf Course (Park Name)	Location	Approx. Size	Year of Conversion
Windfields Golf Course (Windfields Park)	North York (Toronto), ON	83 acres	1968
Prospect Lake Golf Course (Prospect Lake Nature Sanctuary)	Saanich (Greater Victoria), BC	78-80 acres	2017
Barrie Golf Club (Sunnidale Park)	Barrie, ON	48-50 acres	1969
Maple Ridge Golf Course (Hammond Community Park)	Maple Ridge, BC	35-40 acres	2025
Grand Highland Golf Course (Grand Highland Park)	Mississauga, ON	27-28 acres	2021

APPENDIX C

Examples of golf courses converted into parks - in the U.S.

Name of Golf Course (Park Name)	Location	Approx. Size	Year of Conversion
Orchard Hills Golf Course (Orchard Hills Park)	Geauga County (Cleveland), Ohio	237 acres	2018
Deer Run Golf Course (Deer Run Community Park)	Seminole County, Florida	190 acres	2024
Westwood Country Club (Willowdale Park)	Amherst (Erie County), New York	171 acres	2025
San Geronimo Golf Course (San Geronimo Park)	Marin County, California	157 acres	2022
Park Hill Golf Course (Park Hill Park)	Denver, Colorado	155 acres	2025
Highlands Golf Course (Highlands Urban Natural Area)	Grand Rapids, Michigan	121 acres	2017
Forest Beach Golf Course (Forest Beach Migratory Preserve)	Ozaukee County, Wisconsin	116 acres	2017
River Ridge Golf Course (Willow Bend Park)	Eugene, Oregon	25 acres	2025