

City of Burlington – Draft Official Plan

Deputation by Mark Bales, Carriage Gate Homes to Planning & Development Committee on September 5th, 2017

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you very much for providing me with this opportunity to speak with you regarding the new Draft Official Plan.

As you are aware, Carriage Gate is an active member in the local development community with projects under construction, under review and in the development stages. We intend to be here for a long time. Burlington is one of the best cities in Canada and we are very pleased to be part of the efforts to plan its future. We love the City and want to contribute in a positive way to the City's future and we are thankful to have opportunities like this to participate. We are doing our best to contribute in a positive manner to many of the concurrent planning initiatives including the Official Plan Review process. If making the City a better place was not important to us, we would not be here today.

The City of Burlington is at a cross-road. As you have heard from HHHBA, greenfield development opportunities in the City are no longer available and the City must now concentrate on redevelopment and intensification within the Built-Up area to accommodate its required growth. The City's Strategic Plan that was adopted unanimously by City Council recognizes this and acknowledges that new growth is to be directed to a series of nodes (especially the Downtown) and along important transportation corridors within the Built-Up area.

The new Draft Official Plan is in many respects a characteristic urban structure plan with growth being focused to a series of nodes that are knit together by connecting corridors. The success of the new Official Plan will be contingent upon the ability of the Urban Growth Centre, the other mobility hubs and transportation corridors to accommodate assigned amounts of growth by 2031. We agree with this focus yet are concerned that the Draft New Official Plan fails to propose effective growth management strategies and the policy framework necessary to bring the Plan to life.

The new Draft Official Plan was released on March 24th of this year. We have submitted comments both verbally in writing since April of this year.

Senior staff confirmed that we would receive responses yet to-date we have not received a response. We are encouraged today to hear that Planning staff will be providing responses to us.

I will not regurgitate all of our comments today as you can see many of them in the appendices to the Planning Report. However, we have significant concerns to bring to your attention at this time:

The Plan is incomplete. The Plan MUST to do more than simply paint a pretty picture of what the City might generally like to achieve. Municipalities are required to encourage and facilitate residential intensification.

The New Draft Official Plan fails to assign population and employment distribution targets to each of the Mobility Hubs and the Downtown Urban Growth Centre in particular. No one can figure out how much of what is intended to go where. Even if we knew, the guts in the Plan to make it happen are missing.

Without assigned population and employment targets for each of the mobility hubs and the corridors, it is impossible to determine whether or not the

underlying principles and policies of the Plan are appropriate or if success can be reasonably achieved.

We recognize that redevelopment and intensification projects within existing urban areas can be some of the most challenging that a city will experience. This is precisely the reason that new planning policies must focus on matters of “fit” and not sameness. The current Draft Official Plan fails in this regard.

To be successful, the new Official Plan must not only provide clear policy directions for new development BUT must also foster an environment that will bring it to life.

Due to the many information gaps within the document, its incompleteness and my earlier comments, we find ourselves with little option but to indicate that it is premature for us to support for the Plan in its current form.

To help make my presentation as brief as I can, we would like to use the Downtown as an example to illustrate our concerns:

The Downtown is recognized as the main area where intensification and redevelopment is to occur and **the Province of Ontario requires it**. This principle has been clearly endorsed by this Council through its unanimous approval of the City's Strategic Plan which formed the basis for the "Grow Bold" movement. This is why we find it surprising that Draft Official Plan fails to indicate how much growth is to be assigned to the Downtown and what form this will take.

This is a fundamental requirement that is being ignored. Every municipality, not just Burlington, has a responsibility to accept and accommodate its fair share of population and employment growth in accordance with a series of smart growth principles.

Let me explain as this is perhaps the most significant issue that the new Official Plan must address.

There is a common misperception in our City that very little redevelopment and intensification is required in the Downtown to enable the City to reach **minimum** Provincial growth targets and accommodate its **fair share**.

Some people continue to suggest that that the existing planning framework for the Urban Growth Centre is capable of promoting and accommodating Provincial growth requirements – a minimum population and employment density of 200 people and jobs per hectare by 2031.

We do not believe that the suggestion that “we are 75% of the way there” has ever been tested in a public forum, however, it is safe to say that a number of you may be of the impression that the amount of growth required within the Urban Growth Centre is inconsequential.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

As noted at a recent Ontario Municipal Board hearing, City Planning staff confirmed that the City is 66 percent of the way towards meeting its required minimum target for 2031. Staff also confirmed that the existing planning policies for the Downtown will not enable the City to reach its required minimum population and employment targets by 2031.

Regardless, incorrect messaging continues and the City’s additional growth requirements have yet to be presented to Council and the public.

You may ask why this is so important. It is important because not only are appropriate planning policies required for the Downtown, but these policies may impact other Official Plan policies and those being developed for other mobility hubs, nodes and corridors – in other words, the policy framework being prepared for the entire Plan may be flawed.

To assist us to gain a better understanding of the future growth requirements, we retained Altus Group to prepare and submit a detailed analysis of Provincial and Regional growth requirements and the economic feasibility of redevelopment and intensification in both the Built-Up area and the Urban Growth Centre (“the Downtown”).

The results of the Altus analysis are quite an eye opener.

Altus has concluded that within the Built-Up area, **45** new tall buildings are required between now and 2031 with **23** of those to be located within the Urban Growth Centre/the Downtown. To put this into perspective, the residential housing supply in the Downtown is required to expand by over 40% between now and 2031. In addition, we are challenged to find any

locations in the Urban Growth Centre that are currently designated and zoned to reasonably accommodate this scale of redevelopment.

We have provided the Altus report to the City Planning Department and hope that it will be given serious consideration as the new Official Plan and the Downtown Mobility Hub secondary plan are prepared.

It is clear that bold, new policy directions are required as the existing Official Plan and its Precinct Planning Framework have failed. The current draft of the Official Plan fails to address these fundamental planning issues.

We hope that you will consider our comments as we look forward to continuing to work with City Planning staff, this Committee and City Council in efforts to find solutions that will help to make us all proud to be in one of Canada's greatest cities.