

Good evening everyone.

Thanks for the opportunity to speak tonight about the downtown precinct plan.

A little background. My wife and I bought our first and only home here in beautiful Burlington in 1989. When we bought our house on Caroline just west of Brant Street the downtown was a wasteland. You could literally shoot a cannon off on a Saturday night down Brant Street and not hit a soul. My how things have changed and evolved over the subsequent years. Often the improvements occurred in an organic way rather than a programmed, directive and unbelievably rushed manner as we now witness.

The community is only just now becoming aware of the transformative change this plan, in its current draft format, will impose upon Burlington residents. That said, I also feel for you folks as you have had such a short amount of time to absorb the mountain of materials related to this plan. Why rush such a fundamental change to the look and feel of our downtown. Remember once the plan is approved there are no do overs – city council with the assistance of planning staff must get it right the first time. Frankly much of the community has a perception that the planning staff is running the show and council not so much. This perception must change with deliberate transparent action from council that clearly shows you have Burlington residents best interests at heart.

The following is a laundry list of specific concerns I have with the plan:

This plan states that we don't have specific details surrounding heritage protection policies. That will occur later. Really! Heritage is currently the defining feature of downtown Burlington. Councillor Marianne Meed Ward placed a video on FB that shows so many vulnerable heritage worthy building that will be decimated by rampant condo development. Watch the video – it is disturbing on so many levels.

Intensification in of itself is not the problem – it is where it is most intensively planned that is the mistake in this current plan. Spread the intensification around specifically to the real mobility hubs in Burlington at the GO stations, not the made up one at our downtown bus station. More on that later.

Hyper intensification downtown will only add to downtown congestion. Hyper downtown intensification with huge condos will create a constant, years long construction site downtown that will impair seriously downtown business and residents. Never ending noise and congestion – just what downtown Burlington needs. Take a moment to close your eyes and consider what Brant Street and James Street will look like with twin towers being constructed at that corner simultaneously. Burlington's new tag line becomes – the constant unrelenting downtown build! Not a vision that says welcome to visitors and residents alike. Why destroy a downtown to meet intensification targets.

About those targets... they are just that. The targets are guidelines from the Provincial government. Provincial governments come and go. And with a change of government, policy directives change and evolve. Whose to say what the future policy around intensification will be? Interestingly the provinces minimum density target of 200 people and jobs combined per hectare by 2031 is identified in the Provinces Growth plan. By that definition and with the well documented growth of home businesses in the downtown and throughout Burlingtons, those people should get counted twice in my opinion. I have four neighbours within 100 yards that work from home. As well please note the target year above - 2031 which is 14 years from now – as noted an eternity in senior level government policy evolvment let alone which party is in power. Additionally what are the real consequences of not meeting these cookie cutter intensification goals? No one can remotely predict future policy priorities. Indeed be bold Burlington councillors and create a made in Burlington, constituent focussed plan to positively and responsibly manage growth. Not a let's build big and tall towers downtown to toddy to senior levels of government.

From my perspective I see limited buy in by the community for this plan. However the recent 23 story approval has galvanized the community.

In fact, observers from other jurisdictions I know or have read say in a nutshell "What is Burlington thinking? That historic downtown is a jewel."

I have read the report and note that community consultation has taken place. Problem is the community consulting has been very limited in scope and most importantly had a marginal number of Burlington residents actually participate. It strikes me that the community is the missing element in the research that supports this plan detail and direction. Where is the documented ground swell of community support for this plan?

It appears to me that the consultations that have been done were more to check of boxes on a compliance flowchart rather than real active community engagement.

The other irony with the consultation document PB-81-17 is that so many of the comments of those who did provide feedback is ignored.

For instance, feedback included statements such as:

- 1) Need to ensure enough parking is provided in new buildings. As most towers will provide 1 car/unit where will 2 car families park the second vehicle, where will their visitors park, where will business, employees customers etc park in this concrete jungle that downtown Burlington will become based on this planning document?
- 2) Right now these Condos will be solely aimed at attracting rich retirees. Price points of these proposed condos are prohibitive for most people. This is probably one of the most astute viewpoints on the housing inequality the current downtown plan will support and indeed condone. I call it Gentrification by Intensification. The social impacts of building so many high end buildings in such a confined area will further stratify our community and be the legacy the current council will leave unless other avenues are more fully explored.
- 3) Developments should be in keeping with the charm and character of Burlington's current downtown area. I don't foresee that being the case in the future under this plan.
- 4) There appears to be no mixed housing, affordable housing or disabled housing... Historic downtown Burlington is a small area and it should be preserved to offer beauty near the lake ...
- 5) No reference to parking, no reference to traffic congestion, no reference to the impact that additional people will have on existing infrastructure.
- 6) Lastly, Carpeting the area with 17 to 23 storey buildings will not improve it...pretty simple powerful straight forward observation.

So let's see how the planning department incorporates some of this feedback in report # PB-81-17.

- 1) Protect the character and experience of Brant Street – I do not see that reflected in the recommendations in this report.
- 2) Protect low density residential areas through transitions between taller buildings and existing homes – what does that even mean? Is it that semi detached units will be allowed in the Emerald and St Luke's precinct? So we go from the infill invasion of the monster homes that often have no design parallels to existing homes to monster semi-detached units. You should ask yourselves and the planning department why this is a righteous policy now. Because it is absolutely baffling to the dozens of current residents I've spoken to.

The report goes on to describe the objectives of the Downtown Mobility Hub Draft Precinct Plan Objectives with 11 bullet points – so much for brevity. Within this multitude of objectives I wanted to highlight 3 of them.

- 1) Allowing for height and density permissions that will support and enhance the city-wide, regional and Provincial significance of the Downtown Mobility Hub and its role as a major transit centre. This is where the downtown intensification plan is predicated on such absurd data. To state that our current bus station is a “major transit centre” jumps the shark in so many ways. The station is the size of a double garage. It is a small municipal bus station...nothing more and nothing less. There is no remote comparison to the 3 dynamic GO stations in Burlington. To deem the downtown bus station location as a transit hub because someone from Queens Park or Metrolinx said so, is bizarre to say the least. I feel this false designation of the downtown bus station as a Mobility hub has been done in order to validate and justify poor public policy - the extreme over intensification plans for downtown. That is just wrong! Just because you say something or include it in a report does not make it true...unless of course you are Donald Trump! Assumptions permeate this report without credible data to support recommendations.
- 2) Another bullet point states, “Where possible, (weasel words that you can drive a truck through) establishing maximum buildings heights which are consistent with existing development precedent. It seems like existing building heights have instead been tossed aside based

on this plan. Seems like the truck has indeed been driven through. The positive expectation though is that council can turn the truck around and respect existing development precedent. Although if the recent decision on the building by City Hall is indicative of councils thinking, the truck might well drive up and down Brant Street with impunity! Make no mistake, height exceptions or exemptions become precedent setting.

- 3) A final bullet point in the report I want to flag for you to do a smell check on relates to future development generated traffic and congestion downtown.

Mitigating future traffic congestion associated with growth through a variety of measures, including development specific transportation demand management measures, enhanced pedestrian and cycling amenities and networks and strategic concentrations of height and density within walking distance of major transit stations... Wow! How does most all of this bureaucratic double talk remotely address traffic congestion woes now and in the future.

If "specific transportation demand management measures" exist why aren't they implemented now. Enhanced pedestrian and cycling amenities will help... not. Witness the New Street diet fiasco! And then the kicker, concentrations of height and density within walking distance of major transit stations. The Burlington bus station is not remotely a major transit station. Since a vast majority of the massive condos are planned south of Caroline Street, the majority of new downtown condo residents will drive to the GO station or drive directly to their workplace. Words matter and the above objective bullet point is filled with words that when analyzed do not in my estimation pass a reality test. They are just wishful words.

The report goes on to state the following with regards to changes in the Urban Growth Centre Boundary.

- 1) The removal of Spencer Smith park as if that is some kind of concession... really!
- 2) The removal and inclusion of various properties at the eastern edge of the boundary – your question should be why is this now so important?

- 3) The inclusion of parcels on Ontario Street west of Hager and in the area of Locust and Ontario – your question here again should be why? What is the real driving force for this recommended change that will now permit and encourage semi detached building in old historical sections of downtown changing the character forever

The following are change recommendations you must consider:

Slow this process down...the worst planning decisions are made in haste! Ask yourselves, are we trying to solve a problem that does not really exist to the level depicted in the report or trying to solve it the wrong way. Often we don't know what we don't know – in other words, are there less drastic disruptive ways to get where you want to, from a city planning perspective.

Keep height limitations in core precinct at 4 to 8 stories. Work with Halton Region to change the urban growth boundary to exclude the established neighbourhoods in the St Luke's and Emerald precinct.

If you actually feel massive towers are required to meet density goals consider building higher buildings particularly by the existing GO station corridors and areas like Harvester Rd, North Brant, Appleby North, Upper Middle and along Dundas St below the 407 to name a few alternatives. In other words, there is no valid reason or need to over-intensify the core.

I must add that the mapping on schedule "B" of the Urban Growth Centre Boundary and Schedule "D" is enough to turn most citizens off getting engaged. It takes a magnifying glass and a PHD to process all the moving parts and amendments to existing planning documents that the maps illustrate. Not to mention the almost 2,000 pages of supporting documentation! It is overwhelming to say the least!

Please be very aware of the unintended consequences of accepting the current version of this flawed plan. The second and third level affects of this plan will forever change the vibe and functionality of the city core for the worse. Don't base your decisions on assumptions based on flawed or incomplete data that the planning department has presented as fact. We live in Burlington not on the shores of denial.

Building the right way in Burlington over the next decade should be viewed as a privilege not a right.

I implore city council to protect our collective shared heritage!

If you do this effectively you will be on the right side of Burlington's history!

Last point. I drove into Toronto along the Gardiner for the first time in several years last Sunday. Much to my shock you basically can't see the Rogers Centre anymore when driving east. One condo exists about 3 feet from the Gardiner. The concrete canyon that has been built there resembles some scary dystopian future city. Be very vigilant here in Burlington that a slippery slope is not created that sets the precedent for a smaller yet similar ugly building outcome in our special city.

I have a copy of my delegation that I will provide to staff who can share it with you folks for your reference.

Thanks so much for listening to my observations and recommendations!