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502-02-68  
Delegation correspondence

**Delegation by Gary Scobie to Planning & Development Committee, City of Burlington**

**Re: Proposed Downtown Intensity Plans**

**Date: January 23, 2018**

I live in Ward 3, near Upper Middle Road and Guelph Line. I care about our downtown and how it is redeveloped, as many others do who live in Wards other than the downtown Ward 2.

I am here tonight to further address the Downtown Mobility Hub/Urban Growth Centre Plans that I spoke to on November 30th here at City Hall. I also wrote an article on Mobility Hubs that was published in the Gazette and sent to you on December 19<sup>th</sup>.

With further research, many assumptions that I made earlier have proven to be true. I would like to thank Councillor Taylor, his Assistant Sheri Wainman, City Clerk Department staff Twyla Nicholson and Ginette Wright, and Andrea Smith and other staff of the City Planning Department for their aid in this research.

I'll begin with a tale of two cities. The Provincial Places to Grow Act of 2005 was the first warning to municipalities that intensification was coming. Both Burlington and Oakville were assigned Urban Growth Centre designations to their downtowns.

According to information I received from the current manager of long term planning in Oakville, the Town immediately responded to the Province that they instead wanted their Mid-Town area around the Trafalgar GO Station to be their future Urban Growth Centre, not their downtown, and the Province acceded to their request. By the time that the Provincial Growth Plan was passed in June of 2006, Oakville had just one Urban Growth Centre designated – the Oakville Mid-Town Growth Centre, around its Trafalgar Road GO Station. There would be no designation of an Urban Growth Centre or Anchor Mobility Hub in their downtown in any plans going forward. That left them free to decide the intensification planning for their downtown without provincial interference and that right still remains today in 2018. Their one Urban Growth Centre/Mobility Hub will be highly intensified in the future, holding tens of thousands of people and jobs, meeting provincial mandates. They themselves have also identified the Bronte GO Station as a Mobility Hub, and will intensify around its environs.

So Oakville took the opportunity in 2005 to present a case to the Province that they could meet the density mandates elsewhere without involving their downtown and the Province agreed.

What happened in Burlington? As best as I can discover, Burlington acceded to the Province and agreed to densify the

downtown as an Urban Growth Centre. No negotiations with the Province took place to instead have the Brant/Fairview GO Station designated as our growth centre. I have speculated with others that this decision may have been prompted by concerns over our downtown's future in 2005. Brant Street was seen as lacking the vibrancy it once had and many were looking for a possible solution to revive it. I suspect that the Province's suggestion for more growth and density was welcomed as that possible solution, in the absence of any better ideas. More people would bring more vibrancy, more business, more attraction and more modernness. Had Burlington Council made a case for the Burlington GO Station to become our one Urban Growth Centre instead of the downtown at the time, I believe they probably could have prevailed with the Province as Oakville did, but I can find no evidence that this was ever considered or tried.

So Burlington's current Official Plan, still in force today with amendments, passed in October 2006 and showed our single Urban Growth Centre in the downtown. So did the 2009 Halton Region Official Plan that was passed in December 2009 that also showed Oakville's single Urban Growth Centre at their Trafalgar GO Station.

Burlington did incorporate density for the downtown in its 2006 Official Plan, as mandated by the Province. The zoning in our current plan will get us to Provincial targets by 2031 – 200

people/jobs per hectare and growing our total population from the current 183,000 to the 193,000 target. This will easily be reached by the future intensification around the three GO Stations that will have partially completed in the next 13 years. Our population goal will likely be surpassed in that period. So it is evident to me that the major intensification that the Planning Department has suggested in its downtown plans is not needed.

I feel that our planning direction has gone a little rogue, that our Grow Bold vision has been translated as simply Grow Up. For planners and developers that means up in height. For citizens it seems to mean we're sometimes told to grow up and get with the program.

I think somewhere downtown there just might be a poster hanging on a wall showing a skyscraper and stating "Height, the final frontier. Our mission: To boldly grow where Burlington has never grown before". The Planning Department is going far above and beyond what citizens want, what the Province desires, what our transportation and transit systems can handle and what you our Councillors are really up for, now that you have seen and realized, precinct by precinct in the December 1<sup>st</sup> meeting, that the downtown could become a Metropolis of high rises, many over 17 storeys in height. You are also feeling the heat from constituents and citizens groups like ECoB, Engaged Citizens of Burlington

who are against runaway intensification of the downtown.

With the November 1<sup>st</sup> acceptance by Council of a 23 storey podium based condo across from City Hall, far above the 12 storey zoned and even above the 17 storey advised by the Planning Department, but not yet passed, a dangerous line has been crossed for many citizens.

Councillors, you have led us to a precipice 23 storeys high. A precipice many are fearful of. You have positioned a 23 storey domino that will encourage other dominos to raise themselves ever higher downtown and change the look and feel of our downtown forever, and not in a good way. It is time for some sober, second thought. It is time to pull away from this precipice. You can still do so by not fully completing the 421 Brant Street acceptance.

You can still do so by contacting the Province and requesting, with evidence, that our downtown, like Oakville's, is not needed as a high density locale to meet our City mandates and that you request that the designations be removed. You can pass Councillor Meed Ward's amendments.

You don't have to scrap all of this downtown planning; just put it on the shelf as a cautionary tale. You don't have to re-plan either. The plans for a kinder, gentler intensification of the downtown are already baked into our current Official Plan.

You only have to uphold them, along with a few amendments to be added as suggested by the Councillor. This is what I am asking of you; and some of what I think ECoB may ask of you.

I believe you all know in your hearts and minds that we are going too far, too fast in the downtown and that so much of it is unnecessary. Please pull back from the precipice we are at and halt this process until you talk to the Province, plan out the actual necessary buildouts at the GO stations, decide through transportation and transit plans how well and if we will be able to handle all of this growth in our beautiful City. We don't want to look back with regret many years from now and realize that we went ahead and gave our downtown a huge makeover without first having it all figured out.

Thank you.