

Skinner Delegation to Jan 23rd to PDC on Agenda Items 5.1 & 5.2

Good evening: My name is Jeremy Skinner

I wish to thank Councillor Marianne Meed Ward for her work in developing her memorandum complete with at least 8 motions which can be found in the agenda package associated with agenda item 5.2. These motions appear to be based on land use designations found in Schedule D entitled "Land Use – Downtown Urban Core" which can be found in the proposed New Official Plan (Nov. ed). A copy can be found on Pg.28 in my presentation deck.

I also wish to thank the City Planning & Development for providing us with the "Supplementary information and directions regarding the proposed downtown mobility hub precinct plan and proposed Official Plan" which is included as part of today's agenda package item 5.1. I believe that this information is in response to a request made by committee on Nov 30, 2017.

Appendix G contained within depicts Primary Redevelopment Site (on a Block by Block) with proposed building heights for the downtown urban growth centre. This chart is an extraordinary piece of work and serves as an illustration as to what could be built in terms of maximum building heights based upon the policies contained in the revised New Official Plan. An unmarked copy of this Appendix and a marked-up copy indicating my attempts to identify those building heights which are unable to comply in providing appropriate transitions to bordering residential neighbourhoods can be found on Pg. 24 of my presentation deck. I was unable to identify any building height transition violations to the front or rear of bordering residential neighbourhood properties.

My opinions tonight are based on successfully answering three questions:

1. How does the proposed development impact bordering residential neighbourhood?
2. How does the proposed development contribute to the community contained within the building and surrounding the proposed building site.
3. How are the Investments made to support the downtown die. urban growth centre protected?

On 30 of November, my delegation to the PDC sought three things:

1. The need to adoption of guidelines which enable children in vertical communities. I did so because children are a good indicator as to the health and vitality of a community. This included suggestions as to establishing a minimum percentage of residential buildings be allocated with 2 and 3 bedroom units where each bedroom is to be at least 11 metres square excluding the closet. We must not forget that we lost two Secondary Schools last year in Pearson & Bateman and that we have two Secondary Schools in Burlington Central & Aldershot which are hosting grades 7 & 8 in order that they may remain viable. We need to attract families with children to Burlington and they need to reside in healthy communities.
2. The need to adopt guidelines governing mid-rise building applications which will comprise the bulk of the intensification efforts throughout our city including; our 50+ plazas; our intensification corridors on Plains Rd & Fairview St, our mobility hubs and our two urban growth centres located in the downtown and uptown at Appleby & Upper-Middle Road.

3. The need to promote residential neighbourhood intensification such as townhouses facing major streets which are well served by transit because townhouses are the fastest means of developing dwellings to accommodate families with kids.

Slide 1 Gaps in public understanding:

1. What is the value proposition of approving the Proposed New Official Plan now?
2. How does the development process work in terms of Official Plan policies, Zoning By-laws, amendments to both and the use of section 37 to obtain community benefits over and above the normal development fees.
3. What are the policy sources which drive the need for Mobility Hubs?
4. Why does our downtown core need to be intensified?

I ask that members of this committee consider each of these questions when assessing my delegation and other delegations heard or yet to be heard today.

I believe that we entrust our City Staff and elected officials with building and servicing of our communities. This implies that our elected officials serve multiple roles, not just that of overseeing Planning and Development. What about the budget, the strategic plans, economic development and the list goes on and on. They deserve our support in order that they may fulfill their roles.

I believe that the fundamental issue before us tonight is whether to support the need to re-establish a walkable urban community in our downtown urban growth centre or not. While the transit, transportation and cycling plans have yet to be revealed, significant changes in each should not be anticipated in the same scale as what is being proposed regarding buildings in the proposed new Official Plan. The downtown core needs to be appropriately configured with transit links to significant destinations outside the downtown core. Retail and Commercial will need to transform in order to best satisfy the daily and frequent needs of those who currently and who desire to live and work in this community as well as those who are attracted to share this community's well being from the rest of Burlington or beyond. A suitable critical mass for sustaining such a downtown urban core community has yet to be achieved, and thus requiring continued Municipal and Development Community investments.

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Slide 4 Downtown Urban Core – Investments already made

City Council has made significant investments in terms of developing entertainment and recreation facilities. All of which helps to establish the downtown core as a City-wide and Region-wide destination. This chart was presented at a downtown visioning workshop hosted by City Staff on the 20th of April 2017. The purple areas depict key land marks, including Burlington Art Gallery and Burlington Centre for the Performing Arts. However, many of these landmarks lack complementary entertainment facilities, most notable in the form of restaurants, pubs and bistros, as well as perhaps a combined movie and games facility orientated to the younger amongst us. However, we need to ensure that new developments are suitably configured with exhaust vents to support the cooking of food required by patrons. The cost to retrofit after the building has been built is beyond the means of most restaurateurs to support, especially if the site is not owned by restaurateur.

Looking into the future, we could consider the erection of a fresh food market perhaps modelled after Ottawa's Byfield Market. The areas in orange indicate existing and mid-rise and tall towers. The circles indicate Heritage properties. Note the lack of areas shaded in green which designate parks. Note that there are no more roads. If anything, some roads may need to be repurposed into parks. Parking could be enhanced through the erection of a second car park tower somewhere east of Brandt near City Hall.

I have provided my suggestions as to how to come up with an informed decision for each of Councillor Marianne Meed Ward's motions in the charts that remain.

I believe Motions 1, 2a, 3 may have merit dependent upon Councillor review of a completed SWOT (Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities & Threats) analysis by appropriate City staff. Motion 4c may have merit only if not appropriately covered in proposed New OP policies. I do not support any of the other motions,

Thank you for your attention to my delegation and for your efforts to govern our great city.

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Slide 7 Motion: 1 – Defer approval of Official Plan till after the 2018 Municipal Election

This motion may have merit provided that we understand the Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats or SWOT analysis associated with this motion. If the risks can be appropriately managed and the rewards are not significantly impacted by delaying, then we should do so to permit the proposed New Official Plan to be enhanced.

Slide 8 Motion: 2 – I believe that we need to split this motion into two parts:

Direct staff to discuss with the Region and the Province the possibility of

2a) removing the mobility hub classification for the downtown, and

2b) shifting the Urban Growth Centre from downtown to the Burlington GO station.

Motion: 2a Removing the mobility hub resolution may have merit if it is feasible to do and we understand the SWOT analysis of this motion. If the opportunities and benefits of keeping this mobility hub are deemed insignificant then I believe that we should approve the removal of it. This designation may be a relic of the past.

Motion 2b Moving the Urban Growth Centre is unlikely to have merit if we understand the outcome of a SWOT analysis. The implications on prior investments made may result in the death of the downtown core.

Slide 9 – Downtown Urban Growth Centre

The downtown urban growth centre has an assigned density of 200 residents/jobs per acre. However, we should consider what the impact to the rest of the downtown urban growth centre will be when no meaningful intensification is anticipated in the Bates, Emerald and St. Luke's precincts.

While we are here, we should also understand what the target density for the Uptown Urban Growth Centre is located at Appleby Line and Upper-Middle Road.

Slide 10 – Downtown Mobility Hub

The downtown mobility hub has an overall density target of three hundred (300) residents and jobs combined per hectare.

First, we need to do a little conversion work as the downtown urban growth centre density target is measured in people to acres and the Downtown Mobility Hub density target is measured in people to hectares. The conversion is 1 acre equals about 0.405 hectares. Looking the other way one hectare contains about 2.47 acres. So the target of 300 residents/jobs per hectare equates to about 121 residents/jobs per acre and as such is not as large as one might think.

Slide 11 Motion: 3 – Restoring Downtown Urban Growth Centre boundaries so as to exclude Bates, Emerald & St. Luke precincts

This motion is likely to have merit based upon the completion of a SWOT analysis, because Bates, Emerald and St Luke's Precincts are to remain residential neighbourhoods. As such they are not compatible with the downtown urban growth centre. The association of these precincts with the downtown urban growth centre may be relics of the past. It would be interesting to know whether the zoning by laws of these properties have already been designated as mixed-use or not.

Slide 12 Motion: 4 is comprised of three related sub-motions

4a) Retain the current height restriction of 4 storeys (with permission to go to 8 storeys with community benefits) for Downtown Core Precinct.

4b) Include a range of heights in the Precinct to help secure community benefits during development.

4c) Include policies to allow additional density in developments that preserve heritage buildings, as a factor of square footage preserved.

When should Section-37 eligible funding be sought? When should a height designation be considered absolute? I do not believe that 4a or 4b have merit because no residential neighbourhoods are impacted and because Burlington needs to intensify the core in a cost efficient manner to become a walkable urban community, lest it die.

What are the implications for heritage buildings? If they are not appropriately protected, then perhaps 4c should be approved. However, we should consider how much of the heritage building should be kept on a case by case basis. It is one thing to maintain and integrate a heritage building front face as part of the new development-built form and yet another thing to maintain the whole building. I am not aware of any historic theatres or Niagara-on-the-Lake like shops which are worthy of retaining. However, you must excuse me if one were found to exist because I am relatively new to Burlington.

Slide 13 Motion: 5 is comprised of two sub-motions

5a) Height restriction of 3 storeys along Brandt St. with permission to go to 11 storeys along John St. frontage only with the provision of community benefits.

5b) Remove special policy area at the South-East corner of Brandt/James

I fail to see the merits in approving Motion 5 because no residential neighbourhood properties are negatively impacted and the downtown core needs to intensify in a cost-effective manner to support a walkable urban community in a cost-effective fashion.

Slide 14 Motion 6 is comprised of two sub-motions

6a. Add the north west corner of Burlington Avenue and Lakeshore Road to the special planning area to match the north east corner.

6b. Reduce height to 3 storeys.

This situation is more difficult because we are dealing with residential properties. However, we face similar challenges in residential properties along the intensification corridors associated with Plains Rd and Fairview St. In such cases the property owner should be able to reap the benefit from a change of the Zoning By-law governing the site permitting the redevelopment of their land with a mid-rise building at the time of their choosing.

Appendix G illustrates a mid-rise building which steps down to Burlington Ave and includes green space at the corner. This design sensitivity needs to be captured as part of the proposed mid-rise guidelines and applied to other intensification corridors. See pages 21-23 in my chart deck.

Slide 15 Motion 7 Reduce the cannery district at the north east corner of Lakeshore Road and Brant Street to 15 storeys.

I fail to see the merits in approving Motion 7 because the site is surrounded by taller buildings.

Slide 16 Motion: 8 (Upper Brandt Precinct 25 storeys & Special Policy Area) comprised of two sub motions

8a) Remove East Side of Brandt from Blairholm to Prospect

8b) Remove West Side of Brandt from Blairholm to Olga

I fail to see the merit in approving this motion because Appendix G indicates that appropriate transitions to residential neighbourhoods have already been accommodated. A public workshop placed greater height away from South of City Hall and placed it North of City Hall in this area. See pages 25 & 26 of the presentation deck.

Slide 5 GAP in Public Understanding as to the Planning Process

I ask the City Planning & Development to consider documenting the relationship between of the Official Plan, the Zoning- By-laws and how amendments can be made to each. It is important for all to realize that there must be means to amendment each. I believe that all parties would benefit if more certainty and fewer surprises associated development applications. Paramount to me relates to the erection of mid-rise and tall tower buildings near residential neighbourhoods going forward. I thank the Planning and Development staff for updating the proposed New Official Plan with transition guidelines. However, more work needs to be done in terms of developing a set of Mid-Rise guidelines so that the height of such buildings are not higher than the street is wide and that the rear face of such buildings are appropriately terraced under an imaginary 45 degree angular plane from the property line of a bordering residential neighbourhood dwelling. In those cases, where mid-rise and tall buildings already loom over residential properties, perhaps these property owners could be compensated by having the site By-law changed to the next order of height. There are simply too many intensification nodes scattered around the city which are bordered by residential neighbourhoods which need to be governed by appropriate mid-rise building guidelines.