

Please delay the vote on the Proposed Official Plan until After the Municipal Election. More time is Needed

Good Afternoon

I would like to ask that the vote on the proposed Official Plan be postponed until after the Municipal election.

My reasons include:

- concerns about traffic congestion all over Burlington
- the fact that we can easily meet our intensification targets without over intensifying
- waterfront over development
- the complete change in the character of downtown by allowing the proliferation of high rise buildings

Most of all, I feel the city's communications about the proposed Official Plan have been poor.

I know that many people in other wards have issues with the proposed plan. I recognize that downtown belongs to the whole city, but it is my neighbourhood and I have many questions to which I still don't have answers.

I can understand creating a new high rise community around a Go Station where most of the available land near it is industrial, commercial, or undeveloped.

But imposing a whole group of tall structures on a populated city core, necessitating the demolition of many iconic older buildings and small shops just doesn't make sense to me.

And absolutely nobody I know believes downtown is an "Anchor Mobility Hub" no matter how much planners and counsellors try to convince them. It's a bus stop.

I am convinced that the citizens of Burlington are just now beginning to find out what the proposed Official Plan involves, and I have not yet met anyone who is happy with it. My friends and I still meet many citizens who have no idea about the tall building proposals.

Intensification is one thing, but where is the Vision? The one in the proposal certainly doesn't match that of the people I know. Page 9 of PB-11-18 might look good on paper but we just don't see the need to spoil the core with tall towers.

The justifications on page 14 for increased building heights deserve to be scrutinized much more broadly by the public. And the word is out that we don't need them to meet our intensification targets.

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Rightly or wrongly, most people don't pay enough attention to City Planning. It's just not on our radar. Statistics and minute details don't work as well as an overall picture.

People are busy. They may not know what the official documents say, but they know what they feel in their guts.

So when news spread that 5 counsellors had voted in favour of a 23 storey building across from City Hall, I think a tipping point was hit. Citizens took notice and they didn't like it. But too many still don't know about the proposed Official Plan

About 6 weeks ago I set up an email list to my friends and started passing along information from the city's website, counsellor newsletters, the Burlington Gazette, ECOB's website and various other sources. I read documents and asked questions of counsellors.

There are 40 people on my mailing list. That's not very many, but it is the sample I have. I learned that people really *didn't* know what is being proposed until very recently, and many still don't.

Here are some of the things they asked or commented on in conversations and responses to my emails :

What is a Mobility Hub ?

Why can't they reverse the 23 storey approval for that tower at Brant and James ?

What does the Planning Department do?

What is a Precinct ?

Why do they want to destroy the charm of our downtown with big buildings ?

Traffic and parking are already terrible. Why are they allowing development which will make it worse ?

And, sadly - Time to move out of Burlington.

I have my own questions:

For instance, where will the working poor live and shop ? I go to the No Frills Plaza all the time.

I often see people who cannot afford cars and are old or disabled.

They can't walk a long way to get to services they need, and they certainly can't carry all their groceries on buses from stores which are further away, so what will happen if there is no longer a convenient grocery store downtown ?

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Where will these people live ? Will smaller less expensive apartments north of Victoria be demolished to make way for towers which will overshadow nearby neighbourhoods ?

To me this is the human side of the issue, and should be given as much credence as a planning document.

I read somewhere that response to the city's request for input via public meetings, newspaper ads, drop - in open houses, surveys, etc was minimal. The number I saw was 1300 respondents - less than the 1400 signature petition against 431 Brant which was rejected by Council.

If that is accurate, then I think Counsellors and Planners need much more feedback in a city of over 180,000. Apparently developers are informed, but citizens are not.

People are not proactive in seeking out information until it affects them directly - in spite of the reported 108,000 "contact points".

Clearly there has been a big communication breakdown because from what I have experienced the overwhelming reaction to what we know of the proposed Official Plan has been shock and outrage.

Citizens are angry about what they are just now starting to find out. They are unhappy about the proposals and don't want them implemented without significant changes. There is a perception that Counsellors are out of touch with what their constituents want.

I have recently seen 2 examples of ways that communication with the public has been effective.

The first is the Hamilton waterfront where I saw 2 very large colour renderings posted on fences showing what future development in that area would look like. Therefore, I understand what will be happening there. Simple but effective.

Why can't Burlington have those kinds of signs and billboards in front of City Hall, at Go stations, the entrance to Spencer Smith Park, the Library, and other public places visible to lots of people so that we all understand the size and scope of these changes ?

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Could a large sign with a rendering of a potential development be posted in front of every building that might be demolished, with the information that a 17 or 23 storey building has been proposed for that site ?

What about a scale model in the City Hall lobby illustrating what downtown would look like if all the proposed developments go through ?

People need to be able to visualize things in order to understand them, and I have seen very little evidence of how it has been made easy for them to do so.

The Conceptual Renderings in Appendices A - D in today's agenda item 5.1 would be good candidates for such public notices, and would be a huge revelation to most people.

My second example is Joseph Brant Hospital. When the new structure was proposed and being built, I recall seeing signs on Lakeshore with colourful renderings , pictures in the Post, and notices around town. I received leaflets in the mail. As a result, I became fully aware and supportive of it, and I think most other people were too.

A wordy black and white notice doesn't do it. We need pictures. Why not put those conceptual renderings in The Post ? Why not send them out by mail in leaflets ?

The proposed Official Plan affects everybody who lives here. We the citizens don't know enough about it, and we have many questions which require answers.

So to me, rushing into a vote at this stage is wrong. We need more effective dissemination of information, presented in a meaningful way, so that a far larger portion of the population are informed and have their say. Somehow City Hall needs to make it easy for them to do that.

This requires time.

For these reasons, I ask you to postpone the vote on the Official Plan until after the Municipal Election.

Thank you

Elaine O'Brien