

Burlington's Official Plan.

#### A FAILURE TO ENGAGE

The people of Burlington are entitled to hope and expect that their city's official plan will be about them.

That it will reflect their hopes and aspirations, will provide the basic outlines of a city that will be planned and built for them; their families; their futures.

And the people of Burlington trusted Council to do that.

From the public outcry over the ongoing and seemingly endless ability of Developers to circumvent our city's Official Plans it is obvious that City Planning has failed and will continue to fail to meet those hopes and aspirations.

These hopes and aspirations will not be met because our city council and planning staff have failed to engage with the very people they are elected or appointed to represent. They failed in many ways, they failed early in the process and they continued that failure to engage right up until last weeks of the process.

These failures began at the very outset of the Updating of The Official Plan which, according to City Planning staff, was undertaken some time in 2012. Provincial Ministry of Municipal Affairs Guidelines on Official Plans calls for "Pre-consultation, public meetings and community input", yet while Our City worked on this for the better part of six years its citizens were only involved in the closing months of that six year process and had it not been for a massive public outcry, our city would have met its own December 2017/January 2018 deadline and the public input would have been negligible.

Given the number of Citizens Advisory Committees Burlington boasts I find it informative that in all of the supposed engagement in The Official Plan, these Committees were never formally consulted or engaged.

Even by the city's own standard, outlined in your policy on "**Public Participation and Engagement**" in which it is claimed that "**The city has identified the critical importance of public involvement**". The policy then lays out Five Levels of Engagement on an IAP2 spectrum of public engagement that range from **Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate and Empower**. Our City failed to engage.

The final summation of the Open Houses, Grow Bold, Downtown Mobility Hub and Official Plan public meetings were all **informative** in nature, rarely reaching the level of "**consultation**" and absolutely failing to **Involve, Collaborate or Empower**. Even the limited information sessions were restricted to a meme of: "Here are our ideas how do you like them?" rather than: "What are your ideas?"

I submit the city failed to meet its own standard and barely reaches level 2 on its own scale of 5 levels.

It failed not only in the execution of its engagement but by failing to Consult, Involve, Collaborate and Empower, the city's Inform only model of engagement came so late in the process that it became more of a "**Here are our ideas, take them or leave them**" forcing any citizen engagement to become oppositional rather than collaborative or empowering. Citizens denied the opportunity to be proactive in the early stages of the process were forced into criticism and bitterness at an Official Plan the majority of citizens feel excluded from.

The evidence of that exclusion is presented in an analysis of your own document **Appendix E: Agency, Public and Stakeholder Feedback and Staff Response Summary (PB-14-18)**

The document lists 48 oppositional comments from named citizen and concerned group delegations and refers in three areas of opposition to unspecified numbers of **“Other Members of The Public”**. **The absence of detail in these oppositional presentations is extremely disturbing and might be construed by the public as misleading to minimise the extent of public opposition to the Plan and complaint about the methods and level of Public Engagement.**

The document further lists fifteen objections, clarifications or other issues from businesses and consultants involved in the Urban Planning and Development Fields. This suggests that public opposition is not just NIMBYISM but is indicative of a bad plan, badly executed and very poorly communicated to those, citizens, businesses and property Developers who had every right to expect better from our city and from our council.

Because this is not council’s Official Plan, it is our Official Plan. It belongs to the citizens of our city.

Given the opportunity and more than six years to do something wonderful for our city, the opportunity to engage your citizens in the re-planning that will affect their lives for decades to come, you chose instead to engage yourselves and in doing so failed the very citizens you are supposed to represent.

Even given the opportunity to defer a decision for further consultation, real involvement and participatory engagement; Our city chose not to allow the electorate to opine on this but once again rushed the decision process to further ignore their wishes and alienate them further. It was reported in the Hamilton Spectator that one Burlington Political Commentator has not seen such a clamour by the public in 45 years of reporting yet still only peripheral tinkering in response to this outcry.

Once again, along with the majority who have spoken, written and delegated I urge city council to postpone this decision on a plan that appears to serve no-one. I ask for not only more time but to utilise that time to **Involve, Collaborate and Empower** our citizens to create An Official Plan that will satisfy all stakeholders, then to put that plan before them in the upcoming election so all of their voices may be properly heard.

In our democracy the ultimate engagement comes with the election. I urge you to seize this opportunity to engage your citizens fully. Otherwise an engaged citizenship will engage the electorate where you, our council, failed to engage your citizens.

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