

April 11, 2018

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505-08

Mayor Goldring, Members of Committee and Council Correspondence from Burlington Downtown Business Association

Re: **DRAFT** Guiding Principles- Burlington Downtown Business Association

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In January 2017 the Board of Directors for the Burlington Downtown Business Association (BDBA) approved a three-year Strategic Plan: *Focus 2020*. The Plan reaffirmed the organization's stated commitment to serve, lead and together build a prosperous downtown business community.

Embedded in *Focus 2020* is the acknowledgement that immediate and longer-term intensification of the downtown will result in demographic changes that will impact our membership of 435 members. Our goal is to stay ahead of the curve by managing, influencing and adapting to these changes.

The BDBA Board has created and communicated a *draft* "statement of principles" to its membership. Once affirmed it will act as our official comment on the downtown we would like to see in the future.

We believe it can immediately be considered as a resource to City Council's deliberations on the proposed new Official Plan.

Our principles rest on five main themes: creating a unique destination, active placemaking, telling the story of our business community, blending the "old" and the "new" and striving for an optimum commercial mix. Each of these themes is underscored by a guiding principle.

We believe that our Downtown is now and should also remain a **UNIQUE DESTINATION** in the City of Burlington. This is underscored by the principle that Downtown must be a "*year-round attraction that is walkable and inviting*". This principle could translate into policies that:

- Promote year- round activities and animation that support art and culture in all corners of the Downtown
- Investigate opportunities for pop ups and farmers/Christmas markets to reinforce the downtown as a place to visit and explore
- Explore opportunities to increase public parking in BDBA, where appropriate. Encourage development that is self sufficient for parking and meets minimum zoning requirements





**PLACEMAKING:** This is underscored by the principle that *“The downtown streetscape should be green, cohesive, and include strategic places for people to gather, meet, and linger.”* This principle could translate into policies that:

- Require an implementation strategy that builds on the downtown streetscape guidelines and identifies key public gathering places, open spaces, and applicable design features in the downtown
- Validates the City planning regulatory framework that ensures new developments provide appropriate building setbacks that allow for enhanced and animated public spaces.
- Necessitates a better working relationship with the municipality to establish a list of BDBA placemaking initiatives that could be subject to “community benefits” through Section 37 funding.

Striving to create an **OPTIMUM COMMERCIAL MIX** is also a key platform of our vision. This is underscored by the principle that *“New development should accommodate a range of commercial uses and should not cause a net loss of commercial floor area in the downtown”*. This principle could translate into policies that:

- Support new mixed-use developments that maximize the amount of commercial space in the building envelope and provides, at a minimum, the same amount of commercial floor area that existed prior to redevelopment of a property.
- Develop a strategy to recruit businesses and market commercial floor area on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of mixed use buildings

The Burlington Downtown Business Association believes that having an acting hand in **TELLING OUR STORY** is important as the people of Burlington reflect on the health of our unique business district. This theme is underscored by the principles of *“Vibrancy and distinctiveness: our key competitive advantages”*. This principle could translate into policies that:

- Promote the downtown as a place that is special, eclectic, and remains the anti-mall experience. A small business incubator.
- Develop creative strategies that focus on attracting people from the waterfront experience and into the downtown business community (apps, enhanced wayfinding, and directories).





Finally, the theme that reinforces **BLENDING OLD AND NEW** is the key to our identity and is underscored by the principle that “*Downtown must embrace its future and remember its past*”. This principle could translate into policies that:

- Promote assets (like Village Square) that exemplify unique architectural features and succeed in representing Burlington’s rich history.
- Participate in Sign By-law revisions to ensure signage in the downtown is cohesive and reflects its unique context.
- Encourage the ground floor of buildings to be pedestrian oriented and building podiums that integrate with historic features of the downtown (where applicable)

This is the Board’s list of the elements that we believe are too important and too valuable to be compromised as we build the downtown of the future. Presently we are canvassing our membership for earnest feedback on this draft “statement of principles”.

Based on membership input we expect to have a confirmed, final statement for publication as early as June 01, 2018.

The Burlington Downtown Business Association thanks City Council for the opportunity to provide valuable input to your discussions on the draft new Official Plan.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Dean, per Mark Eade  
Chair, Board of Directors  
Burlington Downtown Business Association

