

I will be out of town on January 14th. & 16th. So will be unable to delegate when The City's Community Planning, Regulation and Mobility Committee meet to discuss The Interim Control Bylaw (ICBL) and the Scoped Review of the 2018 Official Plan (OP). Here is what I would have loved to say.

Considering the Dillon Report on the ICBL, The OP Review (*downtown precincts only*), the continuing backlog of intensification zoning amendment applications and the complete lack of progress on the Transportation and Mobility Master Plan, I have to conclude that the ICBL has achieved nothing for the people of Burlington.

The ICBL was intended to buy the city a one year pause on the land planning process which would allow them to correct the more egregious errors of the OP. Citizens were hopeful that their concerns with the OP would be addressed. Concerns that: downtown intensification and building heights were extreme, exceeded provincial guidelines and that there was no Transit Plan in place to address the increased traffic and congestion that over-intensification would bring.

The over-intensification was predicated on the precinct being designated an Urban Growth Centre (UGC) which in turn was based on the Region's designation of the bus ticket office on John Street as a Major Transportation Station Area (MTSA). The ICBL and the OP Review have failed to address these concerns in a way that means anything to the people of Burlington.

Even the Dillon Report suggests the John Street Bus Terminal is not on a priority Transit Corridor, not supportive of regional transit and does not function as a major bus depot. Yet, so long as that John St. MTSA designation stays in place, any changes to the OP are meaningless and the proposed scoped review of that OP bears this out. Planners have presented two downtown options which amount to unattractive "Short Squat" density on Brant St from Ghent to Lakeshore or Alternating Extremely High buildings along that same stretch, neither of which have won favour with council and certainly do not appeal to local residents.

In the meantime the ICBL has not stopped developers from submitting numerous amendment applications, it has only stalled these in the process. They are still awaiting planning consideration while the ICBL is in effect. So even the hoped for "slowdown effect" has not been achieved. This will eventually allow developers to bypass the process by appealing to LPAT (Land Planning Appeals Tribunal) when planners are too overloaded to respond in time.

This will be aggravated by changes at LPAT, shortening the city's response time from 210 to 90 days (120 for OP Amendments). Now even more failure to respond appeals will go to LPAT. Wins for developers will increase due to the fact they can now claim "compatibility" with the already approved/appealed hi-rises on Brant, Lakeshore and Martha Streets and the fact that city planners plan to "average" precinct density targets while developers and LPAT review applications on a case by case basis.

The end result will be a severely over-intensified downtown without a transit plan in place to move the additional people around or to the real MTSA at Fairview GO. While a dedicated few will cycle or walk from downtown to the GO station, it was always more likely that commuters already committed to transit into Toronto would take a bus to the GO. If the bus is there! Yet all the talk of "Integrated Transportation and Mobility" are centred on cycling, walkability and active mobility modes, ignoring the most efficient way to move people in an over-intensified and congested downtown: Improved Public Transit.

Sometimes it feels like downtown mobility concepts seek health outcomes more than serious transit solutions.

The year of grace granted by the ICBL would have been better served by planners creating the transit plan that would have connected the city's Urban Growth Centres to its GO stations, eliminating the need for a downtown mobility hub, working instead with the region to remove that downtown MTSA designation. The Dillon Report clearly points out that this is a regional responsibility, "*.....The Province directs that upper-tier municipalities such as the Region of Halton are responsible for evaluating the major transit station areas within the region, delineating the boundaries of each major transit station area*".

Heather MacDonald, Executive Director of Community Planning, Regulation and Mobility suggests this was clearly the original intention of the City's ICB: "*The recommendation to implement an ICBL will come back to City Council on Jan. 14 with proposed amendments that will make it possible for new development in the identified study area to be better informed by the City's transit, transportation and land use vision.....*" I ask again, as many did in 2017/2018: Where is The Transit Plan on which all this intensification is based?

City advocacy groups; Engaged Citizens of Burlington, We Love Burlington and Waterfront Plan B are disappointed (see Open Letter, Gazette January 6) that after so much citizen outreach, feedback and supposed input so little attention has been paid to their voices.

Personally, I fear the downtown as we know it is already lost to overdevelopment. My only hope is that maybe now, finally, the city is coming to realise that that the voices of city residents must be heard. Because so far they have not.

Perhaps city engagement efforts should involve a little less reaching out, and a little more listening in.

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