

**Delegation by Gary Scobie to Planning & Development  
Committee, City of Burlington**

**Re: PL-01-20  
ICBL Land Use Study Report**

**Date: January 14, 2020.**

I am here today to speak in opposition to the sections of the Land Use Report that deal with downtown planning and the downtown Major Transit Station Area (MTSA). I support the recent letter to Council drafted by ECoB, Citizens' Plan B and We Love Burlington citizens groups. I also support Jim Young's recent article on his concern for a downtown maybe already lost.

Last time I was here in December, I disappointed some on Council. I'll warn you now that I'll probably do that again today.

The MTSA is an outgrowth of both Urban Growth Centre and Mobility Hub designations from the first decade of this century. It seeks to densify urban areas in Southern Ontario that satisfy or seek to satisfy the intermodal transit needs of citizens.

It has been known for quite a few years that the downtown Bus Terminal does not qualify even as an Anchor Mobility Hub, and the Dillon report finally acknowledges this clearly. I want to thank them for their honesty on this issue. I only wish that Planning staff had not chosen to disregard this acknowledgement and continue to plan as if the downtown is truly a Major Transit Station Area.

Repeatedly saying something that is untrue does not make it true and it certainly doesn't help our case at the Local Planning Area Tribunal (LPAT) hearings.

The downtown MTSA, the Anchor Mobility Hub, and the Urban Growth Centre are the three cornerstones that legitimize the over-intensification of our downtown, notwithstanding that Burlington will reach its intensification targets before 2031 without their further help. They've already done enough damage. I want to offer some contextual comments before I return to the subject at hand, and request that you'll let me do so. On November 13, 2017, I came before Council and referred to a recent Ryerson University

report that worried about the average Toronto condo height increasing from 15 storeys to 21 storeys at that time. The authors were concerned about parking for residents and visitors, the increasing scarcity of parks nearby and the livability factors of these condo groupings. Were they indeed communities at all?

I asked Council that night if they had the ethical and moral courage to stop their quest to legitimize the Anchor Mobility Hub in the Official Plan and instead make it an election issue in 2018. I also asked that they not grant the developer the right to build a 23 storey high rise at 421 Brant Street, across the road from City Hall.

If they failed to accede to my request and the requests of others, I said the future of high rise buildings along Brant Street would be set that night. November 13, 2017 would go down in our history as the day our Council gave its blessing to a future building spree along Brant Street and its environs to the lake never seen before.

Of course that last Council did not listen to me nor other engaged citizens and the die was cast. Their legacy was set as the Council that abdicated responsibility for future downtown redevelopment. We've continued to follow that path through OMB and LPAT decisions on approving high rises since then. But downtown over-intensification did indeed become an election issue and the majority of this new Council did actively campaign to stop it and can thank that issue in large measure as the reason why you were elected. And it was clear what citizens then wanted you to do.

Today or Thursday or at the January 30<sup>th</sup> Council meeting, the fate of the downtown is going to be decided by this Council and I am apprehensive to say the least. I view this report and the one on the recommended downtown development concept coming on Thursday as key drivers of the stake through the heart of the downtown. If the recommendations are allowed to stand and they lead to amendments to the OP within the designation mandates of the Urban Growth Centre, Anchor Mobility Hub and Major Transit

Station Area, then I believe that the downtown's fate is sealed as no longer a pedestrian-oriented place of retail, commerce and government but as a sterile, shadowed, windswept, unfriendly place of imposing podiums and high rises of steel, glass and concrete. I see only a few buildings left harkening to our past, like City Hall, Smith's Funeral Home and the Queen's Head Pub.

I know there is to be a follow-up study on the merits of the three land-use designations I've mentioned. But it will be too late if the OP is already amended as above. If you then intend to re-amend it without the three imbedded designations, the time it will take to remove them with permission from the Region and Province and come up with replacement intensity limits of our own making is simply not available in the five weeks before the March 5<sup>th</sup> ICBL end. Even if you can do this, it will result in a re-amended OP that I believe will be treated with disdain at every LPAT hearing to come and will be appealed over and over again by developers as unprofessional, poorly executed and manipulative.

Tough words, and I feel bad using them. I campaigned hard in 2018 and supported a number of you in the election, believing that we could save the downtown. But there is only one way – removal of all of the designations, not conformity to them. By investing all of the time, expense and effort in conforming, and none on the removal, we have squandered precious time and resources. It's not just that we've fiddled while the downtown burned; we've created a complete orchestral composition that no citizen wants to listen to. And remember, this composition is being directed for Planning staff by our new Council. You are on the hook for the results.

I'm asking you to put this composition on the back shelf where it belongs. I'm asking you to instead create a new composition without the three designations for the downtown that gives us back control of the downtown's re-development future, with our own vision of reasonable height and retention of and respect for much of what we value. Keep the recommendations for the GO Station Mobility Hub intensification that make sense and update the

Official Plan once and done with those and with new wordings for the downtown of your own making. Answer only to citizens who elected you to save the downtown from a complete transformation, not to provincial bureaucrats in Toronto who make sweeping generalizations and rules for every city as if they are all the same. Nor to the Local Planning Area Tribunal, nor to the developers. Stand up to keep Burlington's downtown as one of the main reasons we continue to be judged an excellent city to live in and visit. Adding high rises and further congestion will not add to our score in these ratings. If you allow an OP with these designations, you will fail to save the downtown and that will be your legacy, so early in your term. I don't want that and neither should you.