

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

Re: Planning Concepts for Downtown Burlington

Date: December 5, 2019.

You have been put in a very difficult position as a Council. You wish to please citizens with good development in our downtown, yet you feel you must also create a new OP that will kowtow to the Province's demands and developer wishes to over-intensify the area of our city that people look to as central to our existence.

You are in this position because of failures of past Councils, dating back to the Council elected in 2002, which threw up its hands in defeat when trying to re-vitalize the downtown and accepted help from Big Brother in the form of the Places to Grow legislation designation of the downtown as an Urban Growth Centre. That Council and the one following in 2006 welcomed further intrusion in local planning by accepting a questionable designation of our Bus Terminal as an Anchor Mobility Hub.

That Council was more interested in saving the City by building a pier instead. Just think what they might have accomplished if they'd focused on the downtown instead, or not.

Fast forward to the 2014 Council who after turning down the Adi request to build a 26 storey skyscraper at Martha and Lakeshore, didn't know how to defend the decision at the OMB and soon after in November 2017 gave Carriage Gate a gift that keeps on giving, the OK for a 23 storey building at 421 Brant that went way beyond the Op's 8 storey limit and even beyond the 17 storey limit that was being pondered for an updated OP, all for the asking.

This was the first nail in the coffin for our downtown. Since then Council OK'd a 17 storey building at 409 Brant, again across the road from City Hall. I am almost certain that the developer-friendly LPAT will give in to the request for more height to match the 23 storeys of its neighbour across the road, leading to the Twin Towers of Burlington, a mockery of our OP and our City Hall.

Now we have before us tonight what I'd term Plan D, an attempt to please the Province, LPAT and developers with the over-intensification they desire and are prepared to fight for. And they have all the high cards in the deck and the high-paid talent to do so. No consideration of our current OP and the views of citizens who wish to keep our downtown to a human scale with retail buildings that are two storeys in height in certain areas and individual in character and façade.

When I see either of the two concepts, looking up or down Brant Street, I am reminded of a near faceless canyon of steel, brick and glass fronting sidewalks, with podiums that are a minimum three storeys in height and stores that have no character except for the name on the glass. So the D is for failure – failure to listen to citizens at labs and walkabouts like those that I attended. The D is also for Destruction because if either of these concepts (or a combination of the two) is accepted by Council, it will likely sound

the death knell of our downtown, a complete replacement over time of the character we value on Brant Street.

But what did we expect, as developers have been buying up our retail street lots for assembly for years for a redo of the downtown in their image? With these concepts we give them free reign, with the blessing of the Province, to go beyond the minimum density goals of the Urban Growth Centre, Anchor Mobility Hub and Major Transit Station Area designations.

Developers can always claim they are only doing what the Province asked in intensifying growth centres. Unless this Council rids us of these designations we will see continued destruction of our downtown. And it hasn't really started yet, so we have yet to realize what will be taking place. We only have vacant lots at 374 Martha and 421 Brant. Wait until the construction starts. We only have a stalled Bridgewater project on the Lake that hasn't really impacted our congestion during construction like these others will.

But wait, there's more. We have applications for 29 storeys at Lakeshore and Pearl, two 27 storey building applications for the Old Lakeshore Precinct and a redevelopment of the Waterfront Hotel waiting in the wings. The latter three are not even being considered in the concepts we have before us tonight. Why is that?

There is no defense possible at the LPAT by the City to stop them. So we are being sold a backup plan that can't possibly work to save our downtown. There is only one plan that might work, but apparently we are still waiting for a report about talking to the Province to get us out from under the downtown-killing designations our previous Councils so passively accepted. We don't need a report. We don't need a Plan D. We need to hear from Council that it is talking now with the Province on moving the intensity away from the downtown and the Lake up to the three GO Station Mobility Hubs. In other words, put a halt on these concepts and show us some action to save the downtown.

Please don't tell us that you aren't at least setting the stage with the Province because the Interim Control Bylaw is in place till March. By then the timeline shows we'll have selected a concept and maybe even a new OP. This would be like giving the enemy their ammunition.

There is one more thing that you must do as well though – adjust the current OP to reflect the downtown density we really want and the heights we would be comfortable with once we regain control of our downtown growth plan. Looking at creating a Heritage District up Brant Street to Caroline Street might also be suggested, but according to Oakville sources this is a time and effort-consuming task that may or may not fly. If you don't do something with our OP, zoning and heights revert to the current 2008 version, the one conforming to intensification targets from the Places to Grow legislation. Only heritage buildings will be safe from being demolished unless this is done.

This is our last chance to stop many more skyscrapers from rising from Brant Street lots that will be cleared of the last remnants of unique stores and storefronts. Please don't tell us these concepts are it – the plan to stop the high buildings. Because they aren't.