

## Transforming Aldershot Public Meeting

### VERBAL AND WRITTEN FEEDBACK SUMMARY

October 10, 2013 | 6:30 – 9:00 | St. Matthew's Church

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#### Meeting Overview

The City of Burlington held a public meeting on October 10, 2013 at St. Matthew's Church to discuss the transformation of Aldershot as part of the City's 5-year Official Plan Review. The purpose of the meeting was to reflect on what has happened in Aldershot since the last Official Plan Review; hear from urban design experts about how urban corridors transform, how they contribute to place making and how the transformation can be managed; and to check in with the community on opportunities and challenges in Ward 1 as part of the current Official Plan Review. The meeting was attended by 24 people according to the sign-in sheets.

Ward 1 Councillor Rick Craven welcomed the participants and provided opening remarks. The City of Burlington Planning staff provided an overview of the Official Plan Review process and highlighted some of the changes that have occurred along Plains Rd since the last Official Plan Review followed by a presentation from Brook McIlroy (posted on the Official Plan Review website: <http://www.burlington.ca/opreview>) regarding the challenges and opportunities for mixed-use, mid-rise intensification corridors. After the presentations, City staff and Brook McIlroy answered questions and then asked the participants to use maps and respond to two questions.

**Question 1:** What have been the challenges related to the transformations that you've seen in Aldershot to date?

**Question 2:** Describe aspects of the transformation (e.g. pedestrian connections, more street activity, building designs, etc) that have gone well. Describe aspects of the transformation that you think could improve.

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## Verbal Feedback

The following notes provide a summary of the verbal comments that were presented by the four groups. The comments are reflective of individual comments rather than group consensus. The next section captures the comments that were written on the worksheets.

### TABLE 1

- Too many remnant car-oriented properties
- Run-down properties that need to be redeveloped, set as a priority
- The presence of a Mobility Hub as it relates to the Waterdown area
- Development on Plains Rd. is good, but it's not happening fast
- The role to accommodate mixed uses
- Need to respect the limit of the development line into the residential area (no creeping)
- Need to access the type of housing that has been introduced to consider more affordable units
- Need to consider building heights and avoid a whole wall of high-rises

### TABLE 2

Q1:

- Lack of connectivity between stores and nodes (driving and parking between uses is required)
- Is there any way to address the developers' preference for 6-storey buildings [to the max height permitted in the zoning by-law]?
- What are the limits for the mix of mid-rise buildings along the 9-km strip on Plains Rd? Too many would become a concern.

Q2:

- Plantings are attractive and add to street (careful of sight lines)
- Aesthetic character of buildings at corner intersections should be enhanced
- How will land acquisition impact local businesses?
- Certain uses are really important to the community, important to retain

### TABLE 3

Q1:

- There has been too much emphasis on Seniors in the area
- Need to attract younger people with restaurants and larger apartments
- Need to provide more family-friendly accommodations
- Need to control ugly signs and advertising through tougher sign by-law – temporary mobile signs that don't advertise retail uses on Plains Rd. should not be permitted
- Like stepbacks on buildings which allow for lighting
- Need to improve pedestrian connections
- Need better transit connection with Downtown. Concern with time duration been so long
- A number of studies and plans have been done. Same things are repeated over and over. It is time to focus on implementation and action
- It takes a long time to achieve the transformation of Plains Rd. We are seeing some buildings but would like to see it continue

Q2:

- The transformation will take a long time, but it's heading in the right direction
- Biking isn't safe on Plains Rd at present (people use sidewalks)
- Local streets often don't have sidewalks / need to encourage pedestrian environment on streets that connect to Plains Rd.
- Encourage more patios and gathering spaces to assist with street vitality
- Some concerns about tall buildings and overlooks on backyards

## TABLE 4

### Q1:

- Concern about traffic and infiltration brought by development
- New retirement home does not represent the type of use we want to see
- Poor relationship / transition to residential neighbourhoods
- Too many residential uses coming in and few employment uses. Need more people and jobs
- Consider treatment of side streets and intensification 'creep' in neighbourhoods
- Traffic is key along Plains Rd -> 4 lanes would provide wider boulevards, tree planting and street parking
- Turn lane on Plains Rd can be removed, but it needs to be evaluated
- Look at European cities with access to good transit (e.g. Copenhagen, but be realistic about alternative transportation)
- More mixed uses need to be combined with balanced development and population growth
- The Ikea site is key in the area. Need to assess the development on the site when they leave
- Treatment of taller buildings is important – step-backs or terraces above the fourth floor
- Consider locating parking behind and not in the front of buildings. What ratio? 1.5 ratio is not enough; should be 1.8 or 2.0
- A 3D visual of Plains Rd would be useful to demonstrate the future of the village

### Other verbal comments:

- Consider the size of commercial spaces to make them feasible
- Mosaic has minimal retail and an abundance of residential; better ratios are needed
- Condition of current development introduces small retail units that remain closed after 7pm. Development should allow flexibility of the commercial space so that when a business grows, it can expand into an adjacent retail unit. Small scale retail won't serve larger amount of people. Need to bring people and vitality to the area
- "Walk to GO" - Aldershot will have a Mobility Hub. Look at development within the 10 minute walking distance of the Aldershot GO station.
- Distance from mobility hubs: Area 1 (250m); Area 2 (400m); Area 3 (800m).
- Need better crosswalks on Plains Rd.
- The cement plant is the elephant in the room

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## Written Feedback

*The following notes information includes the written comments that were provided on the worksheets and feedback forms verbatim as well as comments received via email after the meeting. The previous section captures a summary of the verbal comments that were heard at the meeting.*

### Worksheet A

- Ikea site – what will it be? Won't be a good plan
- Electric bicycles / Copenhagen / European – many people don't have cars because
- Parking guidelines need revision
- 1.2 1.5 2.0 1.8 not viable
- Traffic is key – distribute it
- Less of a highway -> 403 accidents -> can't fix
- Centre turn lanes get rid of by putting right on every corner 30,000 cars/day
- 12,000 houses Waterdown not our community beyond our [incomplete note]
- Traffic / work -> Waterdown Rd widening

- More mixed use w real ratios of retail / employment uses -> balanced dev + growth (people + jobs)
- Built form more \$\$ in 6 floors (4) stagger back is good – over 4 floors top two floors should be stepped back
- Bldg height – stagger it – don't have a line of it
- Do a visioning diagram to show staggered dev'mnts
- Adequate parking – park in back
- Side streets a concern
- Whole corridor affects everything in behind “creep”
- New retirement home – stepped rather than wall
- Main corridor mixed use residential ratios are way too low -> “garages” with nail parlours
- 4-6 storeys – 4 is for middle stepping of buildings helps height
- Too much residential and not enough mixed use
- Residential intensif. is displacing retail/comm. + jobs, therefore people no jobs.
- 20,000 -> 2031 + 20,000 -> 2041
- Open ended? Who's tracking it?

### **Worksheet B**

- Traffic Volume off of QEW at Plains Rd East
- Plains Rd & King Road – Nice improvement to intersection
- LaSalle Park Rd & Plains Road – Crowding the street; no green space

### **Worksheet C**

- Concern – re: height; don't want a hallway of high-rises
- Portion of Plains should accommodate for mixed use, commercial/general similar to rest of corridor
- Redevel of Plains; All good – good process, not fast enough
- Solid Gold -> need to redevelop
- Limit of Mobility Hubs and what's happening here -> real opportunities
- Community vision – 6 storeys
- Need to respect devel line -> concern re: creep to res areas
- Challenges new library – concern – community response – low income
- Motels need to redevelop as a priority

### **Other written comments (via feedback forms and email)**

#### **FORM 1**

Q1:

- Need to attract younger people / Already new seniors home
- Third party signs
- Some new bldgs block sunlight
- Inadequate transportation
- Lack of pedestrian crossings

Q2:

- Whole street slowly getting better
- Two demonstration projects
- Parkettes

#### **FORM 2**

Q1

- Traffic congestion from new 403 interchange whenever Hwy 403 backs up
- Loss of amenities (grocery – hardware – retail) due to intensification resulting in further travel outside area

- Construction vibration damage due to expansion & intensification putting the onus on adjacent homeowners to prove damage after the fact – slow response from by-law enforcement – building by-law is too shallow where “at the discretion of the director a vibration study may be requested as part of the application.
- Waterdown Td widening traffic study has errors – City slow to respond to questions – will not commit to assuring future speed reduction to 50 KPH – will not comment on dB level if speed remains at 60 dB with increased traffic

## Q2

- Well -> public participation & notification
- Improve - > more frequent public transportation availability
- Intensification density – allotment for all of Burlington to the year 2031 is approx. 20, 000
- Who is counting the growth numbers? Too much intensification within confined areas are detrimental.
- Area character changes drastically when new buildings are too tall and negatively affect existing area homes behind and adjacent to the new structure
- Loss of existing schools now, will impact future growth and needs for schools once intensification and population increases

## FORM 3

### Q1

- No connectivity between store (walkability is hard when separated by 2 km)
- Can't force connections or uses on sites
- Is there anything with respect to # of 6 storey buildings on Plains Road?

### Q2

- Plantings – attractive, but can block sight lines (RBG)
- Like LaSalle Building
- Like being able to park at J&G Meats
- Concerns with affect on Jerry's operations once land acquisition
- Larger retail for restaurant or “market” usage

## EMAIL

*(Key points summarized)*

- Need for a policy to require a minimum ratio of commercial floor space compared to residential in the mixed use designation
- New buildings are not truly 'mixed use', but primarily medium density residential which generates a much larger increase in people, traffic, congestion, noise and pollution than does a commercial/employment opportunity.
- Mixed use and intensification are supposed to enable more live, work, shop and play in the corridor and neighbourhood and this is not happening; the present situation is not appropriate built form or good planning that will deliver these often stated purposes.
- Long-term strategy for development required as a result of aging population distribution and economic changes for younger cohorts (often underemployed or unemployed) raising an affordability obstacle to an orderly demographic transition.
- Need to understand the precarious viability of much of the commercial form and space being built under the actual mixed use implementation; redevelopment often takes a commercial site with employment uses and redevelops it to significant residential uses with little employment opportunity involved. Often, the employment losses in Aldershot far outweigh any gains from the redevelopment, although sometimes the commercial activity moves to another location.
- We need to emphasize jobs along the corridor.
- Small, retail units are not adequate commercial development to justify the high density of residential that goes with it. Some are hardly viable and there is significant turnover.

- Cumulative scale of services that dominate the commercial use component, leading to saturation. How many nail and hair salons or physiotherapists, dentists and doctors does Plains Rd need? Should we not be thinking past this model?
  - Thought needs to be given to appropriate distribution of density along the corridor. We need a conceptual model or illustration of the whole length of Plains Rd so we might see what fits where and can provide for a variety of land uses.
  - From existing built form, 6 storeys is an imposing, somewhat overpowering presence, especially when right next to the roadway as is the current urban design. All buildings should not be allowed to go to 6 storeys unless there is a large commercial and employment density involved (i.e. commercial uses beyond the ground floor, potentially 2-3 floors of commercial).
  - Consideration should be given to staggering or stepping back the top 3 floors of any 6 storey building to provide for appropriate transitions between intensification projects and adjacent neighbourhoods.
  - Parking also requires attention for viable retail and quick turnaround uses. We have enough drive-through fast food shops and new ones should not be permitted. As well, the boulevards with pull-ins for parking do not provide sufficient parking spaces.
  - The OPR needs some form of study or reflective narrative on lessons learned with changes seen to date.
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## **Action Items**

The meeting wrapped up with several action items including:

- The preparation of a meeting summary by City staff to be posted on the Official Plan Review website.
- Planning staff will consider the issue of the viable size and scale of retail units on the ground floor of mixed use buildings through the Commercial Strategy Study as part of the Official Plan Review.
- Planning staff will consider opportunities to include the suggestions raised at the meeting through the Nodes & Corridors Work Plan and Commercial Strategy Study as part of the Official Plan Review.