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1. INTRODUCTION

This study has been undertaken as part of the City of Burlington’s five-year review of its Official Plan, which will be updated to reflect an emphasis on accommodating growth through intensification and infill rather than greenfield development. This emphasis will inform the development of policies that support the success of existing neighbourhoods and a transition towards more compact and complete communities.

Commercial uses have an important role to play in creating vibrant and prosperous neighbourhoods. They offer amenities to support the daily needs of residents and workers, and can serve as important community gathering places when they are planned and designed as people-oriented places. Notwithstanding the enormous potential of commercial areas to contribute to the development of great communities, a significant transformation in commercial land use planning and development is needed to achieve that potential in both aging and emerging commercial areas. Some of this transformation from current and historic commercial format is, and will continue to, occur naturally as public tastes change and land economics adjust as part of an evolutionary process. The Official Plan Review provides an opportunity to assist in the evolution, and to revisit past policies and establish new ones to strengthen support for an increasingly integrated and people-oriented approach to commercial land use planning.

1.1 STUDY OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is to develop a set of policy options that will allow the City of Burlington to better incorporate commercial land use planning with neighbourhood planning and urban design, with the goal of creating complete, walkable communities.

Within Phase 1 of the Commercial Strategy Study, the key inquiries for the policy and design team members included:

1. How adequate is the existing commercial policy framework to address current and projected demand in the context of expected trends, in the city and the downtown?

2. How should the current commercial planning policy and design framework be modified to address the current and future needs of the City?

A secondary purpose of Phase 1 of the Commercial Strategy Study has been to contribute to the Downtown Vision Community Engagement Project by identifying new commercial land use strategies for the Downtown that will support the continued evolution of this important centre to a complete community that also serves as a vibrant and regionally significant mixed use destination.
1.2 OUTLINE

This report begins with an overview of the historical evolution of commercial land use and community planning in Southern Ontario. Chapter 2 then establishes the provincial and local policy framework within which future commercial policies will be implemented. The development context, including past and present issues for commercial development in Burlington, is then reviewed in Chapter 3.

In Chapter 4, a comparative analysis of Official Plans from other municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe is used to identify best practices in commercial land use planning, with an emphasis on commercial hierarchies and specific policies for commercial and mixed use areas. Burlington's existing commercial hierarchy, land use policies for Commercial Areas and Mixed Use Areas, and urban design policies are identified through this comparative review.

The Downtown receives special attention in Chapter 5, in recognition of its significance as a Provincially designated urban growth centre (UGC) that includes an anchor mobility hub of regional significance. The Downtown is also highlighted to reflect the City's renewed emphasis on the Downtown as an integral component of the City's network of commercial areas. Chapter 5 highlights the existing planning framework for Downtown, relevant studies to guide future development, and an analysis of the success of commercial uses in the Downtown based on their location and unit size.

Finally, the report concludes with a set of strategic considerations for updating Burlington's land use policies for the City-wide network of commercial areas and the Downtown. These strategic considerations will be further evaluated in Phase 2 of the Commercial Strategy Study, with the objective of developing detailed policy recommendations that can be implemented through the Official Plan Review.

1.3 CONTEXT

1.3.1 HISTORICAL PATTERNS OF COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT & NEW DIRECTIONS IN COMMUNITY PLANNING

From the mid to late twentieth century, the common commercial hierarchy adopted by municipalities across North America included four basic components:

- an historic downtown;
- regional malls;
- community-scaled malls and plazas; and
• locally-scaled commercial nodes that offered convenience items and personal services.

During the 1990s, the regional retail nodes became superseded by power nodes, characterized by clusters of large-format retail outlets located along arterials in a highly auto-oriented setting. During this timeframe, the role of historical Downtowns, as important elements of the urban structure and key commercial destinations, declined in many cities across North America. Interestingly, while the onset of large format power nodes had a significant impact on the retail hierarchy, particularly historic downtowns and community-scaled malls and plazas – both the regional mall component and locally scaled commercial nodes have reinvented themselves, and today tend to compete in the commercial hierarchy relatively successfully. Historical downtowns have also been required to reinvent themselves as centres of culture, administration, service commercial, and niche market retail areas – with a fundamental shift into higher density residential neighbourhoods. Today it appears that those community-scaled malls and plazas are left struggling to compete. Their built form, scale and mixture of retail and service commercial uses appearing outdated, and in decline.

Although the form and function of retail areas has changed over the last several decades, it is important to note that the success of open format retail areas (i.e. plazas/power nodes) continues to rely on the presence of at least one “anchor”, which draws a large number of customers to the area on a regular basis. In fact, Burlington’s 2003 Commercial Study found that although new retail development is moving away from the typical strip mall style with an anchor at each end and smaller retail in between, it is important to note that the open format with some free standing buildings still requires the presence of at least one anchor.

The emergence of power nodes in the 1990s, alongside low density residential development resulted in the pinnacle of what has since become known as suburban sprawl. As the social, environmental, fiscal and health-related costs of sprawl became more and more evident, ideas about urban planning and community design began to shift. Over the last twenty years, smart growth, place making, and creating more compact, transit supportive, and complete communities has become the mantra of cities across the continent as they strive to promote healthier and more active lifestyles, and to become more fiscally and environmentally sustainable.

For commercial development, these shifting ideas have introduced an emphasis on mixed use development, where commercial uses are integrated with other uses (in a community and within development sites), so that employees and residents can access goods and services by foot, rather than by car. Not only are new segregated commercial areas typically discouraged, opportunities to retrofit existing commercial strips and aging retail centres are being championed as part of a broader intensification strategy, which itself is aimed at creating more compact and transit-supportive communities. In fact, one of the primary shifts in planning during the last decade has been to better integrate land use and transportation planning, in support of transit. In this context, the commercial hierarchies of the past are becoming replaced, at least in Southern Ontario, with hierarchies of mixed use centres and corridors that are linked to the intensification framework and planned public transit networks.
2 POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.1 PROVINCIAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The Provincial planning framework has been informed by, and then subsequently influenced the contemporary approaches to urban planning described in the introduction. As concerns about the impact of suburban sprawl came to a head in the 1990s and early 2000s, the Provincial government began formulating a more “hands on” approach to planning in Southern Ontario that emphasizes complete communities and transit supportive development. Additions to the Provincial planning framework since that time have included a new Provincial Policy Statement (2005, currently under review), the Grow Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2006), the Greenbelt Act (2006), and the Big Move (2008).

Although much of the Provincial planning framework, and the Growth Plan in particular, is focused on residential and employment land use planning, expectations for commercial development are integrated through the emphasis on mixed use development and complete communities, intensification, and the revitalization of urban centres, including historic downtowns.

2.1.1 MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT & THE INTENSIFICATION FRAMEWORK FOR THE GREATER GOLDEN HORSESHOE

Integrating pedestrian-oriented commercial land uses as a central component of successful communities is strongly promoted under the Growth Plan. One of the guiding principles of the Growth Plan is to “build compact, vibrant and complete communities” (Section 1.2.2) that provide convenient access to jobs, local stores and services, alongside a full range of housing choices, community facilities and open spaces (Sections 2.2.2.1.h and 2.1). Moreover, as municipalities plan for complete communities, they are required to ensure high quality urban design is achieved to “create attractive and vibrant places that support walking and cycling for everyday activities and are transit supportive” (Section 6.3.1.2 c & d).

The shift to higher quality, compact and mixed use commercial development is also expressed through the intensification policies of the Growth Plan, which are focused on the following framework for shaping the regional structure:

- urban growth centres;
- intensification corridors;
- major transit station areas;
• brownfield sites and greyfields (Section 2.1).

Not only is the intensification framework partly based on historical elements of the commercial hierarchy, commercial uses are identified as part of the land use mix for urban growth centres (Section 2.2.4.4.a) and Major Transit Station Areas (Section 2.2.5.1.b). Local services are also highlighted as part of the land use mix for intensification corridors (Section 2.2.5.3). In addition, the Growth Plan recognizes the potential to transform legacy commercial areas (i.e. the regional malls and strip plazas) by promoting the intensification and revitalization of “greyfields” (i.e. underutilized commercial properties) through mixed use infill development.

Provincial planning policies related to Burlington’s Downtown urban growth centre are outlined in Chapter 5.

2.2 LOCAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 STRATEGIC PLAN (2011-2014)

Burlington’s Strategic Plan was prepared through a collaborative process and lays out a vision for the City and priorities for City Council. The stated mission of Burlington’s Strategic Plan is to ensure that neighbourhoods and commercial areas, including those in the Downtown, are safe and accessible. Creating a strategy to redevelop aging retail areas into mixed-use “people-places” is a key component of this Plan, as is promoting a mix of local retail and services in the Downtown to ensure it remains a vibrant place.

2.2.2 THE BURLINGTON OFFICIAL PLAN (1997, JUNE 2012 CONSOLIDATION)

The current Burlington Official Plan was prepared in 1997. The Plan last underwent review between 2002 and 2006, and is generally considered to be in conformity with Provincial and Regional planning policies. Notably, the 1997 Official Plan incorporated the City’s first mixed use designations, and began reworking the traditional commercial hierarchy. Like other municipalities, the City’s new commercial hierarchy included a blend of commercial and mixed use designations to reflect the traditional retail centres/hierarchy, and the emerging intensification framework based on centres and corridors. The hierarchy is further described in Chapter 4 of this report.

As the overarching planning policy document for the City of Burlington, the Official Plan establishes eight principles to guide planning and decision-making. These principles reflect contemporary planning approaches, and emphasize the goal of creating attractive, livable and successful communities that offer a diversity of housing, employment, leisure and transportation options within a more compact urban structure. Moreover the eight principles highlight the need for responsible fiscal management in providing growth-related infrastructure and services, and the need to support businesses and a vigorous local economy (Part 1, Section 3.0).
Part I, Section 4.0 of the Official Plan references the City's post-war development pattern, and recognizes itself as a "typical suburban community", but one that will evolve in response to Provincial planning requirements, and perhaps more importantly, residents' desire to become more sustainable. To this end, Section 4.3 identifies "structural features" that are expected to remain stable over the long-term, including existing residential neighbourhoods, the "historic downtown focused on the waterfront", the employment corridors along highways, the City's shopping areas, and the green space network. Key changes that are supported by the Official Plan include creating a greater diversity of housing choices; encouraging jobs in proximity to where people live; intensifying mixed use centres and certain roads; creating a "more balanced" transportation system that improves conditions for walking, cycling and transit; and conserving the City's natural heritage features. Rather than a whole-scale transformation, these opportunities represent a more fine-grained approach to facilitating change, without challenging existing lifestyles, but instead by creating more choices.

Part III of the Official Plan outlines the land use policies, including for Major Retail Areas and Mixed Use Activity Areas. An overview of Burlington's commercial hierarchy and land use policies is provided through the comparative review of best practices in Chapter 4 of this report, where the City's policies are considered alongside those of other area municipalities. Existing policies and relevant studies regarding the Downtown are reviewed in Chapter 5.
3 PAST AND PRESENT ISSUES IN COMMERCIAL LAND USE PLANNING

3.1 MIXED USE AREAS STUDY (2004)

During Burlington’s last Official Plan Review, the City evaluated the Mixed Use Area policies that were originally adopted in 1997. Overall, the study found that the policies for the Downtown Mixed Use Centre were achieving their desired objectives, but that this was not the case for other parts of the City. For other Mixed Use Areas, particularly the corridors, the 2004 Study found that a majority of the development had been residential without the desired retail and office mix. In addition, large format retail uses had continued to expand along corridors, and did so without appropriate regard for urban design. Issues had also arisen with regard to the compatibility of higher density development with existing development.

Based on these findings, the Mixed Use Areas Study called for a number of improvements to strengthen the performance of the existing policies, and to better support the achievement of desired development outcomes. Recommended changes included:

- Increased urban design guidance (in general, and specifically regarding walkability and compatibility);
- Urban design strategies for specific Mixed Use Corridors;
- Specific urban design guidance for parking lots;
- A package of strategies aimed at directing public investment and incentives to mixed Use areas;
- New policies directing retail and service commercial uses to the ground floor of residential and office buildings; and,
- Introducing incentives (such as reduced application fees, parking standards, and development charges; additional density for development that includes ground floor retail; general incentives for providing City-owned parking structures).

Notwithstanding the emphasis on urban design guidance, the Mixed Use Areas Study also called for flexibility, in recognition that areas will evolve in response to outside factors, including market forces, demographics, the transportation system, and the general maturity of the community.
Finally, the study put forward policies to address large format retail development, based on the recommendations of a consultant study. The policies introduced a description of the types of retail uses that are appropriate for Mixed Use Employment Corridors, specifically large format use that have “quasi-industrial” characteristics and cannot be located elsewhere due their land requirements. Importantly, the recommended policies specified that the concentration of these retail uses in otherwise employment areas should not approach the significance (in terms of floor area) of Commercial or Regional Shopping Areas.

### 3.2 Emerging Issues

For the purpose of identifying emerging issues and trends in commercial development, the City of Burlington provided a collection of Official Plan and Zoning By-Law Amendments for review as part of this study (Table 1). The applications represent a number of trends, including:

- **Applications to rezone lands along the QEW corridor to accommodate large format retail.** This includes redesignating from a variety of designations, including Employment Commercial, Neighbourhood Commercial, Business Corridor, and Mixed Use Corridor General, and/or in some cases, requests to increase the retail floor area cap. The economic and planning-related merits of these proposals vary from case to case, and there is a benefit to requiring applicants to go through the Zoning By-Law Amendment process to ensure good planning principles are promoted and the planned urban hierarchy is achieved in support of transit and other objectives.

- **Applications to permit fast-food restaurants (and perhaps other non-conforming uses) in aging neighbourhood commercial plazas,** where they have not previously been permitted. With regard to fast-food restaurants specifically (as well as cafes and small-scale restaurants/pubs), it is recommended that these uses be permitted within neighbourhood commercial areas, since they do not conflict with the intended function of these areas (i.e. to serve the day-to-day retail and service needs). As with all uses in commercial/mixed use areas, their approval should be subject to strict design guidance to ensure they support the long-term evolution of neighbourhood commercial centres into pedestrian-oriented community focal areas.

- **Applications for mixed use development in Neighbourhood Commercial Centres and the Downtown** that exceed density/height maximums. These proposals represent the type of development the City is calling for through its Official Plan in terms of land use mix, but not necessarily in the form that is permitted. Notably, many municipalities are currently struggling to attract this type of mixed use residential development, which includes an office component and/or retail at grade. Some flexibility may be required to reward this type of development, but that flexibility must be balanced with strict design guidance and standards to ensure development is compatible with existing land uses, particularly lower-density residential uses.

- **Other applications that may represent good planning,** but do not conform with the land use designation and/or development standards. The example that was provided by the City is for a daycare in a Mixed Use Employment Corridor that did not conform to the land use and setback requirements. In these circumstances, there is a benefit to requiring applicants to go through the Zoning By-Law Amendment process to ensure good planning principles are promoted. For uses such as daycares and other social services, there is a benefit to permitting them more broadly throughout the City.
### TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF COMMERCIAL OFFICIAL PLAN AND ZONING BY-LAW AMENDMENT APPLICATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locational Characteristics</th>
<th>Current Occupancy</th>
<th>Current Designation</th>
<th>Proposal</th>
<th>Issue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  QEW Corridor</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>Employment Commercial</td>
<td>For large sporting goods store, requires “exception”</td>
<td>Site not designated to accommodate uses that meet the day-to-day needs of nearby residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  QEW Corridor</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>Neighbourhood Commercial (with cap on retail floor area at 300 sm, and max floor area of up to 1,200 sm for other uses, including hotel, restaurant or entertainment establishment)</td>
<td>Single retail use with a floor area up to 1,000 sm</td>
<td>Exceeds retail floor area cap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  QEW Corridor</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>Business Corridor</td>
<td>IKEA complex, with store, restaurant (40% of floor area), warehousing and head office</td>
<td>Exceeds the retail floor area limit of 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  QEW Corridor</td>
<td>Vacant used auto sales and occupied single detached residential dwellings</td>
<td>Mixed Use Corridor General (intended to for mixed use higher intensity development)</td>
<td>Mountain Equipment Co-op single storey retail building</td>
<td>Does not conform with the intention to intensify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Existing Neighbourhood Commercial Area Plaza with 36% vacancy</td>
<td>Neighbourhood Commercial (permitting convenience restaurants with a floor area of up to 100 sm)</td>
<td>Tim Horton’s (fast food restaurant, with floor area over 100 sm)</td>
<td>Site not designated for fast food restaurant; exceeds floor area cap</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Planned Neighbourhood Commercial Vacant residential dwellings</td>
<td>D (placeholder for development zone)</td>
<td>Mixed use development with low rise apartments, townhomes and ground-floor retail</td>
<td>Exceeds the residential density cap</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  Downtown, in proximity to lower density uses and heritage buildings</td>
<td>Mixed use, low density, with a max height of 4-storeys (up to 8 if compatible)</td>
<td>High density mixed use development with an 8-storey medical office building, 8-storey parking garage, and 17-storey apartment</td>
<td>Exceeds height limit; incompatible with area (poor transition from low density)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  Residential</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>Mixed Use Corridor – Employment, with a 6 m yard setback requirement</td>
<td>Predominantly commercial uses, with a daycare set back from the road</td>
<td>Site not designated for daycare, and proposal exceeds set back requirement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW OF LOCAL COMMERCIAL POLICIES

To begin evaluating Burlington’s commercial hierarchy and land use policies, a comparative review was undertaken based on the Official Plan policies of five GTA municipalities, including Oakville, Mississauga, Guelph, Ajax, and Kitchener. These municipalities were selected due to their similarities with Burlington, in terms of size, historical patterns of development, and general context. As will be outlined throughout this section, some municipalities are implementing comprehensive policies for phasing out post-war commercial development patterns, while others are taking a more selective approach to introducing new forms of commercial development in specific areas.

4.1 COMMERCIAL HIERARCHIES

4.1.1 COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW

The commercial hierarchies adopted by the five selected municipalities represent varying degrees of transition away from auto-oriented, post-war land use strategies that focused on segregating land uses. By and large, the commercial hierarchies represent an effort to phase-out auto-oriented commercial land use patterns and to promote more fine-grained and higher density mixed use development, while balancing the realities of the existing built form and market drivers. As such, many of the municipalities are now accommodating commercial uses through a blend of commercial and mixed use designations (Figure 1). These designations are connected to the intensification framework – particularly growth centres and corridors that are being targeted for intensification in accordance with Provincial directives. Most commonly, future expansion of single-use, auto-oriented commercial areas are not permitted or highly restricted, with the bulk of new commercial development being directed to new mixed use areas.

From a functional perspective, the commercial hierarchies do reflect traditional ideas, in so far as the various types of commercial areas are differentiated according to their catchment area, size, and associated permitted uses. For example, the hierarchy will often include commercial areas that provide goods and services for the region, city, community, and/or neighbourhood – with the scale of development decreasing down to the neighbourhood level, and the types of goods and services that are provided ranging from those required on an occasional basis within city-scaled commercial areas, to those required on a daily or weekly basis at the neighbourhood scale. The footprint of permitted retail uses is also reflected within the hierarchy, with regard to the concentration (total retail GFA) permitted within a designated area.

Beyond the hierarchy of commercial areas and its relation to the overall urban structure, it is also important to consider the degree to which commercial nodes and individual uses are dispersed throughout a city. This is an important consideration if the objective is to create “complete communities” where amenities are accessible by transit, foot and bicycle. In particular, local commercial amenities or nodes
should be available within a 5 to 10-minute walk (or 400 to 800 metres) of most residents. If the urban structure or land use policies do not allow for that type of commercial dispersion, then achieving complete communities is unlikely.

FIGURE 1. COMMERCIAL HIERARCHIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>- Mississauga*</th>
<th>- Oakville</th>
<th>+ Kitchener</th>
<th>+ Guelph</th>
<th>+ Ajax</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Core</td>
<td>Urban Core</td>
<td>Mixed Use Node</td>
<td>Community Mixed Centres</td>
<td>Downtown Central Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Node</td>
<td>Urban Centre</td>
<td>Commercial Node</td>
<td>Mixed Use Corridors</td>
<td>Uptown Central Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Node</td>
<td>Core Commercial</td>
<td>Mixed Use Corridor</td>
<td>Neighbourhood Commercial Centre</td>
<td>Mixed Use Corridor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Commercial</td>
<td>Village Corridor</td>
<td>Mixed Office Commercial</td>
<td>Village Central Area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Business District</td>
<td>Commercial Corridor</td>
<td>Service Commercial</td>
<td>Local Centre Area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Use Main Street 1</td>
<td>Neighbourhood Mixed Use Centre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Use Main Street 2</td>
<td>Convenience Commercial Area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood Commercial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Mixed Use Designation
- Commercial Designation

+ - Evaluation of overall policy approach in terms of integrating commercial land use planning with neighbourhood planning and design.

For reference purposes, more detailed descriptions of the commercial hierarchy designations for each selected municipality are provided in Appendix 1.
4.1.1.1 BURLINGTON’S COMMERCIAL HEIRARCHY

The City of Burlington has established a settlement pattern through their Official Plan that concentrates commercial uses within Major Retail Areas, but also permits their controlled dispersion throughout Mixed Use Areas. The current hierarchy of commercial land use designations can be described as follows:

- Regional Commercial – major activity centres that include retail to serve the city and adjacent communities. This designation applies to mall sites that are a minimum of 20 ha in size with a total retail GFA of at least 45,000 sm. Redevelopment that brings in a mix of jobs and medium-to-high density housing is encouraged for these areas, although to emphasize the retail function of these areas, free-standing non-retail uses are restricted to 50% of the GFA of any property (Section 4.3). The maximum permitted height is 12-storeys.

- Community Commercial – smaller scale activity centres that function much like Regional Commercial centres, but with a smaller catchment area that includes the surrounding residential and business areas. Residential and office uses are also encouraged at these locations, which are five to 12 ha in size, and may include a maximum retail GFA of 45,000 sm (Section 4.4). The maximum permitted height is 12-storeys.

- Mixed Use Corridor Commercial – areas currently characterized by large-format, auto-oriented retail uses that serve the residents of the City and adjacent communities. These corridors will redevelop over the long-term to become transit supportive and pedestrian-oriented with new office and residential uses. Infill will be prioritized over the designation of new commercial corridors. The maximum permitted building height is 3-storeys, except for residential and office use, which may go up to 6-storeys.

- Employment Commercial – areas that are well-suited to accommodate employment and retail uses that require expansive land areas. These areas are meant to serve the occasional needs of residents and the business community, rather than daily or weekly needs. The minimum floor area for permitted uses is 1,000 sm, and it should be noted that new Employment Commercial lands are not permitted. The maximum FAR is 0.3, except for office uses, which may achieve a density of up to 0.5 FAR.

- Neighbourhood Commercial – these commercial nodes are located at the periphery of residential neighbourhoods primarily along arterial roads, and provide retail and service commercial uses to serve people's daily and weekly needs. Smaller-scale nodes are approximately 1 ha in size, with a total GFA of up to 2,500 sm to serve the immediate neighbourhood in its vicinity. These nodes may be located on collector roads. Larger-scale nodes are up to 5 ha in size, with a max GFA of 12,500 sm to serve the needs of the immediate and surrounding residential communities. Residential uses are permitted above grade in these centres.

Aside from these primary commercial designations, commercial uses are directed towards General and Employment-oriented Mixed Use Corridors, as well as the Mixed Use Centres (Downtown and Uptown). While these areas are not intended to serve a primarily commercial
function, controlled retail and service commercial uses are permitted as part of the land use mix, particularly at grade to serve local residents and employees (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2. THE PLACE OF COMMERCIAL USES IN BURLINGTON’S URBAN STRUCTURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Commercial Areas</th>
<th>Limited Commercial Areas</th>
<th>Non-commercial Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional Commercial</td>
<td>Mixed Use Centres</td>
<td>Residential Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Commercial</td>
<td></td>
<td>Employment Lands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Use Corridor Commercial</td>
<td>Mixed Use Corridor – General</td>
<td>Natural Features &amp; Open Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Commercial</td>
<td>Mixed Use Corridor - Employment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood Commercial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 COMMERCIAL LAND USE POLICIES

This section provides a comparative review of how municipalities across the GTA are beginning to plan for commercial land uses in an integrated way. Through the review, a number of model policies are highlighted that provide options for achieving complete, walkable communities where commercial land uses contribute to, rather than detract from, the quality of the public and private realm; and, provide amenities in proximity to where people live and work, while protecting sensitive uses (e.g. residential and employment). The highlighted policies address:

- the fine-grained dispersion of commercial uses;
- restricting the scale and concentration of retail development;
- restricting auto-oriented land uses;
- market impact studies;
• incentives;
• optimizing/minimizing the parking supply; and,
• urban design guidance.

To determine the adequacy of Burlington's existing commercial planning policies, a summary of the City's current policy position is provided for each topic below. Along with the other analysis presented in this report, this comparative policy review has been used to identify strategic considerations for better integrating commercial land use planning with neighbourhood planning and urban design. These strategic considerations are outlined in Chapter 6.

4.2.1 FINE-GRAINED DISPERSION OF COMMERCIAL USES

Several municipalities permit small-scale retail and service commercial uses throughout residential and employment areas to provide amenities that serve day-to-day needs, such as convenience stores near where people live, and banks, gyms and restaurants near where people work. Land use policies that permit this type of dispersion of commercial uses are typically balanced with policies to protect the retention of employment lands, and limit the scale of retail uses within residential areas.

Of the five municipal Official Plans that were reviewed, three include policies to permit commercial uses in residential areas.

• In Ajax, convenience commercial uses are permitted throughout the Residential Area, provided that they are centrally-located on the ground floor of another building and do not exceed 250 sm in size.

• Similarly, in Guelph, service commercial uses that are up to 400 sm in size are permitted throughout residential areas.

• Kitchener’s Official Plan expressly permits Non-Residential Supporting Land Uses within Residential Areas where they are located on an arterial or collector road, within a mixed use building, or as a community focal point. The uses are permitted by zoning by-law amendment.

Within employment areas, especially office/business-employment areas, service commercial uses are also typically permitted as an ancillary/accessory/complementary use that serves local workers. Mississauga limits the extent of these uses to 20% of the site’s total GFA. It should be noted that many municipalities do, however, prohibit commercial uses in heavy industrial areas, and all include provisions prohibiting major retail uses in employment designations.

→ Under Burlington’s current Official Plan, commercial uses are not permitted within residential areas, with the exception of home-based businesses. Although Section 2.2.1.e states that one of the general objectives for Residential Areas is “to provide, where compatible, housing opportunities in proximity to employment areas and residential support uses such as shopping and recreational
areas to create opportunities to reduce travel times”, the list of permitted uses in residential areas does not include commercial uses (Part III, Section 2.2.2.a). Based on these policies and the commercial hierarchy, the expectation is that residents will access local services and goods in Neighbourhood Commercial Areas that are located on the periphery of neighbourhoods, but not dispersed throughout Residential Areas.

Within Employment Areas, a limited range of retail and service commercial uses may be permitted to serve the needs of local workers (Part III, Sections 3.3.2.a, 3.4.2.a). Approval of these uses is subject to a lengthy criteria that includes a Comprehensive Municipal Review and the completion of supporting studies. In addition, ancillary retail and service commercial uses (convenience stores, banks, restaurants), are only permitted in Employment Areas on lands with a total GFA greater than 3,000 sm and may only use up to 15% of a building’s GFA (with the exception of restaurants, which can occupy 100% of one building’s GFA) (Part III, Section 3.3.2 (d)). It should be noted that some other types of commercial uses are permitted as-of-right in Employment Areas. For example, storage facilities, recreational uses, car dealerships, and adult entertainment uses are permitted in the General Employment designation, and hotels and conference/convention centres are permitted in the Business Corridor designation.

4.2.2 RESTRICTING THE SCALE AND CONCENTRATION OF RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

Commercial development patterns that are characterized by large floor-plates detract from the walkability of commercial areas, and often contribute to an unattractive quality of place. To control the size and concentration of commercial uses, some municipalities have introduced GFA restrictions and other types of controls on new retail development.

Kitchener’s Official Plan includes GFA limits for individual buildings and properties that are located in Mixed Use and Commercial Areas (Table 2).

### TABLE 2. GFA LIMITS IN MIXED USE AREAS & COMMERCIAL NODES IN KITCHENER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>GFA limit per “outlet” (m2)</th>
<th>Combined total GFA per property (m2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food Store</td>
<td>Other Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commercial node</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>1,500 (min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mixed use node</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mixed use corridor, village corridor</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neighbourhood mixed use centre</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, to promote mixed use development along Mixed Use Corridors and Village Corridors, retail uses are only permitted on the ground floor of a building that contains other permitted uses at an equal or greater GFA.

In Guelph, Community Mixed Use Centres are restricted to 22,760 sm to 56,000 sm of retail GFA (Section 9.4.2.16), and no centre is permitted to have “more than four (4) freestanding individual retail uses exceeding 5,575 square metres (60,000 sq. ft) of gross floor area” (Section 9.4.12.14). Neighbourhood Commercial Centres are restricted to 4,650 sm of retail GFA (Section 9.4.4.3), and must be spaced at a minimum of 500 m to avoid strip commercial development (Section 9.4.4.2).

Guelph’s policies for Community Mixed Use Centres & Mixed Use Corridors also provide site design standards for developments with a GFA of 5,575 sm or more. For those larger-format uses, the OP policies require flexible site design that does not impede opportunities for smaller-scale uses at intersections and adjacent to the street line near transit stops. Moreover, the policies require that these smaller-scale uses comprise a minimum 10% of the development’s total GFA (Section 9.4.2.1; 9.4.3.8).

In Ajax, Local Centre Areas are restricted to a maximum 10,000 sm of total retail space (Section 3.2.8(c)), and stand-alone uses with a ground plate in excess of 4,646 sm are not permitted in the Downtown Commercial Mixed Use Area.

The Burlington Official Plan includes policies to restrict the proliferation of large-format retail uses in commercial and mixed use areas. Only 30% of a site within a Community Commercial area can be occupied by retail uses that are between 1,800 sm and 5,200 sm, unless the use is a food store, in which case the GFA restriction does not apply (Part III, Section 4.4.2 (g)). Within Mixed Use Commercial Corridors, large-scale retail and service commercial uses are restricted to a maximum GFA of 5,600 sm (excluding food stores) (Part III, Section 5.3.3.2 (b)).

4.2.3 RESTRICTING AUTO-ORIENTED COMMERCIAL LAND USES

Several of the municipalities included in this review have adopted policies to restrict automobile-related commercial land uses such as drive-throughs, particularly within mixed use areas.

In Kitchener, policies for all types of Mixed Use Areas permit the City to adopt zoning standards to discourage land uses that are inconsistent with “the planned density and/or function” of the designation, including a specific list of large format, low density, and/or car-related uses. Drive throughs are specifically prohibited in all Mixed Use Areas, except for Neighbourhood Mixed Use Centres. Drive throughs are also discouraged in Convenience Commercial Areas, although they are permitted in other types of Commercial Areas.

In Ajax, auto-oriented uses are generally restricted in the Downtown Central Area, particularly within Commercial Mixed Use Areas, as well as in some areas of the Uptown Central Area. Specifically, policies 3.2.3.1 (b), 3.2.4.1.b (ii), and 3.2.6.1 (c) state, “land uses which, by function, cater to automobiles rather than pedestrians shall be prohibited”. These uses include, but are not limited to, car service stations and gas
stations, car washes, drive-through facilities (including restaurants), car rental shops, and taxi depots. In addition, new auto-related uses are not permitted in the Village Central Area (Section 3.2.7 (c)).

In Mississauga, a list of car-related land uses are not permitted within the Downtown Mixed Use and Downtown Core Commercial designations (Downtown Core Local Area Plan, Sections 4.1.1 and 4.2.1). In addition, Motor Vehicle Commercial uses (i.e. gas stations and drive throughs) are not permitted in Major Nodes, Community Nodes, or Corporate Centres (13.1.5, 14.1.4, 15.1.7).

Oakville discourages (but does not prohibit) drive throughs in mixed use designations.

→ The existing land use policies in Burlington’s Official Plan do not include specific restrictions on auto-related land uses, such as drive throughs.

4.2.4 MARKET IMPACT STUDIES

To discourage commercial development that is inconsistent with Official Plan policies, some municipalities require applicants to complete a market impact study to rationalize the need for development that exceeds commercial GFA limits, or expands commercial areas.

In Kitchener, a Retail Impact Study may be required for any new commercial development in a Commercial Area. In addition, a Planning Justification Study is required for any development proposal in a Commercial or Mixed Use Area that exceeds the non-residential GFA limits. Planning Justification Studies are also required for development proposals in Mixed Use Areas that include major office use or a retail commercial centre; that propose a Zoning By-law or Official Plan amendment to extend the area of a mixed use area; or that propose to establish a new mixed use area. To monitor the supply of commercial uses, the Official Plan requires the City to maintain a Commercial Inventory.

Similarly in Guelph, Section 9.4.1 of the Official Plan requires that any proposal for commercial or mixed use development that extends beyond the areas identified on the land use schedule, or that exceeds the retail floor area limitations, must be accompanied by a Market Impact Study and may only be approved through an Official Plan Amendment.

Finally, in Ajax, any proposal within a Central Area that includes over 2,500 sm of retail GFA is required to provide a Retail Impact Study, prior to the enactment of local zoning by-laws (Section 3.2.1(h)).

→ Under Burlington’s existing Official Plan, Market Impact Studies are required for any proposal to re-designate land to Regional Commercial, Community Commercial or Employment Commercial (Part III, Section 4.2.2.d(iii), 4.5.2.f(iv)). Market impact studies are also required for “additional retail uses which includes a warehouse club, supermarket/grocery store or large department store, or the sale of food in excess of 1,800 sq. m. in area” (Part III, Section 4.2.2.(g)). The purpose of the Market Impact Study is to assess the
impact of the proposal on the planned function of any existing or designated commercial or mixed use area (i.e. the City's planned urban structure).

4.2.5 INCENTIVES

4.2.5.1 PROMOTING FOOD STORES

Food stores provide an anchor for community-scaled commercial nodes, are significant trip-generators, and provide the most basic amenity for nearby residents. Kitchener’s Official Plan provides incentives to promote the development of food stores throughout all Mixed Use Areas, except Neighbourhood Mixed Use Centres. First, the as-of-right GFA limits for food stores are much higher than for other commercial uses (Table 2). Second, where food stores are incorporated into a mixed use development, the density of the whole development is raised significantly from 2.0 FSR to 5.0 FSR. Incentives are not provided for developing new food stores in Commercial Areas, however, where food stores exist in Commercial Areas, Official Plan policies specify that “planning decisions shall have regard for” their retention and enhancement.

4.2.5.2 PROMOTING LAND USE MIX WITHIN A DEVELOPMENT

Within Kitchener’s Mixed Use Nodes, incentives are also used to encourage a mixture of commercial and residential uses within a development site. Incentives the City may consider include reduced parking requirements; permitting shared parking; increased commercial floor space limits; and/or increasing the maximum Floor Space Ratio (FSR) up to 5.0.

4.2.6 PARKING SUPPLY

To limit the negative impact of surface parking on walkability and urban design in commercial areas, municipalities may consider reduced parking standards, particularly in areas where walking, cycling and transit are desirable modes of transportation:

- In Ajax, Section 3.2.4.7 Downtown Parking Policies specifies a “reduced” parking standard for retail commercial uses, at 3.75 spaces/100 sm and stand-alone restaurants, at 6 spaces/100 sm. Further reductions are permitted in proximity to parking garages.

- In Kitchener, reduced parking requirements and shared parking arrangements may be considered throughout Mixed Use Areas, and in a Major Transit Station Area where residential units are proposed within a large mixed use development in proximity to transit facility.

- In Guelph, “reduced parking requirements may be considered as part of a Parking Study, particularly within Downtown, Community Mixed-use Nodes and Intensification Corridors, or for affordable housing, or where high levels of transit exist or are planned” (Section 5.11.6).
Mississauga’s Official Plan includes general provisions for considering parking reductions where transit service is provided (Section 8.4.3). In particular, parking reductions may be considered within Intensification Areas (Section 8.4.7), and parking requirements may be reduced or eliminated through the implementation of the Downtown Core policies (Local Area Plan, Section 5.1.1).

Oakville's Official Plan directs the Town to investigate maximum parking standards and establish reduced standards for Growth Areas and major transit station areas. In general, reduced parking standards may also be permitted where a TDM plan and implementation strategy are prepared. Commercial uses in the CBD are exempt from parking requirements.

In addition to reduced parking standards, municipalities are also calling for the provision of bicycle parking as part of complete and healthy community design. Whether or not they have yet adopted mandatory standards through their zoning by-laws, they do either encourage or require bicycle parking to be provided through their Official Plan policies.

Mississauga’s Official Plan directs the City to require bicycle parking and other end-of-trip facilities within all buildings and Major Transit Station Areas, as appropriate (Section 8.2.4.4).

Guelph’s Official Plan states that bicycle parking “shall be” provided, and that sheltered parking should be integrated with the built form (Section 8.12.7).

Kitchener’s Official Plan states “the City will require new, multi-unit residential, commercial, industrial, office and institutional developments to provide secure bicycle parking and will encourage, where appropriate, shower/change facilities for cycling commuters” (Section 2.22.5)

In Oakville, new bicycle parking standards “shall be” implemented through the Zoning By-Law (Section 8.10.8), while in Ajax, bicycle parking will simply be “encouraged” (Section 2.5.3.g.vii)

Burlington’s current Official Plan policies include provisions to reduce the parking requirement in selected Mixed Use Areas. Off-street parking reductions may be permitted in the Mixed Corridor General (Part III, Section 5.3.2.e(v)), Mixed Use Corridor Employment (Part III, Section 5.3.4.e(iv)), and Mixed Use Centre (Part III, Section 5.4.2.m) designations where transit-supportive site design or shared parking arrangements are implemented. Within the Downtown, parking reductions may be approved based on a Transportation Demand Management Plan (Part III, Section 5.5.14.e), and non-residential uses are exempt from parking requirements in the Downtown Core and Wellington Street Mixed Use Precincts.
In terms of bicycle parking, Burlington’s Official Plan states that adequate and secure bicycle parking will be required for commercial (and other) land uses (Part II, Section 3.5.2.f). In addition, the City’s Zoning By-Law (2020) establishes a minimum bicycle standard of 2 spaces plus 1 space/1,000 sm GFA for retail, retail centre, service commercial, and office uses.

4.2.7 URBAN DESIGN GUIDANCE

All of the Official Plans that were reviewed include urban design policies that apply to all land uses. Most also include site and building design policies for commercial uses, particularly within mixed use areas. Of particular relevance are urban design policies that emphasize high quality design, place-making, the provision of pedestrian movement through sites, continuous street walls with street-related entrances, limited setbacks, and taller first-floor heights to accommodate active commercial uses at grade, and more fine-grained block development, with parking located in structures, below grade, or at the rear of buildings.

4.2.7.1 PARKING LOT DESIGN

Within suburban commercial areas, surface parking lots often exert a particularly negative impact on walkability and the quality of a place. As such, it is common for municipalities to provide urban design guidelines or requirements for parking. Example policy approaches are outlined in Table 3.

**TABLE 3. POLICIES FOR MITIGATING THE IMPACTS OF PARKING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mississauga</th>
<th>Oakville</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduced Surface Parking</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking located at rear or side of building</td>
<td>Encouraged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underground or Structured Parking**</td>
<td>Encouraged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoning***</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentives</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Parking will be allowed off-site, where appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged generally</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required for Main Street 1 &amp; 2, Urban Centre, Urban Core, Midtown Oakville</td>
<td>Encouraged for Urban Centre, Urban Core, Midtown Oakville, Uptown Core, Bronte Village Main Street district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional lot coverage where at least 75 percent of parking is below-grade or structured in Midtown Oakville, Uptown Core, Palermo Village’s Urban Centre and Main Street 2 designations</td>
<td>Additional lot coverage where at least 75 percent of parking is below-grade or structured in Midtown Oakville, Uptown Core, Palermo Village’s Urban Centre and Main Street 2 designations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% maximum surface parking lot coverage in parts of Palermo Village</td>
<td>Underground parking is a bonusable community benefit in the Uptown Core</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table: Parking Options and Zoning Incentives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Reduced Surface Parking</th>
<th>Parking located at or side of building</th>
<th>Underground or Structured Parking**</th>
<th>Zoning***</th>
<th>Incentives Details</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kitchener</td>
<td>Encouraged* for commercial areas</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Encouraged for the Downtown</td>
<td>May include standards to limit parking along the frontage</td>
<td>Additional density up to an FSR of 4.0 for structured parking in Mixed Use Nodes and Mixed Use Corridors</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guelph</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Encouraged</td>
<td>Encouraged</td>
<td>May include standards to limit parking along the frontage</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Parking not permitted adjacent to intersections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajax</td>
<td>Encouraged</td>
<td>Mandatory, except adjacent to Hwy 401</td>
<td>Encouraged, particularly below grade</td>
<td>Will establish minimum lot coverage standards for the Downtown Central Area</td>
<td>&quot;Enhanced development incentives&quot; for structured parking in the Downtown</td>
<td>Parking may be provided off-site in the Downtown and Village Central Area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* "Encouraged" means the Official Plan policies either says the action will be "encouraged", or includes words such as "should" or "may". In contrast, "Mandatory" means Official Plan policies that use words such as "shall" or "will be required".

** In general, municipalities prioritize underground parking, and require structured parking to include active uses at grade.

*** Development standards to be implemented through the Zoning By-Law.

#### 4.2.7.2 DESIGN PLANS

To evaluate whether a development application satisfies urban design policies and/or guidelines, some municipalities require the submission of design plans. For example, in Mississauga, development proponents may be required to provide concept plans. In Guelph, concept plans are required for development in Community Mixed Use Centres, and site plans are required for development along Mixed Use Corridors. Under Section 3.3 of Kitchener's Official Plan, the City may require applications for development in Mixed Use Areas to include a site plan, elevation drawings, 3D model, shadow study, angular plane analysis, and any other appropriate plans/studies as part of a complete application. Similarly, under Section 3.4, the City may require development applications in Commercial Areas to complete a site-specific urban design study.

→ According to Burlington's Official Plan, Regional Commercial, Community Commercial centres and Mixed Use Areas are intended to be integrated with the surrounding area, and to provide safe walking and cycling conditions with access to transit (Part III, Sections 4.3.2(g); 4.4.2(h); 5.2.2(k)). The general urban design policies under Section 6 of the Official Plan outline additional guidelines and expectations for the whole City that address many of the common elements highlighted above for creating a sense of place and improving the pedestrian environment. Specifically, the general design policies address the compatibility of infill development,
pedestrian-oriented built form and streetscapes, transit supportive design, personal and public safety, parking, and sustainability. To support the evaluation of development proposal with regard to these guidelines, applicants are required to submit design plans that, “among other things”:

identify the natural environment system as the organizing framework for new community forms, define a physical organization that supports the goals of mixed land use, diversity and pedestrian orientation, define the public realm and the relationship of built form to the public realm, address issues of the physical integration of the community with surrounding areas, encourage the use of public transit and the creation of an environment for pedestrians and bicyclists, identify opportunities to integrate public art or other cultural elements into the community, and promote public safety (Part II, Section 6.3(d)).

In addition, Part VI, Section 2.5.2 designates the entire City of Burlington as a Site Plan Control Area, although certain types of development may be exempt by Council.

With regard to parking, the Official Plan policies state that surface parking should be located at the side or rear of buildings within the Mixed Use Corridor General (Part III, Section 5.3.2.g(v)) and Mixed Use Centre (Part III, Section 5.4.2.g(vii) and (viii)) designations. As an incentive to provide underground parking, the City may also permit an increased FAR in the Mixed Use Corridor General (Part III, Section 5.3.2.d(i)) and Mixed Use Corridor Commercial (Part III, Section 5.3.3.e) designations. In addition, surface parking is banned in the Downtown’s Old Lakeshore Road Precinct (Part III, Section 5.5.7.2.g), Core Precinct (Part III, Section 5.5.8.2.e), and Wellington Square Mixed Use Precinct (Part III, Section 5.5.9.2.e).
5 THE DOWNTOWN

5.1 THE POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR DOWNTOWN

5.1.1 PROVINCIAL DENSITY TARGETS FOR THE DOWNTOWN BURLINGTON URBAN GROWTH CENTRE AND MOBILITY HUB

The Growth Plan establishes minimum density targets for mixed use urban growth centres, including Downtown Burlington. Under Section 2.2.4.5.b of the Growth Plan, Downtown Burlington is to achieve a minimum gross density of 200 residents and jobs per hectare by 2031.

Downtown Burlington also includes the Burlington Transit Station, which is considered a Major Transit Station Area under the Growth Plan, and a regionally significant anchor mobility hub under The Big Move. Under the Growth Plan, municipalities are required to develop minimum density targets for intensification areas, including Major Transit Station Areas, that are “consistent with the planned transit service levels, and any transit-supportive land-use guidelines established by the Government of Ontario” (Section 2.2.3.6.h). Since the adoption of the Growth Plan, the Province has adopted general Transit Supportive Guidelines (2011) as well as specific Mobility Hub Guidelines (2011).

Burlington’s Downtown Transit Terminal (a.k.a. the Downtown Burlington Mobility Hub) is planned to integrate Rapid Transit, Regional Rail and local transit (Downtown Burlington Mobility Hub Profile, Metrolinx, 2012). Based on these transit services and associated Provincial guidelines, the Downtown Burlington Mobility Hub is expected to achieve minimum density targets in the range of 160 to 250 people and jobs per gross hectare, with a transit mode share target of up to 30% (Table 4). As a re-integrated component of the City’s commercial hierarchy, these density targets will influence the form of commercial uses in the Downtown.

**TABLE 4. DENSITY AND TRANSIT MODE SHARE TARGETS FOR THE DOWNTOWN BURLINGTON MOBILITY HUB**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transit Mode</th>
<th>MHG Min. Density Target(^1^)</th>
<th>TSG Min. Density Target(^2^)</th>
<th>MHG Transit Mode Share Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Transit</td>
<td>50-150</td>
<td>50-100</td>
<td>10-25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus Rapid Transit</td>
<td>100-250</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>20-30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Rail</td>
<td>50-100</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>10-25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Density targets are reported as people and jobs per gross hectare.
Sources: (1) Metrolinx Mobility Hub Guidelines (2008), Table ii.3; (2) Ministry of Transportation Transit Supportive Guidelines (2011), Section 1.1.7
5.1.2 THE COMMERCIAL FUNCTION OF MOBILITY HUBS

Mobility Hubs include major transit stations and the surrounding area within a walkable catchment area. Within the regional transportation network, these hubs are important places of connectivity where people begin and end their trips to work, school, shopping, etc., and where they transfer from one mode to another (e.g. from local transit to regional rail).

According to Section 2.5.5 of the Growth Plan, Section 7 of The Big Move, and the Mobility Hub Guidelines, the vision is for these areas to evolve into high-density mixed use nodes where people live, work an visit, and where the needs and desires of the public transit user are prioritized by providing seamless connectivity and a high quality user experience. Figure 3 is taken from Metrolinx’s Mobility Hub Guidelines and illustrates the “key elements of a successful mobility hub”.

The Burlington Transit Terminal and surrounding area have been characterized as the Downtown Burlington Anchor Mobility Hub. Anchor mobility hubs are expected to contribute to the evolution of urban growth centres into major nodes of activity and development within the regional urban structure.

To support a high quality user experience within mobility hubs, the Province’s guidelines recommend “develop[ing] a station retail program that is responsive to customer demand, convenience and market needs” (Section 3.2, Mobility Hub Guidelines). Commercial uses are promoted because retail and service amenities increase convenience for transit users, while also generating revenue and activity within the station area.

Commercial uses that are typically in demand at transit stations include those that offer food, reading materials, and services such as dry cleaning and banking. Specific examples include convenience stores, newspaper stands, ATMs, cafes, and fast-food outlets. The Mobility Hub Guidelines also recommend clustering regional retail uses at mobility hubs (outside of the station proper) to increase market potential (Section 3.2.1).
Aside from the type of retail that should be directed to major transit station areas, the Mobility Hub Guidelines recommend retail uses be located in high-traffic areas, such as “station entrances, plazas, waiting areas, and major movement corridors” (Section 3.2.3), or in locations that are highly-visible from these areas. This guidance is consistent with best practices in station design.

5.1.3 OFFICIAL PLAN POLICIES FOR THE DOWNTOWN

Part III, Section 5.5 of the Burlington Official Plan provides detailed policies for the Downtown, which describe the area as a high density, mixed use and vibrant “people place” that will demonstrate high quality urban design. The area is recognized for its strategic location within the public transit network, and its designation as an urban growth centre under the Province’s Growth Plan. Section 5.5.3 incorporates the Provincially mandated minimum density target of 200 people and jobs per gross hectare for the Burlington Downtown as a whole.

From a commercial land use planning perspective, the Downtown Mixed Use Centre is expected to offer city-wide lifestyle and entertainment amenities, while also serving a Community Commercial function for local residents (Part III, Section 5.5.1(j)). In addition, specialty retail is promoted to create a unique shopping experience, “as an alternative to the car oriented, shopping plazas, malls and business corridors” available in other parts of the City (Part III, Section 5.5.1 e, 5.5.2.e). A mixed use approach is generally advocated for accommodating retail stores and other commercial uses (Part III, Section 5.5.3.h).

Although mixed uses are generally promoted in the principles and objectives for the Downtown, retail and service commercial uses are not included in the list of permitted uses for most of the residential, institutional and open space precincts, including the St. Luke’s and Emerald Neighbourhood Precincts (Part III, Section 5.5.4.b), the Downtown Residential Medium and/or High Density Precincts (Part III, Section 5.5.5.b), the Waterfront West/Public Lands Precinct (Part III, Section 5.5.6.2.a), and the Downtown Major Institutional Precinct (Part III, Section 5.5.10.2.a). Local service and retail uses are only expressly permitted, and even required continuously at grade, within the Downtown Core (Part III, Sections 5.5.8.2.a, 5.5.8.2.d) and Wellington Square Mixed Use Precincts (Part III, Sections 5.5.9.2.a, 5.5.9.2.d) (Figure 4).
5.1.4 DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES (2006)

The Burlington Downtown Urban Design Guidelines address public realm features, built form, and sustainability for the Downtown as a whole, and then provide detailed Block Plan Guidelines for specific areas. The Guidelines were originally prepared in response to concerns over the loss of character, owing to an increase in condominium and townhouse development in the Downtown. Notably, the area subject to the Guidelines is not consistent with the boundaries of either the Downtown Mixed Use Centre or the Downtown Urban Growth Boundary. Generally, lands north of Victoria Avenue, west of Burlington Avenue, and residential neighbourhoods are excluded.

With regard to the role of the Guidelines within the land use policy framework, it is noted that the Official Plan and Zoning By-Law “define the type of buildings, uses and densities that are desirable, but do not provide details on how these buildings should be articulated and outlined to achieve the goals outlined in the Official Plan” (p.6). The Guidelines are intended to fill this gap in the policy framework, and support the ongoing success of the Downtown, as a unique and character-driven area of the City.

5.1.4.1 URBAN DESIGN GUIDANCE FOR COMMERCIAL USES

Within the Public Realm Guidelines, Section 4.3 provides guidance for signage, encouraging their integration in a compatible fashion with respect to scale, material and colour, as well as in compliance with the City’s Sign by-law. Due to the scale, density and special role of the Downtown, a special signage zone is recommended to tailor provisions for addressing billboards; ground signs; mobile signs; sandwich boards; and, advertising vehicles. Furthermore, principles are recommended as needed to guide the size and proportion of signage depending on the location and nature of the buildings.

Section 4.3.6 provides guidance for signage on heritage buildings, including the protection of vintage signs; ensuring signage installations are reversible; permitting only front lit or signs with individual lettering; and, allowing signs to occupy no more than 5% of the individual façade. Section 4.3.7 provides other signage principles that include: signage should not significantly obstruct window areas; discouraging or limiting the scale of backlit signage; the use of low energy consumption; and, prohibiting up-lighting of signage to limit light pollution.

Within the Built Form Guidelines, Section 5.3.2 provides guidance for loading and servicing areas with emphasis on ensuring these functions are integrated and internalized, located away from principle streets and screened from key pedestrian areas. Although not specific to commercial uses alone, Section 5.4.3 speaks to grade-level design, requiring high levels of transparency (60% glazing facing public street or areas) and access to animate the public realm. A minimum floor to ceiling height of 4.5m is also required. Section 5.9.5 provides specific guidance for commercial low-rise buildings, encouraging direct and activated relationships to the street, with parking provided either on the street or to the rear. This section also provides additional guidelines that include:

- Discouraging franchise or corporate style architecture and/or contrasting colour schemes;
Heavily landscaping the street edge between buildings and through parking areas; in addition to providing pedestrian amenities;

- Discouraging excessive illumination of signage, buildings or sites; and,

- The screening and design integration of rooftop mechanical equipment.

Section 7 provides Block Plan Guidelines for each of the block within the Study Area and, where applicable, provides general and/or specific recommendations with respect to commercial uses. For example, in some blocks along Brant Street infill development is encouraged to reinforce the existing rhythm and scale of retail shops, while in distinct blocks such as the one containing the Village Square, specific recommendations for revitalizing the environment are made.

5.2 RELEVANT STUDIES

5.2.1 OFFICE AND RETAIL MARKETS DOWNTOWN BURLINGTON (2012)

The consulting firm Deloitte assessed the market feasibility of economic development occurring in the City of Burlington. According to Deloitte, retail space in the Downtown could more readily accommodate new development because costs are lower there than in power centers and malls. It should be noted, however, that rent costs in the Downtown are in-line with other retail areas across Burlington (i.e. retail areas outside of the Downtown that are not a power centre or mall). In terms of parking, Burlington has less public parking relative to neighbouring municipalities as well as a lower ratio of parking relative to its number of business establishments.

Deloitte also undertook a SWOT analysis assessing the retail implications that may be created by intensification. Key strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities for retail based on redevelopment are identified in Table 5. Based on their analysis, Deloitte conclude that redevelopment in the Downtown poses certain challenges that will need to be addressed before long-term intensification objectives can be achieved. In particular, increasing pressures on the parking supply and existing infrastructure should be addressed as a priority. Deloitte recommend the parking levy be reviewed, but stressed that net rents generally reflect what tenants are willing to pay. In addition, policies for new higher forms of density should emphasize the creation of functional and marketable retail space.
TABLE 5. SUMMARY OF SWOT ANALYSIS FOR DOWNTOWN BURLINGTON’S OFFICE AND RETAIL MARKETS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the number of tenants with a longstanding history in the Downtown</td>
<td>cost and availability of parking for patrons</td>
<td>newer, more marketable retail space</td>
<td>the increasing CVA (Credit Value Adjustment), which could result in significant increases to property taxes over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the momentum of current redevelopment</td>
<td>cost of parking for tenants</td>
<td>increasing rental costs in shopping centres (associated with the entry of new tenants from the US and elsewhere)</td>
<td>the potential of further redevelopment/intensification to exacerbate the current parking issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increases in residential development and intensification</td>
<td>distance from population growth in Northeast Burlington</td>
<td></td>
<td>redevelopment does not always produce attractive and affordable retail space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the wide mix of uses within the Downtown</td>
<td>unsuccessful legacy projects such as Village Square and Upper Canada Place</td>
<td></td>
<td>the entry of new tenants and formats will strengthen shopping centres and competing locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the waterfront location and recreation capacity</td>
<td>competitive rents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.2 DOWNTOWN MERCHANDISING STRATEGY (2009)

A Merchandising Strategy was prepared by the Burlington Downtown Business Association in 2009. The Strategy indicates that Downtown Burlington is reinventing itself, transitioning from traditional retailing that competes with large suburban big box stores, to retailing that is to more focused on creating a destination shopping experience. During consultations on the Strategy, the community supported this characterization. The Business Association’s Strategy highlights many characteristics of the Downtown that contribute to its identification as a successful and vibrant centre, including:

- A growing niche of retailers that broaden a local shopping experience;
- The planned redevelopment of the waterfront hotel;
- A strong existing historic residential neighbourhood;
• Ongoing condominium development;

• The City’s support for the planned Performing Arts Centre; and,

• Public investment in the waterfront pier at Brant Street.

Taken together, the locational characteristics, access to the waterfront park system, and the emergence of destination retail and dining, mean the Downtown has the capacity to draw consumers and visitors from beyond the City’s boundaries and take advantage of the regional market of 670,172 people. The Strategy notes that the area’s market potential is also supported by its designation as an urban growth centre, which supports the ongoing population growth and investment.

The demographics of the City’s own population suggest there is support for dining and boutique retailing in the Downtown, as well as commercial activities targeted to children and families. Overall, household income levels are quite high in Burlington, with the share of families earning over $100,000 increasing by 28% from 2000 to 2005 (more recent data was not reported). For businesses in the City, this translates into higher disposable incomes for dining and specialty and/or boutique retailing. And although the population is generally aging, Burlington can be described as a youthful community with 28.1% of the current population being between 25 and 44 years, and 18.1% being under 15.

The Business Association’s Merchandising Strategy identified a number of actions to support the continued success of Downtown that are relevant to commercial land use planning and the Official Plan Review. These include:

• Prioritizing the development of specialty grocery or food stores;

• Adopting retail-oriented economic development tools to mitigate costs for retrofitting old buildings in the Downtown;

• Revisiting the parking policy, reinforcing free parking and parking validation, and continued promotion of the location and availability of parking; and,

• Creating a visual focus symbolizing Downtown Burlington’s commitment to business, culture, arts and lifestyle.

5.2.3 DOWNTOWN VISIONING SESSION (2012)

A visioning session facilitated by urbanMetrics was held in November of 2012 as part of the City’s consultation program for updating its policies for the Downtown. The findings of the visioning session support many of the conclusions drawn by Deloitte and the Downtown Burlington Business Association, although there are some differences.
The visioning session was primarily attended by residents of the Downtown, which is evident in some of the findings. In particular, the participants viewed the primary functions of Downtown to be a neighbourhood shopping centre and place to live, rather than a regional shopping centre. This view may or may not be shared by residents that live in other parts of the City and Region. The respondents also prioritized improvements that support walking and transit above those for driving and cycling. Notably, there was strong support for ensuring there is a diversity of housing options in the Downtown to accommodate people of different incomes and stages in life, as well as for attracting more office uses to the Downtown.

With regard to what they enjoy most in the Downtown, the participants identified the waterfront as a major asset above and beyond all others. Restaurants, cafes and walking were also highlighted. The participants identified the need for more entertainment options, more retail stores, and more restaurants and cafes. With regard to retail, food-related stores received the greatest support, which may reflect that most of the participants are residents of the Downtown. In particular, they wanted to see a farmer’s market, specialty food stores, and another supermarket.

5.2.4 ON-STREET RETAIL SURVEY (2012)

An on-street survey was conducted by urbanMetrics in Downtown Burlington in November 2012. When asked what additional retail or service facilities people would like to see in the area, common responses included movie theatre, place of entertainment (e.g., live music club), specialty food stores (bakeries, delis), full-service restaurants/pubs, cafes, fast-food restaurants, and clothing/jewellery stores. Moreover, many respondents indicated that a greater variety of options are needed, including more affordable options.

It should also be noted that although the City’s Official Plan currently categorizes the Downtown as serving a Community Commercial Centre function, survey participants responded that it was important for the Downtown to be a regional shopping centre, neighbourhood commercial centre, and a cultural centre—reflecting a need to accommodate uses that serve the people who live and work in the area, as well as those that are drawn to the area from across the City and beyond. This multifunctional preference is characteristic of successful Downtowns.

5.2.5 DOWNTOWN PARKING STUDY (2011)

The Strategic Plan (2011-2014) directed the City to complete a Downtown parking supply review, and to pursue a mixed-use development and partnership for the existing public parking lot at Elizabeth and Pine Streets as a key outcome. The Parking Study was completed by MMM in 2011, and included an assessment of the current and future parking needs of the area.

The observed parking demand rate of 1.37 spaces per 1,000 sq. ft was derived based on overall peak parking demand and existing commercial floor space in the area. For Downtown Burlington, this rate is found to fall within the lower range of parking demand rates as
compared to other municipalities within Halton Region. This variation can be attributed to efficiency of floor space layout, mix of uses Downtown, parking pricing, and travel demand measures.

The City estimated an overall shortage of 471 parking spaces within the Downtown, based on the observed parking demand rate. This parking deficit was found mostly in areas along the Brant Street corridor and along Lakeshore Road. A parking strategy was created to respond to the desire to maintain short-term on-street parking in priority locations, create more convenient and attractive off-street parking in priority locations, and provide future opportunities for parking facilities to meet current and projected demands.

Key recommendations of the Parking Study are to consolidate monthly permit parking locations, introduce reserved carpool spaces for City staff, reconfigure existing parking lots, and construct new parking facilities in priority municipal lot locations as part of a mixed use redevelopment. Locust Street Lot 7 was identified as a potential site for reconfigurations that could result in additional parking, and Elizabeth Street Lot 4 was considered most desirable for a new parking structure. Estimated construction for 500 spaces ranged between $12.5 million and $17.5 million.

5.3 COMMERCIAL SITE ANALYSIS

A detailed inventory of commercial spaces in the Downtown was undertaken that includes addresses, business names, floor area, commercial types and other pertinent descriptions. Based on this information a number of key observations were made with respect to common patterns or characteristics.

5.3.1 VACANCY ANALYSIS

Of the total 473 commercial units identified, 86 were vacant accounting for 18% of all commercial spaces or 30% of retail/service spaces, of which there is approximately a total of 276. 72% of the vacant units were located in complexes such as Burlington Square Plaza and Village Square, as opposed to the street-oriented locations traditionally associated with downtowns. Of the remaining 28% of vacant units, most were located on either John or Pearl Streets. Only 5 street-oriented units were identified as vacant on Brant Street. The median floor area of vacant units is relatively small at 90 sm (965 sf). In sum, there is a strong correlation between vacant retail/service units and locations not afforded with high visibility and foot traffic, such as suburban formats, off Brant Street or further away from the core. These units also have smaller than typical floor areas, limiting the extent of potential tenants and their flexibility.

5.3.2 MERCHANDISE RETAILING ANALYSIS

Of the approximately 190 retail establishments, 64 or 34% are retailers of non-food related goods. Most are specific to women's and men's clothing, accessories, shoes and other related products at 45%, followed by home products such furniture and appliances at 19%. While the
majority of these retailers are located along Brant Street, particularly clothing related shops, home and specialty products tend to also locate on adjacent streets such as John Street. Specialty shops such as jewelers tend to occupy the smallest spaces with a median area of only 74 sm (800 sf), but in general the median scale is 177 sm (1,900 sf), consistent with the narrow storefronts on Brant Street and typically found on traditional ‘main streets’ – generally 19 feet wide and 100 feet deep. In sum, it is notable that very few of these retailers are located in the plazas or malls and appear to prefer street-oriented formats with high degree of visibility and access to pedestrian traffic.

5.3.3 CONVENIENCE, FOOD & SPIRITS RETAILING ANALYSIS

Of the approximate 14 retailers of food-related products, 79% are convenience or specialty food stores and most are located on Brant Street. Both retailers selling beer/wine or liquor products are located off Brant Street, possibly relying more on vehicular access and wider area draw. While the one supermarket and some convenience stores locate in the plazas, all the specialty food stores tend to locate in more street-oriented formats. With the exception of the supermarket at 2,443 sm (26,300 sf), the median scale is 232 sm (2,500 sf), slightly larger than that of the merchandise retailers.

5.3.4 HOSPITALITY RETAILING ANALYSIS

Of the approximately 190 retail establishments, 55 or 29% are hospitality related. At 67%, most are full service restaurants and the majority of them (62%) are located on Brant Street or Lakeshore Road. 14 of the 17 limited service eating places are also locate on either Brant Street or Lakeshore Road. These locations are generally consistent with the highest concentrations of pedestrian traffic and in proximity to most offices that are likely the greatest source of daily customers. The median size of full service restaurants tends to be almost twice the size of limited service food places, at 279 sm (3,000 sf) and 153 sm (1,650 sf) respectively.

5.3.5 NEIGHBOURHOOD-ORIENTED RETAILING ANALYSIS

Of the approximately 190 retail establishments, 30 or 16% can be defined as servicing the local residential population, such as food stores, pharmacies, florists and dry cleaners. These retailers are located throughout the Downtown but many are in proximity to residential areas and off Brant Street. These locations may also correlate to more affordable lease rates. While food and convenience related stores tend to be larger, laundries and dry cleaners occupy the smallest spaces with a median size of 84 sm (900 sf). The overall median size is 186sm (2,000 sf).

5.3.6 GENERAL & PUBLIC SERVICES ANALYSIS

Service type uses account for approximately 33% of the 473 commercial spaces in the Downtown, and include pharmacies, banks, health and family services, hair salons and social or business organizations. Health and family services account for most of these units at 33%,
followed by personal services such as hair and aesthetic related services at 29%. Most services are located on Brant Street, with the exception being personal services where over half are located on other streets. This may correspond to both more affordable spaces and the tendency for these uses to be destination oriented. It is notable that many health, family and social services are located in the plazas and malls. The scale of units varies greatly but the overall median is relatively small at 139 sm (1,500 sf). The 5 Banks account for the largest median at 539 sm (5,800 sf).

5.3.7 PROFESSIONAL OFFICES ANALYSIS

Offices and services relating to professions such as finance, insurance, real estate, law and accounting, account for approximately 20% of all commercial spaces in the Downtown. As with the general and public services, the majority are located on Brant Street and a large number within the malls or plazas. A significant number of these offices are also located at upper levels. While the scale of these units can vary greatly, most are relatively small with a median of 107sm (1,150sf).

5.3.8 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it appears that location with greatest exposure and access to foot traffic is the primary determinant of the viability of retail uses, with scale and degree of flexibility problematic mostly for more isolated locations. On the other hand, services and professional offices appear to be least concerned with direct access to the street or exposure to foot traffic, indicating less reliance on walk-in business.
6 STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE CITY-WIDE NETWORK OF COMMERCIAL USES

Burlington’s land use policies for commercial uses already promote higher quality urban design and provide a number of safeguards against car-oriented development, and more generally, signal a transition to a mixed use approach to commercial land use planning that is based on the intensification framework, with policies to guide the transformation of traditional commercial areas. Notwithstanding this, there may be opportunities to better incorporate commercial land use planning with neighbourhood planning and urban design. A number of these opportunities are outlined below for strategic consideration as the Commercial Strategy Study proceeds through Phase 2.

6.1.1 THE COMMERCIAL HIERARCHY

The City of Burlington’s existing commercial hierarchy demonstrates a first step in the transition towards creating mixed use “people places”. To more fully phase-out segregated commercial areas, strategic consideration should be given to a modified commercial hierarchy and land use policies that over the long-term can:

- fuse the commercial hierarchy with the urban structure;
- disperse commercial land uses in proximity to where people live and work, and
- integrate non-commercial uses more fully with existing retail areas.

A modified commercial structure would retain areas with higher concentrations of commercial uses than other areas, but these areas would serve multiple functions and more effectively act as neighbourhood or community based hubs of activity – whether it be of a primarily commercial, social, cultural or economic nature.

To support further deliberations regarding a modified commercial hierarchy that identifies areas where commercial uses will be encouraged within the urban structure, a revised set of designations is proposed below (Table 6). The proposed structure represents a simplification of Burlington’s commercial and mixed use area designations and would need to be implemented with strong urban design guidance, which will be key achieving walkable, complete communities where commercial uses contribute to a vibrant sense of place.
### TABLE 6. MODIFIED MIXED USE/COMMERCIAL HIERARCHY DESIGNATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Built Form</th>
<th>Land Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Core</td>
<td>Regional, City-wide, and Neighbourhood</td>
<td>Primary hub with high intensity of economic activity</td>
<td>Mix of high, mid and low-rise buildings with minimal at-grade setbacks, appropriate above-grade stepbacks, and active street frontages</td>
<td>Broader mix of commercial, cultural, office, institutional, residential and open space uses, with a commercial emphasis on specialty retailers and restaurants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Centre</td>
<td>Regional, City-wide and Neighbourhood</td>
<td>Secondary hub with a significant intensity of economic activity</td>
<td>Mix of high and mid-rise buildings, with minimal at-grade setbacks, appropriate above-grade stepbacks, and active street frontages</td>
<td>Broader mix of commercial, cultural, office, institutional, residential and open space uses, with an overall emphasis on retail and service commercial use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Corridor</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Moderate levels of economic activity</td>
<td>Mid-rise buildings with minimal at-grade setbacks, appropriate above-grade stepbacks, and active street frontages</td>
<td>Mix of office and residential uses, with an emphasis on retail, service commercial, and community service uses at grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood Centre</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Moderate levels of economic activity</td>
<td>Mid-rise buildings with minimal at-grade setbacks, appropriate above-grade stepbacks, and active street frontages</td>
<td>Small-scale open space, residential and limited office with retail, service commercial and community services at grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood Corridor</td>
<td>Neighbourhood</td>
<td>Low levels of economic activity</td>
<td>Primarily low rise buildings with minimal setbacks and flexible first storey heights that can accommodate commercial uses over time</td>
<td>Residential and limited office, with retail and service commercial uses at grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood Node</td>
<td>Neighbourhood</td>
<td>Insignificant levels of economic activity</td>
<td>Low-rise building with minimal setback</td>
<td>Convenience retail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 5. VISUALIZING A MODIFIED COMMERCIAL HIERARCHY/URBAN STRUCTURE

Urban Core

Urban Centre

Urban Corridor

Neighbourhood Centres and Corridors

Neighbourhood Node

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Aside from these commercially-oriented areas, the City of Burlington’s urban structure would continue to include Residential Areas, Employment Areas, and Open Space network. The intention would be to generally restrict commercial uses in these other areas, while permitting some convenience retail and service commercial uses to serve the day-to-day needs of residents and employees within a walkable distance of their place of residence or work.

6.1.2  FINE-GRAINED DISPERSION OF COMMERCIAL USES

Permitting convenience commercial and service commercial uses in close proximity to where people live and work is essential to fostering a transition towards complete, walkable communities. Burlington’s Official Plan does not currently permit commercial uses in Residential Areas, which account for the vast majority of the City’s urban area. Restricting commercial uses in these areas can negatively impact the walkability of neighbourhoods and people’s access to services and goods. Within this context, strategic consideration should be given to permitting some small-scale, pedestrian-oriented convenience commercial uses in Residential Areas, subject to size restrictions, locational criteria, and any other conditions deemed necessary.

6.1.3  RESTRICTING THE SCALE OF RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

To prevent the ongoing proliferation of car-oriented large-format retail uses and an over-concentration of retail uses in one area, municipalities are introducing GFA limits for individual retail “outlets”, and combined GFA limits for commercial and mixed use centres. Burlington currently restricts large format retail uses that are between 1,800 sm and 5,200 sm to account for no more than 30% of a Community Commercial area. Retail outlets are limited to a maximum GFA of 5,600 sm in Mixed Use Commercial Corridors as well. It should be noted that food stores are exempt from these GFA limits in recognition of the important role they play in anchoring community-based commercial nodes and serving people’s daily shopping needs. Strategic consideration should be given to establishing GFA limits and/or overall percentage caps for all commercial/mixed use designations.

6.1.4  RESTRICTING AUTO-ORIENTED LAND USES

By their very form and function, auto-oriented land uses such as drive-throughs, car washes, gas stations, and car dealerships, detract from the walkability of places. For this reason, some municipalities prohibit or discourage auto-oriented land uses in intensification areas and other important nodes and corridors. Burlington’s Official Plan does not currently include any direct restrictions on auto-oriented land uses, and strategic considerations should be given to identifying a list of such uses and prohibiting or discouraging them throughout the commercial/mixed use designations.
6.1.5 INCENTIVES

Using incentives to send the right price signals can be an effective strategy for encouraging developers to build the type and form of development the municipality desires. Two strategies that were identified through the review of best practices include:

- Promoting mixed uses within a development site through the use of reduced parking requirements, increased commercial floor space limits, and/or increased density; and,

- Encouraging the development of food stores by exempting these uses from GFA limits and offering density increases to mixed use development that incorporates a food store.

Additional types of incentives that have been used in other municipalities will be explored in Phase 2 of the Commercial Strategy Study.

The City of Burlington's Official Plan does not currently include incentives for shaping the form or location of commercial uses, and strategic consideration should be given to developing a set of incentives that can be used to encourage mixed use development, attract office uses and promote food-related retail, particularly within the Downtown.

6.1.6 PARKING SUPPLY

Aside from design standards, reduced parking requirements are a useful tool for limiting the impact of parking on walkability and the design of commercial areas. In addition, mandatory bicycle parking requirements can be used to off-set the need for car parking and encourage cycling as a viable mode of travel in suburban areas. Burlington already offers reduced parking standards in some Mixed Use Areas, including for development in Mixed Use Corridor General, Mixed Use Corridor Employment, and Mixed Use Centre where transit supportive site design or shared parking arrangements are implemented. Reductions may also be considered within the Downtown based on a TDM Plan, and non-residential uses are exempt from parking requirements within the Downtown Core and Wellington Mixed Use Precincts. In addition, the City requires bicycle parking, at a rate of 2 spaces plus 1 space/1,000 sm GFA for retail, retail centre, service commercial and office uses. Notwithstanding these policies, strategic consideration should be given to permitting reduced parking standards in exchange for TDM measures more generally throughout the commercial/mixed use areas, and establishing more comprehensive standards and guidelines for bicycle parking for all land uses in commercial/mixed use areas.

6.1.7 URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

Along with development standards that are specified in the Zoning By-Law, urban design policies provide additional guidance for development within the public and private realm. In addition to area-specific urban design guidelines referenced in Appendix B, the City's Official Plan includes design policies under Part II, Section 6.0 that address common strategies for creating a sense of place and improving
the pedestrian environment. Urban design will receive further attention in Phase 3 of the Commercial Strategy Study, however, in Phase 2, strategic consideration should be given to developing Official Plan policies that encourage transitions in scale and intensity between high, medium and low density areas. These considerations will become increasingly important as the City intensifies over the coming years. Strategic consideration should also be given to developing even stronger policies for parking lot design in support of creating safe and walkable commercial and mixed use areas.

6.2 STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE DOWNTOWN

A significant amount of work has also already been undertaken to understand what kind of commercial role the Downtown should play, and what kind of commercial development will ultimately be most successful in this area. Complementary to this research has been the development of detailed urban design guidance and land use policies for this important focal point of the City. The Official Plan policies and urban design guidelines for the Downtown establish a preliminary framework for creating the type of regional centre that is envisioned under Provincial policy, and emerging local policies. However, strategic consideration should be given to new policy approaches and land use planning strategies that more fully actualize the multiple objectives for Downtown, which include that it function as:

- a complete community for residents;
- an urban core with a diverse employment, civic, cultural and entertainment base; as well as,
- a regional specialty commercial destination.

Given these objectives, the strategic considerations below introduce opportunities to enhance the commercial land use policy framework for the Downtown, and to address broader mixed use planning and intensification issues head on. These strategic considerations are intended to feed into the City's ongoing work regarding the Core Commitment for the Downtown.

6.2.1 DOWNTOWN BOUNDARY

Currently, the City's core is delineated by two boundaries: the Provincial urban growth centre (UGC) boundary, and the City's Downtown Mixed Use Centre boundary (Figure 6). The Provincially designated UGC boundary is an irregular boundary that extends across parts of the Downtown proper, mainly along the Maple Avenue, Lakeshore Road, and Brant Street corridors, terminating in the northwest at Prospect Street. The City's Downtown Mixed Use Centre boundary covers a broader area associated with the Downtown, bounded by Baldwin Street in the northwest, extending out to Clarke Avenue/Maple Street/the QEW in the west and southwest, and roughly Torrence Street in the east.
In support of the ongoing work regarding the Core Commitment for the Downtown, the City has identified the need to rationalize the Downtown boundaries. As part of this exercise, it is important to consider, what is the purpose of establishing a boundary? From a community planning perspective, a boundary is used to identify an area that functions as a system and/or has common built form characteristics and transportation infrastructure, and to then develop a framework for managing change (i.e. growth) over time in a way that preserves the unique characteristics of the area, while enhancing the physical and social fabric of the established community. From a commercial planning perspective, boundaries are used to identify hubs of contiguous retail and other commercial activity that function as a system and/or have common characteristics in their built form and/or they types of products and services that are offered. The commercial planning boundary may also reflect the destinations (home addresses) of customers.

Using these criteria, strategic consideration should be given to generally maintaining the City’s existing boundary for the Downtown, with some minor modifications (e.g. removing the southern most portion of the current designation along the Burlington Skyway where the land uses and block configurations are inconsistent with the remainder of the core). To operationalize the UGC designation, strategic consideration should also be given to identifying an urban corridor northwest of the Downtown along Brant Street, and to revisiting the precinct designations within the Downtown to ensure density distributions are informed by the UGC boundary (i.e. the area where the highest densities should be directed). Additional strategies for operationalizing the UGC designation within the Downtown are outlined below in Sections 6.2.2 and 6.2.3.
6.2.2 MINIMUM DENSITY TARGETS

Currently, the Official Plan incorporates the Provincially mandated minimum density target of 200 people and jobs per hectare for the Downtown as a whole. Strategic consideration should be given to developing minimum density targets for different areas of the Downtown to facilitate density distributions that reflect the existing and planned built form and block configurations, in line with the UGC and mobility hub designations. These minimum density targets could be integrated with existing height and density policies for the various Downtown precincts and would help to comprehensively plan for and monitor the intensification of Burlington’s Downtown.

6.2.3 SPECIFIC MIXED USE TARGETS

To optimize the use of transit and strengthen the area’s economic base, one of the objectives for the Downtown is to attract more office and institutional land uses. Beyond economic development activities, there are a number of policy strategies the City could consider to encourage this type of development, including establishing mixed use targets (i.e. % requirements) for the different precincts, and establishing a jobs-to-residents target ratio.

6.2.4 PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR INTENSIFICATION AND NON-RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

In addition to establishing mixed use targets for different precincts in the Downtown, the City should consider identifying a Primary Office/Institutional Core Area, and providing incentives for new office development, such as reduced parkland dedication requirements. The City could also consider a linkage requirement, whereby approval for residential development is tied to the inclusion of non-residential uses, particularly office uses, within the development site.

6.2.5 A NEW RETAIL STRUCTURE

With regard to commercial uses in the Downtown, strategic consideration should be given to providing more flexibility to permit convenience retail and service-related uses more broadly throughout all areas of the Downtown. Currently, commercial uses are not permitted throughout much of the area, and this is inconsistent with the characteristics of a complete urban community.

In addition to providing greater flexibility to permit neighbourhood-related retail throughout the Downtown, other strategies could be employed to better integrate commercial uses. In particular, retail permissions/requirements could be de-linked from the precinct designations and re-introduced through new designations and mapping for “retail priority streets”. Proposed retail street categories/designations are outlined in Table 7.
### TABLE 7. PROPOSED RETAIL STREET CATEGORIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retail Street Category</th>
<th>General Description</th>
<th>Principles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Main Street Retail             | Historic/traditional mixed use areas with existing small-scale street-oriented retail                     | At-grade retail required  
City-wide and neighbourhood commercial function, with a broad range of retail types, including specialty shops and restaurants  
Reflect existing built form, with narrow, active street frontages                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Mixed Use Major Street         | Mixed use areas with a broad range of retail formats, including small and large                           | At-grade retail required  
City-wide commercial function  
Street-oriented, with narrow street frontage  
Encourage articulation of storefront and frequent entries for large format uses  
Street-oriented, with narrow street frontage  
Encourage articulation of storefront and frequent entries for large format uses |
| General Mixed Use Street       | Mixed use streets that are primarily residential                                                         | At-grade retail permitted, but not required  
Neighbourhood commercial function  
Require commercial-grade design for first storey (e.g. minimum floor-to-ceiling heights) to facilitate land use flexibility and adaptability over time  
Avoid creating barriers for future at-grade retail  
Street-oriented, with narrow street frontage  
Encourage articulation of storefront and frequent entries for large format uses |
| No Retail                      | Select low-rise residential streets                                                                     | At-grade retail not permitted as-of-right  
Neighbourhood commercial function  
Require commercial-grade design for first storey (e.g. minimum floor-to-ceiling heights) to facilitate land use flexibility and adaptability over time  
Avoid creating barriers for future at-grade retail  
Street-oriented, with narrow street frontage  
Encourage articulation of storefront and frequent entries for large format uses |

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### 6.2.6 ENHANCED GUIDELINES FOR COMMERCIAL USES IN THE DOWNTOWN

The Downtown Urban Design Guidelines provide an adequate overarching structure and direction with respect to the public realm, built form and the interrelationship between them, however, strategic consideration should be given to introducing specific design guidance for commercial functions. Such guidance is especially important for the Downtown context given the importance of properly designed commercial functions in activating the public realm and/or reinforcing distinct area characteristics. Specifically, strategic consideration should be given to providing additional design guidance for the following categories:

- **Area-specific retail guidelines** that provide greater direction for distinct areas on the appropriate scale, interface and character of retail uses and how they interface with the pedestrian realm. For example, Brant Street has a prevailing traditional ‘main street’ character that ought to be reinforced through specific guidance on matters such as shop front design, maximum retail floor areas and frontage widths that support the fine-grained, highly animated and pedestrian-oriented nature of the streetscape.
• **Retail format type guidelines** that provide greater direction for a variety of potential retail formats to ensure design considerations that are supportive of the distinctive Downtown context. Specifically, the appropriate integration of medium to large format retail uses essential to supporting a robust residential population in a manner that does not detract from the quality of the pedestrian environment. For example, other Downtown contexts can provide valuable lessons for accommodating larger formats stores by directing them internal to the block or the second levels so that smaller and more pedestrian-friendly shops interface with the street or grade-level.

• **Optimal retail design guidelines** that provide specific direction for ensuring the optimal design of retail spaces to enhance their visibility, flexibility and prominence, and in doing do strengthens their appeal to potential tenants and commercial success. This is especially important in mixed-use developments where high-density residential design often do not pay enough attention to quality and character of the grade-level commercial spaces with respect to the configurations, locating of structural columns and design distinction of the commercial functions.

If developed, strategic consideration should be given to connecting the commercial urban design guidelines to any new “retail priority streets“ designations.
### TABLE 8. SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Considerations for the City-wide Network of Commercial Uses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. modifying the commercial hierarchy/urban structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. dispersing commercial uses in residential areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. restricting the scale of retail development in mixed use areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. restricting auto-oriented land uses in mixed use areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. developing incentives for mixed use development</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. right-sizing the parking supply</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. updating urban design guidelines for higher density development and parking lots</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Considerations for the Downtown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. revising the downtown boundary</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. establishing minimum density targets</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. adopting mixed use targets</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. providing incentives for office development and food retail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. creating a new retail structure based on “retail priority streets” rather than precincts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. developing enhanced urban design guidelines for commercial uses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7 NEXT STEPS

In Phase 2 of the Commercial Strategy, the strategic considerations that have been highlighted for the city-wide network of commercial uses and the Downtown will be further explored, with the objective of developing detailed policy recommendations and a phasing strategy that can be implemented through the Official Plan Review. In particular, the key inquiries that will be further explored in Phase 2 of the Commercial Strategy Study from a land use planning perspective include:

1. How can the City facilitate the successful integration of commercial areas within neighbourhoods?

2. How can the City facilitate the (re)development and intensification of commercial lands within centres, mobility hubs, and corridors in a way that emphasizes:
   - good principles of urban design and sustainability;
   - the efficient use of hard infrastructure; and,
   - the co-location of community facilities/infrastructure.

3. If need be, how should the policy framework be modified to align with upper tier policy (e.g. Provincial Policy Statement and Places to Grow)?

4. What additional strategies can be used to support the implementation of the commercial land use objectives (e.g. programs and partnerships)?

These inquiries will be explored in collaboration with the project team, city staff, and through consultations with the public and key stakeholders to build a consensus for change that will, over the long term, transform Burlington's commercial lands into mixed use, community gathering places that better meet the commercial and social needs of the City and its residents.
REFERENCES


Deloitte & Touche LPP. (2012). Office and Retail Markets Downtown Burlington. Toronto, Ontario


APPENDIX 1: COMPARATIVE COMMERCIAL HIERARCHIES

Mississauga Official Plan (2011)

Mississauga’s new Official Plan establishes an urban structure that includes the Downtown, Major Nodes, Community Nodes, Corporate Centres, Neighbourhoods, and Employment Areas. Overlaying this structure are corridors, intensification areas and greenfields, and underlying this structure are a suite of land uses that include Residential, Mixed Use, Office, Institutional, Convenience Commercial, Motor Vehicle Commercial, Business Employment and Industrial.

Within the urban structure, retail and other commercial uses are primarily directed to the Downtown Core, Major Nodes and Community Nodes, which vary in character as follows:

- **Downtown Core** – one of four Downtown character areas, and centred on Square One shopping centre and the City's civic core. The area is envisioned to redevelop as a high density, mixed use regional centre where the existing focus on retail, employment and civic uses is balanced with new residential development and cultural attractions that serve business visitors and tourists. New retail and office use are directed to the ground floor. The area will be served by higher order transit facilities with citywide and regional connections, and heights are not restricted.

- **Major Nodes** – targets for intensification that will be planned as prominent, mixed use centres that provide regional shopping services, alongside office, institutional and high density housing. The City's two Major Nodes are located along planned higher order transit routes. Heights in Major Nodes will range from a minimum of 3-storeys to a maximum of 25-storeys.

- **Community Nodes** – include historic main streets (e.g. in Port Credit and Streetsville), as well as smaller-scaled shopping malls that will be targeted for mixed use redevelopment at a smaller scale than that planned for the major nodes. Heights in Community Nodes will range from a minimum of 2-storeys to a maximum of 4-storeys.

Under the land use designations, commercial uses are primarily covered under Mixed Use, Convenience Commercial, and Motor Vehicle Commercial (i.e. gas stations and drive-throughs). Outside of these designations, commercial uses are generally not permitted, and policy 10.4.6 states that "the dispersion of retail uses beyond designated commercial areas will be discouraged".

Taken together, the urban structure and land use policies do not facilitate the redistribution of commercial uses at a walkable scale, but rather reinforce large concentrations of commercial uses in a limited number of “mixed use” locations, as well as regional shopping centres.
Oakville Official Plan (2009)

Oakville’s Official Plan establishes a framework for the distribution of commercial uses through its urban structure and land use policies. The urban structure consists of large expanses of stable “residential areas”; “employment” and “major commercial areas” along the 403/QEW highway corridor; and, mixed used “growth areas” targeted for existing and emerging centres.

From there, the land use policies establish typologies for mixed use and commercial uses. Four “mixed use” categories are used within Growth Areas, including Main Street 1 (for established centres), Main Street 2 (for emerging growth areas), Urban Centre, and Urban Core (for Midtown Oakville and the Uptown Core). These categories are primarily differentiated based on the scale (i.e. height) of permitted development, ranging from 2-4 storeys for Main Street 1, to 8-12 storeys for the Urban Core. The retail and service commercial component is primarily allocated to the ground floor.

The four “commercial” categories used outside the growth areas include the Central Business District (the historic Downtown), Core Commercial (malls), Community Commercial (plazas), and Neighbourhood Commercial (smaller-scaled plazas). Compared to the character-based mixed use designations, the commercial designations are differentiated by their location within the street network hierarchy. For example, Core Commercial uses are located in proximity to highways and serve a “broader regional community”, while Community and Neighbourhood Commercial uses are located at the intersection of arterial and collector roads.

The policies for commercial uses generally reflect post-war community planning paradigms and reinforce an auto-dependent approach to accessing goods and services.

Guelph Draft Official Plan (2012)

The ongoing review of Guelph’s Official Plan has resulted in the introduction of new policies for the distribution and design of commercial uses, in-line with the principles for establishing “complete communities” established in the regional Growth Plan, Places to Grow.

The framework for distributing commercial uses is established through the urban structure and land use policies. The urban structure contains designations within the Built-Up Area, including an Urban Growth Centre (the Downtown), a Major Transit Station Area (a portion of the Downtown), Intensification Corridors, and Community-Mixed Nodes. Outside of the Built-Up Area, lands are designated as primarily Greenfield Area, with some Non-Settlement Areas.

The land use policies for Commercial and Mixed Uses are intended to support “the dispersal of commercial uses throughout the City while discouraging the creation of strip development” (Section 9.4), and moreover, to create walkable, transit supportive places with integrated open space components (i.e. urban squares). The Mixed Use and Commercial Designations include five sub-categories:
Community Mixed Use Centres (not including the Downtown) – envisioned to redevelop as high density, pedestrian-oriented “urban villages” with main streets where retail and service commercial uses are provided at street level and residential and office uses are provided above grade. Within these centres, automobile-related uses are only permitted as an accessory use, and maximum heights are 10 storeys.

Mixed Use Corridors – intensification areas located along existing commercial corridors, which are intended to redevelop with mixed uses up to 6-storeys in height. The mixed uses include retail and service commercial uses at grade to serve adjacent residential communities, with office and residential above grade.

Neighbourhood Commercial Centre – provide local convenience and neighbourhood commercial uses within a convenient walking distance of residential neighbourhoods, along with small-scale office uses and community services. Notably, automobile-related uses are not permitted, and neither are residential uses (other than in a live-work format). Like the Mixed Use Corridors, these centres have a 6-storey height maximum.

Mixed Office Commercial – a designation for promoting small-scale office and neighbourhood-related commercial uses at grade and facing the street, with residential uses above or behind. Heights are restricted to 4-storeys, and residential densities are limited to 100 uph.

Service Commercial – includes existing highway-oriented service commercial uses (e.g. malls) that depend on highway access and can conflict with residential uses. The overall set of policies aims to limit the expansion of this type of use. Moreover, the policies state that these uses should only be retained along one side of an arterial road.

The Downtown Guelph Secondary Plan reinforces the intent of the Official Plan policies, and establishes a community structure that integrates commercial uses throughout most designations, including Mixed Use 1 (high density urban areas), Mixed Use 2 (historic low-rise areas), and Residential 2 (high density). Ancillary commercial uses are also permitted in the Major Transit Station area, and in Institutional and Office areas.

**Town of Ajax Official Plan (2010)**

The Town of Ajax Official Plan establishes a basic urban structure comprised of Greenlands, Residential Areas, Mixed Use Areas and Employment Areas. Commercial uses are primarily directed to Mixed Use Areas, although convenience commercial uses are also permitted throughout the Residential Area (provided that they are centrally-located on the ground floor of another building and do not exceed 250 sm in size), and amenities such as restaurants, gyms, and banks are permitted in the Prestige Employment Designation.
The Mixed Use Areas, which are to become the “predominant places of commerce”, are structured according to the following hierarchy:

- Downtown Central Area – the primary, dense, urban core where a full suite of mixed uses are permitted, including office, retail, commercial, institutional, cultural, entertainment, and medium and high density residential (up to 25 storeys in height);
- Uptown Central Area – the Town’s largest retail area and a regional commercial centre where larger scale commercial and high density residential uses are permitted (up to 25 storeys in height);
- Mixed Use Commercial Corridors along major arterials where larger format uses are permitted and higher density infill will be encouraged;
- Village Central Area – the town’s historic village, where commercial uses are permitted at-grade in low-to-mid rise mixed use buildings (up to six storeys in height); and,
- Local Centre Areas – neighbourhood-based commercial centres located along arterial and collector roads, where residential uses are permitted above grade (up to three storeys in height).

**City of Kitchener Draft Official Plan (June 2011)**

The City of Kitchener’s new Draft Official Plan establishes an urban structure and land use policies similar to the other municipalities referenced in this memorandum, in so far as it aims to bring the City’s planning regime in-line with Provincial directives under Places to Grow. Like many other municipalities, the urban structure includes the Built Up Area, Countryside, Designated Greenfield Areas, and Intensification Areas.

The distribution of commercial uses is established through the policies for Mixed Use Areas and Commercial Areas, which combined represent a transition to distributing commercial uses in a new way. Both areas are key components of the intensification framework, and are envisioned to evolve as transit supportive and pedestrian oriented places, although it is recognized that the Commercial Areas are more auto-oriented at present. The hierarchy of commercially-focused land use designations includes:

- Mixed Use Node – centres where a broad range of non-residential, as well as medium-high density residential uses will be concentrated “to complete surrounding residential communities”. These nodes will serve an “inter-neighbourhood market”, but may
also contain uses that serve the city at large. Permitted densities generally range from a minimum of 0.6 to a maximum of 2.0 FSR, and heights range from a minimum of 3-storeys to a maximum of 10-storeys.¹

- **Commercial Node** – traditionally auto-oriented malls and plazas with large-format retail outlets that serve the city at-large. Residential uses are not permitted. New and expanded commercial nodes are strongly discouraged, and existing nodes are to be retrofitted to become more compact, with less surface parking and enhance pedestrian and transit accessibility. Permitted heights and density are to be specified in the zoning by-law.

- **Mixed Use Corridor** – linear concentrations of a broad range of uses along existing or planned transit corridors that have strong pedestrian-linkages to adjacent residential neighbourhoods. These corridors are contiguous with the UGC and serve as gateways to the Downtown. Permitted densities generally range from a minimum of 0.6 to a maximum of 2.0 FSR, and heights are to be determined through the Zoning By-Law.

- **Village Corridor** – limited linear concentrations of mixed uses at a smaller scale than along Mixed Use Corridors. Development is limited to a maximum height of 8-storeys.

- **Commercial Corridor** – traditionally auto-oriented commercial development along arterial roads with substantial redevelopment potential. New “retail commercial centres” are prohibited in these areas. Instead, the land use provisions emphasize the role of office, entertainment and light industrial uses, as well as some limited multi-unit residential uses. Heights and densities are to be prescribed in the implementing Zoning By-Law.

- **Neighbourhood Mixed Use Centre** – smaller-scale concentrations of convenience commercial and service-oriented uses to serve the day-to-day needs of surrounding residential areas, where some limited residential uses will be permitted. The maximum permitted density is 1.0 FSR, and the maximum permitted height is 5-storeys.

- **Convenience Commercial Areas** – neighbourhood-scaled commercial uses located with frontage on an arterial or collector road, or in a multi-unit residential building, or as designated as a community focal point. Locations are to be identified in the Zoning By-law.

¹ One of the City’s designated Mixed Use Nodes (at the 401 and Homer Watson Boulevard) also serves as the City’s only Regionally Designated Major Local Node, where a minimum density of 100 people and jobs per hectare will be achieved by 2029. Uses within this node will serve a broader regional and/or city-wide catchment area, to be determined as part of more detailed area-planning. Commercial uses are likely to be included.
Commercial uses are also permitted in some parts of Downtown (the UGC), such as at-grade in the core (i.e. the Downtown City Centre District), and within the Downtown Market District. Otherwise, the Downtown is envisioned to accommodate primarily office, high density residential, cultural and institutional uses, and is not identified as a key commercial destination.

Finally, the proposed OP policies facilitate the development of smaller-scale commercial uses throughout most land use designations, for example as complementary uses in institutional and employment areas. Non-Residential Supporting Land Uses are expressly permitted (by zoning by-law amendment) within Residential Areas where they are located on an arterial or collector road, within a mixed use building, or as a community focal point.