

Dear Mayor Goldring and City of Burlington Councillors,

We are writing to affirm BurlingtonGreen’s position with respect to the proposal to convert the property at 901 Guelph Line from employment land use to mixed use, and to address the key concerns with and objections to this proposal which resulted in it not being passed at the January 16th meeting of the Planning & Development Committee.

We believe that the Emshih Development proposal for this property addresses and synthesizes economic, employment, social and environmental priorities in a forward-thinking, attractive mixed-use community. The proposed development aligns with the vision of [BurlingtonGreen’s Community 20/20 initiative](#), which links landowners and developers to innovative green design features and forward-focused building practices to create communities where residents can live, work and play while reducing their impact on the environment.

We attentively listened to comments expressed by this Council prior to your majority vote to reject the proposed land conversion to mixed use, however we did sense a genuine struggle by some of you in determining your position. We ascertained that in principal, many of you are supportive of and enthusiastic about the proposed innovative opportunity, but have outstanding concerns preventing the land conversion. With that in mind, we would like to aim to address your expressed concerns via the summation below, with the hope that you may reconsider this rare and tremendous opportunity for Burlington, when brought for review by the Region in 2019.

Council’s Concern	BurlingtonGreen’s Perspective
<p>1. Location: this broke down into a cluster of issues:</p> <p>a. The property lies just outside the boundaries of the Burlington GO mobility hub and it was felt the distance was too great to be walkable.</p> <p>b. The current surrounding environment and site constraints (i.e. underpass, railway line, retaining wall, high speed traffic and poorly functioning intersection at Guelph Line & Harvester, adjacent industrial usage)</p>	<p>1. These objections could be addressed by considering the following:</p> <p>a. The developer has committed to offering a shuttle service between the site and the GO station. For walkability, there are sections of both the Appleby and Aldershot mobility hubs that are about the same distance from their respective GO stations, based on the identified hub boundaries. Tweaking the Burlington hub boundary over to the creek, a natural boundary, would not be inconsistent with the other two hubs.</p> <p>b. Since the property directly opposite on the west side of Guelph Line is zoned residential, we believe that the two properties would complement one another and create a robust and lively high-density residential node and not one</p>

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<p>make it a hostile setting for pedestrians. Walkability requires a more urban, pedestrian-friendly environment. These same factors make it less compatible with residential usage, by potentially isolating residents, which could necessitate additional investment such as a bridge over the railway, which could compete with other needed investments.</p> <p>c. It is surrounded by other employment lands and conversion might de-stabilize the employment corridor north of the railway.</p> <p>2. Land Use mix:</p> <p>a. We already have a large and adequate pool of mixed use lands.</p> <p>b. Need to protect existing employment lands to meet city's employment targets.</p> <p>c. Conversion would create a 'leapfrog' situation by having mixed use in the middle of industrial areas to the east and west of the property.</p> <p>d. Current zoning provides for a key gateway site/office site to support hotel and restaurants.</p>	<p>in which residents would be isolated. Residents from the west side complex could avail themselves of the amenities offered by the 901 Guelph Line complex. And residents of both complexes are a reasonable walk from the Burlington Mall and several restaurants on Harvester. Furthermore, if these issues were of critical importance to the zoning, we feel sure that they would have precluded the residential designation on the west side property, yet this did not occur.</p> <p>c. The majority of surrounding lands are commercial (hotel, restaurants, car dealership) rather than industrial; therefore, we don't believe this will be a significant issue.</p> <p>2. Land Use mix:</p> <p>a. Adding more residential units here may accommodate lower rise buildings downtown, where residents have strenuously objected to more high rises.</p> <p>b. The proposed development accommodates the same square footage (86,000) of office space as current zoning, but adds a further employment use of 74,000 sq. ft. of retail space, a robust contribution to employment targets.</p> <p>c. Employment properties adjacent to residential areas already exist in close proximity just across the street where there is a paper/plastics factory and a car dealership close to housing, compliant with provincial legislation. Given that the 901 site would simply extend the residential cluster a little further east, we don't foresee any leapfrogging situation; in fact, a mixed use development would serve as a useful transition from full residential to employment uses.</p> <p>d. The complex would offer as good or superior gateway/office site features (see</p>

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<p>e. There is already opportunity for residential use in the general area (Glenwood School Drive); therefore more residential is not required in this area.</p>	<p>point b) and support for local amenities by adding about 1,000 residents on top of the 300+ employed individuals.</p> <p>e. It may be worth considering that Burlington residents are more likely to be more receptive to high density, tall buildings in this location than in the downtown core, as alluded to previously; recent development approvals in the downtown have attracted a great deal of resident opposition.</p>
<p>3. Unforeseen Complications:</p> <p>a. There is no guarantee that land conversion would result in the proposed development being built (development approval would still be required).</p> <p>b. Rising market prices and land values could drive up commercial leasing costs and drive out employment use.</p> <p>c. Converting it may result in it inadvertently competing for resources with mobility hub projects.</p>	<p>3. Unforeseen Complications:</p> <p>a. The developer has offered to sign a binding document that the development as currently proposed will go forward, provided it has the City's approval.</p> <p>b. This would be true regardless of whether the development were 100% commercial or mixed use.</p> <p>c. We believe this becomes an exercise in speculation; meanwhile, there are few if any land parcels in Burlington, so close to a GO station, that afford the size of property necessary to develop a truly smart/complete community.</p>
<p>4. Timing: it was felt that at this time, there is insufficient urbanization in the area between the GO station and the property for viable residential use that is accessible either by active or public transportation. This may change over time, but conditions are not right for it right now.</p>	<p>4. Burlington has adopted the motto "Grow Bold". We encourage Council to see the Emshih development as a bold step into the future. With the intensification and mobility hub strategies as a strong and defensible rationale for this development, and the opportunity to shape the Transportation Master Plan to support a nexus of intensified, high rise residential and employment use on both sides of the Guelph Line/Harvester intersection, now is actually the ideal time to move forward with this concept.</p>

Furthermore, we hope Council will consider the many benefits the proposed smart community at 901 Guelph Line offers:

- Environmental:
 - Supports City’s strategic carbon reduction targets through net zero development
 - Supports City’s strategic vision for targeted intensification and mobility hubs/transportation corridors
 - Ameliorates traffic congestion issues/rush-hour gridlock that employment-only use would exacerbate
 - Contributes to City’s goals of walkability and active transportation: site is close enough to GO Station (1.2 km) to support active transportation for commuters, and close enough to lifestyle amenities (restaurants, mall) to encourage residents to use active or public transportation options
 - Proposed enhancement of tree canopy contributes to community health and offsets carbon emissions from local traffic
- Economic:
 - Increased annual property taxes from \$179,859 to \$3.8M (2014)
 - \$24.4M in development charges
 - \$1.6M in building permit fees
 - Economic synergy with surrounding services (market for hotel, restaurants etc.)
 - Equivalent to employment use zoning in attracting new employers and jobs in high value-added sectors (e.g. financial, IT/digital, health and professional services): site is a only a short distance from McMaster Campus with the possibility of leveraging innovative partnerships
- Employment:
 - 350+ permanent office and retail jobs
 - 2070 person/years of employment (construction and materials)
- Social:
 - Affordable housing through a partnership with Habitat for Humanity
 - Housing for seniors to respond to significant senior demographic
 - Vibrant, robust community that will complement and benefit from existing surrounding businesses and services (hotel and conference centre, restaurants, etc.)

To provide more detailed support for these comments, we have attached BurlingtonGreen’s earlier document on the proposed 901 Guelph Line development which was submitted to Council on January 13th. This offers useful contextual reference information as well as a fuller outline of our position on this project.

We also draw your attention to the recent announcement that our sister city, Hamilton, has been ranked 7th (up from 21st last year) in a global economic development survey by the Intelligent Communities Forum, a U. S. based think tank that focuses on digital economic development (The Hamilton Spectator, page A13, Friday February 9th). BurlingtonGreen thinks that our city can be just such an intelligent community, and in an even broader sense: creating a vibrant, forward-thinking live-work-play community right at the gateway to Burlington would be an attractive draw for the innovative companies, high-value jobs and the young millennials we’d like to attract to Burlington to drive our city forward and truly “Grow Bold”, with the added value of upholding our climate change and quality of life commitments by contributing to a healthier, greener and more vibrant city.

In summary, the proposed land conversion and Emshih project for 901 Guelph Line affords an impressive list of benefits but perhaps the deciding feature of this project is that to our knowledge, there is no other development proposal before the City that meets so many of the smart community benchmarks the City is seeking, and as a distinctive flagship community, we believe it represents a pivotal opportunity for sustainable city-building that could put Burlington on the path to becoming a truly smart city for the 21st century. Furthermore, its approval would send a clear signal of encouragement to other developers to consider creating similar projects that would enhance our city as it grows. We therefore hope Council will give further consideration to the land conversion proposal at 901 Guelph Line in 2019 at Regional Council.

Respectfully,

The Advocacy Team
BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association