

To: The Chair and Members of the Community Development Committee
From: BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association Inc.
Michelle Bennett and Amy Schnurr
Date: March 29, 2010
Re: Agenda Item 7, Report PB-24/10, Downtown Market

As representatives of the BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association, we are pleased to appear before you this evening to endorse the proposal to introduce a local food initiative to Burlington's Downtown core. It is an objective of BurlingtonGreen to advocate for the support of local food, products and services and we believe our vision of an Eco-Market would meet (and perhaps exceed) the objectives that have been identified in the report and support a more sustainable future for the City of Burlington and for the future.

We support the introduction of "by foot" access to local source markets in a variety of regions throughout Burlington and with the current and proposed intensification of the downtown area, we see the addition of a marketplace to be a strategic next step.

Many municipalities throughout Ontario include a marketplace in their downtown core regions and appreciate the resulting economic, social and environmental benefits.

From an environmental perspective, a downtown marketplace that integrates locally produced farm fresh food, eco-friendly products and services contributes to the overall health of the larger community. For example:

- **Supports local viable farms** negating urban sprawl
- **Reduces Co2** emissions by situating market in highly populated region
- **Reduces transport** emissions of imported goods by supporting local producers
- **Inclusion of local eco-groups & food box programs** to encourage public awareness & action to live greener lifestyles

Consumer awareness to "Buy Local" has been trending upward due to the efforts of many levels of organizations & government to market this self-evident notion. To do so, consumers require convenient opportunity whenever possible which a downtown market location supports. BurlingtonGreen believes the time is "ripe" to introduce this initiative and predict demand will only grow in years to come as peak oil challenges/food costs become more fully evident.

BurlingtonGreen's vision for a downtown marketplace would include a solid business plan to support a sustainable project of excellence. Our vision supports a "partnership" whereby the City, community and business partners bring their shared commitment, experience and assets to the table.

We appreciate that other Burlington markets to date have not included municipal involvement, however we believe the market for the City's downtown to be an exception, where like other investments within that community (waterfront project, PAC) to name a few, the market can and should serve as a significant attraction drawing citizens as well as tourists, with a vibrancy and level of quality that reflects the overall objectives of the City of Burlington.

As you may recall, in our previous delegation on this issue, we suggested the need to include early stage investment funding to support resources required to plan, promote and establish such an important, high-profile venture. A new market needs to identify itself and the qualities it can offer to potential vendors, supporting partners and of course to the citizens of Burlington.

The staff report includes an estimation of \$6,000 to cover the lease of Civic Square. If this is based on 120 hours of operation, or 20 weeks, for just 6 hours, one day per week, we would suggest that to maximize the interest for both vendors and citizens to attend the market, consideration should be given to ensure this new venture is open for business at peak times (i.e. Saturdays and potentially a second weekday as well.) Of course a vendor and stakeholder survey would be required early on to effectively gauge and plan this exciting new initiative.

The report identifies key milestones and dates in order to achieve a market opening for May 2011. We respect the time and budget challenges the City needs to balance, in supporting an array of municipal initiatives, however we do think it important to speak up now and share a few concerns we have about the proposed timeline.

Our preliminary research has indicated that a minimum of one year lead time is generally required to launch a successful community market, and again, we are proposing the downtown project be somewhat elevated in scale/diversity, thereby suggested a year could potentially be "tight" given the timeline's action steps.

For example: The report indicates the selection of the preferred operator to take place Sept, 2010 with financial approval to take place later, in the first quarter of 2011, and this we believe would push back some important planning steps significantly.

Surveys should be prepared this spring, followed by vendor outreach during the summer. To do so would require some preliminary decision making regarding the expected market structure, projected opportunities, vendor agreement requirements and some associated promotional items produced to conduct these communications. It is very important to make that first impression a positive, professional one as both vendors and sponsors want and need to know what they would be signing on for before they can offer their valued commitment.

The report's timeline defers the selection of the market operator until after the peak operating season when this outreach should be happening. Additionally, we would expect that the City would not want multiple project "bidders" out there simultaneously contacting and surveying vendors, running the risk of confusing and alienating potential vendors and sponsors. A clear vision, solid framework and early start that would come with a selected operator, we believe would maximize potential for success.

Furthermore, the report timeline includes budget approval post the funding application deadlines and yet in our experience with Ontario Trillium Foundation for example, there is an expectation that *confirmed* funding partners and amounts be identified at the time of application in order for them to assess the ask, and determine the project's projected sustainability.

Additionally, we believe it important to be upfront about the fact that BurlingtonGreen has a few key initiatives under review – all to support a healthier, greener future for Burlington. We do plan to apply for funding with the Ontario Trillium Foundation on November 1 and have already consulted with staff there about projects and options. We are able to apply for one project of this scale at a

time, and it would not be prudent for us to take the risk of selecting the market as the project of choice, only to reduce our odds for approval if it turned out the City was not able to make the financial commitment proposed for 2011.

Also, grant funding does not cover expenses for work carried out in advance of the grant approval and yet the bulk of planning as stated before should be happening in the months ahead. A November 1 application submission with OTF would not receive approval notice until March 1, 2011 – only a few months prior to opening day. We hope you can understand the considerations here.

Since our inception just over 2 years ago, BurlingtonGreen has strived to introduce high quality programs and services to serve the interests of both citizens and the environment. Although not always easy, (given the multitude of requests and demands that come our way), we do try to pick and choose initiatives that best align with our Associations mandate while establishing strategies that can support project sustainability. We see tremendous potential for many environmental benefits in establishing a downtown market that supports local food, art and service and would welcome the opportunity to help realize a vision consistent with Burlington's 4 key mission values.....

Namely, the market would:

1/support an inclusive community that promotes healthy lifestyles while supporting economic and cultural growth.

2/Respond to community needs in a timely, innovative manner through citizen participation, teamwork and partnerships.

3/ It would be designed to offer service excellence to our urban, suburban and rural communities

4/and as previously conveyed, it would demonstrate leadership in promoting a strong, livable and sustainable Burlington.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to present to you this evening.

Sincerely,

Michelle Bennett & Amy Schnurr

BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association

www.burlingtongreen.org