



August 28, 2020

Dear Mayor Meed-Ward, Members of Council, and City Staff,

The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the inextricable connections between human health, equitable and just communities, a resilient economy and the current climate and biodiversity crises. Governments must recognize and act on this understanding by researching, reporting and making decisions with an integrated or ‘ecosystem’ approach, in order to provide a liveable, equitable and sustainable future for all.

Additionally, the City of Burlington must consistently be accountable for their Climate Emergency Declaration and their Blue Dot commitment that recognizes everyone's right to a healthy environment, including clean air and water, and a say in the decisions that affect the community's health and well-being.

While BurlingtonGreen recognizes the inextricable connections between the environmental, social, and economic aspects of sustainability, our specific area of focus pertains to the health of the environment, which is reflected in the following input regarding Staff report *PL-16-20 – Taking a Closer Look at the Downtown: Recommended Modifications to the Adopted Official Plan.*

BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association commends the City for taking this opportunity to review the Official Plan (OP). BurlingtonGreen generally supports the proposed modifications to the downtown policies in the Adopted Official Plan, with recommendations for additional clarity about:

- Alignment on the three concurrent crises:
 - The overall vision should focus on an equitable and green economic recovery, in light of the climate crisis, systemic racism, and COVID-19 pandemic. This supports the City's Climate Emergency Declaration, work on diversity and equity issues, and the opportunity presented by COVID-19 to “build back better” by creating new jobs in the green sector.
 - Climate change mitigation and adaptation/resilience needs to be integrated into the Official Plan in order to align to the Climate Action Plan (CAP). Also, although there is a section on the Climate Action Plan, it was not, but should be, included as an appendix to this staff report.

- Additional scope to consider “Removing the designation of Downtown as an Urban Growth Centre, Major Transit Station Area, and identification as a Mobility Hub.” If the City is to remove downtown as an Urban Growth Centre, what will be the new location and size of the Centre?
- Natural heritage:
 - Planting diverse and native tree species that are appropriate for the site.
 - In addition to turf grass for recreational purposes, including native plants and pollinator patches or corridors. The turf could include clover and other species that support nitrogen fixation and biodiversity.
 - Identifying and removing invasive species on a regular basis. While aspects of these suggestions are included in the section on climate action within the staff report, they are not integrated into the other parts of the report in sections where staff discuss these matters.

While not in the scope of this OP review, we recommend that the city’s focus on alternative transportation in its Transportation Plan be geared toward:

- The need to design our communities to encourage transit-oriented development. Additional focus should be placed on new challenges surrounding people’s concerns about public transit due to COVID-19 (such as health & safety, enclosed spaces, close proximity to others; touching shared surfaces).
- If the John St. bus terminal is to be removed as a Major Transit Station Area, the focus should be on the connectivity to the main MTSAs such as the Go Stations. More robust transit routes and connections to the GO stations need to be central to downtown development to prevent further excessive traffic congestion with additional development in the downtown core. This supports the CAP as well as affordability and wellbeing.
- Prioritizing pedestrians and bike lanes on Brant St. and other main corridors.

In summary, BurlingtonGreen urges Council to assess this issue holistically and with accountability to the declared Climate Emergency and Blue Dot Commitment priorities.

Respectfully,

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