

BurlingtonGreen Delegation to Council on the Official Plan– February 27, 2018

Good afternoon Chair Craven, Mayor Goldring, Members of Council, staff, and citizens of Burlington.

My name is Marwa Selim and I am pleased to speak to you today on behalf of BurlingtonGreen. I joined the BG team in 2016 to pursue my passion for the advancement of smart communities, applying my GIS expertise to conduct green space mapping. Among various other things I also represent BurlingtonGreen with our Greenbelt protection work.

I would like to thank City staff for their cooperation over the past 18 months, and for taking the time to meet with us to answer our questions and sharing their vision for the future of Burlington.

BurlingtonGreen has been actively involved in assessing and providing comprehensive input to both the City's now approved Strategic Plan and the current draft Official Plan. Along with our various written submissions, our Board President, Gloria Reid was here before you on November 30th indicating then that we generally supported the direction of the draft Official Plan, specifically noting the protection of the agricultural/greenbelt/escarpment lands and embrace of "smart community" planning.

She emphasized that quote "Protection and expansion of green space and the tree canopy, especially within the urban boundary, are in jeopardy without an urgent review/rewrite of the Parks Master Plan and open space acquisition policies – these can't be after-thoughts"

Since then, this Council has voted against the advancement of a smart community (the proposed net zero mixed use development for 901 Guelph Line), and we have not yet seen firm dates or identified measurables for the essential green space piece that must be integrated with OP.

These examples, combined with an overdue updated Transportation Plan and Urban Forest Management Plan draw into question what we can expect going forward in regard to having an OP in place that will ensure growth and development, take the challenges of climate change into account, and respect the ecological limits posed especially within the urban boundary.

The City of Burlington has declared itself to be a "Blue Dot" City. This expresses the belief that its residents have a right to a healthy environment.

Land use policy is one of the biggest determinants of a healthy environment - Official Plans matter.

As reminded by David Suzuki here in Burlington on Nov 21– policy must be grounded in the recognition that the environment has ecological limits.

BurlingtonGreen has adopted a similar lens in its new strategic plan. Without clean air, water, healthy food, and environment, we don't survive.

Economic activity occurs within social and ecological limits. We are certainly testing those limits.

Our organizations' mandate has and continues to focus on ensuring a healthy environment now and for the future, particularly in the areas of green space protection and smart community development. We support an Official Plan that reflects and fully integrates these priorities.

Through our extensive awareness, advocacy, and action work in the community, we have listened and learned from the residents of Burlington (particularly youth), about what is important to them and what they value most about living in Burlington. Consistently, it is a healthy environment and a sustainable future that preserves green space, mature trees, and wildlife - a rich biodiversity essential to our survival.

Green space and adequate urban tree canopy play a key role in the City's new vision. Burlington's current park system, created over the course of decades of greenfield development, may be suitable for the suburban form of the City's existing neighbourhoods, but may not be adequate to meet the parkland and urban tree canopy needs of an increasingly more compact community.

The areas identified for intensification and higher densities need updated policies to better serve them, and to ensure they are developed into vibrant hubs that are attractive, livable, and sustainable.

Updates to the OP need to address the concerns raised about intensification and higher density targets.

Parks and natural areas are important to compact urban areas in particular as oases of green lungs and sponges within the context of the urban landscape and as spaces for outdoor playgrounds and recreation facilities close to where people live, work and play. Well-designed Urban Squares and Linear Parks will be essential in the more urban, mixed-use centres and corridors designated for employment, commercial and retail purposes.

Parks, green space, and mature trees are key components to creating a vibrant community in the intensification areas where people can meet for lunch, gardens on roof tops, rest assured that their children can play safely, walk their dogs, and pursue more environmentally responsible and healthier lifestyles. But most importantly, they are essential to ensuring clean air and adequate storm water absorption as the city transitions to a more compact built form.

The issue of green space is a complex one, there are many overlaps and cross overs with other plans, policies, and directions.

The Policy framework must address parkland dedication rates and the best way to derive them. Traditional service levels may not work, and new measures such as service levels / per capita may be an alternate approach.

A new methodology is needed to determine how much and what types of green space the City needs.

Ensuring that Burlington's mobility hubs and urban centers provide equitable access to green space and mature trees will go a long way in securing public support and buy-in while providing the required human and environmental health benefits.

Community green space, net zero buildings, getting out of our cars, sustainable energy generation and use, water preservation, maintaining a mature tree canopy, working where we live and more— all need to become the "new normal" in Burlington.

BurlingtonGreen is excited about a future for this City with an Official Plan that embraces and drives sustainable development, respects ecological limits, and provides a high quality of life for all.

And thus, our request to you today is that a motion be prepared that allows for the approval of the OP with direction to Staff to review and update the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Assets Master Plan, the Urban Forest Management Plan, and the Transportation plan before the close of 2019.

Thank you very much for your time and attention