



BurlingtonGreen
City of Burlington Official Plan Work Plan Review

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Executive Summary

Background

The following is based on:

- The August, 2012 BurlingtonGreen Sustainable Cities: Official Plan Components, the November 2002 Center for Urban Transportation Research Building Transit Oriented Development in Established Communities a review of the City of Burlington August 27, 2012, 2012 Official Plan Review: Comprehensive Work Plan and a September 6, 2012 BurlingtonGreen meeting with Paul Sharman and Waterloo Region Light Rail Transit program officials and politicians. (

Review

1. Effective Sustainable Cities

One of the components of effective sustainable development identified in Sustainable Cities: Official Plan Components was transportation: creating viable options to automobiles.

2. Official Plan Integration

The 2012 Official Plan Review: Comprehensive Work Plan outlines various component Work Plans, but lacks an over-riding “vision” or guiding principle that unifies them.

Integration and coordination of the Key Work Plans is necessary to create a coherent overview and successful development and execution of the Official Plan.

3. Transit Oriented Development

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is a process for the successful redevelopment of car-oriented communities like Burlington to transit oriented communities.

4. Burlington Mobility Hubs

The 2012 Official Plan Review: Comprehensive Work Plan indicates that the Burlington Mobility Hubs identified in Metrolinx’s The Big Move are Downtown and the Burlington (Fairview and Brant) GO station. BurlingtonGreen has concluded the inclusion of a single hub in downtown Burlington limits Burlington and its development.

5. Waterloo LRT Development

The region of Waterloo was faced with similar problems to Burlington in terms of accommodating intensification without the ability to expand beyond existing urban borders. They have successfully planned and are implementing what is effectively TOD with their forthcoming Light Rail Transit (LRT) system.

Conclusions

1. Transportation planning and transit are key components for successful “sustainability” development.
2. The Official Plan process and various individual Work Plans lack over all integration and coordination to an over riding principle or “vision” for Burlington.
3. Transit Oriented Development is a proven and effective method for municipalities to evolve from car oriented to transit oriented communities.

4. The Downtown Burlington Mobility Hub is limiting in its scope for ongoing development and given conclusions 1, through 3, TOD should be a key component incorporated into the Official Plan development
5. Waterloo Region's LRT shows that with sufficient planning, support and vision, TOD can be implemented in Ontario communities.

Recommendations

1. Change the Official Plan development to relate each Work Plan to achieving Burlington transit development with Maplevue Mall and the Appleby GO station as initial hubs, which would incorporate Fairview Ave. and Plains Rd. as an initial "spine" or corridor.
2. Use learning from TOD and Waterloo Region's successful LRT to develop strategies that would target key community segments during and after the Official Plan.

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Background

The following is based on:

- The August, 2012 BurlingtonGreen Sustainable Cities: Official Plan Components outlining results of a survey of “best practices” in Official Plans (see Appendix A:)
- The November 2002 Center for Urban Transportation Research Building Transit Oriented Development in Established Communities that surveys Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and outlines five case studies from the United States (see Appendix B)
- A review of the City of Burlington August 27, 2012, 2012 Official Plan Review: Comprehensive Work Plan that outlines all component Plans of the Official Plan review and how they will be implemented.
- A September 6, 2012 BurlingtonGreen meeting with Burlington Councilor Paul Sharman and Waterloo Region Light Rail Transit program officials and politicians (See Appendix C).

Review

1. Effective Sustainable Cities

One of the components of effective sustainable development identified in Sustainable Cities: Official Plan Components was transportation: creating viable options to automobiles. It included the following strategies:

- Implement a multi-modal Transportation Network
- Link Centre and other hubs
- Designate ‘pedestrian only’ zones/streets
- Increase frequency and reliability of public transportation both internally and to out-lying areas
- Enhance connectivity of pedestrian and other non-vehicle routes
- Dedicate bicycle lanes which are safe
- Slowly reduce parking spaces, all parking has minimal fees, fees go directly to public services (transportation); less parking means more room for pocket parks

2. Official Plan Integration

The 2012 Official Plan Review: Comprehensive Work Plan outlines various component Work Plans in detail, but there is no over-riding “vision” or guiding principle that unifies them, despite the fact that the following key Work Plans are especially interdependent on each other:

- Neighborhoods Work Plan
- Downtown Work Plan
- Mobility Hubs Work Plan
- Movement and Connectivity Work Plan
- Nodes and Corridors Work Plan

2012 Official Plan Review: Comprehensive Work Plan’s Appendix L, the Technical Issues Work Plan identifies this issue under its “Technical Issues List” as an objective to “align policy direction within the Official Plan to support ongoing work throughout the city” but indicates that this alignment with other city plans is a “non transformational policy area” and therefore a minor issue. The action outlined is to “Align policy direction within the Official Plan to support ongoing work throughout the City”, but it does not indicate how this will be achieved.

Integration and coordination of the Key Work Plans above is needed to create a coherent overview and successful development and execution of the Official Plan.

3. Transit Oriented Development

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is a process for the successful redevelopment of car-oriented communities like Burlington to transit oriented communities. The processes are varied for each community, but generally include:

- A transportation system that is designed and constructed to enable transit vehicles to navigate easily through communities and provide riders with safe and convenient access to the service.
- Implementing TOD concepts and applying them to residential and commercial land development served by the transportation system.

Major issues for implementing TOD include:

- Real and perceived financial risk to developers
- Higher initial public development costs
- Initiating a supportive land regulatory framework
- Community resistance to changing the existing nature of suburban neighborhoods
- Appealing to individual homebuyers – the single most powerful decision making unit in shaping urban land development

Good transit design alone is not sufficient to make TOD successful. It must be supported by some combination of:

- Developing financing methods
- Offering financial incentives to land developers
- Flexible zoning requirements to accommodate proximity to Transit Corridors¹.
- Coordinating stakeholders
- Careful tailoring of land development regulations
- Crafting transit supportive design guidelines
- Providing effective access by alternative transportation modes
- Managing parking
- Pre-designating transit corridors and incorporating transit service into future development
- Adapting transit services and equipment, to urban and suburban areas
- Providing home loan incentives to homebuyers
- Addressing and overcoming community resistance through public education

4. Burlington Mobility Hubs

The 2012 Official Plan Review: Comprehensive Work Plan indicates that the Burlington Mobility Hubs identified in Metrolinx's The Big Move are Downtown and the Burlington (Fairview and Brant) GO station and that Staff is taking steps to bring Burlington into conformity with the Big Move. They plan to undertake mobility hub work by incorporating strategic policy into both the Official Plan and the Transportation Master Plan and to complete plans for the two hubs in the near future, but states the latter is “beyond the scope of the Official Plan review”.

¹ As an example, Kitchener approved the building of a Condo where a “crack” house has been for some time (about 4 blocks from King St.), allowing the developer to have fewer parking spaces because of the proximity to the future LRT line. This enables the developer to have more condos and more profit.

The inclusion of a single hub in downtown Burlington would seem to be limiting for Burlington and its development:

- The downtown area is already highly developed with high rises and has limited scope for extensive, additional live/work/play/shop development.
- It has no potential for extension to new areas. For example, using the Appleby GO station and the Mapleview mall as initial Hubs would:
 - Encourage intensification along the larger and less developed Fairview road “corridor”.
 - Allow integration with a possible high frequency Transit Service from Aldershot and Hamilton to the Mapleview Mall.
 - Allow future extension across Sixteen Mile Creek along Speers Road into the Oakville GO station.

5. Waterloo LRT Development

The region of Waterloo was faced with similar problems to Burlington in terms of accommodating intensification without the ability to expand beyond existing urban borders. They have successfully planned and are implementing what is effectively TOD with their forthcoming Light Rail Transit (LRT) system (see Appendix D).

The following were key in getting acceptance from the community:

- Good communication with the public. The region hired a PR company, had public meetings and sent communication pieces to every household.
- The workshop format of the public meetings assured they were not “hijacked”.
- The region had a clear plan and had been working at it for 8 – 10 years, so they used the meetings to solidify the process of accommodating the population growth.
- The LRT line followed the already established “i Express” offering a bus along the route at short intervals (every 7 ½ minutes)
- Targeting riders of choice is effective, as they won’t normally ride busses.
- The process needs political and community champions.
- Regional only councilors assured there weren’t conflicts of interest with city ward responsibilities.
- Alternatives, such as a major highway artery through the Region were presented as cost comparison.

Conclusions

1. Transportation planning and transit are key components for successful “sustainability” development.
2. The Official Plan process and various individual Work Plans lack over all integration and coordination to an over riding principle or “vision” for Burlington.
3. Transit Oriented Development is a proven and effective method for municipalities to evolve from car oriented to transit oriented communities.
4. The Downtown Burlington Mobility Hub is limiting in its scope for ongoing development and given conclusions 1, through 3, TOD should be a key component incorporated into the Official Plan development
5. Waterloo Region’s LRT shows that with sufficient planning, support and vision, TOD can be implemented in Ontario communities.

Recommendations

1. Change the Official Plan development to relate each Work Plan to achieving Burlington transit development with Maplevue Mall and the Appleby GO station as initial hubs, which would incorporate Fairview Ave. and Plains Rd. as an initial “spine” or corridor.
2. Use learning from TOD and Waterloo Region’s successful LRT to develop strategies that would target key community segments during and after the Official Plan.

10/9/12

Appendix A

Sustainable Cities: Official Plan Components

1. High Density

- Each neighbourhood is complete and compact
- Residential and non-residential uses are interspersed: living, shopping, working
- Density in centre of the city: self-sustaining (produce vendors)
- Customer base for businesses

Model City:

- a) **Portland, Oregon:** Smart Growth – focusing transportation growth to encourage high density growth
- b) **Vancouver:** interspersing of retail, homes, grocery stores and industrial activities – easy access

2. Variety of Housing in Same Neighbourhood - Social Sustainability

- Diverse range of accommodations
- Equal access to community amenities
- Integrated housing for all demographics
- Equal access to community amenities and local employment opportunities

Model Cities:

- a) **Dunkirk, France**²: breaking mono-functionality
 - Renting or buying studio flats and apartments
 - 40% public housing; 10% for first time buyers
 - Wide range of cultural activities scattered throughout the city
- b) **Hafencity, Hamburg:**
 - More than one developer and building function in one urban block (eg. office for Greenpeace, private apartments and a design studio)
 - Joint building Venture: cooperative of future residents who collectively purchase land, design their residence and construction – Hafencity supervises the process

3. Transportation: Create Viable Options to Automobiles

- Implement a multi-modal Transportation Network
- Link Centre and other hubs
- Designate ‘pedestrian only’ zones/streets
- Increase frequency and reliability of public transportation both internally and to out-lying areas
- Enhance connectivity of pedestrian and other non-vehicle routes
- Dedicate bicycle lanes which are safe
- Dr. Shoup: *The High Cost of Free Parking*-Pasadena’s three steps to curbing car use
- Slowly reduce parking spaces, all parking has minimal fees, fees go directly to public services (transportation); less parking means more room for pocket parks

² <http://sustainablecities.dk/en/city-projects/cases/dunkirk-a-green-alternative-to-suburbanization>

National/International Model Cities:

a) **Toronto: Metrolinx**

- Fast, frequent and expanded regional rapid transit network - large infrastructure projects, including subway expansion, bus rapid transit, and light rail that will connect communities across the region. Upon completion of The Big Move, over 80% of GTHA residents will live within 2 kilometers of a rapid transit service³.
- ensure that 75 per cent of residents find themselves living within 2 kilometres of a dedicated rapid transit line, up from 42 per cent now⁴
- Increase active transport in Toronto: improved walking and cycling network so that every urban resident in the GTHA will live within 1 kilometer of a dedicated bicycling facility⁵

b) **Calgary: C-Train: Ride the Wind Program – Light Rapid Transit powered by twelve wind mills**

- In 2006, Calgary's light rail system surpassed the personal automobile as the preferred transportation choice for entering the downtown during peak rush hours. Without the C-Train system, extra 74,000 vehicles would enter the downtown core, occupying over 28 lanes of traffic, equivalent to 388 city blocks⁶.

c) **Copenhagen: The world's best city for cyclists: 55% cycle to work**

- City council has made a concerted effort to improve the infrastructure, safety and parking facilities for cyclists.
- Vast majority of major roads have cycle lanes in both directions, either as separate tracks or delineated by markings at road level.
- 'cycle pockets': space for cyclists to stop in front of the cars at red lights – improve visibility to cars and reduce accidents
- Bike Parking: bike stands on streets, in public parking lots and private underground car parks or sheds at most housing complexes, in front of shops
- Snow cleared off bike lanes before car lanes

d) **Portland, Oregon: Transit Oriented Development (TOD) strategy**

- maximising access to public transport in neighbourhoods which have a combination of housing and commercial activities.⁷
- Light Rail trains, trams and a transport zone in the city centre (Fairless Square) within which bus and train travel is free.
- The Yellow Bike Project: greatest number of commuters biking to work in U.S. (8%)⁸
Free, yellow bikes for community use (did suffer vandalism and theft but lead way for bike-use mindedness)
- Infrastructure: city has painted sections of hazardous bike lanes blue, wait ahead of cars at red lights, expansion of sidewalks
- “By shifting traffic from cars onto streets, alleys and pathways, the activity and, as a consequence, the diversity of social life in the area is increased. And by turning motorists into cyclists and pedestrians, you reap the double rewards of a greener environment and healthier citizens”⁹

e) **Vancouver:**

³ <http://sustainablecities.dk/en/blog/2011/06/the-big-move-a-transformational-plan>

⁴ <http://ourburlington.org/?p=11425>

⁵ <http://sustainablecities.dk/en/blog/2011/06/the-big-move-a-transformational-plan>

⁶ <http://sustainablecities.dk/en/city-projects/cases/calgary-residents-ride-the-wind>

⁷ <http://sustainablecities.dk/en/city-projects/cases/portland-considerate-growth>

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cycling_in_Portland,_Oregon

⁹ <http://sustainablecities.dk/en/city-projects/cases/odense-masterplan-for-sustainable-mobility>

- City Hall employees making the move to sustainable commuting: rebates on public transit costs
- Monthly incentives and access to reserved parking for staff who ride-share
- Incentives for biking, walking, skateboarding and rollerblading, such as gift cards for rain gear, as well as, cycling skills courses and subsidized bike tune-ups

4. Green Infrastructure

- Innovative ‘green’ development standards
- Environmentally friendly building standards: Burlington?*
- Incentive program?

5. Green Space

- Green space within city core
- Protection of Burlington’s waterfront
- Public gathering space – city squares (in central business district)
- ‘Pocket Parks’ in the middle of urban areas: add to parking lots
- Fruit trees in urban spaces: use fruit for charitable purposes

Model Cities:

- a) Vancouver: creating four to six new mini-parks by converting streets into parks. These parks will be developed in consultation with the local community to determine their use as community gardens, plazas, local orchards, community yards, or naturalized habitat.
 - Work to acquire new parks in priority neighbourhoods.
 - Plant 15,000 new trees on City land and other public property
- b) **Portland, Oregon¹⁰:**
 - Pocket parks: expanding already existing open space (size of a house lot) to be a full-fledged park
 - Traffic “calming” park: with bike trails- protective barrier with five-foot wide planter strip – room made by cutting out centre turning lane
- c) **Copenhagen: Urban Gardens**
 - Empty building sites to establish gardens – tables, benches, bbqs for everyone to use
 - Carrier bikes: good for the family

Prepared for BurlingtonGreen by Caitlin Vito August 16, 2012

¹⁰ <http://bikeportland.org/2010/05/05/pocket-park-and-cycle-track-a-closer-look-at-the-ne-holman-bike-boulevard-project-33025>

Appendix B

Note: As this document is very large, a web source for a download is included for the reader to access a download at: <http://www.pdfio.com/k-1334652.html>

Appendix C

Notes on September 6, 2012 Waterloo Region LRT Review Meeting

Present:

Thomas Schmidt – Commissioner of Transportation and Environmental Services

Jim Wideman Waterloo Regional Councilor

Ken Seiling – Waterloo Regional Chair

Monte Dennis

Factors Leading to LRT Decision

Places to grow indicated they were pushing their urban boundaries and the existing road system was incapable of handling the additional 250,000 people from “Places to Grow” increases. They developed a Growth Management Plan (GMP) to direct intensification and as the Waterloo Region controlled transit, they were able to integrate transit planning with the GMP. Eventually they also plan to have 60,000 to 150,000 employment along the LRT line.

Keys to Getting Public Support

1. The community was told that the equivalent of an additional Hespler Rd. across the region would be required without transit.
2. Illustrations of the new roads were used to show the impact.
3. The affluent neighborhood (Westmount) was brought on side by indicating that an additional two lanes of roadway would be required through their area without transit.
4. Cost was addressed by mentioning the “hidden” subsidies for car usage and indicating that although transit isn’t self-funding, neither are roads.
5. Financing taxation levels were key. Existing cash flows were used to offset tax increases.
6. The citizen group TriTAG was able to present reasoned presentations and support through social media. They represented a young, upwardly mobile group, many of whom did not want to own a car.
7. The GTA and Ottawa’s Bus Rapid Transit were used as examples of what not to do.
8. Since assuming transit responsibility in 2000, the region has invested in transit and now has 18 - 19 million rides.
9. They targeted riders of choice (always including business person in illustrations etc.) and subsidized lower income riders (the region had control of social services).

Outcomes to date.

1. Land prices along the line are increasing (“money follows rails, not tires”).
2. New companies are coming to the region (e.g. Google).

Lessons Learned

1. Good communication with the public is key. The region hired a PR company, had public meetings and sent communication pieces to every household.
2. The workshop format of the public meetings assured they were not “hijacked”.
3. The region had a clear plan and had been working at it for 8 – 10 years, so they used the meetings to solidify the process of accommodating the population growth.
4. The LRT line followed the already established i Express offering a bus along the route at short intervals (every 7 ½ minutes)
5. Targeting riders of choice is effective, as they won’t ride busses.
6. The process needs political and community champions.
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