



REPORT

Midtown Oakville

Meeting Date: February 27, 2024

FROM: Planning Services Department

DATE: February 20, 2024

SUBJECT: Midtown Program

LOCATION: Midtown Oakville

WARD: Town-wide

RECOMMENDATION

That the report entitled “Midtown Program” be received for information.

KEY FACTS

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- A summary of feedback from the February 15, 2024 Public Information Centre (PIC) #3 is provided in this report from *Jacobs* (the consultant team).
- Town staff have provided a response to key questions raised at the final Midtown Oakville Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting on January 30-31, 2024. The full list of issues identified is attached as Appendix ‘A’.

BACKGROUND

The Midtown Oakville Committee of the Whole (COW) process began on July 18, 2023. Six COW meetings took place between July 2023 and January 2024, with the final meeting on January 30, 2024. The COW meetings covered the following topics:

- COW #1 (July 18, 2023): Introduction of the Midtown Implementation Program.
- COW #2 ([August 15, 2023](#)): Joint Best Planning Estimates (JBPEs) overview – a collaborative planning exercise undertaken by Halton and its local municipalities. The JBPEs serve to establish the town’s growth management

framework, and as a foundation for the town's future planning of infrastructure and other services.

- COW #3 (October 10, 2023): existing conditions, constraints, and opportunities to inform the preliminary land use block concepts.
- COW #4 (November 14, 2023): presented the draft block concepts for consultation, illustrating effects on servicing, mobility, public realm, built form.
- COW #5 (December 12, 2023): provided an opportunity to understand Ontario's planning law, policy options, tools and context, and the supporting tools and processes the town can employ.
- COW #6 (January 30-31, 2024): the final COW meeting presented the proposed concept and policy directions, based on public, Council and stakeholder feedback to-date.

The six COW meetings have been complemented with public consultations on the same topics. Between September 2023 and February 2024, the team hosted more than 20 engagements with the public, technical experts, developers, landowners, and Residents Associations to discuss land use objectives and block concepts. A third phase of engagement occurred in February 2024 to refine the proposed concept.

Following the final COW meeting, a petition from the majority of Council requested that a Special Council meeting be scheduled on February 27, 2024. The petition asks for a Special Council meeting to:

1. *To receive a summary of the feedback from the February public information meeting.*
2. *To hear and discuss answers to the Public's questions on the preferred concept.*
3. *To discuss how Council will act on the recommendations listed below we see as necessary to assess a new OPA and make the right decision for the liveability and future of Oakville.*
 - A. *Follow through on request for bus tour / Council workshop to see Vaughn [sic], Liberty Village and Square one, with materials provided showing the community's growth plans. Bus tour to be led by expert on urban design/planning describing the strengths and challenges of each community.*
 - B. *Council participation in workshop format with an independent facilitator on what they have heard, likes, concerns, priorities to provide more comprehensive feedback to Jacobs.*
 - C. *Council to be educated on Community Permit planning and its possible Application to Midtown: Dillon Consulting to be retained as they have recent experience in Burlington.*
 - D. *Council to get a break down of developable land in each growth node and how that relates to forecasted population including a realistic people per*

- unit # for each area. A detailed analysis of optimal build out based on liveability, infrastructure needs and the assumptions underlying that.*
- E. Council to receive options with different built forms and lower density more consistent with commuter and regional transit direction of the Province.*
 - F. Council to hear in more detail the tools and best practices in OPA language to **provide surety** to the community on what will be achieved in terms of the parkland, public realm, community services, green building standards, green energy, and multi-modal connectivity.*
 - G. Council to receive population, community services, amenities and density per hectare and the developable land areas for neighbouring MTSA communities with GO service not subways.*
 - H. Council to receive and discuss a report on Transportation planning: projected traffic counts, parking requirements now and over time, possible changes to road network to and from the GO station based on impact of Metrolinx position on land use, including the impact road network changes will have on infrastructure, liveability and community safety, land use.*
 - I. Council to receive and discuss report on viability of employment projections and implications if not achieved on liveability and plan.*
 - J. RA / Community Leader meeting to engage in identifying SWOT analysis of the proposed land use and how it is built out facilitated by an Independent Facilitator.*

COMMENTS

Over the course of the Midtown Growth Area Review, and public engagement, there have been consistent themes in the feedback and areas of discussion. These have been identified throughout the stakeholder meetings and the Public Information Centres, and primarily focus on planning processes, land use mix, density, height and phasing (or timing of the area developing).

The following section provides context to the main points of the petition provided above.

Summary Feedback – Public Information Centre #3

The *Jacobs* team provides the following summary of the public feedback received at the 15 February PIC:

1. Project, Process & Policies Booth
 - Desire to understand more about planning process, forecasts and targets
 - Policies topics noted included financing, taxpayer impact, affordability, mobility & green infrastructure

2. Height and Density Booth

- This booth received the most feedback/engagement from the public
- Support for tall towers, densification, mixed heights
- Concerns about no height caps, environmental impacts, livability

3. Housing Booth

- Support for affordable, diverse and dense housing in complete communities
- Concerns about affordability, tall towers and realizing the promises in the plan, adequate amenities

4. Precincts & Destinations Booth

- This booth received the least feedback/engagement from the public
- Support for walkable, unique and safe mixed use areas
- Concerns for induced traffic demand, empty retail/office space and not enough schools

5. Mobility Booth

- Support for car-free mobility - transit, active transportation, dedicated bus lanes
- Concerns about gridlock and safety, mobility connections beyond Midtown

6. Open Spaces Booth

- Support for green spaces and parks, resilience
- Concerns about school/park access, heritage, environmental impact & commitment to realizing parks

Matters affecting the Proposed Concept

There are common questions, issues and concerns relating to the proposed concept prepared by the *Jacobs* team. Responses follow relating to the themes of height and density, alternative plans, phasing, and financial implications are provided below. More detailed response to questions provided directly to staff from Residents Associations is appended to this report. While not exhaustive, the context following may assist Council in its deliberations, and a more fulsome analysis will be provided through the staff reports for the Official Plan Amendment.

Feedback from stakeholders is valuable throughout the process to ensure the land use policy implements the Vision for the area, while responding to the community's aspirations. The land use policy will not address every issue raised though, since it must still conform to the Province's policy framework.

The Province has allocated 1.1 million residents and 500,000 jobs to Halton Region to 2051. Through a collaborative planning exercise undertaken by the Region and local municipalities, the population and jobs were distributed across the Region. Oakville's portion of this future growth amounts to 442,941 people and 212,116 jobs, and it has been distributed in alignment with the town's Urban Structure, and based on provincial rules. The foregoing population and jobs figures have been refined slightly from what staff presented to Council in August 2023. As noted at that time, a full analysis had not yet been completed across Halton Region, and as such, the August figures were deemed preliminary.

The Growth Plan designates Midtown as an Urban Growth Centre, and must be planned for a minimum of 200 people and jobs per hectare, by 2031. The plan for Midtown must also account for the 2051 population and employment forecast and how to accommodate that population while still designing for a vibrant, resilient, complete and liveable Midtown.

To that end, the feedback from the public throughout the Midtown review has been invaluable and allowed the consultant team to shape a concept that strikes a balance of meeting provincial policy requirements and creates a complete community.

There have also been common interests expressed such as a desire for flexible office and retail policies; the importance of pedestrian-oriented streets and active transportation; concerns with traffic; dispersed parkland; and the importance of phasing developments and the delivery of infrastructure.

Height and Density

Midtown's existing, in-effect land use policies are out-of-date and do not conform to provincial policy. They must also be updated to inform and guide future development in Midtown. Risks associated with not having a policy framework in place include further delaying environmental assessments, infrastructure planning and other implementation plans.

The minimum required growth to be accommodated within Midtown Oakville by 2051 (32K people and 17K jobs by 2051) must be accommodated within approximately 40 hectares of land – the net developable area. The developable area has removed lands required for:

- public roads (26 ha);
- utilities / rail (21 ha);
- parks (12.8 ha);
- natural heritage (1.4 ha); and
- public rights-of-way (0.7 ha)

While Midtown is an Urban Growth Centre, it is also being planned and designed as a transit-oriented community with a mix of land uses. It is therefore more appropriate to use floor space index (FSI) as a means to measure the total amount of floor area that will accommodate various land uses, residents and employees. FSI does not represent people, dwelling units or an employer. FSI measures volume and helps regulate a building's mass.

Having a range of FSI and heights grants flexibility to accommodate different building typologies, granting greater housing options and choice by utilising mid-rise and tall building forms throughout Midtown.

Phasing

Not all of the 40 net developable hectares will develop by 2051. To account for landowners that do not wish to redevelop (e.g., Home Depot and Metrolinx) and other constraints, there will likely be a need to accommodate the 2051 minimum growth targets on about 70% of the developable lands.

The policies will need to be structured to demonstrate how the population and employment forecast can be met, but still have flexibility if development slows throughout the planning horizon.

Alternate Plans

Various public comments have recommended deploying only a mid-rise concept for Midtown. As noted above, the OPA must still meet the mandated population and employment forecast and conform to provincial policy. There is alignment with the desires of the public comments on a number of initiatives to create a liveable urban centre such as focussing on walkability, pedestrian orientation, and vibrancy at-grade. The latter is created by having a mix of uses at street level, and framing the street with a human-scaled built form.

The final land use policy must also account for future community need, infrastructure and amenities, including schools, parks and a well-connected, multi-modal transportation network.

Town staff will continue to work with the consultant team to explore different built form options to achieve the Vision of Midtown, implement sound urban design principles while meeting policy requirements and establishing critical community elements.

A concept presented at COW #6 known as the "OMG concept" was reviewed by staff and the consultant team. The underlying assumptions made in the OMG concept concerning such matters as developable area, road rights-of-way jurisdiction,

integration of employment, dwelling unit sizes and persons per unit make the OMG concept very difficult, if not impossible, to be considered feasible.

Financial / Cost Implications

The majority of the infrastructure costs required for Midtown will be funded through Development Charges (DCs). A total of \$393M (2024) in transportation infrastructure costs are forecast based on previously completed Midtown studies and projects identified in the 2022 DCs Background Study. The majority of the cost – \$386M (or 98%) – will be funded by DCs and through anticipated cost-sharing agreements with the Ministry of Transportation (MTO), Metrolinx, and Halton Region.

The town's 2024-2033 Capital Forecast includes \$304 million in Midtown-related transportation infrastructure. Of this total, \$297 million, or 98%, will be funded by DCs and anticipated cost-sharing arrangements with MTO and Metrolinx. Beyond the ten year forecast, \$89 million in costs are forecast, all of which are expected to be funded by DCs and cost-sharing arrangements with MTO and Halton region. Water and Wastewater projects required to support Midtown are the responsibility of the Region and they are predominantly funded through DCs.

Local service costs related to roads, stormwater, water and wastewater infrastructure are the responsibility of the developer. The town's Local Service Policy, which is included in the 2022 DC Background Study, identifies the type of projects that are the responsibility of the town as development charge projects, and the type of projects that are considered a local service, and are the responsibility of landowners.

The financial manner in which Midtown is to be developed is complex and will require further work by staff, and will be determined as the plan for Midtown, and the implementation program, take shape. Financial matters are generally difficult to confirm before a plan is approved. Furthermore, financial matters are not demonstrative for plan success when those plans are adjudicated by the Ontario Land Tribunal or the courts.

Communications and Public / Stakeholder Engagement

Since July 2023, engagements led by the *Jacobs* team have been undertaken through interactive PIC workshops, technical advisory meetings, surveys, website and email submissions and the COW. A comprehensive list of public comments received throughout the Midtown OPA consultation will be provided as part of the staff report with the OPA's statutory public meeting.

Next Steps

A draft Midtown Oakville OPA will be posted on the town's website in early April 2024 and go to Council for review at a statutory public meeting in late April. A final draft OPA is anticipated to go before Council for deliberation and approval by June 2024.

CONSIDERATIONS

(A) PUBLIC

The town has hosted three statutory public meetings, several workshops, PICs, and technical advisory meetings, and six COW meetings. The public may submit comments on the draft OPA up until the time Council makes a decision.

(B) FINANCIAL

None applicable specifically to this report.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

The Midtown OPA and Implementation project involves co-ordination among numerous town departments.

(D) COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This report addresses the council strategic priority with respect to accountable government by providing Council and the public with detailed information on the Midtown Oakville OPA and implementation program, and the funding/financial implications associated with various options and emerging policy directions.

(E) CLIMATE CHANGE / ACTION

The Midtown consultant team will undertake a Community Energy Plan which is a key component of the Midtown Implementation project.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Issues Identified at COW Meeting #6

Appendix B – Urban Structure

Appendix C – Response to Residents' Associations Questions

Submitted by:

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