

Planning and Development Council Meeting
October 10, 2017 (Reconvening October 11, 2017)

Comments Received Regarding Item 14

Public Meeting Report – Town-Initiated Official Plan Amendment:
Downtown Oakville Growth Area Review (Livable Oakville)
File No. 42.15.54



Mayor Burton and Members of Council

October 11, 2017

Your Worship and Members of Council:

Re: Proposed Official Plan Amendment for Downtown Oakville

The BIA has been pleased to be involved in this important review and is grateful for the good work that has been done to date. As we all know the Downtown has been going through a difficult economic cycle for the past few years, which is a troubling concern for many. The Economic Study undertaken by J.C. Williams dated June 26, 2014 highlighted and forecasted these continuing difficulties. It is therefore important that we take this opportunity to address the various issues during this study period.

What is most troubling is the lack of shopping traffic during normal 9-5 business hours. The Williams study notes the considerable (and increasing store vacancies) as at 2014 has resulted in a reduction of as many as 1,000 employees further contributing to this issue. Given the loss of the traditional shopping traffic generators in the downtown, such a government offices, major food store and a major general merchandiser, the only remaining option is to provide significant modern office space which is currently sadly missing in the downtown.

As the Barry Lyon Study reported, the economic feasibility of downtown condominium development for the 4-6-8(with bonusing) storey projects, is questionable given the reduced lot depth and extraordinarily high land costs. They also note the retail market for the high priced luxury product is a shrinking one. In terms of shopping traffic, occupancy for an 1800 sq. ft. expensive condo may only be 2 persons who only occupy the unit after business hours. During the winter months many will be vacant (like many of the homes in the downtown) during the winter months. This is to be compared with an 1800 sq. ft. office which will normally have 6 or more persons during normal business hours 12 months of the year and who would significantly contribute to the downtown shopping traffic needs.

We would therefore ask Council to study the economic feasibility for major office at the identified 12 storey sites and the possibility that such be reserved for that purpose. We would also ask that nBarry Lyon take the next step and study the actual footprints for these 4-8 storey sites together with updated market data, to determine the economic development feasibility for such. If they determine such is not practical, we ask that they report back with alternative suggestions.

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Finally, given the significant vacancies in Downtown ground floor space, there is a need for a common commercial leasing strategy to make the space more affordable and marketable. This will require the involvement of the Downtown landlords. Given the oncoming 2 year street construction period, the leasing strategy must deal with this issue. This is not the first time downtowns in Ontario have had to deal with this issue and the assistance of the OBIAA will be sought to provide input. We would ask the City authorize the J.C. Williams Group to take the lead on this initiative.

We believe that when we have this additional information the BIA and Council will be in a more informed position to make a decision on this important Official Plan Amendment.

The BIA thanks you for your ongoing assistance with this important work and look forward to continuing to work with you.

Sincerely,

Nick Bourikas

Chair Downtown Oakville BIA

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