

Residents for Sustainable Development in Guelph
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Mr. James Riddell, Director
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City of Guelph,
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December 1, 2005

Re: Commercial Policy Review

Thank you for the opportunity to comment again on the Commercial Policy Review.

As noted in my previous correspondence, the root of most of our difficulties today is the increasing size of the commercial developments, both at the individual store level and in the centres themselves. But I see nothing to address this in the proposed changes. The clause limiting each power centre to no more than four big boxes over 5575 square metres (60,000 square feet) does not address this issue.

The concept of communities within the city, each served by its own commercial centre, called for by our current Official Plan, appears to have been abandoned. With all the retail action focused on the new power centres, how long do you think it will be before many of the stores in those community centres will feel obliged to move to the edge of the city?

With traffic continuing to be an issue in this city—and it's only getting worse—the move toward larger stores means a larger service area, and thus even more traffic. The relatively compact nature of our existing community commercial centres means the adjacent road and transportation services are adequate and no single neighbourhood needs to bear the burden of undue traffic activity. One wonders what the traffic impacts will be for the neighbourhoods around Clair and Gordon if the 140,000 sq. ft. Zehrs is built, or if the Watson Road store is of similar size?

While the new format stores and the power centres are clearly popular, how well do they serve those without the means to get to them—the elderly and the infirm? To move away from community-based shopping would ensure greater automobile use, more traffic and would be unfair to those who rely on nearby shopping, and have made home-buying decisions based on the availability of local amenities. What will you say to the people in the 20 neighbourhoods in Guelph who have asked for traffic-calming measures to be implemented because of increased vehicle use?

With regard to the public process, it has been flawed from the very start and the City has been advised of people's concerns time and time again. (And having ARMED police officers in the council chamber while the public are making presentations was a ridiculously heavy-handed response to the perceived threat from anti-poverty activists.) I have, incidentally, seen no substantive response to any of the concerns raised in my December 31 or May 16 submissions.



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All the submissions from the public have indicated this city does not need to have power centres on the edge of town with huge stores dominating the landscape. The community centre concept has served us well and there is nothing to stop us having two of three smaller boxes representing the same banner spread throughout the city. Limiting stores size is becoming increasingly common as cities seek to preserve some sense of community and offer shopping that is convenient to all their residents, not just those with their own vehicles.

The developers took the opposing view and the City appears to be listening to the developers. While their commercial motives are legitimate, they can hardly be viewed as public interest. It is your job, and the council's job, to protect the public interest.

Please do your job.

Yours sincerely,

Ben Bennett

c.c. Craig Manley
Mayor and Council