

Residents for Sustainable Development in Guelph
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Mr. James Riddell, Director
Planning and Building Services
City of Guelph,
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May 16, 2005

Re: Commercial Policy Review

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the next stage of the Commercial Policy Review.

While illness prevented me from attending the May 3 workshop, I have had an opportunity to review the participant documents and the workbook.

My first observation is that we have a big problem here with process.

In my letter of December 31, 2004, I asked to speak to PET at the first opportunity. I duly took time off from work to attend the daytime meeting where the CPR was on the agenda and was only then told I was not allowed to speak. That letter was sent to you and Mr, Manley and copied to council. In that same letter I expressed hope that there would be "full opportunities for the general public to make their views known before any decisions are made". Instead, those who registered for the workshop were invited to comment on three versions of what was essentially the same option. Who developed the criteria? When were the criteria developed? Where was the public input into this important part of the process? If we were looking for waste management sites rather than shopping areas this process would be thrown out of the Environmental Assessment hearing before it even began.

Each of the three "options" includes 600,000 square feet of commercial zoning in the far north end. As a community, we have spent the past 10 years arguing about whether it makes sense for there to be ANY further development at Woodlawn and Woolwich. This argument is continuing in the courts to this day. Indeed, it is possible the courts will find there should be no commercial development on that site. There is a major compatibility issue here and your report says there is none. This is just wrong. Not knowing how well briefed your consultant has been on these issues makes it difficult to characterize this as incompetence or just insensitivity to the dozens of citizens who presented at both the May 25 public meeting and the August 5, OMB public night.

While staff argued at the recent Ontario Municipal Board hearing that it has always supported a limited development at the site, it has had well-documented reservations about a larger development and much of the discussion has been about the inevitability of the area becoming a regional centre. And yet, all three of your "options" includes a major node at 6&7, at the expense of more commercial land in the east, west and south—**where the city is growing!**

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This review is marked by flawed documents and a flawed process. I will not be completing the workbook. It is purely market based. It relies on a market consultant who has been thoroughly discredited after estimating Wal-Mart sales figures **less than one third** of what was finally agreed upon by the developer. There is nothing in the workbook about alternatives to these 1960s-based “edge-city” approaches to planning. These approaches make no sense when gasoline is approaching \$1.00 a litre, while traffic congestion is becoming a widespread issue and air quality continues to compromise our health.

I have seen no response to any of the concerns raised in my December 31 submission, other than acknowledgement that drive-throughs are a concern. We don't 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. When gasoline hits \$2 or \$3 a litre, the wisdom of such a policy will become evident to everyone.

If the city is serious about doing this right, it will review the original terms of reference for this project to ensure those terms have been met. It takes time to do it right but it will save time in the long run, and may avoid another expensive OMB hearing.

Yours sincerely,

Ben Bennett

c.c. Craig Manley
Mayor and Council