

From: Jody U

Sent: Tuesday, September 3, 2024 8:37 PM

To: Filson, Stuart <sfilson@london.ca>

Cc: City of London, Mayor <mayor@london.ca>; Mathers, Scott <smathers@london.ca>; Cuddy, Peter <pcuddy@london.ca>; Pribil, Jerry <jpribil@london.ca>; Trosow, Sam <strosow@london.ca>; Rahman, Corrine <crahman@london.ca>; Hopkins, Anna <ahopkins@london.ca>; Ferreira, David <dferreira@london.ca>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Amended Notice of the Planning Application, OZ-9726

Dear Mr. Filson,

We would like to provide feedback with respect to the *Revised Notice of Planning Application & Public Meeting* for files O-9752, OZ -9726 & OZ9727, O-9753 which was dated August 7, 2024. Our comments relate to the proposed “Transit Village” and subsequent rezoning for the Oxford-Richmond site (OZ-9726).

With interest, we logged into the online information session provided by the City on July 31, 2024 regarding this planning application. Most of our comments stem from what we learned during the presentation and subsequent discussion via the Q&A/chat forum.

We learned that this planning application is not really for creating a ‘transit village’, but rather for approval to rezone the area shown on the map to allow for high-rise development of up to 30 storeys. We were surprised to hear that the proposal does not even include a transit station, and that Council does not support a transit leg in this area at this time. One take-away from the meeting was that the City feels that transit will follow after the area’s population density increases significantly. That was expressed as a hope, not a plan.

From our point of view, expecting transit design to follow on the heels of building development is problematic, especially when talking about the establishment of a rapid transit system as referenced in the London Plan. It would certainly make better sense to plan transit routes first, or at least concurrently, to reduce the construction challenges, legal obstacles, utilities relocation, expropriation costs, and neighbourhood push-back inherent in the process of trying to punch transit corridors through areas that are already

saturated with development. That's why roads are built before houses; transit infrastructure planning should follow a similar blueprint.

Strategic planning should always consider important elements of current and future development, including the cause and effect of planning decisions on other major infrastructure investments and required services. The Transit Village planning proposal, as presented and explained during the information session, does not seem to do any of that, which is both unfortunate and disappointing.

We understand that the City wants to benefit from federal funding made available through the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF). However, decisions on rezoning existing residential areas to include high-rise development should not be fast-tracked, or taken in isolation of other factors, and yet that's what seems to be occurring.

It appears that the focus of this planning application is simply to allow substantial tear-down and redevelopment, on a scale and style inconsistent with that of the existing neighbourhood, while essential infrastructure planning to support that development is being relegated to a file titled "Maybe Someday." As it stands, it's a very incomplete package.

We get the impression, therefore, that the specific purpose behind the proposed rezoning is not to develop an urban, transit-oriented environment, but simply to permit and promote large-scale residential and business development in the affected area. Other types of development in the area will be encouraged, no doubt, but the primary intent of the proposal seems to be to open the area to properties that build up, as in skyward.

In looking at examples of transit-oriented development (TOD) and other definitions of Transit Villages, we found that they describe residential and commercial areas that are designed and built around, and served by, mass transit networks. By contrast, the City of London wants to designate the Richmond/Oxford area as a Transit Village without planning for one of the most important aspects of a Transit Village – a transit hub.

It seems that newer areas of the city, ones that are further from the core, would benefit from the transit village strategy. Build and connect them by means of efficient transportation systems encompassing roadways, bus lanes, bicycle paths, BRT/LRT, and pathways. Make the city easily transitable on a broad scale. Don't add congestion and intensify development in areas around the downtown core.

As per the City's definition of a 'Transit Village Place Type', this type of zoning allows for "some of the broadest uses and the most intense forms of development in the City." At the same time, the current planning policy for Transit Villages is also being changed from allowing 22 storeys to be built, to permitting 30 storeys. We are not against development, and absolutely support the City's plan to build vibrant communities, but the OZ-9726 planning proposal represents a significant change from the present and long-standing make-up of this area. Our feeling is that this planning application to change the zoning of this area so significantly represents the first step toward the erosion of our historic neighbourhood. This long-established community's character and well-being will suffer if the City's proposal proceeds as currently written.

Therefore, we urge you to reconsider the current plan and, after open consultation with all affected parties, modify it considerably. We require a plan that serves as a building block to enhance our community and promotes development that complements the neighbourhood. As the proposal stands now, it does none of that.

Jody Unrau

Robin Daneff