

Dear Mayor Morgan and City Councillors,

I am writing to share with you my perspectives on the package of amendments to the Official Plan that you will be considering on September 24th. The proposed changes are extensive, so there is much to say, but I will keep my comments as brief as I can, knowing that you'll most likely be inundated with correspondence:

1. I generally support the maximum height increases proposed. The proposal to allow four-story stacked townhouses as-of-right on neighbourhood connector streets is particularly welcome. While the change is modest, it can help to encourage the kind of 'missing middle' development that London needs, and that can help to provide relatively affordable ownership or rental units. Also, academic research consistently shows that increasing residential density by interspersing mid-rise housing in lower-density neighbourhoods makes them more socially diverse, inclusive, walkable and sustainable, and can help to support a range of neighbourhood-level small businesses. The vibrancy of the Wortley Village area, which includes numerous mid-rise housing developments on neighbourhood connector streets such as Ridout and Wortley, is a good local example of these positive impacts.
2. Notwithstanding the above, I am very concerned about the deep **disconnect** between Council's push for residential intensification and the lack of progress on rapid transit planning. Council has supported intensification since late 2022, but rapid transit planning has been stalled as a three-year Master Mobility Plan process slowly crawls forward. This sets London up for a future of gridlock, with serious implications for quality of life and economic competitiveness. A strong rapid transit system (whether it be BRT or LRT) is essential for mobility in a city where multi-story housing is the norm, and rapid transit lines take many years to plan and build. The previous Council's decision to reject the proposed rapid transit lines in the north and west was a mistake – one whose implications are more serious now that we are a rapidly growing city. As London intensifies, more rapid transit lines will be necessary. But research shows that the denser a city is, the more complex and expensive it is to build new transit lines. The longer London waits, the more challenging the task will be. With this in mind, I urge you to consider the following:
 - a. Along with voting on the proposed Official Plan changes, Council should **pass a motion directing staff to identify all possible opportunities to accelerate the Master Mobility Plan process, and to prioritize identifying routing alignments for additional rapid transit as a matter of urgency**. An aggressive timeline that sees Council approving new rapid transit routings by the fall of 2025 is both necessary and completely achievable, in my view.

- b. Council should **reject the proposal to remove the transit corridor and village designations from the planned north BRT routing.** The future routing of rapid transit to north London is unclear, but the ad hoc removal of the currently designated route without identifying an alternative makes no sense. Among other things, any future rapid transit route to north London will very likely include parts of Western Road, as well as Richmond St. north of Western Road, so the Council will most likely have to re-designate them as transit corridors in the future, further delaying transit development. If the concern is about the possibility of too much intensification in areas that may not end up near rapid transit, then the solution is to exempt these areas from the permitted height increases until the rapid transit routing has been finalized, rather than prematurely removing the designation entirely.
3. The height limit changes that you are considering may spur significant new residential development in some parts of the city – that is the goal, after all! But major new development in existing neighbourhoods should be accompanied by a systematic consideration of impacts on infrastructure needs, service needs, and other values (quality of built environment, heritage preservation, etc.). Fortunately, the Secondary Planning process is designed to do exactly this, and the City has successfully used it numerous times in the past. I thus propose that along with voting on the Official Plan changes, **Council should pass a motion directing staff to identify areas of London that are likely to experience significant development in the coming years and would benefit from developing Secondary Plans.**

I hope that these reflections are helpful to you as you make some important decisions about the future development of London at this meeting.

With best wishes,

Martin Horak