

London and Area Planning Consultants

January 12, 2012

Mr. Bud Polhill, Chair Planning and Engineering Committee
Chair and Members of the Planning and Engineering Committee
The Corporation of the City of London
City of London
P O Box 5035
London, ON N6A 4L9

Dear Mr. Polhill:

Official Plan Review 2011 Information Report - Public Participation Process January 16, 2012 Committee Meeting

The London and Area Planning Consultants is a group of land use planning professionals created to provide independent comments on matters of public interest related to planning in the City of London and surrounding areas. Comments provide by LAPC group are submitted to encourage excellence in the land use process and resulting planning documents. The following comments are based on a review of the Official Plan Review 2011 Information Report, dated December 12, 2012 and participation at the public Open House held to discuss this topic on December 13.

In principle LAPC supports the City's participation approach to develop an open and inclusive Official Plan review process. The following comments are divided into two groups. The first group of comments are significant concerns about the direction of the Official Plan review and the second set of comments are suggestions to enhance the participation process.

Significant Concerns

1. New areas in the City of London provide the housing and public services to meet the needs of our residents. At the same time, these new areas are often lacking the investments in public facilities and programming that build community relationships among the residents. We feel an important theme of the Official Plan review must focus on "community planning". Council and staff must identify geographic areas, public features and investments, and policies to encourage land use changes from residential areas to complete communities. The Plan must articulate land use planning goals, objectives and policies that will create complete liveable communities in the long term.

2. The original 1989 Official Plan has evolved into a cumbersome, inaccessible and sometimes contradictory document. Numerous amendments and ad hoc changes have created a document with prescriptive and regulatory policies, effectively removing the overarching policy intent of Council and the community. LAPC strongly supports the creation of an Official Plan focused on the City's long term vision, articulated in goals, objectives and policies. It must be readily accessible to a wide range of community members, investors and Council to make sound land use decisions. The resulting policy must be the first point of reference for all community investment in both the public and private sectors, to ensure complete liveable community for London.

3. The City of London is currently undertaking a number of studies such as the City of London Growth Plan, Downtown Master Plan and Urban Design Guidelines – Building the Place to Be. LAPC is very concerned that studies undertaken concurrent with the Official Plan do not become default policies overriding the Plan. These documents will provide important supporting material to shape the Official Plan. These studies must not pre-empt or prejudice the purpose of the Plan to be the primary land use document for the City.

Official Plan Process Suggestions

1. London has large groups of new immigrant residents. Consideration should be given to publication of Official Plan information in other languages and in formats that are accessible to the major immigrant groups. This will ensure broader and more comprehensive input and greater community understanding.
2. The planning decisions made today will affect future generations of youth who are not engaged in planning discussions. Specific efforts should be made to engage youth at the high school, college and university levels who will benefit from decisions made now, creating an environment that retains our young population.

A representative of LAPC will be in attendance at the meeting of January 16, 2012. Please contact myself should you have any questions or comments.

Yours Truly,

London Area Planning Consultants



William Pol, MPA, MCIP, RPP Member of LAPC

cc. Mr. Greg Barrett, Manager City Planning and Research