

Southeast London Community Council

✓ on mailing list

November 25, 2011

City of London Planning Division
P.O. Box 5035
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London, ON N6A 4L9

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PLANNING DIVISION
NOV. 28 . 2011
FILE NO. _____
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Attention: Ms. Heather McNeely

Re: 2011 Official Plan Review File # O - 7938

Dear Ms. McNeely;

We have read your circulation regarding the upcoming Official Plan Review. We are concerned that the draft Terms of Reference does not support a process that allows for new creative and innovative planning policies that are conducive to the City's new vision "City of Opportunity".

The Terms of Reference appear to assume that a continuation of the existing planning policies and procedures that characterize the current Official Plan should remain essentially intact. The language of; "visioning", "needs evaluation", "issues identification", "engagement", and something termed a "community vision", are not operationalized in the work program tasks. We are looking for practical descriptive guidelines regarding plan implementation procedures for the benefit of the citizens of London. Previous Official Plan reviews had also promised a new Official Plan that would accomplish noble and worthwhile goals however; the Official Plan appears to have not only have maintained the status quo but also become progressively more prescriptive, cumbersome and exclusionary.

We do not want to see an Official Plan that perpetuates the creation of sterile residential subdivisions; we want vibrant neighbourhoods that support a pedestrian lifestyle and creates communities in which we can live, work and play. We want substantive changes in the Official Plan similar to the enlightened and innovative planning and development models that have been adopted and successfully implemented in other municipalities to create the attractive and vibrant communities we desire.

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Southeast London Community Council

We are also concerned about the policies that facilitated the demise of many small businesses, small commercial plazas and malls, particularly in the south end, such as Westmount Mall and Argyle Mall, the Old East neighbourhood and the Downtown Core while supporting the development of automobile dependent big box stores along many of London's arterial roads. Londoners need Council and Staff to recognize these past errors and acknowledge and address these policies within the current review process.

We are looking for more innovative planning initiatives from the City, such as the relatively recent "Placemaking Principles"; which incorporates creative and progressive thinking into the planning process. Placemaking Principles are practical and have been very successful in other Ontario and North American cities. These principles seem to have been overshadowed by London's prescriptive antiquated policies and procedures which could not, or would not, recognize their value for creating viable communities.

The Official Plan Draft Terms of Reference does not appear to acknowledge the restrictive, exclusionary policies inherent in the City's Official Plan, nor does it describe how the review process will address the issues we have raised. Council and Staff have been unsuccessful in developing planning policies that create attractive, socially functional, communities in the City of London.

The Terms of Reference should contain task objectives that will result in procedures for:

- Practical and efficient plan review guidelines that permit innovative residential development, in order to build "communities" as opposed to just "subdivisions" ;
- Planning policies that prevent dysfunctional, automobile dependent, strip development;
- Planning policies that encourage the creation of pedestrian friendly neighbourhoods;
- Practical guidelines that will help reverse the trend toward deterioration of many small commercial enterprises;
- Serious reduction in plan review and approval timelines;
- Efficient submission requirements for new development plans (as has been successfully implemented in other municipalities in Southern Ontario);
- Land use designations that permit a viable mix of compatible land uses, such as those that have been implemented in other North American cities and have been the standard in European cities for centuries;

Southeast London Community Council

- New Land Use designations that facilitate implementation of development plans that create “communities”; and
- Policies and planning guidelines that empower communities with useful, innovative, and beneficial initiatives such as the “Placemaking Principles.”

We plan to be very vocal during this planning process, and intend to vigorously pursue our concerns since the results of this Official Plan will impact the character and functioning of our City.

The attached names are the current members of our growing committee membership.

Sincerely,



Lynda Cowie

Southeast London Community Council

Brian Matthews
Anthony Fonseca
Carmen McClemont
Michael McClemont
Kurt Holman
Jesse Haidar
Shams Syed
Gohar Zeb Raja
Wendy Evans
Marge Waller
Dave Waller
John Millership
Kris Usher
Sandy White
Victoria White
Mike Williams