

Ms McNeely

I would like to make a few comments regarding the Southwest Area Plan being considered by the Planning & Environment Committee on Monday October 15th.

First I would like to congratulate those who put the process of public consultation together. I was able to attend most public meetings and appreciate the opportunity to ask questions and provide input. However, the decision by members of the PEC to over-ride significant elements of the planners' recommendations that had already been rationalized through the public consultation process leaves me feeling disenfranchised and betrayed. At no point at any of the public meetings I attended did I hear someone say "we need more big commercial" or "let's just let the developers decide".

As a resident of Lambeth it is this headlong rush to encourage excessive commercial development as quickly as possible that leaves me opposed to the plan. While I can support the overall vision for Lambeth presented, it is just that - a vision. Nothing I have seen or heard to date would leave me to believe this vision will be achieved.

That vision calls for the village core to "serve as a central community focal point, and will provide a neighbourhood level of service within comfortable walking distance of most residents of Lambeth and other nearby Neighbourhoods". However, as development rapidly encroaches on the village of Lambeth we are already seeing a direct impact on the commercial viability of neighbourhood services. The decision to close the neighbourhood branch of the TD Bank and relocate to Colonel Talbot and Southdale is a perfect example.

Unless they are a true "destination", commercial/retail will follow roof-tops. To compete for those services, Lambeth needs to transform itself from a rural village to a unique urban neighbourhood - it needs smart development. Because the city continues to defer any action on the infrastructure that would allow residential development in Lambeth to grow at a rate that would retain and attract neighbourhood services, it does not play on an even field. Residential growth in the village will significantly lag surrounding areas and the trend to see more and more traffic exiting Lambeth or simply flowing through will continue. The result will look nothing like the pretty pictures that have been displayed - it is pretty hard to have a pedestrian-oriented main street environment when you have four lanes of traffic speeding through with no reason to slow down.

I moved to London to go to university and liked it enough to stay even though I have had the opportunity to live in many different cities. After being a long-time downtown resident, I moved to Lambeth because I wanted a change but also wanted to be in a community where I could still walk to the essential services I need (post office, dry cleaner, bank, drugstore, grocery store and yes...LCBO). There are a lot of people out there who seem to like big commercial areas populated with big box destinations. But there are a lot of us that don't and that is why we live in mixed use, walkable neighbourhoods. It would seem this city's elected officials are determined to keep encouraging the same old car-oriented development patterns because it is easy and has the potential for a quick return. And they are willing to ignore the direct and indirect dis-benefits of that type of development. If that is the case, those of us who look for something different will vote with our feet and move to a city where the ideals are more aligned with our own.

There has been debate and discussion as to whether opening up significantly more commercial/retail space would have a negative impact on other areas of the city. Lambeth is proof that it will. Cities are complex systems and land use is a decision that affects many people for a very long time. It is not a tool to achieve short-term objectives no matter how pressing they might be.

Thank you for your consideration

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