

On Jun 21, 2013, at 10:48 PM, "Damon Muma" wrote:

Hello Cathy, I have sent this correspondence to my councillor and the mayor and was hoping you would look at it and consider attaching it to the council agenda.

I wanted to write to you after hearing about what's being planned with respect to replacing an environmentally significant woodlot at the south end of the city with a shopping plaza.

Whether this is a play at getting a lot of jobs for London in a short amount of time, or whatever it is... It strikes me as shortsighted, and not the way to lift London out of its employment rut.

London needs reasons for skilled graduates to stay here after they finish school. London needs incentives for entrepreneurs to start up businesses that will create jobs by employing skilled labourers and professionals. London needs a strong core with a thriving arts and culture scene so that people my age and any age can stay downtown for their high quality entertainment instead of travelling to and eventually relocating to Toronto to for a world class night out. London needs a pedestrian and bicycle friendly plan to encourage a vibrant, co-operative community and inspire those forward-thinking entrepreneurs to set up shop here instead of in Waterloo or Toronto.

This plan is the absolute antithesis to these opportunities for real progress.

As retail is slowly but inevitably supplanted by online shopping, all this will do is syphon business away from White Oaks Mall and downtown. The jobs will be low-paying, usually part-time and not even accessible by bus. They will do nothing to enrich the people who hold the jobs, or the city as a whole, and ultimately just relocate jobs from one place to another as business closer to the core are driven to bankruptcy. A city with the same number of people will not suddenly have more money to spend -- they'll just be able to spend it in different places. It's economics. This will not help London grow in employment and prosperity. It will hurt it -- its character and sustainability.

I am a late 20s working professional in the tech sector with a passion for the arts. Every day I talk to people who are moving out of the city because London doesn't have anything to offer them. We have enough big-box retail centers. The great thing about the new economy -- tech -- is that it can happen anywhere there's an internet connection. But it won't happen in the city that's building cookie-cutter shopping centers that keep people apart. It will happen in the city that's bringing and keeping like-minded people together, giving them a great environment to live and work and play in. Thousands of people (not me, incidentally) came out to ReThink London to envision a progressive, exciting London which involved a lot of things, but not more big box stores.

I urge you sincerely not to support this motion. Let's not replace an ecologically important forest with a parking lot. It's a short-sighted band-aid attempted-solution. We can do better.

Thank you.

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Damon Muma