



P.O. Box 89052
HAMILTON, ONTARIO L8S 4R5

Sept. 1, 2018

Re: Applications to Amend the Urban Hamilton Official Plan and City of Hamilton Zoning By-law No. 6593 for Lands Located at 925 Main Street West and 150 Longwood Road South (PED18199)

Dear Chair and Members of the Planning Committee:

On behalf of Hamilton Naturalists' Club President Bronwen Tregunno and 600 HNC members, thank you for the opportunity to present our views on the Columbia International College plan to build a mixed-use student residence including two towers of 18 storeys and 16 storeys at Main and Longwood.

We recognize the value of Columbia College, the attractiveness of the site, and the importance of urban intensification. However, the location and scale of the project are controversial. We are opposed to the magnitude of the proposed development and the potential environmental consequences of slope reconstruction associated with the Chedoke Creek valley. Given the significance of this project, we also have serious concerns about the consultation and approval process as it has unfolded to date.

The HNC was surprised and disappointed when the Hamilton Conservation Authority gave conditional approval to the project on Feb. 1 despite the strong recommendations of Authority staff. The staff report recommended the development be refused as it does not comply with municipal, HCA or provincial policy in the regulated Chedoke Creek valley.

HCA staff estimated reconstruction of the valley slope would require about 1,440 dump truck loads of engineered fill. They cited potential public safety and property risks within valley lands susceptible to erosion hazards.

In approving the project, it was noteworthy that the Authority included the landowner entering into a Save Harmless Agreement regarding any liability for the development. I should mention that a civil servant with many years of experience in these matters suggested to me last week that such an agreement is not enforceable.

HCA staff noted the original concept consisted of a single 10-storey residential/commercial building limited to the 925 Main Street West property. We support the staff's conclusion that the larger, two-tower project is too much for the available land.

It is disconcerting that Planning and Economic Development Staff are now supporting an even larger development with 18 storey and 16 storey towers, certainly well beyond what was originally envisaged. The growing size of the development raises questions as to whether alternative locations that could be less controversial have been considered.

Hamilton Naturalists' Club is a non-profit organization dedicated to the study, appreciation and conservation of our wild plants and animals.
All work is freely done by Directors, Officers and Members.



Our concerns about the consultation and approval process to date relate to both the Conservation Authority and the City. First, the HCA. We definitely would have appreciated an opportunity to speak to the Authority before their decision. I believe many people, who would have otherwise tried to attend the meeting, were not aware of the issue when it came to a vote at the Authority.

Some proponents have suggested that the project should be approved since the Chedoke Creek valley has been heavily impacted by urban development and Highway 403. Chedoke Creek nonetheless has survived. In fact, the City's website description of the Chedoke Golf Course emphasizes the beauty of the "rolling parkland landscape" and the "stunning Niagara Escarpment."

We urge the HCA and the City to recognize the importance of this attractive escarpment stream as a valuable natural asset. Accordingly, we support efforts to naturalize more of the creek and the valley, rather than extensive reconstruction of the slope for development in a regulated creek valley.

In our view, the Conservation Authority's approval is inconsistent with its own positive Stewardship Action Plan for the Chedoke watershed. Cities are increasingly taking steps to improve the quality of life by restoring and opening creeks that were formerly channeled and buried by urban development.

The attitude toward urban streams is changing as people recognize how vital natural watercourses are. City residents appreciate the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of living near streams at a time of rapid growth and climate change. Hamilton can set an example for the province in enhancing the natural appeal and landscape of Chedoke Creek.

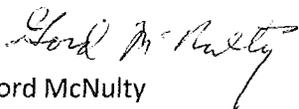
As a longtime donor to the Hamilton Conservation Foundation, I believe the HCA's approval of the proposed Columbia development, on the scale proposed, does not reflect the environmental leadership that I would expect of the Authority. Decisions such as this can, unfortunately, diminish the reputation of the HCA.

We also take issue with the short period of time between release of the Planning Staff recommendation and today's meeting. Such an abbreviated consultation period is problematic for citizens. It is difficult to review a lengthy, complex and long-awaited, I should add, Planning Staff report and prepare a submission in less than a week, particularly over the busy Labour Day weekend.

To date, public consultation by the Planning Staff and the applicants has focused primarily on property owners within 120 metres of the subject property. In our view, this issue is of such importance that more community feedback is needed. The proposed development has received some news media coverage but enhanced discussion and dialogue would be beneficial.

We urge the Committee to extend the consultation period and seriously consider a full public meeting, open to all interested citizens, who could share their views before the Committee votes on the Planning Staff's recommendation. Such a step would help to promote public confidence in how this issue is being managed to date.

Thank you.



Gord McNulty

Ontario Nature Representative, Hamilton Naturalists' Club