

# WINDSOR-ESSEX REGIONAL Chamber of Commerce

## **CITY OF WINDSOR OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW CHAMBER COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

January 25, 2010

### **Improving the Official Plan**

- The Official Plan Review amendments contain language that would diminish the business climate for commercial development in the City of Windsor. Commercial development is singled out as a business category and treated unfairly.
- The Chamber has opposed any new restrictions to business, and objects to the proposed additional restrictions in the draft Official Plan Review documents. An acceptable Official Plan Review would provide incentives for commercial development in areas where there is perceived value or deficiency in such development. The Official Plan Review should improve the business climate throughout the City of Windsor to ensure fairness and continuity of the free enterprise principle as the best way to attract new businesses.
- The Chamber is in favour of improving the City of Windsor's long term plan by including incentives to steer growth in desired commercial locations, improving its overall economic development programs and allowing for a business friendly municipal process in assessing development related applications.

### **Provide Incentives**

- The Chamber opposes restrictions but is very much in favour of incentives that will make certain areas in the City more attractive to potential investors and developers.
- Easing development charges or other fees for development related services are within the purview of the municipal government. Improving the building permit process and providing property tax incentives can be valuable in attracting commercial development downtown.

- The most promising set of incentives can be initiated by completing a Community Improvement Plan needed for a Brownfield Redevelopment strategy. The City of Windsor has a significant industrial base downtown that can be converted to various other uses, including new residential and commercial development.

### **Expand the Economic Development Toolbox**

- Tools are needed by Windsor Essex organizations to attract and retain businesses in our region. The City of Windsor should cooperate with surrounding municipalities in creating or obtaining such economic development tools whenever possible.
- The municipalities should strengthen their economic development capacity and know how through targeted organizational development and utilizing already existing structures such as the Windsor Essex Development Commission, the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Visitors and Convention Bureau and similar regional organizations with mandate to strengthen the region for business.

### **Time For Action**

- It was five years ago that the economy was able to sustain restrictive measures to guide economic growth. Currently, the economic climate in the region is such that perceived or real restrictions to economic development and growth would be detrimental to any future growth.
- The City of Windsor's Official Plan Review should ensure no such restrictions exist. An official plan should remain a positive general document outlining opportunities for growth and allowing business enterprise to flourish in the long term. The limitation to growth should only be allowed in a provision for a fair application process to assess the suitability of the desired enterprise where every reasonable plan should be treated fairly. The document should not restrict the process before such application is made.

### **Allowing Free Enterprise**

- In the official plan, allow growth to occur wherever businesses decide to invest as the best policy. There is already a process in place to screen

applications for development. Do not use the official plan as a tool to restrict growth.

### **Helping Downtown**

- Official plan should avoid focusing almost exclusively on the Downtown. However, the City can and should develop initiatives that would broaden the downtown residential base as the best incentive for businesses to choose downtown commercial locations.

### **Chamber Recommendations:**

- Include single long-term planning horizon for all development categories (residential, employment and commercial)
- Consider the widest possible scope for future development without undue restriction
- Untie commercial and employment development from residential growth
- Provide clear and non-prejudicial way of assessing all business plans regardless of desired location
- Where more commercial development is desirable the City should encourage or provide incentives for such development to occur
- Do not prohibit or restrict business development by the virtue of the Official Plan
- Welcome future development that makes business sense, not only planning sense.