

Presentation for Cote Saint Luc Master Plan

By Nathan Elberg

In the consultations so far the city has presented many interesting and ambitious concepts for the future of Cote Saint Luc. I feel strongly that this is the wrong approach. The city and its planners should look at present-day conditions and fix those. This is especially true with regards to making CSL a more pedestrian-friendly city.

At one of the first consultations, a city spokesman (I believe it was the City Manager) said that single-family homes are not the future, and are not what families want. I was shocked by this statement. What evidence is there for this? It seems to me that among the many young families I know, a single-family home with a backyard is a heartfelt ambition of a majority. I'd say "most" but I don't want to make a definitive assertion not backed by evidence.

Increasing the density of the population might increase the tax base, but would damage the nature of the city. We are a middle-class family-oriented suburb. The Planners should NOT try to change the nature of our city to suit Urban Planning paradigms. Similarly, increasing the diversity of the population should not be a planning element. If it happens organically, that's another thing. Higher density may increase the tax base, but there is an alternative: reduce city spending.

Low-cost housing in CSL is low-key, with institutions such as the Caldwell housing project, and Bnai Brith buildings. We do not need arcane regulations whereby a condo project is obliged to provide twenty percent low-cost units, effectively making the regular unit owners pay for a share of the subsidized units.

Underground parking was mentioned at the last consultation. It's a nice thing to have in winter. But it brings significantly higher costs than outdoor parking, costs which are passed on through tenants to the consumer. There are also potential crime-related safety issues in underground garages. While a sea of asphalt may not be visually pleasing, its overwhelming utility cannot be ignored. Perhaps aesthetically designed decked parking could offer a solution in shopping centers.

At the first Master Plan consultation, a city official mentioned the concept of having homes within a fifteen-minute walk of their shopping area (I think the reference term was "pods"). I don't understand such an idea. It seems to deny consumers the ability to choose the retailer they wish to frequent. You can't have a Costco, Home Depot, or even IGA every fifteen minutes apart. This concept should not be a consideration.

If the city wants to significantly improve the ability of residents to walk to their destinations, the first thing it has to do is fix all the sidewalks. This should take priority to beautification,

trees and flowers. While most sidewalks are passible to able-bodies people, a crack or gap can make a route impassable or at least dangerous for someone in a walker or wheelchair. I once was pushing a person in a wheelchair, and we hit a minor-looking crack. The wheelchair pitched forward, and the person fell part-way out. When part of a sidewalk is missing, a disabled person is trapped. Given the high proportion of seniors in CSL, this is a serious issue.

If the city wants to be a good place to walk, there are some easy and some difficult things it must do.

- As mentioned, fix all the sidewalk gaps and cracks ASAP.
- Pass and enforce a bylaw banning bushes and trees that encroach on the sidewalk. If property owners refuse to take care of these, the city should do the work, and bill it back to the owners.
 - Do not allow cars to park partway in their driveway and partway on the sidewalk.
 - Ensure that garbage bins are not left on the sidewalk past garbage day.
- When an orange “trottoir barré” sign is put up for any reason, ensure that an alternate wheelchair-compatible pedestrian route is available.
- Widen the sidewalk on the north side of Guelph. This is a high pedestrian traffic route, and often families with strollers are forced onto the road to get around other families. This is especially a concern on the Sabbath.
 - Your planners will have to determine whether it is possible to encroach on the existing road, or whether some expropriation may be necessary. Traffic planners could look at whether it is feasible to make Guelph into a one-way street.
- Widen the sidewalk on Fleet. It is a ridiculously narrow sidewalk for what could be a major pedestrian thoroughfare. The overgrown bushes along Fleet exacerbate the seriousness of the problem.
- Pedestrian overpasses over the railway tracks would be useful, both at the Cote Saint Luc shopping center and near the Bailey Road synagogue.

As I stated, some of these concerns are easy, and others difficult to resolve. But all together they would work much more effectively at making Cote Saint Luc a green, pedestrian-friendly city than any plans to re-engineer and re-work the city.

Cote Saint Luc is a good place to live. Let’s work with what we have. Thank you for your consideration.

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