

Three briefs oppose changes

Planning board delays decision on business section

Members of Acton Planning Board decided they wanted more time to analyze results of a survey and three opposing briefs before they made any decisions about changing the zoning of the town's commercial holding zones.

"We certainly find ourselves in a very difficult position here," opined board chairman Sid Saltz. "Which ever way we go we will be stepping on somebody's toes."

Three opposing briefs

Planning board heard an oral brief from lawyer Aldo Braida and had two written briefs opposing changes in the CIH zones, from the Chamber of Commerce and the Acton Development Commission.

A survey the board commissioned high school students to carry out seemed to be inconclusive so members, by resolution, decided to review and further discuss the proposals which involve residents mainly on Church, Bower and Mill Streets. When they have reached a consensus of opinion they will hire a professional consultant to find out if any changes or alterations are legal before they make a firm recommendation to council.

Some members of the short-handed board also found the oral brief by Aldo Braida unsettling and they did not want to make any concessions or changes until a full board was on hand.

Mr. Braida explained he was chairman of the planning board in 1968 when it was decided to zone all Bower Avenue from Willow St. to the CN tracks as commercial, figuring it would be the best provision for subsequent downtown commercial development. Council did not go along with their proposals so the board resigned at that time.

He said the present proposals before planning board which would rezone commercial holding zones to allow residents to alter or add to their homes would discourage commercial development. He proposed instead that, if possible, the CIH zoning be maintained and an amendment be made to the zoning by-law which would allow residents in CIH zones to alter their homes so long as they complied with R2 or R4 zoning.

Then if a developer came along, Mr. Braida explained, there needn't be the long waits for a change of zoning and then a

possible hearing before the Ontario Municipal Board which would discourage commercial development and probably send it elsewhere, likely to Milton or Georgetown. Those who invest money are in the business to make money, he stressed, and long waits where capital sits idle do not appeal to them.

"In my opinion we should not stifle the downtown," Mr. Braida said and if regional government decides Acton won't expand its borders where will business go? when the downtown area is filled up? he asked. He said it would hamstring the town.

Braida urged the Planning Board to leave the zoning as it is and put in an amendment to the by-law. He said changing the CIH zones to residential would be doing a disservice to existing merchants. He told the board he was presenting his views taking into account the background and didn't want to go back to zoning which would be so inflexible no one could want to do anything with it.

Mayor defends change

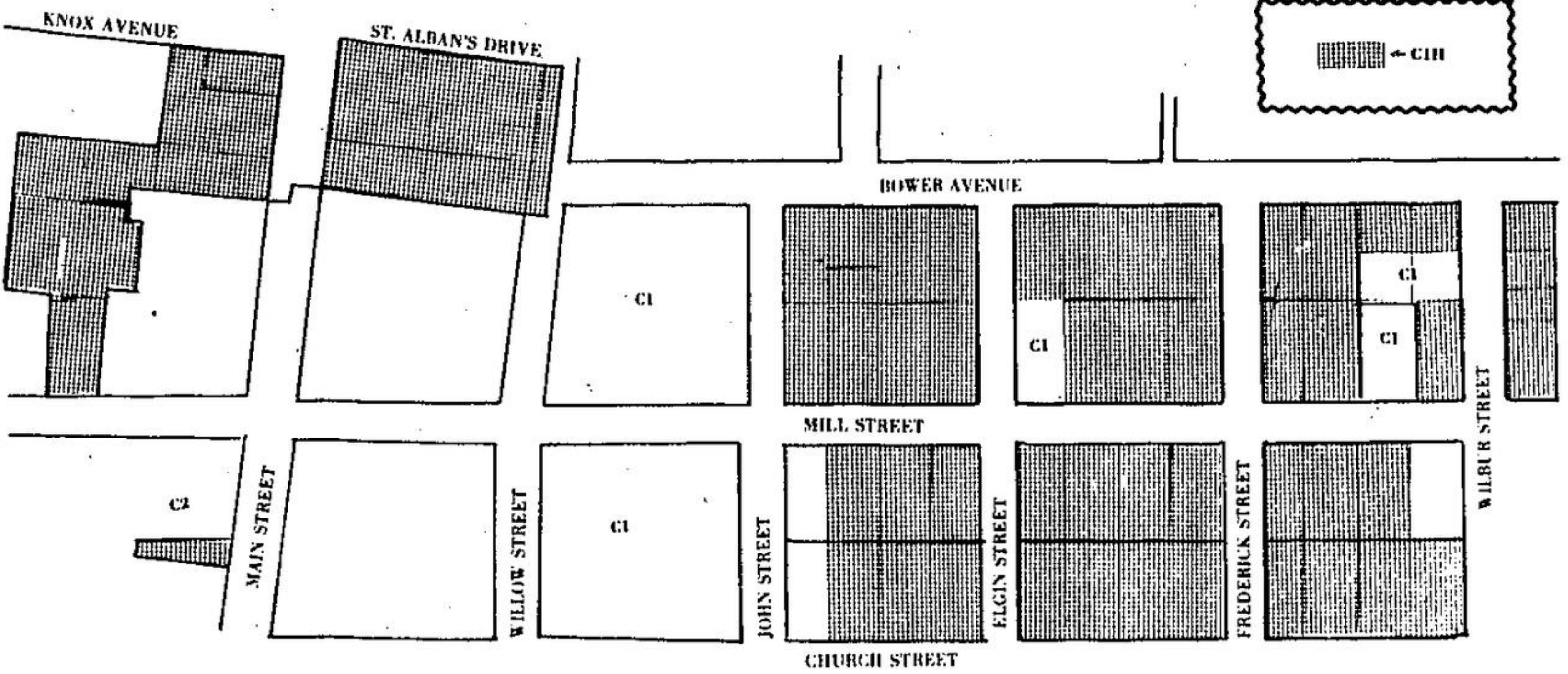
After Mr. Braida had left, Mayor Les Dudy spoke in defense of the change of zoning, suggesting that what was done in 1966 was the best thing at the time, but several years have passed and the thinking then has not borne fruit. By-laws are made to be amended from time to time, he said, and he felt it was time to change.

"If commercial outlets are opened on Bower Avenue and closed on Mill St. it is no advantage to the merchants there now," he told the board. It would be better, he reasoned, to include portions of Main St. in CIH zones in lieu of Bower and Church, which would be better residential.

"From a retailer's point of view the more businesses open adjacent to them, the more benefits would result."

"Think of Mill St. on the south side—what have we got commercially? the mayor asked, ticking off businesses there, he suggested, left plenty of room for development. "I'd like to see Mill St. fully developed before Bower and Church."

The mayor said the downtown area was already unattractive to shoppers with its soaped-up, marked-up windows, and certain



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people would like to see them improved before houses are torn down on Bower Avenue.

"Before encumbering residential homes on Bower and Church we should utilize everything possible on Mill St.," he continued. It is much better to shop in adjacent stores than to shop in one store, pass two empty stores and then have to go over to Bower and Church Sts. to finish."

Survey inconclusive

At this point in the meeting Councillor Bill Coats arrived with results of the survey commissioned by the board, and carried out by students of the high school. Mr. Coats explained the students

surveyed some homes in CI zones as well as CIH, for a total of 77. Tabulated results showed that most people in the survey did not know how the CIH by-law affected them and did not feel it restricted any improvements they might want to make in their premises. Most people in the CIH survey were in favor of reverting to a residential zone but those in the CI zone were not. This answer was clouded by many "not sure" answers which further confused planning board's intent.

"It sure is not consistent. I can't follow the logic," said board member Dave Muckle.

"It shows too much of our planning is not meaningful to the public," said the mayor.

Mr. Muckle indicated he leaned toward the argument set forth by Mr. Braida—to leave the CIH alone and allow residents to change properties provided they adhered to certain standards. He felt this would solve any complaints.

The mayor said he favored more public participation so residents would know how the by-law affects their properties before any decisions were made, but was willing to make some

concessions to Mr. Braida's argument.

Mr. Muckle referred to the survey which indicated only 22 of those in the CIH zone would appear at a public rezoning hearing. In his estimation this did not favor a public meeting. He felt the board should also ask the consultant's opinion about the legalities of Mr. Braida's proposals.

Chairman Saltz thought the board would arrive at the best compromise by leaving Church and Bower and developing Mill St., although he noted they might be going contrary to opinion as expressed in the briefs from the Development Commission and the Chamber of Commerce.

Executive decision

It was noted, however, that the Chamber brief was an executive decision as opposed to a general meeting, and the mayor said in his opinion it would still be better to fill in Mill St. before going to Church and Bower with commercial properties. "I don't feel this conflicts with the Chamber brief," he declared.

This ruffled Mr. Muckle. "Do you suggest going against all advice and representation?" he

asked the mayor. "We have received no mandate whatsoever than to preserve the status quo and no advice from any professional agency or anyone to do as you suggest." He felt the board should consult the planner before going any further.

But board member Frank Simioni said members should take all the information home and study it before any decisions were made.

"I still feel as Mr. Dudy does," Simon said, declaring Mr. Braida's arguments about regional government suppressing growth in Acton itself were not valid because most shoppers couldn't care less if a new plaza was in the town or Esqueping, for instance and this should have no bearing on the decision.

"We have waited for six or seven years for a big outfit to buy in the commercial holding zones but they haven't arrived yet and although Mr. Braida felt this could happen anytime, it might not either. In Mr. Simioni's opinion the town needs larger stores, not the smaller type being built. He referred to neighboring towns and cities, noting downtown stores were never replaced with something larger and he felt Acton's case was no different.

Appoint Simioni to attend meetings

Members of Acton Planning board were so pleased with the report Frank Simioni brought back from a recent Bruce Howlett Inc. meeting in Georgetown, about Ontario Hydro's 500 KV lines, they appointed him to attend all subsequent meetings.

Mr. Simioni reported he felt most of the people who attended the meeting in Georgetown were there to protect their own property rather than being concerned about the region as a whole.

Mayor Dudy agreed, noting the only place the hydro lines could go was across open farmland and over the years it had never hurt anyone. He and other members of the board felt that if Hydro had to avoid all the areas referred to in the criteria the lines would be doomed.

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Chamber says change would be backward step

In opposing any changes in the present CIH zoning, the Acton Chamber of Commerce submitted the following brief to Acton Planning board:

"Over the years, the Acton Planning Board and the Acton town council have received advice in regard to zoning and town planning in general. Large amounts of the taxpayers' money have been spent on professional consultation as well as free advice obtained in 1964 as a result of a survey taken by the University of Toronto. All these concur that steps should be taken to preserve and enlarge the central business district.

"In order for the central business district to develop, it must be possible for a developer to assemble lands without the delays of rezoning and without interfering with the Official Plan of the municipality.

"By-law 1416-1968 contains all that is necessary to guarantee the foregoing, and it is the opinion of the Acton Chamber of Commerce that nothing has changed in the interval since 1968 to require council to rescind this by-law.

"The Chamber recognizes the fact that there are certain inconveniences which may (or may not) present themselves from time to time to persons who own property in the CIH zone, but we have confidence in the members of the Acton Committee of Adjustment, that they will continue to use their good judgement when and if applications are made to them for variances to properties occupied as residences within the zone.

"We therefore submit that any change in the present plan would be a backward step."

Oakville planner to speak

Oakville planner Ron Cooksley, a resident of Nassagaweya township, will speak at a joint meeting of the Acton Development Commission and the Planning Board on regional government planning.

The press and public are barred from the meeting.

Members of planning board agreed to attend following receipt of an invitation at their meeting Thursday and passed a resolution which would allow them to be paid the usual rate for attendance.

Survey results:

Results of the survey by high school students of the CIH and CI homes was tabulated as follows:

CIH	Yes No Not Sure		
	1. Do you know how the CIH by-law affects you?	17	29
2. Do you feel that this has, or will, restrict any improvements you want to make in your premises?	17	28	3
3. Do you feel that being in a CIH zone has increased the value of your property?	10	19	19
4. Would you be in favor of reverting to a residential zone?	24	15	9
(b) Would you appear at a public rezoning hearing?	22		

CI Homes		
1. Yes 11; No 17;		
2. Yes 5; No 18; Not Sure 5.		
3. Yes 14; No 16; Not Sure 8.		
4. Yes 4; No 13; Not Sure 11.		
(b) Yes 10.		

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