Waverley West notes

Happy New Year to the Mayor and all of you

I'm appearing in opposition because the rules don't provide for support with conditions.

I began this process, to paraphrase William Lyon Mackenzie King, believing in "Waverley West if necessary, but not necessarily Waverley West."

That is, I was open to being convinced, first, that there will be a genuine need for new housing in Winnipeg, and second, that Waverley West is the right means to fill it.

The Planning Department's projections are based on two factors: population growth and rate of household formation. The projections of low or no growth, based on a few years in the 90s, have turned out to be faulty. Yet, we are now projecting forward, in the same way, growth based on a few years' experience in this decade.

Likewise, with household formation, we've seen a steady decline in the number of people per household and a point-1 decline creates demand for 10,000 homes. The department has predicted the rate will continue to decline and then level off.

Both projections could turn out to be just as faulty as the no-growth scenario – in either direction – through no fault of the department.

However, I accept the argument that there will always be a market for new homes in Winnipeg.

And if people who earn their livelihood in this city, choose to buy in the new home market, I want them to buy inside City Limits. I want them to pay taxes for the roads and services they use.

I join with Coun. De Smedt and Coun. Clement in holding the province accountable – as the profit-oriented developer of these lands, as the ultimate regulator of the process that governs their investment, and as the only effective referee of discussions between this government and the surrounding municipalities – in every respect, this provincial government has failed to show leadership on any of these issues.

Couns. Clement and De Smedt are quite correct in calling for a Minister of the Crown to appear in this place and make the case for the province to profit from this development. Mr. Borger, the chief executive of Ladco, came before us and made his case with considerable passion and commitment to this project. Where is the province of Manitoba?

And where is the province when it comes to sorting out the issues Coun. Clement raised regarding the extension of Bishop Grandin into the RM of Macdonald? Where is the province when it comes to the issues raised by Coun. De Smedt about land use issues and housing throughout the capital region?

Until those issues are sorted out, this city government must insist that every housing development that "looks like a city" be built within the city, where we can control it and we can earn the tax revenues from it to pay for the roads and services those people will use.

So I accept that there is a need for new housing in Winnipeg and I firmly believe it should be built within city limits.

And then I ask: Is this the right place to do it?

My answer is:

This city can only build Waverley West if we build Bus Rapid Transit at the same time.

All the developments in the Fort Garry part of my ward referred to yesterday in the planning department presentation, have put incredible stress on the neighbourhoods in the River Heights and Crescentwood parts of my ward. Every day, thousands of drivers from south of Wilkes "cut through" on Centennial, Beaverbrook, Lindsay, Cambridge, Oxford, Waverley, Montrose, Wilton and others. Homeowners are justifiably angry at people from other neighborhoods treating their front street as a through street.

Not only will Waverley West compound this problem for River Heights, it will expand the problem for Linden Woods. Linden Woods was designed to flow traffic around it, to prevent people from using it for through streets.

Yet, this intent will be lost under this plan, as drivers inevitably use Linden Wood Drive, East and West, to bypass lights on Kenaston and Waverley. This potential would only be compounded if the City proceeded with an underpass at Waverley.

In yesterday's presentation, the planning department showed you the familiar Power Point slide from Winnipeg Transit that shows the 35-minute contour. It shows that – WITH BUS RAPID TRANSIT – residents of Waverley West could get downtown within 35 minutes. Without Bus Rapid Transit – they don't.

That tells the story right there. If this city council had "done no harm" – had simply allowed Bus Rapid Transit to proceed, this city would still have $34 million in federal and provincial money to help build Bus Rapid Transit. And – in a matter of weeks from now – shovels would have gone in the ground to start building it.

If that had happened – If we were on track to building a rapid transit system that would serve every section of this city, including Waverley West – I would be standing here in support of Waverley West. I believe if people understand from the beginning that they are going to get transit service that provides a genuine alternative to the automobile – many of them will buy in and at least leave their cars at home for their daily commute to

work. That alone would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by thousands of tonnes and reduce wear and tear and congestion on our roads.

Bus Rapid Transit isn't a frill. A commitment to providing a genuine alternative to the automobile is a basic tenet of any forward-looking city.

Yet I note not one councillor has raised the issue of Bus Rapid Transit, light rail transit, or indeed, any questions about Winnipeg Transit service whatsoever. You can honestly sit here and ponder the biggest single development question this council has faced – and not ask yourself – how are we going to move these people? What transportation alternatives will they have?

There can be no Waverley West without Bus Rapid Transit. Don't compound the error you made on September 29 by creating a new generation of Winnipeg suburb completely dependent on the car. Build Bus Rapid Transit for all Winnipeggers, and then let Waverley West proceed.