

PRESS RELEASE

Re: Conference-Portland, Oregon.

From Pickering Councillors Dickerson, O'Connell and McLean.

Pickering City Councillors Doug Dickerson, Jennifer O'Connell and Regional Councillor Bill McLean attended the 45th International Making Cities Livable Conference in Portland, Oregon, June 10th-14th.

The conference theme was True Urbanism: Designing for Social and Physical Health. In attendance were 150 delegates and presenters representing countries such as Canada, USA, England, Poland, Sweden, Australia, Taiwan, Germany, France, Japan, China, South Korea and Italy. The representatives from these countries provided an opportunity for the Councillors to examine how best to create a vibrant "downtown core" as Pickering commences a review of its Official Plan. In addition this experience educated the Councillors on sustainable features to incorporate into the new greenfield communities of Seaton and Duffin Heights.

Councillor Dickerson, Chair of Sustainable Pickering, stated that the Official Plan process timing is excellent. "We must deliberately, openly and extensively include our residents in setting goals for our future. We will need to learn to understand each other, to work together and to agree on actions to be taken."

For Councillor O'Connell the time was well spent as it allowed her to interact with other political and professional designers from around the globe and to expand on her knowledge as to what Pickering ought to aspire to. Those in attendance at the conference embraced this fresh and vibrant approach.

Councillor O'Connell stated, "Pickering needs to become a city of short distances where balanced transportation planning makes possible commuting via pedestrian networks, bicycle trails, traffic quietened streets and public transportation. The City's identity is further expressed through its public art. Outdoor cafes and restaurants, farmers' markets, summer long artisans' markets and community festivals draw people together and help to create a vibrant community."

Ward 2 Regional Councillor Bill McLean said the conference really drove home the point that if we want to make our city healthy and livable for all then it first must be made livable for children. "If our cities are unhealthy, or lack livability and identity, our children will be the first to suffer," said McLean. "When you take away the impromptu social interaction in community life that can accompany autonomous walking and biking to school, kids fail to develop a sense that they are valued members of an interesting and stimulating community. Wherever we read or hear of a youth suicide or attempted suicide, we are witnessing an absence of a competent community," he added.

According to Sustainable Committee Chair Doug Dickerson, attending this conference will avoid having to hire high priced consultants to tell us what we have learnt through attending a week of practical sessions. The Councillors agreed that Pickering can be a "City of Vision" and requires increased citizens' awareness and involvement.

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“Our Downtown needs to be built through consensus building and leadership from the many vs. the few,” declared Councillor O'Connell.

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