

Contradiction over drive-through

Sometimes, your newspaper gives me a case of 'cognitive dissonance' where government policies and public statements are concerned. I've been reading about the latest imbroglio over a Starbucks' drive-through in King City, including Cleve Mortelliti's excellent letter 'Councillor points out planning rules for drive-through' (June 21). Great letter, Councillor Cleve. Very succinct. I followed the comments about traffic engineers, traffic design standards laid out in the Ontario Traffic Manual, traffic safety standards, traffic movement, volume of daily vehicles, etc. So much detailed planning goes into getting residents into cars, on to roads, then into a vehicle line-up at a proposed drive-through!

Still, I have to ask this question: 'Why do politicians make so many public statements about compact walkable liveable communities while showing a distinct preference for the exact opposite?'

What is so walkable and liveable about adding drive-throughs? Drive-through fast food outlets, drive-through banking, drive-through prescription pick-up at some drug stores, even drive-through beer stores. I wonder what the bylaws will be for drive-through marijuana outlets located at LCBO stores?

Years ago, I would never have guessed that people would want to waste so much time, idling in a line-up of cars and trucks, just to collect a drink and/or a boxed meal, or make a bank deposit, or pick up a prescription by driving from one huge asphalt-coated parking area to another. The more drive-through 'conveniences,' the larger and larger the paved parking areas grow (along with vehicle emissions), as assigned service lanes have to be built and dedicated to the line-up of cars. Add in the dedicated turning lanes off the main roads, and even off highways. In the end, the overall effect of this vehicle-focused design discourages physical exercise, such as walking.

Ever since Tim Hortons and McDonald's arrived in Schomberg, we are kept busy collecting cups, straws, containers, and clamshells from nearby ditches, recycling the small fraction that can be recycled. It seems some residents manage to drive to those outlets, collect their meals, then eat and finish them just in time to chuck all the containers out the window before they get home.

Civic consciousness? Not when environmental amnesia is in fashion. Why must municipal economic planning result in such social and environmental 'baggage'?

You can wade through the trail of 'economic success' that litters far too many roadsides and ditches throughout the GTA. You can even see plastic bags, emptied of their contents, festooning tree branches. Where does all that waste come from?

It is so predictable and ubiquitous that it really needs to be addressed NOW because there is so little about it that is 'liveable.' It is completely unsustainable.

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