

June 27, 2007

In regards to: North End Traffic Study

Justin Readman
Project Manager, Public Works
City of Hamilton
77 James St. North, Suite 320
Hamilton, ON
L8R 2K3

Dear Justin,

The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce has had a long-standing tradition of supporting the growth initiatives on Hamilton's Waterfront/West Harbour. Recent developments on Pier 4 and on Pier 8, along with the *Setting Sail* broader vision, are wonderful examples of the limitless economic potential of enhanced public access to one of Hamilton's greatest treasures.

As we understand, the North End Neighbourhood Association (NEN) approached the City with concerns of current perceived "through" traffic to the neighbourhood, as well as the potential impact of the planned revitalization to the waterfront and the further development of Pier 8. Out of this concern, IBI Consulting was hired to submit proposed traffic calming measures that would mitigate the concerns of area residents. It is our understanding that IBI conducted a license plate study to ascertain incidences of out-of-neighbourhood vehicular traffic and found high incidences of this type of traffic. What was not captured, however, was the number of vehicles that were strictly using the north-end streets as "through" streets, vis-à-vis those using the neighbourhood to access waterfront attractions.

Through this process, NEN put forward an initiative to create a blanket 30-km speed limit on all streets within the NEN area, including James and Burlington streets. The intent was to provide a safe environment for children to live in without fear of serious harm if hit by a vehicle. Consequently, both the City and IBI developed a proposed plan based on this information.

The customary Public Information Centers (PIC) and Community Advisory Group (CAG) meetings were also held to gain public input, however, the Chamber was not informed of the traffic study until just before the second PIC meeting. NEN did finally approach the Chamber to ask for our support on two key components 1.) the endorsement of a blanket 30-km/hr on all NEN streets and 2.) the endorsement of traffic calming measures to curtail "through" traffic.

The Board of the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, following input and recommendations received from their Waterfront Revitalization & Stakeholders Task Force, and their Transportation Committee, has now reviewed this request. We are of the opinion that there are serious implications that may not only be detrimental to the growth and development of the Hamilton Waterfront/West Harbour, but may also impact existing businesses in the neighbourhood and on the waterfront – an area that attracts at least 50,000 people per annum. (For example, at least 80% of customers to Fisher's Pier 4 Restaurant arrive from outside the NEN, and The Hamilton Port Authority has a similarly high proportion of staff and visitors from outside the area.)

The Chamber recognizes that "through" traffic exists, but are unclear as to the genuine percentage of this particular type of traffic and how much is using the waterfront as a destination. Our concern goes further to identify that any traffic calming measures on arterial roads (versus local roads) would effect not only "through" traffic, but also "destination" traffic that use the same roads.

We believe IBI confirms that the assertion of lowering speed limits without traffic calming measures is ineffective. Nevertheless, we would support reduced speed limits selectively, applied to purely residential streets.

However, if the intent is to make James and Burlington streets the preferred roads to use for “destination” traffic, then measures must be put into place to safely allow for materially increased traffic flow, but this may not be conducive to reduced speed limits on access routes such as these. Where the options for traffic calming measures are purposed, the Chamber endorses measures that will enable destination vehicular travel to have a clear understanding of which roads to take, including a more effective use of a strategically placed “round about.”

While the Chamber endorses reasonable safe-traffic initiatives to protect pedestrians within the NEN area, we feel it is imperative to include measures that will effectively deal with the realities of existing waterfront users and other local business whose livelihood depends on such traffic. To generally deter destination traffic on a broad-brush basis in an effort to “calm” will undoubtedly lead to discouragement and subsequent decline in interest in the attractions themselves, as well as future development.

We should collectively ensure that measures are taken that will guarantee smooth and safe travel for all, but also those who are and will be using the waterfront as a destination. We strongly suggest that IBI and the City enter into direct consultation with existing businesses in the NEN, as well as on the waterfront, to determine the specific impact of the proposals on them and their businesses and solicit direct input from them in terms of viable suggestions that would achieve requisite balance. If you wish to use the Chamber as a venue for arranging such consultation, including the NEN group, we would be happy to provide it.

Please contact our CEO, John Dolbec if you wish us to arrange this, and/or if you require any further information. Attached is a recent public policy statement of our Board of Directors in this matter for your further information.

Sincerely,

Tyler MacLeod
President, Hamilton Chamber of Commerce

cc: Brian Hollingworth
His Worship Fred Eisenberger and all members of Council
The Chamber’s Board of Directors, and all members of our Business Development and Transportation Committees, including existing Waterfront users.