

HAMILTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Response to GRIDS Development Options

In a previous response to the GRIDS program, the Chamber suggested that of the alternatives presented, the option labelled "Nodes and Corridors" appeared to be the most desirable avenue to pursue. Of the options currently presented, the Chamber remains of the position that the "Nodes and Corridors" option is the preferable form of urban structure on which to base the future vision of our community.

While the Chamber supports this approach, we feel that any decision on a GRIDS development option can only be made within the broader context of the important external influences that affect not only form, but also the function of the City as it evolves over the next 20 to 30 years.

At this stage, the Chamber is not questioning the technical calculations completed by staff and their consulting team, which led to the preparation of population projections and the determination of broadly-based future land use needs for urban development over a 20-year time period. What is being questioned, however, is the extent to which both structural and functional elements of the City are tied into broader, external restrictions and opportunities, including the recently completed Goods Movement Study, the Greenbelt Plan, and the future Mid Pensinsula (or Niagara to GTA) Corridor.

Goods Movement Study:

The City has recently completed the Goods Movement Study which the Chamber has reviewed and supports. It is the position of the Chamber that the future economic well being of this community depends largely upon its ability to emerge as a leader in the field of goods movement. Given our strategic location in the GTA, combined with opportunities for road, rail, marine and air transportation, the City of Hamilton has all the resources it requires to become a major transportation hub in the GTA for local, regional, national and international markets.

We would therefore recommend that the preferred GRIDS strategy recognize this role and structure any future vision for our community such that our opportunities to function as a transportation hub are maximized.

Greenbelt Plan:

The Province, through its Places to Grow Strategy and the position of the Greenbelt Plan, has predetermined the long-term urban structure of the City of Hamilton. The preferred growth option, and in fact all of the GRIDS alternatives, must be evaluated within the context of the Greenbelt Plan. When the Greenbelt Plan is superimposed on the GRIDS options, it appears that any of the recommended GRIDS strategies will generate isolated pockets of land which will have no connection to either the urban area identified by GRIDS, or the rural character of the community which is to be preserved by the Greenbelt Plan.

It is recommended that all of these areas be identified as Future Urban Area in a manner which is consistent with the intent of the Provincial Growth Strategy, and fulfills the role of the Greenbelt Plan as a mechanism to preserve lands for long-term agricultural and rural purposes.

If these lands are not so designated, their future function and the manner in which they help achieve the objectives of the community remain uncertain at best. If they are not considered as future urban uses, how does the community plan for and design infrastructure for these lands which will ultimately be serviced. As illustrated in the Transportation Master Plan options, some major road improvements to service growth areas pass through some of these non-urban areas (i.e., north of the airport) or generate corridors where options are either inefficiently limited to one side of the corridor (i.e., Highway 6 south and Highway 20), or are totally non-existent (i.e., the corridor linking the Glanbrook Industrial Park with the airport). At the same time, given the size, location and anticipated long-term outcomes, these areas cannot be considered as being tied to the rural area as it is unlikely that investment would be put into these properties for long-term agricultural purposes.

It is our position that while not all the lands may be utilized within a 20-year period, the long-term use of these lands for urban purposes is inevitable and should be recognized to facilitate long-term planning. That is, more attention has to be given to determining how all of these elements are tied together in a comprehensive plan which properly integrates both planning and transportation considerations, and provides certainty for all components of our long-term urban structure. All of the lands can be tied into the urban framework for Hamilton through an implementation program that involves staging policies. It is understood that staging policies have been successfully used elsewhere in other urban areas to ensure the orderly and logical growth of the community.

The designation of urban lands on a long-term basis and the implementation through phasing measures will go a long way to eliminate the ad hoc expansion of the urban area in an incremental fashion through five-year reviews. Previous history in Hamilton has shown that the incremental build-out of our urban fabric on a subdivision-by-subdivision basis does not offer the best opportunity

for designing and implementing new integrated communities over the long term.

Mid Peninsula (Niagara to GTA) Corridor:

This new transportation facility is absolutely essential to the emergence of the City as a major transportation hub. Given that the presence of this major facility will potentially open up exciting new development opportunities, and will have a substantial impact on how the structure of our community will evolve in the long term, it is important that its presence be not only recognized, but also incorporated into the GRIDS options. While there is no confirmation of the final alignment, at the very least the confirmed location of the study area should be included in all of the design options.

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Summary:

The Chamber of Commerce firmly believes that the City of Hamilton is now at an important crossroad in the evolution of our community. On the one hand, we are beginning to experience unprecedented interest from investors, given our strategic location, and because of the logical evolution of growth in the GTA corridor. Through this GRIDS process and official plan review exercise, we also have an opportunity to make important decisions about how our community will look and how it will function over the next 20 to 50 years. The decisions we make today will have long-term implications for those who will follow.

It is for this reason that great care and effort must be taken to ensure that the stage is properly set for us to realize the economic opportunities that are available to us, and to set in place a plan that can ensure long-term prosperity for our community and result in an urban structure which can enhance our role as a transportation hub, while at the same time provide a highly desirable community in which to live, work and play.

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