

RESPONSE TO CITY OF HAMILTON OFFICIAL PLAN - URBAN AREA
HAMILTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10, 2009

THE HAMILTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE APPLAUDS THE EFFORTS OF THE CITY OF HAMILTON TO CONSOLIDATE ALL OF THE AREA OFFICIAL PLANS INTO ONE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING DOCUMENT. THIS CONSOLIDATION WILL HELP TO PROVIDE A CONSISTENT AND UNIFIED MUNICIPAL VOICE ON LOCAL PLANNING MATTERS AND WILL AID THOSE WHO ARE INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITY IN UNDERSTANDING THE BROAD OBJECTIVES OF OUR MUNICIPALITY. THE CHAMBER WISHES TO THANK STAFF, WHO THROUGHOUT THIS PROCESS, HAVE MADE A NUMBER OF PRESENTATIONS TO THE CHAMBER, AND HAVE MADE THEMSELVES AVAILABLE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS AND TO PROVIDE CLARIFICATION ON A NUMBER OF MATTERS. THE CHAMBER ALSO PROVIDED WRITTEN COMMENTS IN APRIL AND PROVIDED A PACKAGE WITH SIMILAR CONTENT THAT WAS FORWARDED TO YOU AS PART OF TODAY'S PRESENTATION.

NOW, IN THAT REGARD, WE ACKNOWLEDGE AND ARE VERY PLEASED TO SEE THAT STAFF DID INDEED AGREE TO AMEND THEIR REPORT TO ADDRESS OUR MANY OF OUR CONCERNS. WE DEEPLY APPRECIATE, THANK, AND VIGOROUSLY APPLAUD STAFF FOR THEIR RESPONSIVENESS TO OUR CONCERNS. PLEASE BEAR THIS IN MIND WHEN REVIEWING OUR WRITTEN SUBMISSION. IN PARTICULAR, SECTIONS 3 AND 4 WHICH WE NOW SEE AS BEING RESOLVED. THE REMAINDER OF OUR SUBMISSION REMAINS VALID.

FROM THE PRESENTATIONS MADE TO US BY STAFF, IT IS VERY CLEAR THAT ONE OF THE OBJECTIVES IS TO ADD MORE FLEXIBILITY TO THE PLAN TO NOT ONLY AID IN THE EASE OF UNDERSTANDING THE ELEMENTS OF THE PLAN. IN ADDITION, TO MINIMIZE THE NUMBER OF PLAN AMENDMENTS THAT WILL BE REQUIRED AS INDIVIDUAL APPLICATIONS COME FORWARD TO HELP ACHIEVE THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN. THE CHAMBER AGREES THAT THESE PLANNING POLICIES SHOULD BE INTERPRETED AS **BROADLY** AS IS REASONABLY POSSIBLE TO MINIMIZE THE TIME AND EXPENSE REQUIRED TO MOVE THROUGH THE AMENDMENT PROCESS AND TO ACCOMMODATE INNOVATIVE NEW INITIATIVES THAT MAY NOT HAVE BEEN ANTICIPATED DURING THE PREPARATION OF THE PLAN.

1. THE CHAMBER GENERALLY SUPPORTS THE OVERALL DIRECTION PROVIDED BY THE PLAN AS OUTLINED IN THE INTRODUCTION OF THE PLAN. A RESIDUAL SUGGESTED MAJOR CHANGE IS TO MODIFY THE WORDING OF DIRECTION 5 WHICH NOW READS AS FOLLOWS:

"RETAIN AND ATTRACT JOBS IN HAMILTON'S STRENGTH AREAS AND IN TARGETED NEW SECTORS."

TO, WE SUGGEST, THE FOLLOWING:

"RETAIN AND ATTRACT JOBS IN ALL AREAS, WITH A FOCUS ON HAMILTON'S STRENGTH AREAS AND IN TARGETED NEW SECTORS."

WHILE THIS MAY SEEM ON THE SURFACE MERELY A SUPERFICIAL CHANGE, THE CURRENT WORDING COULD BE INTERPRETED TO BE TOO EXCLUSIVE; LEAVING OUT OPPORTUNITIES THAT ARE DESIRED AND EVEN NEEDED FOR NEW JOBS THAT MAY NOT NECESSARILY FALL WITHIN THE DEFINITION OF BEING HAMILTON'S "STRENGTH AREA" OR A "TARGETED NEW SECTOR". HAMILTON SHOULD NOT BE IN THE POSITION WHERE INVESTMENT OUTSIDE OF THESE TARGETED AREAS IS NOT VALUED AND ACTIVELY PURSUED.

WE NOTE THAT STAFF DISAGREES DUE TO THEIR INTERPRETATION OF VISION 2020, GRIDS, AND THE NEW OP. NEVERTHELESS, WE REMAIN FIRMLY OF THE OPINION THAT THIS INTERPRETATION IS OVERLY PRESCRIPTIVE, AND MAY LIMIT NEEDED FLEXIBILITY REQUIRED IN ASSESSING APPLICATIONS

2. IN TERMS OF ECONOMIC POLICIES, THE CHAMBER IS PLEASED TO SEE RECOGNITION IN POLICY B.3.1. THAT THE CITY MUST COMPETE FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH WITH NEIGHBOURING AND GLOBAL JURISDICTIONS. THIS FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE IS CRITICAL IN THE FORMULATION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICIES, AND RECOGNIZES THAT THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDED BY THE CITY WILL NOT SIMPLY HAPPEN ON ITS OWN. IT WILL ONLY BE ACHIEVED THROUGH AN AGGRESSIVE AND PRO-ACTIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY IMPLEMENTED BY THE CITY. TO BE SUCCESSFUL, THE CITY MUST CONVINCING PROSPECTIVE INVESTORS THAT INVESTING IN HAMILTON IS PREFERABLE TO INVESTING IN ANY OF THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES IN THE GTA, AND/OR OTHER INTERNATIONAL LOCATIONS THAT MIGHT BE CONSIDERED BY THOSE WHO WOULD MAKE AN INVESTMENT IN OUR COMMUNITY.

3. IN SUPPORT OF THIS POLICY, IT WAS SUGGESTED BY THE CHAMBER THAT SECTION B.3.1.5 - BROWNFIELD SITES BE MODIFIED TO RECOGNIZE NOT ONLY THE IMPORTANCE OF BROWNFIELD SITES, BUT ALSO THE REALISTIC EXPECTATION THAT SUCH SITES ARE NOT SUFFICIENT ON THEIR OWN TO ACHIEVE ALL OF OUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES. RATHER, THEY ARE ONE ALTERNATIVE THAT MUST BE MADE AVAILABLE TO THE MARKETPLACE, ALONG WITH OTHER ALTERNATIVES. WE ARE PLEASED TO NOTE THAT STAFF HAS AGREED WITH OUR COMMENTS AND HAVE SUITABLY MODIFIED THEIR REPORT ACCORDINGLY.

4. IN ORDER TO BE COMPETITIVE WITH OTHER JURISDICTIONS, THE CITY ITSELF MUST OFFER A RANGE OF LOCATIONAL CHOICES FOR ANY INDUSTRY LOOKING AT LOCATING IN THE CITY. GIVEN THAT EACH INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY HAS DIFFERENT LOCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE CITY PROVIDE AS MANY OPTIOPNS AS POSSIBLE FOR THOSE SEEKING TO INVEST WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY. AGAIN, STAFF HAS AGREED AND MODIFIED THEIR REPORT. WE ACKNOWLEDGE AND DO APPRECIATE THEIR RESPONSIVENESS.

5. THE CHAMBER IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE LIMITATION OF OFFICE USES IN POLICY E.5.3. OFFICE USES ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF ANY EMPLOYMENT AREA AND SHOULD NOT BE LIMITED IN ANY FASHION BEYOND THE ALREADY OVERLY RESTRICTIVE POLICIES IMPOSED UPON THE CITY BY THE PROVINCE.

WHILE THE CHAMBER ENCOURAGES AND SUPPORTS THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF GROWTH BEING DIRECTED TO THE DOWNTOWN AREA, AND THE NEED TO ESTABLISH POLICIES TO ATTRACT MAJOR OFFICES TO THE DOWNTOWN. NEVERTHELSS, WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT THE CITY MUST BE CAREFUL NOT TO BE OVERLY RESTRICTIVE TO DISCOURAGE OFFICE DEVELOPMENT THAT IS NOT INTERESTED NOR APPROPRIATE IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA, AND WOULD PREFER TO LOCATE TO OTHER COMPETING JURISDICTIONS RATHER THAN BE FACED WITH THE RESTRICTIONS IN THE PROPOSED NEW OFFICIAL PLAN. THE LOSS OF THESE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES WOULD HINDER THE ABILITY OF THE CITY TO ESTABLISH A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH, AND WOULD BE CONTRARY TO THE INTENT OF POLICY B.3.1 THAT SEEKS TO PUT THE CITY AT A POSITIVE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE WITH OTHER SURROUNDING JURISDICTIONS.

WE NOTE, HOWEVER, IN THIS CASE, STAFF HAS DISAGREED, CITING THE "PLACES TO GROW GROWTH PLAN. WE SUGGEST THAT THIS INTERPRETATION OF THE PLAN MAY BE UNDULY RESTRICTIVE. WE THUS STAND BY OUR ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATIONS, AS PER OUR WRITTEN REPORT.

IN ADDITION TO OUR REPORT, WE UNDERSTAND THAT MITL WILL BE PRESENTING THE RESULTS OF ITS GATEWAY STUDY TO THIS COMMITTEE IN A LATER MEETING. THE CHAMBER ENTHUSIASTICALLY ENDORSES THIS STUDY AND THE GOOD WORK THAT MITL HAS DONE IN DEMONSTRATING THE OPPORTUNITY THAT EXISTS BEFORE US. FURTHER, WE STRONGLY ENCOURAGE THIS COMMITTEE TO INCLUDE IN THE OP THE CONCEPT OF HAMILTON AS A TRANSPORTATION GATEWAY INCLUDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTEGRATED, INTERMODAL TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY FOR THE CITY OF HAMILTON.

LASTLY, THE CHAMBER'S BOARD JUST YESTERDAY AFTERNOON APPROVED IN PRINCIPAL A COMPREHENSIVE NEW PUBLIC POLICY RESOLUTION FOCUSING ON OUR ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORT FOR A COMPREHENSIVE ARTS AND CULTURE STRATEGY TO BE INCORPORATED INTO THE CITY'S EC. DEV. STRATEGY. IN THAT REGARD, WE STRONGLY ENDORSE THE CONCEPT THAT A RANGE OF ARTISTIC ENTERPRISE USAGES SHOULD BE PERMITTED IN AS MANY LAND USE DESIGNATIONS AS IS POSSIBLE.

A SET OF SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE FORWARDED TO STAFF AND COUNCIL IN THE NEXT 10 DAYS; BUT FOR NOW, LET US SIMPLY STATE THAT BY INCLUDING THESE USAGES WOULD SUPPORT AND NURTURE THESE ACTIVITIES, NOW WIDELY REGARDED AS VITAL TO THE TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE SUCCESS OF THE BROADER COMMUNITY.

ON BEHALF OF THE CHAMBER, AND OUR NOW ALMOST 2,100 MEMBERS OF ALL SIZES AND SECTRS, WHO EMPLOY SOME 75,000 HAMILTONIANS FULL TIME, I DO AGAIN WISH TO THANK THE CITY OF HAMILTON, AND YOUR STAFF, FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROCESS. WE ALSO THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTIVENESS THIS MORNING AND ARE PREPARED TO ANSWER ANY OF YOUR QUESTIONS.