

HAMILTON OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW URBAN STRUCTURE PLAN

RESPONSE FROM HAMILTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

1. We Need to Move Forward Quickly

The spotlight is now on Hamilton for three reasons. First is the incremental growth that has been spreading from Toronto through the GTA over the last three decades. This has produced a "wave" of development that has spread from Toronto to Mississauga to Oakville and Burlington and is now at the doorstep of the City of Hamilton. This has resulted not only from the rapid physical growth of development in neighbouring jurisdictions, but is also a result of improvements made in transportation and, in particular, transit facilities, that link outlying communities to the downtown Toronto core.

Secondly, as opportunities for greenfield development are limited in neighbouring community, particularly Oakville, Burlington and Niagara, the opportunities for land use supply options become more tightly focussed on the Hamilton area.

The third factor is the recent implementation of key features of a long-term implementation plan that will see Hamilton emerge as an important and strategic transportation hub in the GTA. Major infrastructure investments which will help the City to achieve its objectives include the recently completed Red Hill Creek Expressway, the ongoing planning exercise for the Niagara GTA corridor, the development of substantial infrastructure and employment land opportunities around the airport, and the continued expansion of port facilities and increased investment in operations at the Hamilton Airport.

This growth potential is now being recognized with a number of firms seeking to invest within the City. Unfortunately, over the past few years, notwithstanding our success in attracting investment to Hamilton, there has simply not been the opportunities to locate these industries on shovel-ready land. As a result, the City has consistently lost employment opportunities to surrounding municipalities. Without a major change in the supply of industrial lands, this disturbing trend will continue.

Therefore, there is an immediate need to generate opportunities for future employment growth within the City. This is necessary to readjust the assessment base away from continued dependence on the residential sector, to minimize the need for out-commuting, to generate needed jobs to combat poverty and unemployment in the City, and generally to re-establish the City as a self-sustaining, healthy community.

2. The Urban Structure Plan should represent the ultimate framework for our community.

In addition to the Notes and Corridors Concept Plan, other elements which affect the future structure of our community should be identified, including the limits of the Greenbelt Plan, the Niagara Escarpment Plan, and the Parkway Belt West Plan. This exercise will identify "gaps" which will have to be considered in any long-range planning strategy to allow the proper long-term evolution of the community to its mature state.

The Provincial Growth Plan sets out broad parameters for establishing an Urban Structure Plan for each municipality within the Greater Golden Horseshoe Area. This is premised on the context that the Greater Golden Horseshoe is one of the fastest growing regions in North America. Within that broader context, the City of Hamilton is seen as having an opportunity to accommodate a lot of that new growth to achieve not only local, but Provincial directives.

In response to these growth pressures and in an attempt to create a rational and efficient urban structure, the Provincial Growth Plan seeks to set limits for urban growth and promote intensification within existing urban areas. Intensification policies will maximize the efficient use of existing infrastructure and require existing urban areas to accommodate some of that future growth. At the same time, some municipalities, like Hamilton, in addition to intensification initiatives, will have opportunities to expand their current urban areas to accommodate future growth.

The Provincial Growth Plan has been prepared within the context of a new Greenbelt Plan. The Greenbelt Plan, which came before the Growth Plan, sets a physical limit for future urban growth and provides a framework for the consideration of urban expansion policy throughout the GTA. Future growth will also take place in designated greenfield areas, which may be implemented through the consideration of phasing policies. These designated greenfield areas are the "gaps" between the existing urban boundary and the Greenbelt limit.

Schedule 2 to the Places to Grow concept illustrates Hamilton's role throughout the GTA by defining ultimate urban structure limits with the establishment of the Greenbelt Plan. The plan also identifies designated greenfield area within the City which is an area which will accommodate future growth as the City grows and additional land is required to meet growth targets, both up to and beyond the time parameters anticipated in the Places to Grow Plan. Therefore, in order to properly evaluate the long-term urban structure of the City, consideration will have to be given to how that structure will evolve within the context of the Places to Grow Plan and the Greenbelt Plan.

Schedule 2 also shows the City of Hamilton context in the GTA with the identification of future Niagara-GTA transportation corridor, identification of the Hamilton Airport, and the location of major transportation links through the GTA which illustrate Hamilton as a focal point.

In setting out the future urban structure of the City therefore, it is important to

keep an eye on the big picture and consider what the ultimate mature state of the City of Hamilton will look like. This means anticipating the long-term development of the designated Greenfield areas to ensure an element of certainty for those who have an interest in helping the community to evolve.

By considering long-term objectives, the City has a better chance to plan and develop complete communities as opposed to simply adding on to the existing urban area on an add hoc basis through the progression of urban expansion reviews which unfortunately has been the way the City has grown over the last few decades.

Further, comprehensive planning for infrastructure and other community services can only be properly undertaken within the context of the analysis of long-term expectations.

In summary, the Greenbelt Plan combined with the Places to Grow Plan establishes the parameters for the mature state of the City of Hamilton. The City and its stakeholder group collectively has both a unique opportunity and an important responsibility to determine how the City will evolve within that structure. There is no question that the mature state of the City of Hamilton will eventually grow from the current urban boundary to the Greenbelt Plan. It is not necessary to have a timetable on how that will evolve. However, it is necessary to have an overall comprehensive and long-term plan in place to guide investment in infrastructure decisions such that whole communities can be properly planned and integrated into a new urban fabric for a mature City. The implementation of how the City will reach its mature state can be properly implemented through appropriate phasing policies. However, this can only be effective within the context of a broader vision for our community.

3. **The Plan Should Incorporate Policies and Opportunities for Proper Movement of Goods.**

A goods movement strategy should be incorporated into the broad planning philosophy for Hamilton to reflect and enhance its role as a major transportation hub.

There should be a strategic movement to encourage support and strengthen key components of a goods movement strategy for the City, as well as build in strategic linkages to facilitate goods movement. These linkages should include both internal and external considerations reflecting the important role the City plays within the Greater Golden Horseshoe area, and as an international gateway to Southern Ontario.

For that reason, the Urban Structure Plan should also include information about the future GTA trade corridor. Consideration should be given as to how Hamilton can be integrated with external connections.