

CHAPTER A – INTRODUCTION

Hamilton is a city of many communities: diverse by nature of geography and history; united by a common future. Hamilton has a vision for its future...a vision for a vibrant, healthy, sustainable city. The vision, known as Vision 2020, has been shared by citizens, businesses, community groups, organizations and our local government since 1992.

An Official Plan is a guiding document for the City to achieve its vision. The Plan provides direction and guidance on the management of our communities, land use change and physical *development* over the next 30 years. The physical *development* of the City effects and is affected by environmental, social and economic factors. Therefore, the decisions we make about our future *development* directly contribute to the achievement of our vision. This Plan and the policies contained herein implement many of the principles expressed by Vision 2020.

This Plan is the first Official Plan for the amalgamated communities of Ancaster, Dundas, Flamborough, Glanbrook, Hamilton and Stoney Creek. This Plan replaces seven former Official Plans – Region of Hamilton-Wentworth Official Plan and six Official Plans representing the former municipalities of the former Region.

A.1.0 HAMILTON'S OFFICIAL PLAN

1.1 Geographic Setting

Hamilton is a dynamic city with unique geographic attributes. Its varied landscape includes an urban area which is the centre for employment uses, community services, and residential dwellings. Surrounding our Urban Area is a strong rural community comprised of agricultural and environmental areas, *mineral aggregate resources*, 19 Rural Settlement Areas and a variety of recreational and tourism uses that support both the City and the surrounding regions. Woven throughout the Rural and Urban Areas is a rich and diverse natural heritage system. Anchored by the Niagara Escarpment, Lake Ontario, Hamilton Harbour and Cootes Paradise, the Natural Heritage System connects the many *wetlands*, woodlands, streams and meadows found throughout the City's rural and open space areas.

The excellent location at the western end of Lake Ontario, mid way between Toronto and the Canada-USA border, provides for many economic advantages. This location at the head of the lake has allowed the City to develop a strong industrial base centred on Hamilton Harbour. The growth of existing and future industrial business parks will help strengthen the economic backbone of the City.

The City is connected to other municipalities and regions by major transportation networks including a series of provincial highways, a major port, an airport and main railway lines.

1.2 Hamilton's Future

Over the next 30 years, the City is expected to grow to achieve a population of 660,000 and 300,000 jobs. The shape and look of the City is not only influenced by physical growth but by economic and demographic trends. Some of the more notable trends include an aging population, a declining number of people per household, the effects of the global economy on local companies, increasing pressures on community services, and urban pressure on rural resources, to name a few.

Our location in the Golden Horseshoe as well as the City's strengthening relationship with the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) municipalities provides both benefits and challenges. Hamilton has become an attractive place to live because of the amenities and the reasonable housing prices. However, many of our residents are commuting to jobs outside Hamilton. One of the City's key priorities is to increase employment opportunities within our boundaries. Another challenge is that our strong social service network serves populations both within and outside the City who require assistance.

Change is inevitable. Our communities have continued to evolve and change over the years yet Hamilton is still considered to be a 'city of many communities'. 'Community' means different things to different people. It could be physically geographic, representing a former municipality or specific neighbourhood (e.g. Flamborough, Westdale, Winona). 'Community' could be ethnic or culturally-based (e.g. the Latino Community, the Muslim Community), or even based around shared interests (e.g. minor sports leagues, clubs and

service organizations). ‘Community’ means something different to each of us and residents of Hamilton often belong to multiple communities.

When, where and how growth will be accommodated and managed is of tremendous importance to the success of Hamilton as a strong, vibrant, healthy, economically and culturally diverse municipal centre. Strength and success will be derived through recognizing and building upon the many individual community attributes that we have come to value, while at the same time moving forward with a cohesive set of principles and directions for achieving our Vision for the future together.

Just as the growth and *development* decisions made 50 years ago have shaped our City and neighbourhoods, the choices we make today will have far reaching impacts for future generations. We must make informed decisions based on the benefits and risks of economic, environmental and social parameters.

1.3 Role and Function of the Official Plan

This Plan projects a long term vision for the physical *development* of the City over the next 30 years. Its policies provide the direction for managing long term *development* to achieve social, economic and environmental objectives of the City’s vision.

The Official Plan plays a large role in setting a framework of actions that will lead to the sustainable, healthy future envisioned by Vision 2020. The City and its residents aspire to have a city that has:

- compact urban communities that provide live, work and play opportunities;
- a strong rural community protected by firm urban boundaries;
- protected and enhanced environmental systems – land, air and water;
- balanced transportation networks that offer choice so people can walk, cycle, take the bus or drive and recognizes the importance of goods movement to our local economy; and
- strategic and wise use of its infrastructure services and existing built environment.

This document:

- is one of the primary implementation arms of Vision 2020;
- is a legal document whose origin is derived from the Planning Act;
- builds on the concepts of provincial initiatives that support the building of strong communities [such as the Provincial Policy Statement, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Greenbelt Plan];
- is one of the key implementation mechanisms for the City’s Growth Strategy (GRIDS) and other corporate initiatives including Master Plans (Transportation and Infrastructure, Recreational), and the Social Development Strategy.

The Rural Hamilton Official Plan applies to lands within *Rural Hamilton*. (OPA 26)

1.4 Structure and Organization of the Official Plan

This Plan is a single-tier plan. It is a hybrid between a regional plan, which takes a broad view of community growth issues, and a local plan which takes the broader objectives and translates those into specific land use designations and operational policies.

The Plan is intended to be read and interpreted as a whole. The goals, objectives and policies are interconnected, interrelated and build on each other. For ease of use, the Plan has been broken down into three volumes.

Volume 1 describes the context of the Plan, a vision for our community, city-wide designations and policies, rural designations and policies, urban designations and policies, infrastructure and community service policies, as well as policies dealing with environmental issues (i.e. water/air quality, noise and vibration), natural systems and implementation policies.

Volume 2 contains the Secondary Plans and Rural Settlement Area policies and mapping which provide detailed and community specific guidance to growth and change in smaller geographic areas of the City. They identify more detailed land uses densities, design requirements, infrastructure requirements and other implementing actions appropriate for the community.

Volume 3 contains the area and site specific policies which incorporate special conditions. Special Policy Areas are geographic areas where either additional studies are required to determine ultimate land uses or where more detailed and specific policies are required and these lands are not contained within a Secondary Plan. Site Specific Areas include site specific planning policies to defined properties. These policies provide detailed direction for individual properties or geographic areas of the City where more detailed direction for land use, infrastructure, transportation, environment, urban design or similar issues are required beyond the general framework provided by this Plan due to unique local circumstances not capable of being addressed by the parent Official Plan or Secondary Plans.

1.5 Supporting Plans and Strategies

This Official Plan relies on legislation, strategies, plans and guidelines as implementation tools to move the City's communities forward to meet, not only City directions, but also provincial requirements. Examples include:

- Growth Related Integrated Development Strategy (GRIDS) - The purpose of GRIDS is to integrate growth management for land use and community services to achieve the City's Vision through the long term *development* of land uses and services based on environmental priorities, social issues, economic opportunities and population studies.
- Master Plans – Water/Wastewater, Storm Water, Transportation, Solid Waste.
- These Plans which were integrated with land use planning, analysed and conducted under the [Environmental Assessment Act](#), prepare strategies and policies for the management and expansion of the City's various engineering services over the next 30 years.

- Economic Development Strategy – This Strategy is a 20 year vision in which Hamilton will strive to have a diversified and sustainable economic base it recommends the City focus on eight clusters based on three broad areas: traditional industries, emerging industries and neo-traditional clusters.
- Social Development Strategy – This Strategy includes a social vision and three key areas of focus or flagships (affordable housing, children, youth and families and skills development) which the City is pursuing in the overall development of civic programs and policies.
- Guidelines – Both the City and Province have adopted subject-based guidelines to provide a greater level of explanation for the implementation of a policy or the completion of a further study. Examples include ‘D’ Series Guidelines relating to distance separation from sensitive land uses (Ministry of the Environment) and Environmental Impact Statement Guidelines for the assessment of natural heritage features and lands.

These documents do not form part of the Official Plan.

A.2.0 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

2.1 Vision 2020

The City has been a leader in the area of community sustainability. In 1992, the former Region of Hamilton-Wentworth adopted Vision 2020. In 2002, the City undertook a review of the Vision in light of many changes that had taken place within the previous 10 years. The ‘Building a Strong Foundation’ public consultation process renewed not only the City’s commitment, but also the community’s commitment to making informed decisions based on environmental, economic and social considerations. The updated vision was adopted by City Council in September, 2003.

Hamilton’s Vision 2020

As citizens, businesses and government of the City of Hamilton we accept responsibility for making decisions that lead to a healthy, sustainable future. We celebrate our strengths as a vibrant, diverse City of natural beauty nestled around the Niagara Escarpment and Hamilton Harbour. We are able to achieve our full potential through safe access to clean air and water, food, shelter, education, satisfying employment, spirituality and culture. We weigh social/health, economic and environmental costs, benefits and risks equally when making decisions.

Action - Sustainable community goals, strategies and targets are achieved by committing resources and acting decisively.

Access - People have the ability to contribute and participate in community life regardless of physical and mental ability, income, age, gender, spiritual or cultural background or geographic location.

Accountability - Community leaders measure and report on progress in achieving the Vision.

Adaptability - We learn from the past and take action to create positive change.

In addition to the Vision, Phase 1 of the GRIDS program identified nine ‘Directions’ to guide *development* decisions. These directions inform the requirements for background studies and were used as the basis for creating *development* options and growth policy concepts. The directions also informed the development of this Official Plan.

Direction #3 - Protect *rural areas* for a viable rural economy, agricultural resources, environmentally sensitive recreation and enjoyment of the rural landscape.

The rural landscape is truly distinctive with its farming areas, *resource-based* industries, Rural Settlement Areas, cultural heritage landscapes and features, an extensive natural system and many recreational uses. Supporting and enhancing the rural area and its economy requires balancing many interests. In particular, agricultural lands and natural heritage features are non-renewable resources and must be protected, preserved and enhanced for the economic well being of the City and the Province.

Direction #5 - Retain and attract jobs in Hamilton's strength areas and in targeted new sectors.

The rural economy, in particular, agricultural and its related industries, is a major contributor to Hamilton's economic base. Agriculture is a \$1 billion industry with significant potential for growth. The City identifies and promotes the agricultural sector, including the food and beverage processing industry, as one of seven targeted economic sectors.

Direction #8 - Protect ecological systems and improve air, land and water quality.

The environmental integrity of our ecological system is critical to the well being of our residents and our economy. These non renewable resources must be protected from encroachment and contamination.

Additional Directions to be added by a future Official Plan amendment.

2.2 Growth Management

In 2005, the Province prepared growth forecasts for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. This area is expected to grow by 3.7 million people by 2031 with Hamilton projecting to take a 1.7% share.

Table 1. Places to Grow Forecasts - Hamilton

Year	Population	Households	Employment
2001	510,000	190,000	210,000
2011	540,000	210,000	230,000
2021	590,000	240,000	270,000
2031	660,000	270,000	300,000
Change 2001 - 2031	150,000	80,000	90,000

Source: 'Growth Outlook for the Greater Golden Horseshoe' – Hemson Consulting Ltd., January 2005

Although the total population is expected to grow, certain demographic trends will shape Hamilton over the next three decades. These demographic changes will influence how, where, and when we will grow.

Notably, the provincial growth forecasts are based on assumptions that household size (or persons per unit (PPU)) will slowly decline in varying degrees over the next 30 years. This trend is influenced by lower birth rates, an aging population contributing towards a growing number of empty nester households and growth in non-traditional households (e.g. single person households, single parent households).

2.2.1 Population Growth for Rural Hamilton

The existing population in *Rural Hamilton* is approximately 44,000 and the estimated population in 2031 is projected to decrease slightly to 42,600 persons. Population change in *Rural Hamilton* is influenced by a number of factors. The number of dwelling units will increase because of the large number of vacant legal lots of record. Also, there are areas within Rural Settlement Areas that have the potential for future infill *development*. Although the dwelling units may increase, the demographic trend of declining household size will also contribute to population change in *Rural Hamilton*.

Table 2. Rural Population Growth

Year	Total Population
2006	44,089
2011	43,255
2021	43,248
2031	42,575
Change 2006 - 2031	1,514 (-4%)

Source: City of Hamilton Planning and Economic Development Department

Changes in the rural population are influenced not only by demographic factors, but also by policy directions. Policy directives ensure that agricultural, mineral aggregate and environmental resources will be available for future

generations, and urban boundary expansions and land fragmentation will be curtailed. At the present time, there are hundreds of vacant residential lots inside the Rural Settlement Areas and approximately 200 outside the Rural Settlement Areas, that could accommodate future residences, therefore there is very little need to create additional lots. Further, municipal services in Rural Settlement Areas will not be expanded which will limit lot creation and, to a certain extent, population growth.

2.3 Provincial Legislation, Plans and Policies

The planning regime within the City is affected and in many ways directed by provincial legislation, plans and policies, including the Provincial Policy Statement, the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Greenbelt Plan, the Parkway Belt West Plan, and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

2.3.1 Provincial Policy Statement

The Provincial Policy Statement, 2005 was issued under the authority of the Planning Act, and provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and *development*. It promotes a provincially ‘policy-led’ planning system in which municipal Official Plans and any planning decisions are consistent with the objectives and details of provincial policy, as required by Section 3 of the Planning Act.

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) sets the policy foundation for regulating the *development* and use of land. It provides for appropriate *development* while protecting resources of provincial interest, public health and safety, and the quality of the natural environment. The PPS supports improved land use planning and management, which contributes to a more effective and efficient land use planning system. It includes enhanced policies on issues that affect communities, such as: the efficient use and management of land and infrastructure; protection of the environment and resources, including agricultural resources and *mineral aggregate resources*; and ensuring appropriate opportunities for employment and residential *development*, including support for a mix of uses. The new Official Plan must be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement.

2.3.2 The Niagara Escarpment Plan

The Niagara Escarpment includes a variety of topographic features and land uses extending 725 kilometres from Queenston on the Niagara River to the islands off Tobermory on the Bruce Peninsula. The Niagara Escarpment is the most prominent natural feature that traverses the City and divides its urban communities into two groups with very different characteristics. The objectives and policies of the Niagara Escarpment Plan (1985, last amended 2005) strike a balance between *development*, preservation and the enjoyment of this important resource.

2.3.3 The Greenbelt Plan

In concert with the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Greenbelt Plan identifies where urbanization should not occur in order to provide permanent protection of the agricultural land base and the ecological features and functions of the

Greenbelt Plan Area. In Hamilton, the area identified for protection includes the Niagara Escarpment Plan Area and the Protected Countryside. The policies of the Niagara Escarpment Plan are the policies of the Greenbelt Plan for the Niagara Escarpment Plan Area.

The Greenbelt Plan area is a broad band of permanently protected land. The Greenbelt Plan protects agricultural lands from fragmentation and non-agricultural uses, protects natural heritage and water resources that are vital to ecological and human health, and allows for other activities typically found in *rural areas* such as recreation, agriculture, and resource extraction.

2.3.4 The Parkway Belt West Plan

The Parkway Belt West Plan was created in 1978 for the purposes of creating a multi-purpose utility corridor, urban separator and linked open space system. It is a system of linked natural areas and protected utility corridors which extends from Dundas through the Regions of Halton, Peel and York.

2.3.5 Deleted in its entirety (OPA 5)