

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 – its goals and policies move the City towards achieving its visions for the future – visions that are expressed both through Vision 2020 and the City's Strategic Plan. The Official 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 and the City's Strategic Plan.

The policies of this Plan express and enable change and transformation. Our challenge lies in implementing change and transforming the City while balancing and respecting the sense of place, history and culture that makes Hamilton a special place to live, visit and experience.

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 in 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 dominated by agricultural and environmental areas, 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 area* 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.

Hamilton's strategic location at the western end of Lake Ontario, mid-way between Toronto and the Canada-USA border, provides the City with 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 growing intra-municipal transit system, a major port, an airport and main railway lines.

1.2 Hamilton's Future – A Time for Change

Over the next 30 years, the City is expected to grow to achieve a population of 660,000 and 300,000 jobs. The shape, look and feel of the City will change - influenced not only by physical growth but by economic and demographic change as well. 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 will result in change – physical, economic and social. The City will experience many changes over the lifetime of this Plan. Change brings energy and opportunities. To effect positive change the City must harness that energy, take advantage of the opportunities, and manage any undesirable impacts.

Our location in the Golden Horseshoe, as well as the City's strengthening relationship with the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) municipalities, provide both benefits and challenges. Hamilton has become an attractive place to live because of the amenities and 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 in our communities 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. 'Community' could be ethnic or culturally-based, or even based around shared interests. 'Community' means something different to each of us. 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 achieved by recognizing and building upon the many individual community attributes that we have come to value, while at the same time moving forward with carefully planned changes that transform and enhance our built, natural and social environments. These changes will be managed, in part, through a comprehensive and cohesive set of principles and directions for achieving our Vision.

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 the community's physical, social and cultural, and environmental development for both current and future generations. Informed decisions must be made through civic engagement on issues and integrated decision-making processes and must be based on the benefits and risks of economic, environmental and social parameters.

1.3 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 Plan:

- is one of the primary implementation arms of Vision 2020 and the City's Strategic Plan;
 - is a legal document whose origin is derived from the Planning Act, R.S.O., 1990 c. P. 13;
- 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]; and,
- 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 Urban Hamilton Official Plan applies to lands within the *urban area*. (OPA 142)

1.4 Principles of the Official Plan

The Official Plan plays a major role in setting a framework of actions that will lead to the sustainable, healthy future envisioned by Vision 2020 and the City's Strategic Plan. The framework of the Official Plan is centred on the following principles:

- compact and healthy urban communities that provide opportunities to live, work, play, and learn;
- a strong rural community protected by firm urban boundaries;
- environmental systems – land, air and water – that are protected and enhanced;

- balanced transportation networks that offer choice so people can walk, cycle, take transit, or drive, and recognize the importance of goods movement to our local economy;
- a growing, strong, prosperous and diverse economy;
- financial stability; and,
- strategic and wise use of infrastructure services and existing built environment.

It must be recognized these principles will not always be balanced in every place and at every time. The Plan provides a policy framework for applying these principles, on a case by case basis, to future land use, social and economic development opportunities.

1.5 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 implementation 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. These lands are not contained within a Secondary Plan. Site Specific Areas and Area Specific Policy Areas include 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.

1.6 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. The purpose of the Master Plans was to prepare strategies and policies for the management and expansion of the City's various engineering services over the next 30 years. They were integrated with land use planning and were conducted under the Environmental Assessment Act and the Municipal Engineers Association Municipal Class Environment Assessment.
- Economic Development Strategy – The development and implementation of a community based multi-year strategy is critical for Hamilton to achieve sustainable economic growth and redevelopment. The proposed strategy is developed around a series of components such as labour force, business development, community redevelopment, infrastructure for innovation and marketing and outreach. The success of this Strategy will require the efforts of the City, residents and businesses.
- Human Services Plan – The integration of planning for human service delivery in Hamilton, through collaboration between service delivery organizations including the City, can ensure that human service provision meets the existing and future needs of Hamilton's changing population. Such a plan will also improve the efficiency of service delivery.
- 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, Environmental Impact Statement Guidelines for the assessment of natural heritage features/lands, Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment Guidelines for the assessment of *cultural heritage resources*, and Site Plan Guidelines illustrating the City's design preferences for site planning.

A.2.0 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The strategic directions for the City have been shaped by several community wide processes. These processes and the resulting strategies and documents were undertaken with extensive citizen engagement and evaluation. These Hamilton-focused strategic directions and several key Provincial initiatives and directions form the basis for the principles, goals and policies of this Plan.

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.

Nine Directions to Guide Development:

Direction #1

Encourage a compatible mix of uses in neighbourhoods that provide opportunities to live, work, and play.

Direction #2

Concentrate new development within existing built-up areas and within a firm urban boundary.

Direction #3

Protect *rural areas* for a viable rural economy, agricultural resources, environmentally sensitive recreation and enjoyment of the rural landscape. In Rural Hamilton Official Plan.

Direction #4

Design neighbourhoods to improve access to community life.

Direction #5

Retain and attract jobs in Hamilton's strength areas and in targeted new sectors.

Direction #6

Expand transportation options that encourage travel by foot, bike and transit and enhance efficient inter-regional transportation connections.

Direction #7

Maximize the use of existing buildings, infrastructure and vacant or abandoned land.

Direction #8

Protect ecological systems and improve air, land and water quality.

Direction #9

Maintain and create attractive public and private spaces and respect the unique character of existing buildings, neighbourhoods and settlements.

2.2 City of Hamilton Strategic Plan

In 2008, City Council developed a Strategic Plan to assist in identifying strategic priorities for the City's future. The Strategic Plan and the Official Plan contain similar themes, principles and goals, such as the creation of healthy, sustainable communities and development of a strong economy. Implementation of the Official Plan policies contributes toward the achievement of the Strategic Plan vision.

Vision

To be the best place in Canada to raise a child, promote innovation, engage citizens and provide diverse economic opportunities.

Mission

- We provide high quality services in a fiscally and socially responsible, environmentally sustainable and compassionate manner in order to ensure a healthy, safe and prosperous community.
- We engage our citizens and promote a fair, diverse and accepting community.
- We are a skilled, knowledgeable, collaborative and respectful organization that thrives on innovation and quality customer service.
- We are lead by a forward thinking Council.
- The team (staff) shows leadership in carrying out their responsibilities and is valued and appreciated for their contributions and accomplishments

Strategic Themes

- Image – Changing the perceptions of Hamilton and promoting the City as a great place to live work and play.
- Job Creation – Ensuring the City has a thriving and diverse business economy with sustainable jobs and employment for its residents.

Focus Areas

The City's seven *Focus Areas* are:

- Skilled, Innovative and Respective Organization
- Financial Sustainability
- Effective Inter-governmental Relations
- Growing Our Economy
- Social Development
- Environmental Stewardship
- Healthy Community

2.3 Growth Management - Provincial

The Province of Ontario's *Places to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* (2006) (*Growth Plan*), sets out a vision to 2031 for how and how much growth should occur in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH). This area is expected to grow by 3.7 million people by 2031 with Hamilton projecting to take a 1.7% share.

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 to a growing number of empty nester households and growth in non-traditional households (e.g. single person households, single parent households).

One of the principal components of the *Growth Plan* is a series of population and employment forecasts for upper and single-tier municipalities within the GGH. The *Growth Plan* requires these forecasts be used by municipalities for planning and managing growth. The *Growth Plan* also identifies a series of density and *intensification* targets which municipalities must plan to achieve.

2.3.1 Population Forecasts – City Wide

Hamilton’s 2031 population forecasts are as follows:

Table A.1 - Population Forecasts, 2001-2031

Year	Population
2001	510,000
2011	540,000
2021	590,000
2031	660,000
Change 2001- 2031	150,000

Source: ¹Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe – Schedule 3

2.3.1.1 Population Growth for Rural Hamilton

In Rural Hamilton Official Plan.

2.3.2 Employment Forecasts – City Wide

Hamilton’s employment forecasts for 2001-2031 by type are as follows:

Table A.2. Employment Forecasts¹

Year	Total ¹
2001	210,000
2011	230,000
2021	270,000
2031	300,000
Change 2001 - 2031	90,000

Source: ¹Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe - number rounded up

2.3.3 Other Targets

Downtown Urban Growth Centre Density Target

2.3.3.1 Hamilton’s *Downtown Urban Growth Centre* shall be planned to achieve a minimum gross density of 250 people and jobs per hectare by 2031. Overall density in excess of this target may be achievable and desirable.

2.3.3.2 Increases to the *Downtown Urban Growth Centre* density target shall be considered as part of a review of the *Downtown Secondary Plan*. The review of the *Downtown Secondary Plan* shall consider the results of office and employment strategy studies and infrastructure needs studies completed for the downtown area.

Greenfield Density Target

- 2.3.3.3 *Greenfield areas* shall be planned to achieve an overall minimum density of 50 people and jobs per hectare. The *greenfield* density target shall be measured over Hamilton's *greenfield area*, excluding natural heritage features designated in this Plan. The *greenfield area* includes designated employment areas. On employment lands, the City shall plan to meet a density target of 37 people and jobs per hectare. On non-employment lands, densities will need to achieve a minimum average density of 70 persons and jobs per hectare to meet the overall density target.

Residential Intensification Target

- 2.3.3.4 Hamilton is required to plan to achieve a minimum of 40% of all residential *development* occurring annually within its *built-up area* by 2015. A total of 26,500 units are to be accommodated within the *built-up area* between 2001 and 2031. The *built-up area* for Hamilton is identified on Appendix G.

2.4 Growth Management - Hamilton

In May 2006, City Council adopted the City's first Growth Management Strategy. The Growth Related Integrated Strategy (GRIDS) identified the broad land use structure, associated infrastructure and major transportation networks to be in place for Hamilton by 2031. The recommended growth options were developed in accordance with the provincial growth forecasts. The land use recommendations from GRIDS form the basis of many policies within this Plan.

2.5 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.

2.5.1 Provincial Policy Statement

The Provincial Policy Statement, 2005 was issued under the authority of the Planning Act, R.S.O., 1990 c. P.13, 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, R.S.O., 1990 c. P.13.

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 are provided for employment and residential *development*, including support for a mix of uses. The Official Plan must be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement.

2.5.2 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.

2.5.3 The Greenbelt Plan

In the Rural Hamilton Official Plan.

2.5.4 The Parkway Belt West Plan

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 projected utility corridors which extends from Dundas through the Regions of Halton, Peel and York.

2.5.5 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe was released in June 2006 to build stronger and more prosperous communities by better managing growth by 2031. The Plan is based on a series of guiding principles which are aimed at building compact, complete and vibrant communities; managing growth to support a strong competitive economy; making more efficient and effective use of infrastructure; and protecting and enhancing our natural resources including land, air and water. This vision will be realized through partnerships with other levels of government, the private sector, residents and non-profit agencies. The Official Plan must conform to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.