occ phase 2
a cultural policy & plan for Hamilton

Photograph by Graham Crawford
Door hinge at St. Mark's Church
Canada’s cities will be models of environmental, economic, social and cultural sustainability. They will build on their distinctive human, cultural, historical and natural characteristics.

Prime Minister’s External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities

The City of Hamilton has undertaken one of the most comprehensive approaches to the development of a municipal cultural plan that has the potential to establish a new benchmark for cultural planning in Canada. This potential will only be realized if Phase 2 of the OCC is undertaken in as comprehensive and thoughtful was as Phase 1 and will require adequate staff and financial resources as described below.

Based on the work completed in Phase 1, Phase 2 will develop a Cultural Policy and Plan for Hamilton that:

- Establishes a vision of culture for the City of Hamilton;
- Defines a mandate to guide the City's role in cultural development;
- Confirms policies and supporting principles to guide planning and decision-making;
- Sets out concrete strategies and action to be implemented by the City in collaboration with its business and community partners;
- Defines operational plans and performance measures for these strategies;
- Confirms a mandate with prioritized core business areas and capacity needs for the Culture Division.

Draft Principles

Phase 1 of the OCC Project involved extensive research and consultation with the Project Steering Team representing multiple municipal departments and strategic community partners. An essential outcome of Phase 2 of the OCC Project will be the definition of a vision and set of principles to guide cultural development in Hamilton. As a result of Phase 1 of the OCC Project, the following draft principles are proposed to begin the broader community engagement in Phase 2. The intent is not to prescribe the final vision but rather serve as a catalyst for initiating conversation.

The City of Hamilton will be guided by the following principles related to culture in recognizing culture’s contribution and importance to our future as a community.

- We understand the creative industries as an important and rapidly expanding source of economic growth, employment and wealth creation.
- We see cultural planning as an essential dimension of planning for sustainability, alongside social, economic and environmental considerations.
- We see our rich heritage, diversity, creativity and culture playing a major role in defining Hamilton’s identity nationally and globally.
- We understand culture as a source of community pride and central to making Hamilton a complete community where people want to live, work, play and invest.
- We value artists and creators as essential sources of new ideas, innovation and technologies important to our future.
- We believe the diversity of cultures in our community is a source of strength and central to our values of inclusion and equity.
- We value creativity and culture as central to making the downtown a social, economic, and cultural hub of the community.
- We support a dynamic cultural sector of organizations and enterprises working together toward shared purposes and capacities.
OCC Phase 2 - Leadership and Resourcing

Realizing the potential of Phase 2 of the OCC Project requires the City to play the same leadership role that has guided Phase 1. Three groups are envisioned playing critical leadership roles in Phase 2 as follows:

Cultural Resource Mapping Partnership

The Cultural Resource Mapping Partnership will include representatives from relevant City departments and community partners. The Cultural Resource Mapping Partnership will oversee the next phase of cultural mapping and support the ongoing management and development of the City’s cultural mapping capacities.

Project Steering Team

The Project Steering Team will include staff from across City of Hamilton departments and representatives from the community led by the Culture Division, Community Services Department. The Project Steering Team will oversee the planning and implementation of Phase 2. A useful framework for considering members of the Project Steering Team is the following “six pillars” or core constituencies of municipal cultural planning as follows:

1. Council – one or more council members
2. Municipal staff - staff from across a range of departments
3. Cultural leaders – from across the arts, heritage, libraries and creative industries.
5. Social agencies - will vary but can include Community Foundations, United Ways, Social Planning Councils, etc.
6. Education institutions - Participation from local school boards and post-secondary institutions.

In other municipalities, members of a Project Steering Team often continue as members of cross-sectoral leadership groups or Cultural Roundtables.

Interdepartmental Working Group

The Interdepartmental Working Group will include representation from across City Departments to identify opportunities for the integration of municipal cultural planning principles and practices in the ongoing work of the City.
The new Economic Development Strategy recognizes Creative Industries as a key part of Hamilton’s future success. This continues a significant shift in how Hamilton defines and supports its broader economy.

The role of Creative Industries was initially recognized by the City of Hamilton through the 2005 Economic Development Strategy with the identification of Film and Culture industries as a unique emerging cluster in the city. Within the 2010 Economic Development Strategy, the broader sector of Creative Industries is identified which includes other areas of local strength such as music, design, and visual art. After consultation with members of the creative community, the sector’s strengths and weaknesses were identified along with opportunities and constraints. Short and long term initiatives have been formulated that target how the City of Hamilton will help grow the Creative Industries sector locally.

A Planning Process and Engagement Strategy

The Project Steering Team in collaboration with the Cultural Resource Mapping Partnership will determine the detailed process for Phase 2. One model that has worked effectively in other municipalities is the following:

- Internal Engagement – this involves continued discussion and engagement across departments and involves regular briefings for the Senior Management Team and Council;
- Prepare a Discussion Paper – based on the findings from Phase 1 and further discussion and input from the Project Steering Team, a Discussion Paper is prepared synthesizing major themes and opportunities to frame community engagement;
- Community Forum One - This event seeks to engage the broadest possible cross-section of stakeholders and community interests. Discussion at the Forum remains at the level of the Strategic Themes and directions not, at this stage, specific strategies and actions. The Forum helps confirm and/or refine the Strategic Themes and can also invite participants to identify actionable steps for the various themes using break-out working groups;
- Draft Cultural Policy and Plan – A draft municipal cultural policy and plan is prepared based on Forum results, website input and further discussion with both the Project Steering Team. The draft policy and plan sets out detailed directions and actions with proposed timelines, resource requirements, partnership needs, etc.

- Community Forum Two – This event is a final opportunity for the community to review the draft plan; the underlying question is: “Did we get it right? What did we miss?

Using a broad process framework such as that outlined above, the Project Steering Team should develop detailed plans for a community engagement process to support Phase 2 of the OCC Project. The process must make use of a range of engagement tools and options and make use of tools such as websites and other social media tools (see below).

Engagement strategies must acknowledge systemic barriers to participation that exist among some groups in the community – in some instances groups such as First Nations, youth, recent immigrants and diverse communities – who may not have a tradition of participating in formal municipal planning processes. Targeted engagement tools and methods can be used to draw groups into the conversation. For example, youth may be more apt to participate in on-line discussion groups or Facebook and other social media tools.
Community Identity Mapping and Community Engagement

What is exciting about cultural mapping is the opportunity to engage individuals and whole communities in extending and amplifying a cultural planning process. For cultural planners, a perfect storm of opportunity has emerged from the simultaneous rise of social media, the new social activism and local resident’s discovering and the assets within their own cities. Furthermore it means that more and more people are interested in the uses of cultural planning and they have the tools to contribute in meaningful ways.

The prevalence of internet and mobile communications makes social networking readily available to a large number of people, generally at an affordable cost. According to a March, 2009 study by Nielson Online, blogging and social-networking sites like Facebook and Twitter are now the fourth most popular on-line activities (outpacing email) and growing twice as fast as searching; the first choice of web-based activities. The biggest surge in users of “member community” websites like Facebook and MySpace was in the 35- to 49-year-old age group. Facebook alone boast 175 million users worldwide.

The breadth and versatility of the social and interactive toolset continues to grow exponentially – from blogs to community-created Google Maps. Here are just a few examples of low-cost, simple-to-implement techniques that are useful to consider:
Stories and narratives should be sought that honour the past; profile the present, and envision the future.

Phase 1 of the OCC Project has initiated a process of mapping and exploring Hamilton’s unique identity and sense of place. Social media tools provide opportunities to broaden a community conversation about these powerful ideas. The community can be invited to offer their own perceptions and stories about what makes Hamilton a unique place to live, work, play and invest. Stories and narratives should be sought that honour the past, profile the present, and envision the future.

Stories gathered in community workshops can be converted digitally to develop thematic cultural maps that become a powerful visual representation of local culture and identity. Community defined maps can be complemented through historical and contemporary photos, videos and graphics from archives and local collections. Community workshops can also act as a forum for networking and relationship building.

The community storytelling and identity mapping process must be sustainable. A meaningful map resource should not be static rather contain features that allow for customization and continuous updating. Part of the engagement strategy must be to encourage diverse stakeholders to contribute to the mapping process through the use of easy-to-use on-line tools that enable users to add to or “filter” map information for various uses.

Here are examples of resources that can be used and adapted to support customizing regional maps. This type of strategy enables different communities within the area and stakeholder groups with different needs to create value-added and context-specific information to serve diverse needs and interests, from environmental and heritage to cultural and commercial.
One simple example of some of these tools can be found at: http://blogto.com/neighbourhoods
Hamilton Then and Now
Part of the work on community identity mapping undertaken in Phase 1 of the OCC Project has involved collecting a series of historical and contemporary maps that illustrate some of the themes set out in the historical narrative. The combining of maps and photographs and narratives will help build a rich context for community engagement in Phase 2.

2. The Framework was adopted in 2004 after a review of leading cultural statistics programs internationally and extensive consultation with the Canadian cultural sector http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-595-m/81-595-m2004021-eng.pdf

3. The definition of Natural Heritage set out in the Cultural Resource Framework includes only a portion of the natural heritage resources of the City. Additional work on this asset category will be a priority in Phase 2 of the mapping process.

4. Leadership on these issues was cited in the September 2009 issue of the Globe and Mail's Report on Business in an article entitled Save This City.

5. Culture; Municipal Affairs and Housing; Economic Development; Tourism; Citizenship; Ontario Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA); Northern Development and Mines)

6. This framework was first defined by the Ontario Heritage Policy Review (1990)


8. The definition of Natural Heritage set out in the Cultural Resource Framework includes only a portion of the natural heritage resources of the City. Additional work on this asset category will be a priority in Phase 2 of the mapping process.

9. The Framework was adopted in 2004 after a review of leading cultural statistics programs internationally and extensive consultation with the Canadian cultural sector http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-595-m/81-595-m2004021-eng.pdf

10. Sources of information are updates from the Statistics Canada survey program and the Business Number registration source collected from the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA).

11. Both charts from Martin Prosperity Institute (April 2009). Ontario in the Creative Age

12. FedNor, Prince Edward County/Lennox & Addington Community Futures Development Corporation (June 2009). Canada’s Creative Corridor: Connecting Creative Urban and Rural Economies Within Eastern Ontario and the Mega Region.


15. Ibid. pg. 3


18. Leadership on these issues was cited in the September 2009 issue of the Globe and Mail’s Report on Business in an article entitled Save This City.


21. Urban Nodes: means discrete areas that contain compact, mixed-use (residential, commercial and institutional) development and service the surrounding areas. They are accessible by higher order transit, active transportation, a good road network, and exhibit high quality urban design (City of Hamilton Official Plan, 2009)

22. Urban Corridors: means areas of street-oriented uses which incorporate a mix of retail, employment and residential uses, developed at medium densities, located along arterial or collector roads serving as major transit routes. Such corridors may form the boundaries of residential subdivisions or neighbourhoods, but should act as a linear focus for activities and uses within the community. (City of Hamilton Official Plan, 2009)

