Full Research Report

Introduction

Phase 1 of the Our Community Culture (OCC Project) establishes the foundation upon which the City of Hamilton will build a Cultural Policy and Plan in Phase 2 of the project. The overarching goal of the Cultural Policy and Plan will be to transform the City’s understanding of culture and to integrate culture into all aspects of future planning initiatives.

The OCC Project is being developed using a new set of assumptions called municipal cultural planning. A defining characteristic and approach of municipal cultural planning, and as undertaken in the OCC Project, is that the municipal cultural planning is place-based. A place-based approach to municipal cultural planning means plans are built on the basis of the needs and circumstances of a specific place and community, a community with a unique history, geography, social and economic circumstances and aspirations, etc. The focus of the City’s Cultural Policy and Plan will be to identify and leverage the unique cultural assets of Hamilton to support the City’s goals in economic development, land use planning, urban design, youth engagement, social inclusion, and more.

The starting point for all municipal cultural plans is a process called cultural mapping. Cultural mapping is a systematic approach to identifying the unique cultural assets and identity of a community. Cultural mapping has two dimensions:

1. Resource Mapping – identifying and documenting tangible or physical cultural resources; and
2. Identity Mapping – exploring and recording intangible cultural resources – the defining history, values, identity and sense of place that make that community unique.

What follows in A Story of Us – A Story of Place is a contribution to both forms of cultural mapping: resource mapping and identity mapping. Hamilton’s culture today emerges from the story of a place and the people who have inhabited that place for thousands of years. Each historical period has left a legacy for Hamilton. Hamilton’s legacy and unique assets include physical sites and landforms, artifacts, images, place names, stories, and neighbourhoods. Hamilton’s unique assets serve as reminders, both tangible and intangible, of the city’s history and culture. Hamilton’s unique assets help us better understand the history and context of many of the challenges we face today, and are indispensable in shaping the plans and strategies we need for the future.

The stories associated with a place are not insignificant. Stories have been called ‘the DNA of culture’ because they express and communicate critical information about the people, places, events, achievements that form the collective memory and identity of a community. A Story of Us – A Story of Place marks not the end but the beginning of a conversation about Hamilton’s unique culture and identity, a conversation that will be an integral component of the broad community engagement and next steps in developing Hamilton’s Cultural Policy and Plan.
The goal in developing A Story of Us – A Story of Place has been to synthesize some of the major themes that have formed Hamilton’s past and that continue to shape its current realities and aspirations. In A Story of Us – A Story of Place those major themes that have helped form Hamilton are captured in two broad categories:

**A Story of Us**

1. Immigration, Diversity and Inclusion
2. Innovation and Creative Economies
3. Citizens, Engagement and Protest

**A Story of Place**

1. Geography and Environment
2. Urban Development
3. Built Form

While the above categories identify some of the major themes from Hamilton’s past they are in no way meant to be seen as comprehensive or complete. Rather, similar to the approach of the baseline mapping of Hamilton’s cultural resources, A Story of Us – A Story of Place is meant to be viewed as a place to begin dialogue, a starting point for community conversations and engagement during Phase 2 of the OCC Project, not an all inclusive historical narrative.

The following is a more detailed explanation of the six major themes captured in the two broad categories of A Story of Us – A Story of Place.
Following World War II, Hamilton was the destination for many refugees from the Baltic countries and Poland and Yugoslavia and significant numbers of Italian immigrants arrived in the 1950s. In the 1960s, with the repeal of the Immigration Act and the establishment of new immigration regulations, many Caribbean blacks arrived in Hamilton, some of whom were teachers scouted by Hamilton’s separate school board.

Throughout Hamilton’s history, successive waves of immigrants arrived and added another layer to the city’s history and culture. These immigrants brought diverse traditions, language, religions, celebrations; they established community organizations and clubs that became part of the urban mix. New neighbourhoods emerged: the low-lying area of Corktown, located southeast of the city centre, became home to many 19th century Irish Catholics. In the 1940s and 1950s, Barton, Sherman and Ottawa Streets became the commercial ethnic “downtown” crossroads for the north and east end working class neighbourhoods.

During the prosperous 1970s, many north and east end residents moved into suburban areas and subdivisions in Stoney Creek and on the Niagara Escarpment, Hamilton’s “mountain.” However, in moving to the suburbs, these former north and east end residents left a significant built heritage legacy in the lower city in the form of churches, fraternal club buildings, restaurants, bakeries, and in stories, like the program of stories, music and song developed by Charley Chiarelli in his show called Cu’Fu? (Sicilian for “Who Did It”). The movement of residents to the suburbs also contributed to the decline of Barton and Ottawa Streets as ethnic commercial strips and led to the dilution of the ethnic character of many neighbourhoods. Today statistics show that pre-1991 immigrants outnumber more recent arrivals by a 2:1 margin. Immigration into Hamilton may have slowed but people are still arriving here. South Asian, Black and Chinese communities comprise Hamilton’s largest immigrant populations.

The fastest increases in Hamilton’s population in the past five years have come from South Asian, Southeast Asian, West Asian and people of Arab descent. Information prepared by the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (2008) indicates that the city’s downtown area has the highest proportion of residents born outside of Canada (28 percent), the highest proportion of recent immigrants (4.2 percent), and is the most diverse community in the city with 17 percent of its population belonging to a visible minority group. Hamilton’s downtown is followed by the Stoney Creek area with 27 percent of its residents born outside of Canada, and 2.1 percent of its residents as recent immigrants.

Efforts to promote the arts and heritage of immigrants are evident in events such as the seasonal Saturday Sabawoon Hamilton Art and Craft Market Bazaar. There are also collaborations between groups such as the Immigrant Culture & Art Association, the Workers Arts & Heritage Centre, the Community Centre for Media Arts, and the Imperial Cotton Centre for the Arts that promote the arts and heritage of immigrants to Hamilton. It is evident that Hamilton has long been regarded as a destination and refuge for immigrants from around the world. As immigrants arrived, each contributed rich traditions in the form of languages, foods, arts and material culture to the city’s already diverse cultural mix.
A STORY OF US
Theme 2 – Innovation and Creative Economies

Hamilton today is being driven by an economic vision that is based on economic diversification and a highly skilled and well-educated labour force. Hamilton’s economic vision is also being guided by the idea of cluster development – a geographic concentration of interconnected companies, suppliers, service providers and associated institutions.

Hamilton’s history of cluster development has been evidenced in several ways including the grouping of metal foundries along the waterfront throughout the 20th century. Having the same industries working in close proximity to each other led to the development of efficiencies, such as retooling, and contributed to the ongoing flow of skilled workers attracted by the city’s industrial economy. Threads of today’s vision can be found in the story of Hamilton’s economic evolution and development as follows.

In the early 19th century, the city’s economy was linked to wholesale commerce and an extended credit system to serve frontier settlement in Ontario’s southwestern interior. Today, while agriculture may not immediately come to mind when thinking of Hamilton economy, 49 percent of the city’s land area is used for agriculture - a $1 billion per year industry.17

Hamilton’s long-standing industrial economy, founded on metal processing, began in the 1850’s. With the establishment of the Great Western Railway foundry on the waterfront, industries began moving from the city centre to the harbour to take advantage of rail and water transportation. As in the case of Hamilton’s early commercial period, a major factor in the success of the city’s metal processing and secondary manufacturing economy is its strategic geographic location. Hamilton’s geographic location has allowed easy access to raw materials and a capacity to reach markets across North America.

Hamilton’s success in metal processing and the secondary manufacturing economy has also been driven by the skilled and unskilled immigrant labour flowing into the city. As metal foundries increased, companies found it advantageous to have their labour force live in close proximity to where they worked. As such, working class neighbourhoods developed around factories and foundries, first in the city centre, then in the west bay shore area, and finally in the east bay shore area.

Although metal-working and other heavy industries have been male-dominated, women in Hamilton have contributed significantly to the city’s economic history. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, women worked in factories processing food, sorting tobacco leaves, and spinning yarn among other jobs. In World War II, women filled jobs traditionally occupied by men, however so many married women entered the workforce that, by the 1970’s, single women represented barely one third of all women workers.

Although women were rarely welcome in male dominated unions, women shoemakers were active in the Knights of Labour. In 1918, the Hamilton Trades and Labour Council welcomed its first female delegate, Sadie Walker from the Retail Clerks’ Union. The granting of the vote to women in 1917 led to the formation of groups that championed issues such as maternity leave, health care during pregnancy, and improved access to health.18
Beginning in the post World War II period, Hamilton’s economy has been strongly identified with steel production and manufacturing along the waterfront – hence its dramatic east harbour profile as viewed from the Burlington Bay Skyway. A second view from the Burlington Bay Skyway reveals the 19th century Hamilton pump house complex, now the Hamilton Museum of Steam and Technology, and tells another story of Hamilton’s economy. The Hamilton Museum of Steam and Technology represents an important innovation from the city’s 19th century industrial past – one of the first waterworks in Canada.

The high point of steel manufacturing, and the accompanying prosperity it brought to many in the city, was between the years 1946 and 1980. Metal and steel manufacturing exploded with new product lines, factory expansions driven by state-of-the-art technology and innovation. After World War II, the presence of major steel companies attracted secondary manufacturers including Hoover, Westinghouse, Firestone, and International Harvester as well as auto manufacturers such as Studebaker and Austin Motor Company. Among Canada’s ten largest cities, Hamilton had the greatest percentage of its labour force in manufacturing in the 1971 census.19

Today, the heritage of 19th and early to mid-20th century industry concentrated in the city core and on the waterfront is the focus of two industrial interpretive trails, a collaborative effort between the City of Hamilton and the Workers’ Arts and Heritage Centre. Despite downturns in the 1980s and 1990s,20 steel, in the form of the two big steel corporations, U.S. Steel Canada (formerly Stelco) and ArcelorMittal Dofasco (formerly Dofasco) – continue to represent Hamilton’s economy for many people.

The 2005 Economic Development Strategy, subtitled “Clusters of Innovation”, refers to the city’s historic “steel cluster”. The Strategy recommends that the City of Hamilton focus on eight industry clusters and a “Quality of Life” component that concentrates on community attributes such as health care and education. The clusters include traditional industries (advanced manufacturing, agriculture/food & beverage processing, port related industry/business) as well as emerging clusters (aerotropolis or airport development, biotechnology and biomedical, film and cultural industries), and non-traditional industries (tourism, downtown).

A significant partner in the development of the Clusters of Innovation strategy is McMaster University, described as “a catalyst for economic growth,” and an example of how new technologies can be used to remake communities. The identification of the industry clusters are seen as areas in which Hamilton possesses inherent strengths and developed out of “innovative research and expertise” at the University.21 McMaster’s presence in this strategy is described as a significant contributor to the three critical factors necessary for cluster development in Hamilton: networks and partnerships; a strong skill base; and, innovation and research and development capacity.22

In pursuing a dynamic economic plan to create a “diversified, sustainable economic base consisting of globally competitive, wealth creating companies that employ a highly skilled, well-educated labour force,”23 Hamilton is once again exhibiting the talent for innovation that has served the city well throughout the last two centuries. In the 21st century, Hamilton is ready to create its future in the global marketplace.
A STORY OF US

Theme 3 – Citizens, Engagement and Protest

An overarching framework for community engagement in Hamilton is provided by Vision 2020 Hamilton that sets out a “vision of a strong, healthy, sustainable Hamilton shared by citizens, City Council, businesses and organizations.” In Vision 2020 citizen involvement is identified as one of four central principles as follows: “Provision for self-determination through public involvement in the definition and development of local solutions to environmental and development programs.”

Vision 2020 reflects a holistic and cross-sectoral approach that acknowledges the need to embrace a “triple bottom line” which considers the economic, social and environmental impacts of all decisions. Today, leading municipalities in Ontario and beyond are extending the “triple bottom line” approach to include a “quadruple bottom line” through the addition of culture as the fourth component to be considered in all decision making processes.

Vision 2020 describes Hamilton as “an economically, social and culturally diverse community that encourages opportunities for individuals, reduces inequities and ensures full participation for all in community life.” The Vision 2020 website includes Community Action Pages with links to 30 organizations and businesses considered to be actively working towards implementing goals for a sustainable Hamilton community.

Since the 19th century, Hamilton has had a history of civic engagement. Like many cities, responsibility for Hamilton’s overall development lay within the domain of the business and industrial class. In the past, land developers, businessmen, merchants and manufacturers controlled many of the levers of city-building process, levers that included land ownership, credit, employment, and influence in local government. Hamilton’s long history of labour activism – a proud and important history – was frequently a response to those who held control of the city’s development.

Labour activism originated with the efforts of skilled artisans to protect work standards and demand higher wages and shorter hours. In 1864 the first labour council was formed. In 1872, the Canadian Nine-Hour Movement was born at a meeting at the Hamilton Mechanics Institute. In May of the same year, craftsmen marched in the city’s streets demanding the nine-hour day resulting in the formation of Canada’s first regional labour federation.

In the 1880s, the Knights of Labour formed a labour society that held the city’s first Labour Day celebration in 1883. The Knights’ activism prompted investigation of labour conditions by a federal commission and led to the formation of the Hamilton Trades and Labour Council in 1888. In 1907 the Independent Labour Party was founded. The Independent Labour Party ran in opposition to the dominance of city politics and its platform included a shorter working day, a minimum wage, public ownership of utilities, abolition of child labour, and establishment of old-age pensions. In 1943, following federal policy allowing workers to form their own unions, workers at many of Hamilton’s east end factories had organized themselves into industrial unions. The 1946 strikes by Stelco, Westinghouse and Firestone workers in Hamilton were a watershed moment for workers’ rights in the city and across Canada. The victorious strikers and their union won union recognition and security, the establishment of seniority and grievance systems, and changed the nature of worker-management relations for decades to come.
Citizen engagement in the 19th and early 20th centuries often took the form of large outdoor gatherings. From 1870 to approximately 1920, Hamilton is considered to have exhibited a “robust character of civic culture”27 with festivals as expressions of civic pride. These expressions of civic pride included Labour Day demonstrations, summer carnivals, Sanger fests organized by the German community, and sports events. “On every pretext work stopped and dignitaries, civic officials, representatives of society, fire companies…all carrying their banners, marched through the thronged city streets to a public place where eminent men made speeches to rousing cheers. Often after the procession came a mass dinner and carousing at one of the local hotels, following sometimes by a ball….They were not peripheral entertainment but key events in which, if contemporary accounts can be believed, a large portion of the community participated as marchers or observers.”28 The film record of the 1946 labour parade winding through the city’s downtown represents a continuation of this tradition.29

Baseball became popular in Hamilton in the 1860s and was played at craft union picnics30 and helped pass the time during the 1946 Stelco strike.31 The city’s football tradition goes back to the 1870s with the formation of the Hamilton Tigers, a team that included north end working class recruits. Hamilton’s vigorous tradition of amateur sports in the 1920s and 1930s has contributed to the city’s identity as a place of athletic achievement.32 Traditions of civic engagement continued in the 1980s, driven generally by concern for the environment, and specifically by water quality in Hamilton Harbor. The Ministry of the Environment’s failure to address severe oxygen depletion caused by sewage and industrial discharge in Hamilton Harbour triggered widespread public protest. In 1986 the Ministry of the

Environment’s failure to respond to the city’s environmental concern drove inter-agency cooperation and initiatives involving industry, government (at the Municipal, Provincial and Federal levels) and labour and citizen interest groups.33 One such initiative subsequently led to the Hamilton Harbor Remedial Action Plan and the establishment of the citizen-based Bay Area Restoration Council in the 1990s – groups that are still active today.34 Throughout its history, Hamilton’s workers and immigrants experienced poverty and economic hardship. In the 21st century, Hamilton has embraced citizen engagement as fundamental strategy to confront the city’s serious challenges related to poverty. Today poverty rates in Hamilton exceed the provincial average and twenty percent of citizens, including a high number of seniors and Aboriginal populations, live under the poverty line.35 In 2005, Tackling Poverty in Hamilton was launched as a systematic strategy to address the city’s poverty challenges. The Tackling Poverty in Hamilton initiative established a multi-sector Roundtable for Poverty Reduction to mobilize citizen engagement and work collaboratively with low-income community organizations and advocacy groups. The Roundtable’s 2008 Report titled Making Hamilton the Best Place to Raise a Child was able to report that between 2001 and 2006 the city’s poverty rate decreased from 20 per cent to 16.1 per cent.36

Organization, collaboration, celebration – all tools of an engaged citizenry in Hamilton, a city noted for its role in activism. Coupled with the framework provided by Vision 2020 Hamilton, the energy, determination, and willingness of Hamilton’s citizens to create positive change in the quality of their lives sets the stage for achieving the quadruple bottom line on the road to sustainability.
A STORY OF PLACE

Theme 1 - Geography and Environment

Hamilton’s geographic features and strategic location at the head of Lake Ontario have shaped its human history for at least 10,000 years. Today, Hamilton’s built form overlies, and continues to be shaped by, the geography of this wedge-shaped land mass located at the west end of Lake Ontario. Hamilton’s unique topography consists of a series of successively elevated levels or “steps” from north to south. The city’s lower area is identified with industry, transportation, urbanization; its upper area represents agriculture and natural heritage as it contains wetlands, the escarpment cuesta, Carolinian forest remnants, alvar and prairie remnants, and sloughs. These topographic steps have shaped the evolution of Hamilton’s history and pattern of urban development. Among the prominent natural features shaping the city are the following:

Hamilton Beach Sandbar
The Hamilton Beach Sandbar originally prevented large vessels from entering Hamilton Harbour but also acted as a protective harbour breakwater. The opening of the Burlington Canal in 1832, which allowed passage for large ships bringing immigrants and exporting products, was a major factor in the city’s commercial and industrial success.

At the turn of the last century, Hamilton Beach, at the eastern end of the sand bar, offered an accessible recreational area for city residents. Later, as water pollution increased and more and more residents were able to travel outside the city on holidays, beach use declined. The remaining lakeside residences, the canal opening and the former lighthouse keeper’s tower and house remain as reminders of the canal’s former commercial and recreational importance.

Lake Shoreline
The lakeshore, originally covered with wetlands and grasses, was left undeveloped until the opening of the Burlington Canal. Incoming boatloads of immigrants and supplies created the need for warehouses, immigrant sheds and taverns along the west harbour shoreline where an early 19th century urban centre, called Port Hamilton, temporarily developed. The temporary development of Port Hamilton served as an alternative core to the commercial downtown area planned out by George Hamilton in 1816.

With the coming of the Great Western Railway in mid-century the resulting rail yards, established along the harbour, attracted foundries and workers’ housing. Furthermore, the shapes of the lakeshore inlets were changed permanently by infilling to create more land for industrial development.

Lake Plain
The city’s lake plain, below the Niagara Escarpment, originally consisted of higher dry areas and swampy patches interspersed with streams running down the escarpment slopes. To the west, archaeological excavations at the Cootes Paradise marsh indicate that this area was a focus of First Nations occupations subsequently becoming the site of the Desjardins Canal, a short-lived water route that contributed to the prosperity of Dundas. Burlington Heights, also at the city’s west boundary, was the site of the first trading post serving aboriginal people and settlers.

The city’s first urban core and commercial district, developed by George Hamilton in the area bounded by King, Main, James and John Streets, was built on a slight elevation close to the Cootes Paradise western boundary. Throughout its development, the city’s higher and drier west area was sought out by middle and upper class residents. Westdale, Hamilton’s first planned suburb was built here.
The east-west lake plain, constrained by Lake Ontario to the north and the escarpment to the south, developed intensively as the city’s urban, industrialized area. In contrast to Hamilton’s upper class west end, low-lying areas, located southeast of the city centre, became home to many poorer residents such as 19th century Irish Catholics. This area southeast of the city centre became known as “Corktown,” a name which continues to this day. Eventually, the barriers of the mountain and the lake required the annexation of adjoining areas to accommodate urban expansion, with resulting development of suburban subdivisions and business parks.

**The Mountain**

Hamilton’s “mountain,” the Niagara Escarpment, is an ancient geological formation that forms a rocky spine between New York State to the east and the Bruce Peninsula to the northwest. An area of diverse landforms and plant and animal species, the “mountain” is cut by many north-south valleys, ravines, streams and waterfalls. Two of the largest of these are the Dundas Valley, which owed its early industrial prominence to the mill power provided by its many swiftly rushing streams, and the Red Hill Valley, in the city’s eastern area.

**Agricultural Plain**

The elevated south plain accounts for 80 percent of the City’s land base but less than 10 percent of its population. Primarily agricultural, the south plain contains the significant Beverly Swamp wetland, prairie remnants in Flamborough and Ancaster, and slough forests in Glanbrook. Suburban and commercial development has been encroaching on this area for years. The completion of the Rural Hamilton Profile (2006) as part of the City of Hamilton Official Plan represents the commitment to manage land use in this area.

In 1860, the beauty of Hamilton’s lake end location and its unique topography led the New York Times to print the following description.

“Hamilton is a beautiful town. It lies at the head of Burlington Bay, the extreme westerly point of Lake Ontario, in a charming basin, made by the abrupt falling off of the table land to the vast upper country beyond…This valley lies warm and sheltered…The position of the town cannot be excelled—indeed, rarely equaled. Its upper quarter overlooks the lake and bay; the broad valley of Dundas, some miles above...Just behind the town, and hundreds of feet above it, is the mountain, which looks down upon the town itself, even away beyond Toronto and into the mighty misty blue of its far eastern boundary.”

This New York Times observation may be one of the few instances where Hamilton was equated with beauty. Many observers have tended to see, and consequently exploit Hamilton’s physiographical advantages in economic terms, as demonstrated in the following quote.

“[Hamilton] possesses, from its location, peculiar advantages for drawing a crowd…At the head of Lake Ontario, it is easy of (sic) access by water, and on the other hand, it is an outlet for a tract of country exceeding in extent, productiveness, wealth and enterprise, any other section of this favoured province.”
However, the City and residents are working to bring recognition of Hamilton’s dramatic location, topography and natural beauty back to the forefront. As mentioned in the earlier section on Citizen Engagement, concern for Hamilton’s natural assets have led to positive action by the City and its citizens. In the 1970s there was a major effort to address the effects of sewage and industrial waste in Hamilton Harbour on the environment. Beginning in 1986, industry, government, local labour and citizen interest groups began working together to address Hamilton Harbour’s environmental issues. The Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan and the citizen-based Bay Area Restoration Council, formed in the 1990s, remain active today. The City’s Urban Structure Report (2008) recognizes the existence and importance of the Hamilton’s major urban open space system (comprised of the Niagara Escarpment, the Red Hill Valley, Cootes paradise, the west harbour area and the Waterfront Trail, and Confederation Park and the Hamilton Beach Recreation Trail), as part of the Growth Related Integrated Development Strategy (GRIDS) and its Nodes and Corridors system. Natural areas throughout the urban and rural areas of the city are protected locally through policies for its 81 Environmentally Significant Areas and the Regional Natural Heritage System initially developed by the former Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth.

The west Hamilton waterfront – the Cootes Paradise area and the harbour – remains a strong focus of environmental efforts by the City and its residents. In addition to Bayfront Park, Dundurn Park and Kay Drage Park, conservation lands have been established around Cootes Paradise, including large areas around the north side now owned by the Royal Botanical Gardens. The City is undertaking a West Harbour Waterfront Recreation (WHWR) Master Plan to balance the recreational, ecological and marine function of the West Harbour. The WHWR Master Plan seeks to accommodate and facilitate a range of recreational boating uses, enhance access to the waterfront, create new active and passive recreational opportunities, provide public amenities for visitors and residents, protect and enhance natural shorelines and aquatic habitats, and provide a financial framework that allows for short-term and long-term improvements.

Today, the value of the city’s environment and geography has been enshrined in Vision 2020 Hamilton as a foundational principle: “Maintenance of ecological integrity through careful stewardship, rehabilitation, reduction in wastes and protection of diverse and important natural species and systems.” Recognition of the value of the city’s natural environment provides a framework upon which to continue the work of reclaiming the dramatic, unique and invaluable beauty of Hamilton’s setting.

### A STORY OF PLACE

#### Theme 2 - Urban Development

In 2001, the provincially mandated municipal amalgamation brought together six constituent municipalities: the City of Hamilton, the City of Stoney Creek, the Town of Ancaster, the Town of Flamborough, the Town of Dundas, and the Township of Glanbrook. Historically, the pattern of urban development has evolved on a community-by-community basis in response to the growth of local transportation networks. Ancaster was the area’s earliest urban centre and was thriving by 1812 due to the fact that it was located on the first road built between the Town of Niagara (Upper Canada’s seat of government in the early 19th century) and western settlement destinations in the Grand and Thames River valleys. By 1850 Ancaster boasted machine, woolen and textile factories.
Ancaster’s early success was overtaken by Dundas when the latter became the shipping terminus of the Desjardins Canal (1837). The canal was built through the Cootes Paradise marsh from Lake Ontario and was a strategic stopover on the Governor’s (Dundas) Road, a major settlement artery in the early 19th century connecting the military centre of York (Toronto) to London. Textiles, milling and shipping of barrel parts became significant parts of Dundas’ industrial base.

Stoney Creek, on Hamilton’s eastern border, flourished briefly as a grain trade centre in the early 1850s. Both Dundas and Stoney Creek declined in economic importance as industry and population shifted to Hamilton after the building of the Great Western Railway (1853). These developments established Hamilton as an industrial centre – a situation that lent substantial weight to its political roles, as the district seat for the District of Gore (1816), as the county seat for the United Counties of Wentworth and Halton (1850) and continuing as the county seat for a reorganized Wentworth County (1853).

In addition to these major centres, a number of smaller centres grew up around natural resource industries such as limestone quarry industries (in particular the village of Rockton), mill sites or as agricultural service crossroads. As their populations grew, communities sought incorporation as distinct municipal corporations. These communities came to reflect more than political boundaries; they became focal points and the source of community identity for residents.

The evolution of Hamilton’s working class residential neighbourhoods was shaped by the development of commercial and industrial centres in various parts of the city. Until 1850, labourers and craftsmen lived close to the commercial core that emerged around the original town site drawn up by George Hamilton. With the opening of the Burlington Canal (1832), the waterfront community of Port Hamilton developed along the lakeshore. With the establishment of foundries and later steel mills along the east harbour, workers’ housing moved into the city’s north and northeast areas, south of the factories, establishing a second commercial core at Ottawa and Sherman Streets.

Throughout the 20th century, Hamilton expanded by annexing adjoining lands to meet housing and industrial demands. Annexation created a ring of suburban development to the east and south, up to and eventually beyond the escarpment. These areas became home ownership havens for many industrial workers who sought better air and new homes for their families.

Today, a new Official Plan has been developed to reflect planning requirements set out in Places to Grow, the Provincial legislation passed in 2005 that defines a growth plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Places to Grow is based on “smart growth” principles aimed at improving quality of life and contributing to prosperity and diversity while protecting the environment. Places to Grow sets out goals and requirements that address all major planning issues: curbing urban sprawl; directing where new development is to be concentrated; revitalization of downtowns; identification of employment lands; plans to strengthen transportation and connectivity across the region; and creating more complete communities, etc.

The City’s response to Places to Grow has taken the form of a range of interconnected and strategic plans to facilitate coordinated, well-planned and sustainable growth in both urban and rural areas of the city. These plans exist under the umbrella of Building a Strong Foundation and include Vision 2020 Hamilton;
Growth Related Integrated Development Strategy; Transportation, Water and Waste Water Master Plans; Official Plan; Social Development Strategy; Comprehensive Employment Study; and the Urban Structure Plan.

Building a Strong Foundation defines a strategic direction for growth and sets out nine directions to guide development focusing on maintaining and improving quality of life; encouraging compatible mix of uses in neighbourhoods; concentrating new development in existing built-up, urban areas; protecting rural areas for economic and recreational purposes; job retention and creation; efficient and environmentally sustainable transportation options; reuse of existing buildings; protection of ecological systems; and the maintenance and creation of attractive and unique public and private spaces.

The Building a Strong Foundation principles are supported by Vision 2020 Hamilton which promotes inclusivity in decision-making, a vibrant, diverse city, citizen access to clean air and water, food, shelter, education, satisfying employment, spirituality and culture, values the natural beauty of the Niagara Escarpment and Hamilton harbour, and weighs social/health, economic and environmental costs, benefits and risks equally in decision making.

An overarching principle guiding Hamilton's future growth and development identified in the 2003 GRIDS strategy is to increase land use density and activity within nodes and corridors. The identification of nodes and corridors reflect the historical development of the area and recognize the importance of urban core areas as social, economic and cultural hubs for the community. In addition to reflecting Hamilton's 19th century growth patterns, nodes and corridors recognize the expansion of the city's post war industrial, residential, and educational services by including suburban retail hubs like Limeridge Mall and Eastgate Square, major institutional facilities like McMaster University, Redeemer University College and Mohawk College, and business and industrial parks. Cores are connected by transit lines and major transportation spines, some of which are based upon historic urban transportation networks, such as Main, King, James and Upper James Streets in central Hamilton.

Nodes and corridors also recognize Hamilton's major transportation arteries that, with some deviations, follow 18th and 19th century trails and roads. These transportation arteries include Brock Road (formerly the Dundas-Guelph Road), King Street (following the route of the former Hamilton-Stoney Creek Road) and former north-south trails that originally cut through the escarpment along ravines and streambeds, such as James Street (the former Hamilton-Caledonia Road) and the Red Hill Valley Parkway.

Finally, nodes and corridors reflect a core value in Vision 2020 Hamilton recognizing the importance of the mosaic of communities and natural areas as important contributors to quality of urban life.

As an amalgamated City, Hamilton faces significant challenges in planning for growth while acknowledging the historical and social significance of pre-existing urban cores as focal points for community identity. The development and implementation of strategic planning tools, such as Planning a Strong Foundation, which invite resident participation and build upon historic land use patterns, is a positive step towards creating a new city while remaining sensitive to the voices of its diverse communities.
Theme 3 - Built Form

Hamilton today represents rich complexity in built form shaped by its architecture, transportation networks and modified natural and cultural landscapes. Until the 1970s, Hamilton’s built form was driven more by industrial and commercial development patterns rather than regulated municipal planning.

Although new development is continually shaping and reshaping the city, much of Hamilton’s built form is a product of development patterns and initiatives of the 19th and 20th centuries. The amalgamated City’s boundaries correspond closely to the shape of Wentworth County first defined in 1816.\(^44\) Within the City’s boundaries, townships enclosing agricultural lots were laid out in the late 18th century. Today rural areas, farm boundaries and roads still reflect, to some extent, the survey plans established during this period. Hamilton’s rural area ringing the urban downtown was the site of earliest settlement, first by Native people, and second by Europeans who colonized its rich agricultural lands. Today, the management of early settlement archaeology – known as sites and areas of archaeological potential – is the focus of the City’s archaeological management plan.

The built heritage legacy of 19th century European settlement exists in various forms: farm buildings and fields; individual buildings; commercial main streets and downtown cores. Place names, such as Duff’s Corners, reflect significant events and people in the history of the area and today form part of the collective memory of Hamilton. While rural Hamilton still contains 1,030 operating farms today, many of these exist alongside suburban developments known as Rural Settlement Areas.\(^45\)

Built form in urban Hamilton, located below the mountain, is the product of almost two centuries of industrial, commercial and residential settlement. Major roads and thoroughfares echo the routes of original roads and trails that ran through the area, created first by aboriginal groups, and later by the British military. The oldest of these thoroughfares are York, King, James, John and Main Streets, which border and define the city’s original urban core. The presence of the escarpment has influenced a pattern of east-west arteries running parallel along the shoreline and just below the cliffs, and north south access roads cutting through the mountain. The latest of these arteries is the Red Hill Valley Parkway, opened in 2007, which created much controversy regarding its environmental impact.

In the Dundas area, Cootes Drive and Governor's Road follow one of the earliest arteries through this area from the lake into the province’s southwestern interior. Ringing Hamilton’s lower urban area are a number of highways built after 1950, including the elevated Burlington Bay Skyway, the Lincoln Alexander Parkway, the Chedoke Expressway and the Upper Centennial Parkway, which represent the influence of the automobile in the post World War II era.

The presence of the Burlington Canal and the High Level Bridge – close to the site of the Desjardins Canal – recall the city’s early days of lake port shipping. The rail lines running parallel to the lake shoreline and the Custom House building (presently the Workers’ Arts and Heritage Centre) stand as a symbol of the city’s mid-19th century transformation into an industrial centre.
The city’s land use patterns and built form tell stories of growth, change, and an overwhelming push for industrial development.46 At its east and west boundaries, Hamilton is flanked by two entry points comprised of York Boulevard, Cootes Paradise and Dundurn National Historic Site to the west, and the Hamilton Museum of Steam and Technology (formerly the Hamilton Waterworks) and the blast furnaces and steel mills of U.S. Steel Canada (formerly Stelco) and ArcelorMittal Dofasco to the east. These iconic structures represent the two sides of this city: a population of business and political “elite” in the west; industry and working class housing in the east.

Hamilton’s west end was the site of the city’s first urban centre and early commercial trade, remains the site of municipal administration, and contains a cluster of cultural institutions. Many of these cultural institutions were built as urban renewal projects of the 1970s: Copps Coliseum, Hamilton Art Gallery (renovated by architect Bruce Kuwabara), Jackson Square, Hamilton Convention Centre, Hamilton Library, and Hamilton Place Theatre. Directly east of this area is Gore Park, once the site of the 19th century city’s dumping ground and later the site of civic celebrations. Hamilton Beach and Burlington Heights near Dundurn National Historic Site were popular 19th century public promenade sites, located outside the downtown core at that time.

The western high-level bridge at the York Boulevard entrance and the presence of the fountain in Gage Park in the central core reflect the influence of the City Beautiful movement. The City Beautiful movement was an early 20th century planning movement that influenced architect John Lyle (creator of Toronto’s Union Station among other significant buildings around the province) as well as Thomas Baker McQuesten, a Hamilton native and an influential proponent of landscape improvement programs such as the Royal Botanical Gardens.47

Hamilton’s significant architectural achievements include the building of the Pigott building on James Street in 1929, the city’s first steel-skeleton skyscraper and which incorporates Art-Deco and Gothic-Revival elements.48 In 1951, the City hired Stanley M. Roscoe as staff architect – a first in Canada. Inspired by the post war modernism movement, Roscoe led Hamilton’s efforts to build structures such as the Hamilton Health Building, Westdale Library, and most notably, City Hall.49

At its eastern entrance, the Hamilton Waterworks chimney stack, juxtaposed with steel mill architecture, is a testament to the city’s industrial roots and activities. Reminiscent of the style of a Roman aqueduct, the Hamilton Waterworks is considered as one of Canada’s greatest surviving engineering achievements of the mid-19th century. Built between 1857 and 1859, the Hamilton Waterworks was designed by the prominent Canadian engineer, Thomas C. Keefer.50 The east and west entrances to Hamilton also contain historic sites – Stoney Creek and Burlington Heights – that represent the War of 1812 and underscore the city’s founding British history.

Hamilton’s industrial heritage is dramatically evident from its skyline profile as viewed from the Burlington Skyway. The northern edge of the city, between Bayfront Park and Windermere Basin, consists of angular industrial landforms, created by landfill during the mid to late 20th century. This area is almost exclusively industrial, devoted to steel mills, rail yards, and related businesses and includes two major east-west thoroughfares providing efficient access to the factories and the Queen Elizabeth Way.
Workers’ residential subdivisions, established in the early to mid-20th century, are spread along the southern boundary of this area. The junction of Ottawa and Main Streets at one time represented this area’s downtown shopping district – and the site of Canada’s first Tim Hortons store.

Hamilton’s dramatic industrial profile is beauty of another kind – which complements the city’s unique topography and lakeside location and which has been captured in part by Edward Burtynsky, an internationally renowned photographer of industrial landscapes. In Burtynski’s words, industrial landscapes represent “nature transformed through industry” as “reflecting pools of our times.”

Hamilton’s built form celebrates the city as a place of contrasts, from Lyle’s Beaux Arts creations, to the Italianate.
Endnotes

2 In a first hand account, dated September 16, 1815, describing the occupation of his farm in 1813 by British soldiers, Richard Beasley, a local Hamilton merchant and trader who lived where Dundurn Castle now stands, describes “the Indians that were attached to the Army, a part of them encamped on my grounds with the troops...” cited in J.R. Triggs, Archaeology at Dundurn Castle, 1991, on file at Dundurn Castle National Historic Site, p. 6
5 John C. Weaver, Hamilton, An Illustrated History (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1982), p. 57
7 Weaver, p. 92
8 Ibid., pp. 93, 96, 140
9 Ibid., pp. 169-170
10 The Souls of Black Folk: Hamilton’s Stewart Memorial Community website available at www.virtualmuseum.ca/English/CommunityMemories/flashDisplayer.php?exNum=00000236
11 Holman, p. 34
12 Workers Arts and Heritage Centre, Made in Hamilton 20th Century Industrial Trail tour guide, n.d.
13 www.terrapingraphics.ca/interviews/chiarelli.htm
14 AuthentiCity, Statistical Portrait prepared for Hamilton Our Community Culture project, 2008, p. 3
16 www.thespec.com/News/Local/article/381354
17 City of Hamilton, The Rural Hamilton Profile, January 2006, p. 10 available at www.myhamilton.ca/NR/rdonlyres/6780F0AAA-BD0C-41F1-9C4E-6A81B6FDCB1/0/RuralHamiltonProfile.pdf
19 Ibid., p. 161
20 See histories of Stelco and Dofasco at www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/
21 City of Hamilton, Economic Development Strategy, 2005, p. 6
22 Ibid., p. 11
23 Ibid., p. 6
26 The Siege of 46, www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~cradle/
27 Weaver, p. 116
28 Katz, The People of Hamilton, Canada West, p. 3
29 On file at the Workers' Arts and Heritage Centre, Hamilton
30 Weaver, p. 118
31 Film record of 1946 Stelco strike, on file at the Workers' Arts and Heritage Centre, Hamilton
32 Weaver, p. 118
34 www.hamiltonharbour.ca/
37 N.B. Bouchier and K. Cruikshank, The People and the Bay (Hamilton: Ontario Workers Arts and Heritage Centre, n.d.)
38 D.G. Smith, Recent Investigation of Late Woodland Occupations at Cootes Paradise, Ontario, Ontario Archaeology, No. 63, 1997, p. 4
39 City of Hamilton, The Rural Hamilton Profile, 2006, p. 4
41 Hamilton Spectator, Oct. 13, 1853, p. 2 cited in Katz, p. 325
42 In 1818, British traveler Edward Talbot, who passed around the head of Lake Ontario, described Dundas and Ancaster as “The only places, which…bear the least resemblance to villages.” Edward Talbot, Five Years Residence in the Canadas (London: Longman, 1824), Vol. I, p. 120 as cited in Weaver, p. 18
43 Plans and descriptions of these centres are laid out in the Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Wentworth, Ontario, 1875, reprint edition (Dundas, Ont., 1971)
44 Illustrated Historical Atlas, p. 9
45 City of Hamilton, The Rural Hamilton Profile, 2006, p. 10
46 The breadth and scope of Hamilton's remarkable architecture is the mandate of the Hamilton Region Branch of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, a charitable organization dedicated to the promotion, interpretation and preservation of the rich architectural heritage of Hamilton and Region. Their website available at www.architecturehamilton.com/arcomain.html offers tours and information related to all aspects of the city's architectural heritage.
47 www.ontarioplaques.com/Plaques_GHI/Plaque_Hamilton32.html
48 historicalhamilton.com/central/pigott-building/
49 www.hhca.ca/hall of fame/inductees/s.m.roscoe.asp
50 Content of Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaque at Waterworks Park, Hamilton described at www.waynecook.com/ahamilton-wentworth.htm
52 www.edwardburtynsky.com/