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In order for Hamilton to become more competitive as a destination, we have an increasingly urgent need to make our city more walkable and liveable. We know from extensive recent research that young professionals (and consequently those that employ them) choose their home largely based on the quality of life offered by a place.

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Unlike the natural environment, we create and control the built environment through our decisions and actions. We, as a collective, must decide upon and create the environment that we want for ourselves and for our kids. And for their kids. And so on. In order to be sustainable and meaningful, any process

involved in imagining this future vision must include and engage all interest groups.

### Pre-amalgamation Engagement

During the 1990s, a healthy culture of civic engagement in the visioning of our built environment was prevalent, and a number of important public consultations took place. In 1996, the Hamilton Society of Architects (now called the Hamilton and Burlington Society of Architects) ran a two-day ideas charrette, which engaged a large number of design professionals, developers, local business people, planners, politicians, and local residents. The Longo Report in 1998 was the result of a public engagement process that involved more than 300 diverse participants. Many other public sessions and initiatives took place during this period including the Ferguson Avenue Revitalization Project, the Gore Heritage Design Study, and Smart Moves, among others.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT+ THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

These sessions and their subsequent recommendations were influential in shaping municipal policy moving forward. The City of Hamilton created the Downtown Renewal Division in 2001, and also developed and published the Downtown Secondary Plan, also in 2001. Both of these are important milestones in our urban history as a city, and were directly influenced by civic participation. Unfortunately, after amalgamation, the momentum gained during this period seemed to wane.

### Engagement today

Recently, the City showed promising leadership in conducting a series of public consultations related to the urban intensification of the B-Line corridor. Seven study locations were chosen, and seven local architects were hired and assigned to participate in one of the visioning sessions. My firm was one of those participating, and was assigned to the team charged with studying the corner of Wellington and

King. An afternoon session involved eight local community members, and explored what a denser built form might look like at this under-functioning urban node using the concept of an “Urban Envelope” in lieu of prescriptive zoning laws governing use and density. Through the use of 3-dimensional computer technology, this facilitated session quickly resulted in the production of a newly-imagined urban form for the intersection, including medium density mixed-use buildings, medium to high density housing, and an urban parkette. All new forms were even analyzed with respect to sun shadows cast on adjacent properties. This short session was incredibly productive and received a high degree of buy-in from the public when presented that same evening.

### Moving On

It is intended that the results of these seven design charrettes be used by staff to begin formulating supportive planning policy along the B-line corridor.

This will make it easier for landowners, prospective buyers, or developers to develop these properties. Perhaps more significantly, it will send a strong and clear message to the Province and the broader development community that we are, in fact, serious about LRT and capable of doing the groundwork to prepare for it. Make no mistake about it, they are watching carefully.

We are at a crossroads in our history as a city. A new momentum is needed now more than ever. We need to find opportunities to forge partnerships between community leaders in all camps: citizens, advocacy groups, politicians, city staff, design professionals, media, and planners. We need to roll up our sleeves together, imagine the future, make clear decisions, and get on with building a great city.

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Images from public consultations, courtesy of dp.Ai