

HAMILTON ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMIT

2014

Planning for Hamilton's Future Together



Event Report



Hamilton

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The Environment Summit was organized by Heather Donison and Jay Carter at the City of Hamilton, as well as a Steering Committee with representatives from the following organizations:

Mohawk College
HIEA
McMaster University
Environment Hamilton
Sustainable Hamilton
Hamilton Conservation authority

Eco Net
Green Venture
Sustainability Professionals Network
City of Hamilton
Lura Consulting

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1. Introduction

On April 22, 2014, approximately 120 participants from the environmental, economic, social and cultural sectors gathered at Mohawk College for the City of Hamilton's second Environmental Summit. Over the course of the day, local accomplishments were celebrated, future environmental challenges and opportunities were identified and the future of the City of Hamilton's Vision 2020 initiative was discussed and debated.

This report highlights the presentations made, presents a snapshot of the workshop results, and puts forward a series of recommendations for moving forward. It was written by the independent facilitator for the project (Liz Nield of Lura Consulting).

For a list of the organizations who attended the Summit, please see Appendix A.



2. Presentations Summary

During the first part of the Summit, a number of speakers delivered a series of presentations, focusing on some of the activities, initiatives and policies that are improving and protecting Hamilton's environment, they also strove to examine environmental trends and threats that may impact local environmental health, as well as sparking ideas for the workshops and in particular to explore potential trends in collaboration.

A summary of presenters, their organization, and topics are provided in the table below.

- Morning Introductions from Paul Johnson, Director, Neighbourhood And Community Initiatives, City Of Hamilton
- Greetings from Bob Carrington, Interim President, Mohawk College
- Setting the Stage For The Next Community Vision With Chris Murray, City Manager, City Of Hamilton
- Innovating Towards Sustainability - Take the Risk, Joel Hilchey, The Beanstalk Project, Leadership Development
- Brownfields, Brian Morris, City of Hamilton
- Urban Natural Areas and Parkland, Dr. David Galbraith, Royal Botanical Gardens
- Complete Streets And Complete Communities, Sara Mayo, Social Planning and Research, Council; Justin Jones, Yes We Cannon!; Peter Topalovic, City Of Hamilton
- Local Food And Agriculture, Dr. Sarah Wakefield, University Of Toronto
- Moving Beyond Consumption, Peter Ormond, ECO5 Inc.
- Climate Change, Hazel Breton, Hamilton Conservation Authority

The presentations were recorded, and can be viewed at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJlrSnltRUYiCb9sO8SbHlw>.



3. Workshop Results

Following the presentations, Summit participants were asked to participate in three separate workshops to take a critical look at:

- Opportunities for Local Resilience
- Celebrating Our City Of Hamilton
- The Next Community Vision

Opportunities for Local Resilience

The focus areas from the morning sessions were posted on boards around the room and participants were asked to focus on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges.

- Urban Natural Areas and Parklands
- Local Food and Agriculture
- Consumption
- Brownfields
- Complete Streets and Communities
- Climate Change
- What Else

From these conversations, a number of areas were identified – the following key ingredients emerged:

Strengths

- There are a plethora of natural areas, trails and waterfront here in Hamilton
- Many initiatives that support local food and agriculture already exist
- More organizations are paying attention to sustainable business practices
- Collaboration is a strength – there are many successful and active organizations and groups in this City, keep building on this
- Several best practice examples of successful brownfield re-development exist from within Hamilton
- Community engagement, awareness and interest has increased specifically around some topics like complete streets
- Existing work and research is currently underway on climate change, build on this

Weaknesses

- Lack of awareness about what natural environment we have
- No plans or strategy around the natural environment or agricultural land
- Continued lack of education around key topics and issues
- Consumption dependent economy
- No fulsome inventory of brownfields
- Roads are still not safe for cyclists – overall, our streets are not yet “complete”
- Lack of understanding or buy-in about urgency of climate adaptation and mitigation

Challenges

- People are losing their connection to nature
- Support for naturalization
- Farmland is being developed for urban expansion
- Understanding the value of our natural environment and resources
- Changing people’s behaviour will take time
- Competing interests and initiatives for the same pool of funding
- Support from all agencies, organizations and public on brownfield re-development
- Understanding of what complete streets means and how to plan for this

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- Many of these initiatives can be complex and complicated to understand

Opportunities

- Strategic planning for the natural environment
- Ensure Vision 2020 keeps the connection to the Niagara Escarpment, Cootes Paradise, Harbour or Lake Ontario and works to define an environmental vision
- Sustainable development – like green roofs, greening parking lots, accessible for walking, adaptive re-use
- Learn from each other about living a healthier, environmentally focused lifestyle
- Buy-local and make this a priority
- Brownfield planning and development
- Use education and community-based social marketing to change the behaviours around consumption, waste, climate adaptation and mitigation
- Use indicators or measures that focus not only on economy, but on well-being and health
- Strengthen partnerships with businesses and post-secondary institutions
- Brownfield strategy for the City – great City-wide opportunity that should be prioritized
- Some of our major streets are wide enough to plan for complete streets and connect our communities

Celebrating Our City of Hamilton

Participants were asked to think big about Hamilton and the aspects that keep them here, working in small groups participants discussed the following: 1) What makes Hamilton a great City?; and, 2) What do you want Hamilton to look like in 30 years? From these conversations, the following themes emerged:

- The people of Hamilton make this City great - its never status quo. Our community spirit, involvement and dedication to environmental, cultural, social and economic issues are second to none.
- Our cultural diversity, arts scene and rich history.
- Our diverse landscapes and our natural environment – the waterfalls, the parks, forests, trails and conservation areas.
- The neighbourhoods – and connections within them.
- Hamilton is a transportation hub; our proximity within the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area is an opportunity.
- We have “good bones”.
- Education and health institutions.
- Proximity in the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area.
- Hamilton is still “affordable”

The Next Community Vision

Participants were asked to think big **about the future** of Hamilton and to brainstorm opportunities for the future. In groups of 4, participants discussed the following questions: 1) What do you see as the key conditions of success or requirements for a successful long-term community vision? and, 2) How do you suggest engaging with the currently unengaged populations? The following themes emerged from the discussions:

Ingredients for Long-Term Success

- Engaged community from diverse perspectives
- Ensure that people are educated about this topic, before moving to engagement
- Take the time to get it right
- Explain the story of Vision 2020 – and how we got here, also look at successes and failures

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- Integrate and combine into the City's Strategic Plan
- Ensure that it is up for renewal and evaluation often
- Strong partnerships tied to actions, community ownership
- Needs to be shorter-term, as well as long-term (1, 5, 10, 15 year targets)
- Take an inventory of existing conditions – and celebrate success early on
- Need strong leadership in order to make this a success

Advice on Engagement

- Theme focused conversations (transportation, natural environment, culture, etc.)
- Engage where people are – community events, food trucks, coffee shops, schools
- Make it relevant to people's lives – run a campaign
- Find community champions so that they can engage in their own communities
- Involve all age groups – as an example, reach out to school boards
- Need to appeal to different audiences – and figure out who are the under-engaged
- Engage in different languages
- Engage the business community
- Use social media
- Face-to-face engagement is incredibly important
- Incentivize engagement
- Report back on how people's input helped

A full list of the results of the Summit workshop can be found in Appendix A – Meeting Data and Notes.



4. Different Perspectives and a Common Vision

During the final session, four panelists engaged in a discussion on the following question: “As Vision 2020 approaches renewal, what do you see as being the most important conditions, steps, or requirements to ensure a new successful and sustainable long-term plan for our community?”



Lynda Lukasik, Executive Director, Environment Hamilton, Keanin Loomis, CEO & President, Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, Don Jaffray, Executive Director, Social Planning & Research Council and Stephanie Vegh, Executive Director, Hamilton Arts Council represented the four pillars of sustainability – Environmental, Economic Social and Cultural respectively. Key elements of the panel discussion are below:

- Reflect and learn from the lessons we have learned from the past, and run a comparable community engagement process to that of Vision 2020.
- Figure out how to engage people in this process – and help them understand how to help create shared Goals & Principles.
- People are attracted to stories – culture can help us to tell a great story and help to get people involved, all of these issues has a human face and can help to build empathy.
- Don't take “status-quo” for an answer. The goals that were articulated for Vision 2020 need to be reassessed as do the Principles.
- Culture needs to be treated as an equal player in sustainability.
- The new Vision requires an effective framework for sharing responsibility for implementation.
- Our work has to go beyond the physical and the built environment – we want to create a community that is healthy from a number of perspectives.
- Reframe this as a Plan that is owned by the broader community.
- Ensure that indicators are updated to reflect priority concerns and changes, and commit to a process for reporting and reassessing indicators to ensure that they remain relevant. Update the community on how we are doing on indicators.
- Integration of existing plans and initiatives continues to remain very important (as an example linking Vision 2020 to the City's Strategic Plan).
- Ensure there is a commitment to stick to the principles and ensure accountability in decision making.

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5. Conclusions

Over the course of the day, several key, recurring ideas emerged. Through the conversation and dialogue at the Environmental Summit, the facilitation team has made the following conclusions from our observations:

Education & Awareness – There is a significant lack of understanding City-wide around Vision 2020 – the first stage of engagement and planning has to focus on education and awareness, this way people will become aware that the planning has begun and they can figure out how they would like to participate in its development.

Collaboration & Engagement – Moving forward, collaboration between the City, stakeholders, organizations and groups will be key in the successful re-emergence of Vision 2020. Establish a Steering Committee or Working Group to help steer the process. Build on the ideas from this Summit, the Summit in 2013, any other conversations or workshops, as well as ideas heard through initiatives like the Hamilton's Engagement Committee to build a comprehensive engagement program that ensures City-wide collaboration.

Integration & Accountability – In order for the new Vision 2020 to be successful, it has to be integrated into the City's Strategic Plan, as well as other City policies and documents. In addition, once actions have been identified (or completed) either from the City or the community these should be communicated. Annual reporting on actions and the use of a balance of indicators (social, cultural, economic and environment) will be key. Also, ensure the results are communicated regularly. Think of Hamilton as a system and do not develop this plan in isolation.

Timeline & Process– Looking thirty years ahead could be too far – suggest looking at 2020 as a start – reassess the vision and goals, report on successes and identify gaps, then identify actions that are medium term (5-10 years) and then long-term (10+ years). In addition, present and seek feedback on the existing goals of Vision 2020 to see what has been achieved as a starting point in the development of the new Vision.

