

December 9, 2020

To the Mayor's Economic Recovery Task for and Members of the General Issues Committee:

Re: Mayor's Task Force on Economic Recovery Report 2020

We thank the members of Mayor's Task Force on Economic Recovery for their commitment to our city and congratulate them on the release of their Report. The Task Force's recommendations highlight key steps to realize a brighter future post-pandemic.

In addition to our support for and endorsement of the Task Force recommendations, we offer feedback from our perspectives as fellow city builders. We collaborate with a network of planners, architects, builders, designers, housing providers, social workers, small business owners, food industry leaders, academics, and more. We are personally and professionally committed to building a great city. In June we released "[COVID-Responsive Planning and Design in Hamilton: A Collaborative Idea Paper](#)," which outlined four key areas of response: Open Space, Mobility, Local Business, Housing, and Density.

From this foundational work, we offer the Task Force our thoughts on three priority areas we believe should receive greater focus.

A Safe, Accessible, Connected and Sustainable Transportation System

We support the Task Force recommendation on LRT investment. However, we also believe that a holistic approach to our existing and future transportation system is essential for Hamiltonians to participate in and benefit from the city's economic recovery.

To ensure people can access places of employment, commerce, and services, Task Force strategies should include more detailed calls for efficient, affordable, accessible, and safe transit options for workers and all Hamiltonians. For example, workers need reliable transit services throughout the day and night, and every day of the week to match the wide range of workers' schedules.

Transit strategies should also address the specific needs of users to ensure that they have equitable access to work opportunities. Women in particular may require transit services with stops located close to active uses and options to be dropped near their destinations at night. Workers in the city's industrial and commercial employment land areas require efficient transit services and safe, accessible transit stops close to their destinations even in areas where there is low ridership density. The same is true for workers residing in low-ridership neighbourhoods.

The task Force recommendations should also more explicitly include investment in safe, connected, and efficient active transportation to make it easier to walk and bike. Currently, a lack of safe and interconnected active transportation routes keep many people from accessing jobs, services, and commerce in an affordable and sustainable manner. This costs individuals, businesses, and the City.

Investment in active transportation connectivity can also support other objectives in the Report. For instance, the Task Force's goods movement strategies highlight the need to enhance last-mile connections and reduce congestion. Reducing travel by automobile aligns with those goals.

Investments in active transportation connectivity could also support growth in tourism and local spending. Hamilton has greater open space and trail assets than most cities in the region, but connections between them are incomplete. Creating a more unified network of high-quality open spaces and trails that connect to Hamilton's commercial areas and key destinations will support local economic development and sustainable tourism.

Streets and Open Spaces that Support People and Business

We strongly support the Task Force's recommendation for creative approaches and investments in the public realm. There is great potential to leverage the public realm to simultaneously deliver benefits to businesses and to residents more generally.

Recent experiments in outdoor dining and repurposing driving and parking space for people should continue and be expanded to more areas of the city. These approaches should be part of a comprehensive re-think of our main streets. Going forward, street designs should enhance accessibility while providing increased space for non-auto circulation and local business activity. At the same time, new design approaches should include parking strategies that reflect (and appropriately manage) the acceleration of food and product delivery. Additionally, local approaches to delivery by both automobile and bicycle may improve fairness for businesses and delivery workers, and enhance sustainability.

Streetscape and public realm strategies must also intentionally address accessibility, equity, and dignity. Along our streets and in our public spaces, investments in dignified public washrooms, hand washing stations, accessible design, and freedom from discrimination will ensure that all residents can participate in economic recovery and public life.

Supporting the People who Uphold our Food Systems

The Task Force report includes important recommendations for preserving and investing in agricultural land and potentially investing in food infrastructure to support industry and jobs. We strongly support these strategies. However, we believe it is critical for the report to also specifically recognize the role of food and agricultural workers in upholding our food security and our food systems.

Agricultural workers and workers in the food processing, service, and retailing sectors have faced considerable stresses and risks while keeping us fed. Migrant agricultural workers and workers in food processing plants have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 outbreaks. The Task Force strategies should include consideration of design and operational measures to improve the safety and wellbeing of food workers.

We are committed to working with the City and the Task Force to elaborate on the commentary in this letter and the broader issues of city building and economic recovery.

Sincerely,

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