

INFORMATION REPORT

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| TO: | Mayor and Members General Issues Committee |
| COMMITTEE DATE: | November 9, 2021 |
| SUBJECT/REPORT NO: | GRIDS 2 and Municipal Comprehensive Review – Urban Growth City-Wide Consultation Summary Report (PED17010(m)) (City Wide) |
| WARD(S) AFFECTED: | City Wide |
| PREPARED BY: | Lauren Vraets (905) 546-2424 Ext. 2634 |
| SUBMITTED BY: | Steve Robichaud Director, Planning and Chief Planner Planning and Economic Development Department |
| SIGNATURE: | |

COUNCIL DIRECTION

With respect to the Growth Related Integrated Development Strategy (GRIDS) 2 and the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR), and the associated Land Needs Assessment (LNA), the General Issues Committee at its meeting of March 29, 2021 approved the following:

- “(a) *That staff be directed to conduct a city-wide mail consultation with a survey on the Land Needs Assessment and the Municipal Comprehensive Review that includes the Ambitious Density Scenario, a “no boundary expansion” scenario, and that also allows residents to submit their own alternative scenario, to be funded from the Tax Stabilization Reserve No. 110046 at an estimated cost of \$35,000;*
- (b) *That, with respect the mailout survey regarding the Land Needs Assessment and the Municipal Comprehensive Review, staff be directed to:*
 - (i) *include a postage prepaid return envelope as part of the mailout; and,*
 - (ii) *give residents 30 days to respond to the survey, respecting the Land Needs Assessment and the Municipal Comprehensive Review.*
- (c) *That staff be directed to compile the data from the Land Needs Assessment and the Municipal Comprehensive Review survey and provide an Information Report to be presented at a Special General Issues Committee no later than October 2021;”*

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

At its meeting of August 13, 2021, Council approved the following further direction with respect to Report PED17010(l) which was presented at the August 4, 2021 General Issues Committee:

“(c) That staff be directed to publicly release the results of the city-wide survey, regarding the Land Needs Assessment and the Municipal Comprehensive Review, the week of September 13, 2021.”

Report PED17010(m) provides a summary of the City-wide mail consultation survey as information for members of the General Issues Committee.

INFORMATION

Through the Growth Related Integrated Development Strategy (GRIDS) 2 and the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR), the City is mandated by Provincial policy to determine how and where to plan for forecasted population and employment growth to the year 2051, in accordance with the Provincial population and employment growth forecasts and land needs assessment methodology.

The City completed a draft Land Needs Assessment (LNA), prepared by Lorius & Associates, which examined the capacity of the City’s Urban Area to accommodate the projected growth. The draft LNA was presented on December 14, 2020 to the General Issues Committee, following which staff conducted public and stakeholder consultation in early 2021 regarding the various land need scenarios presented. The ‘Ambitious Density’ scenario modelled in the LNA, based on an average intensification rate of 60% over the next 30 years, and a planned density of 77 persons and jobs per hectare (pjh) in new Designated Greenfield Areas (DGA), identified a requirement for an urban boundary expansion of 1,340 ha to accommodate Community Area (population) growth.

At the March 29, 2021 General Issues Committee (GIC) meeting, through Report PED17010(i), staff recommended that the ‘Ambitious Density’ scenario be adopted for the GRIDS 2 process.

Approval of the draft LNA and the recommended ‘Ambitious Density’ scenario was deferred by Council. Council directed staff to undertake further public consultation on the draft LNA through a mail-out survey to all households in the City, as per the following:

March 29, 2021 Motion (Councillor Clark):

“(a) That staff be directed to conduct a city-wide mail consultation with a survey on the Land Needs Assessment and the Municipal Comprehensive Review that includes the Ambitious Density Scenario, a “no boundary expansion” scenario, and that also allows residents to submit their own alternative scenario, to be funded from the Tax Stabilization Reserve No. 110046 at an estimated cost of \$35,000;

- (b) *That, with respect the mailout survey regarding the Land Needs Assessment and the Municipal Comprehensive Review, staff be directed to:*
- (i) *include a postage prepaid return envelope as part of the mailout; and,*
 - (ii) *give residents 30 days to respond to the survey, respecting the Land Needs Assessment and the Municipal Comprehensive Review.*
- (c) *That staff be directed to compile the data from the Land Needs Assessment and the Municipal Comprehensive Review survey and provide an Information Report to be presented at a Special General Issues Committee no later than October 2021;”*

1.0 Methodology

1.1 Survey Development

In accordance with the Council direction, a City-wide mail survey was created which asked residents to choose their preferred option for how Hamilton should grow to the year 2051. A copy of the survey is attached as Appendix “A” to Report PED17010(m).

Households were asked to choose between the following options:

- Option 1 – “Ambitious Density” scenario. Urban Expansion Land Need of 1,340 ha (3,300 ac);
- Option 2 – “No Urban Boundary Expansion” scenario. Urban Expansion Land Need 0 ha; and,
- Option 3 – “Other Suggestions?”

Option 3 allowed residents to specify an alternative urban growth scenario to be considered by staff and Council.

Space was provided to allow respondents to provide brief comments on the urban growth scenario(s).

Residents were requested to provide their postal code on the survey to allow reporting on the survey responses by geographic areas of the City.

1.2 Survey Promotion / Advertising

A webpage was set up on the City’s website exclusively for accessing information related to the Urban Growth Survey, including the three options for consideration (<https://www.hamilton.ca/grids2survey>). The distributed survey noted the main GRIDS 2 / MCR project webpage (www.hamilton.ca/GRIDS2-MCR) for more information on GRIDS 2, the LNA and other related reports and studies. The GRIDS 2 / MCR webpage was updated to link visitors to the new webpage for the Urban Growth Survey. There were 5,058 visits to the Urban Growth Survey webpage (includes repeated views by same user) and 3,969 unique pageviews from the time that the webpage went live, to the time that the survey closed on July 23, 2021.

An email to the GRIDS2 / MCR project mailing list was sent on May 4, 2021, informing recipients that the mail-out survey was being created and distribution was anticipated for June of 2021. A subsequent email was sent on May 27, 2021 advising that the survey was anticipated to be distributed in June of 2021. A final email was sent out on July 23, 2021 to advise that it was the last day to submit a survey response (either through mail or email).

The mail-out survey was promoted through the City's social media on Twitter through four separate posts during the course of the survey distribution, and one post on LinkedIn. Twitter posts were published on June 24, June 30, July 7 and July 13, 2021.

1.3 Survey Distribution - Mail

In advance of the motion directing staff to undertake the survey being presented at the March 29, 2021 GIC meeting, staff investigated the expected cost of the survey based on distribution method. Distribution of the survey through neighbourhood walk mail coordinated by DirectWorx was chosen as the most effective and economical method for distributing the survey.

Beginning the week of June 21, 2021, Canada Post delivered the mail-out surveys to households across Hamilton through pre-assigned walk-routes. A total of 213,606 surveys were distributed to households across the City by neighbourhood walk mail.

In addition, 2,216 surveys were delivered via addressed (enveloped) mail to certain rural addresses on or near the municipal border which would otherwise not have been included in the neighbourhood walk mail distribution.

Altogether, 215,822 surveys were delivered to households across the City.

1.4 Survey Distribution – Email

Staff received inquiries from the public interested in ensuring there was an option available for all residents to give their input, and not be restricted to responding as a household, or having a fixed address. Staff initially distributed a PDF version of the survey to individual residents who requested an additional copy, with instruction that the response was to be sent back through email to the GRIDS 2 / MCR project email address: GRIDS2-MCR@hamilton.ca. However, there were many email requests for additional surveys to be made available, and in response, staff updated the City's webpage on July 13, 2021 to provide a PDF version for download, with instructions for sending in a response through email.

2.0 Survey Results

2.1 Results Summary

In total, the City received 18,387 survey responses through both mail and email combined between June 22 and July 23, 2021 (survey end date). The breakdown of survey responses received for the three options during this period is provided in Table 1 below:

Table 1 – Survey Results

| | Option 1: 'Ambitious Density' | | Option 2: 'No Urban Boundary Expansion' | | Option 3: Other Suggestions | | Total |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-------|--|-------|--------------------------------|------|---------------|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | |
| Mailed Responses | 931 | 11.3% | 6,743 | 81.9% | 559 | 6.7% | 8,233 |
| Emailed Responses | 157 | 1.5% | 9,893 | 97.4% | 104 | 1.0% | 10,154 |
| All Responses | 1,088 | 5.9% | 16,636 | 90.4% | 663 | 3.6% | 18,387 |

Option 2 – No Urban Boundary Expansion was selected by the majority of respondents (90.4% of all responses).

2.2 Public Comments

Some survey respondents provided additional comments about their views on the urban growth scenarios. The comments have been grouped in Appendices “C-1” to “E-2” of Report PED17010(m) according to the selected growth option on the respondent’s survey. Public comments which did not meet the City’s procedural by-law, which were defamatory, obscene, offensive, indecent, improper, rude or vulgar have been redacted in Appendices “C-1” to “E-2” of Report PED17010(m).

Staff have reviewed the comments that were received and have summarized the recurring themes / topics that were presented. The following summaries are not an exhaustive list of all comments received, but rather present the more frequent feedback provided by respondents on their preferred growth option. The order in which the themes or comments are listed should not infer any ranking or frequency of the comment(s).

2.2.1 Option 1 – Comment Summary

A total of 1,088 respondents (mail and email) identified Option 1 – ‘Ambitious Density’ as their preferred choice. The following themes were noted in the comments:

- Housing options – comments were received that indicated that more housing options other than predominately apartment units should be available to existing and future residents of the city. Pandemic has made living in apartment units undesirable;

- Housing supply – housing types that cater to families are in demand and becoming less available, resulting in the need for people to move elsewhere;
- Affordability – limited housing supply for lower density housing options will create further affordability issues for those who do not already own this type of housing;
- Focused intensification – prioritize development of housing along transportation corridors with capacity on roads or with planned transit;
- Farm land values – farmers owning land in the whitebelt should be able to sell their land for development; and,
- Rural Settlements – increased development in rural settlements with residential low density to assist in meeting housing demand for lower density.

2.2.2 Option 2 – Comment Summary

A total of 16,636 survey respondents (mail and email) identified Option 2 – ‘No Urban Boundary Expansion’ as their preferred choice. The following themes were noted in the comments for Option 2:

- Underutilized / vacant buildings and lots – focus on redevelopment of housing in the existing urban boundary on properties / buildings that are vacant to improve access to housing and to improve the aesthetic character of the City. Commenters noted that many existing buildings were in disrepair and need to be rehabilitated to be used first before any new housing is considered;
- Climate change – concern that expansion of the urban boundary to accommodate new community development would have impacts on greenhouse gas emission targets when homes are built further from the existing urban area requiring the use of vehicles / fossil fuels. The City declaring a Climate Change Emergency, and the requirement of the City to act on this declaration, was also included in the responses;
- Active transportation - desire for a walkable city with methods of active transportation prioritized;
- Medium Density - develop housing forms in the existing urban area that are medium density (mid-rise buildings, townhouses) to address housing demand and to improve the urban streetscape without requiring all units in tall buildings;
- Infrastructure – concern about the cost of infrastructure expansion to new areas and cost of future maintenance. Comments noted that existing infrastructure in the urban area was in dis-repair and needs to be prioritized to be fixed before new City infrastructure is built;
- Affordable housing – concern that housing (ownership and rental) will continue to be unaffordable to many in the future, and the development of new communities through urban expansion will not assist those currently unable to afford housing. Concern that more needs to be done in existing areas of the city for those experiencing housing access limitations and homelessness;
- Reduced Growth Targets – the City should plan for a lower amount of growth and conversely that the Provincial forecasted growth of 236,000 additional people was too high; and,

- Farmland protection and protection of Greenspace – farmland protection to ensure adequate food security for the future in Hamilton was identified by respondents. In this theme area, greenspace and farmland were sometimes used synonymously, notably in the commentary that rural areas should be protected because of the contribution rural areas make to the natural heritage system.

2.2.3 Option 3 – Comment Summary

Option 3 of the Urban Growth Survey allowed residents to provide other comments or an alternative growth scenario for consideration. A total of 663 survey responses indicating a preference for Option 3 were submitted, of which 657 respondents provided comments. The following themes were noted in the comments for Option 3:

- Preference for an option that does not require urban boundary expansion, but that also focuses development of medium and high-density housing in certain areas of the City (transit corridor);
- Desire for a growth option that has higher intensification rates than the Ambitious Density scenario and therefore results in a lesser amount of land required for expansion;
- A preference for the City to adopt the Growth Plan minimum targets for intensification and greenfield density;
- Prioritization of development of vacant buildings and properties within the urban boundary before bringing in new lands for development;
- Protection of greenspaces in the existing areas of the City and new areas;
- Preference for medium density housing forms in the urban boundary;
- Housing affordability issues need to be considered for future housing options; and,
- Minor intensification of existing residential properties should be encouraged broadly through Secondary Dwelling Units, including the rural area.

2.3 Postal Code Data

Respondents were asked to provide their postal code. A total of 16,585 returned mail and email surveys provided Hamilton postal code information with at least the first three characters.

Responses received from Hamilton area postal codes, grouped by the first three digits, known as the Forward Sortation Area (FSA), are summarized in Appendix “B” attached to Report PED17010(m).

The five postal code FSAs with the most responses were L9H, L8P, L0R, L9G and L9C.

Staff utilized the full postal code information in relation to the City’s Ward boundaries. A total of 16,013 survey responses provided complete (six-character), valid Hamilton postal codes. Staff cross-referenced the 19,297 unique postal codes in the City with their location relative to the mapped Ward boundaries.

There are a few full postal codes that straddle two Wards, therefore, Table 2 of Report PED17010(m) provides a close approximation of the survey results based on the 15 City Wards. The results by Ward are presented below:

Table 2 – Survey Results by Ward

| Ward | Option 1: 'Ambitious Density' | Option 2: 'No Urban Boundary Expansion' | Option 3: Other Suggestions | Total Surveys Received |
|----------------|--|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| Ward 1 | 43 | 1,740 | 43 | 1,828 |
| Ward 2 | 41 | 1,225 | 35 | 1,301 |
| Ward 3 | 37 | 1,116 | 24 | 1,178 |
| Ward 4 | 28 | 777 | 25 | 830 |
| Ward 5 | 65 | 599 | 38 | 702 |
| Ward 6 | 67 | 766 | 31 | 865 |
| Ward 7 | 83 | 849 | 52 | 985 |
| Ward 8 | 69 | 650 | 24 | 744 |
| Ward 9 | 71 | 506 | 31 | 608 |
| Ward 10 | 45 | 677 | 22 | 744 |
| Ward 11 | 66 | 902 | 41 | 1,009 |
| Ward 12 | 111 | 1,496 | 48 | 1,655 |
| Ward 13 | 64 | 1,801 | 50 | 1,917 |
| Ward 14 | 53 | 704 | 30 | 787 |
| Ward 15 | 71 | 755 | 33 | 860 |
| Total | 914 | 14,563 | 527 | 16,004* |

*Of the 16,013 surveys received with full postal code, nine survey responses did not select one of the three survey options.

2.4 Survey Results after July 23, 2021

Staff continued to receive survey copies by mail and email messages in the GRIDS 2 / MCR email inbox with responses stating their preferred option after the July 23, 2021 closing date for Urban Growth Survey. A total of 1,166 email and mail responses were received after the July 23, 2021 closing date, up until the final date of recording the results and analysis (i.e. August 31, 2021). The emailed responses received after the

survey deadline included a number of responses that supported Option 1 – Ambitious Density scenario.

These responses do not form part of the official survey results which includes only those responses received by July 23, 2021. However, as these responses do form part of the public input into the GRIDS 2 / MCR planning process, staff are providing this information for the public record but are not providing any further analysis of the survey results received after the July 23, 2021 date.

Table 3 outlines the summary of responses received between July 24, 2021 and August 31, 2021.

Table 3 – Total Late Surveys

| | Option 1: 'Ambitious Density' | | Option 2: 'No Urban Boundary Expansion' | | Option 3: Other Suggestions | | Total |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-------|--|-------|--------------------------------|------|--------------|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | # |
| Mailed Responses | 424 | 36.3% | 475 | 40.7% | 56 | 4.8% | 955 |
| Emailed Responses | 91 | 7.8% | 111 | 9.5% | 6 | 0.5% | 211 |
| All Responses | 515 | 44.1% | 586 | 50.2% | 62 | 5.3% | 1,166 |

*Three emailed responses did not state a preferred option

3.0 Survey Design and Distribution Issues

Throughout the survey process, comments and concerns related to the design and distribution of the survey were raised by members of the public and Council primarily relating to the design, content, and distribution method of the survey tool. An overview of the concerns is provided below.

3.1 Survey Design and Content

- Perceived as a 'flyer' and discarded by residents – the design of the survey with colours and graphics was mistaken for a 'flyer' and discarded by some members of the public. It was suggested that a more formal survey design would have alerted members of the public to the importance of the mail-out;
- Not clearly identifiable as a piece of City mail (logo etc.) – the City's logo was present on the survey but not in a highly visible location. Related to the previous concern, an enhanced presence of the City logo may have distinguished the survey from being perceived as a 'flyer' and discarded;

- Language perceived as biased – several comments noted that the language on the survey was biased in favour of Option 1, which was described as the “Ambitious Density” scenario. Option 2 was described as the “No Urban Boundary Expansion” scenario. Staff note that the description of Option 1 was taken directly from the draft Land Needs Assessment which described a series of potential land need scenarios, as well as the Council direction from the March 29 General Issues Committee meeting; and,
- Not enough information provided on the survey tool – staff acknowledge the difficulty in summarizing a complex topic on a two-sided sheet of paper. The survey was designed to provide an information overview and to direct members of the public to the GRIDS 2 – MCR webpage, or to contact staff, for further information.

3.2 Survey Distribution

- Survey not received / no ‘flyer’ preference – the primary complaint received regarding the distribution of the survey was that some households indicated that they did not receive a copy of the survey. Households that have identified a preference to not receive flyer delivery from Canada Post would not receive a copy of the survey. Based on discussions with Canada Post, in some areas there was a high proportion of households with a “no flyer” notice on their mailbox which resulted in residents not receiving the survey. In other cases, surveys may have been inadvertently discarded due to being mistaken as a ‘flyer’.

With staff working remotely, it was not possible to mail additional copies of the survey on request. Further, COVID-19 related restrictions meant that it was not possible to provide extra survey copies for pick up at City Hall or other locations.

In response to this concern, staff provided a copy of the survey via email to all requests that were received through the GRIDS2 / MCR project email or other staff contacts. In addition, staff made the survey available on the project website with instructions on how to submit a survey response to the project email address. Staff also made additional hard copies of the survey available to Councillors to deliver to their constituents;

- One per household – concerns were raised about the limitations of only one copy of the survey being mailed per household, in keeping with Council direction. However, staff heard from members of the public that multiple members of a household wished to respond to the survey. For the reasons noted above, it was not possible to provide extra copies of the survey through mail or pick-up. The option to submit a survey response via email was suggested in these situations;
- No online survey option – the Council direction was to conduct a city-wide mail consultation survey, and therefore, Staff did not investigate an option to provide an electronic survey tool online. However, an external website was created by the

group Stop Sprawl HamOnt (SSHO) which provided a form wherein respondents who wished to vote for Option 2: No Urban Boundary Expansion, could input their contact information including postal code, and an automated email stating their preferred option would be generated and sent to the GRIDS2 / MCR email inbox, as well as a blind carbon copy to each City Councillor and the Mayor's office. These automated emails represented 81.7% (8,299) of all the responses (10,154) received through email to the GRIDS2 / MCR project inbox until July 23, 2021;

- Survey not widely advertised – comments were received that the survey was not widely advertised and some members of the public may have not been aware of the survey and the opportunity to express their opinion;
- Duplicate survey submissions – concerns were raised about the potential for individuals to photocopy and submit multiple surveys, or to download multiple PDF surveys and submit them. Staff sought to make it as easy as possible for residents to participate in the survey by making available both hard copies as well as a PDF version of the survey, but staff note that this does create potential for individuals to submit more than one survey response;
- Duplicate email submissions – concerns were raised about the potential for individuals to submit multiple email responses from different accounts, or through the third-party websites. Staff sought to make it as easy as possible for residents to participate in the survey by providing an email option, but staff note that this does create potential for individuals to submit more than one survey response; and,
- Duplicate survey submissions between mail and email - the option to provide survey responses through both email and mail raised concerns and comments about the integrity of the survey and concern that individuals could submit multiple votes. Staff noted that it was deemed important to allow survey responses to be submitted through email due to the concerns noted above. In acknowledgement of this concern, staff are reporting on the results received through mail and email separately, however staff do note that there is potential for duplicate results within the reporting.

Throughout the process, staff attempted to address and find solutions to the issues as they were identified. It is important to acknowledge these identified shortcomings of the survey / distribution in the reporting of results to understand and acknowledge potential issues in the data, such as the potential for duplicate responses.

4.0 Survey Cost Summary

The total cost to undertake the survey (not including staff time) was \$61,145.

A summary of the survey printing and distribution costs is provided below:

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| Item | Description | Cost |
|----------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Printing | Survey printing and folding | \$21,848.55 |
| Distribution Preparation | Bundling for Canada Post Neighbourhood Mail delivery | \$3,993.44 |
| | Envelope printing and stuffing for municipal border properties | \$1,284.47 |
| Survey Distribution | Business Reply Mail fee | \$915.30 |
| | Survey delivery postage fee | \$22,847.88 |
| | Postage fee (to date) - Business Reply Mail (returned surveys) | \$8,847.60 |
| Survey Response Processing | Temporary Staff Resources | \$1,408.00 |
| Total | | \$61,145.24 |

The survey costs increased from the original estimate of \$35 K due to need to print the survey on cardstock, envelope delivery to certain rural addresses, and postage rates for return mail.

In addition to the above noted printing and distribution costs, there were also significant staff hours involved in the survey preparation (content and design) and the data tracking and analysis. Staff estimate approximately 400 hours or almost 0.25 of one FTE was spent on the survey from design and creation through to data analysis and the preparation of this report. In addition, a temporary staff person was hired at a cost of \$1,408 (seven days) to assist with data entry.

5.0 Next Steps

The purpose of the mail out survey was to further inform Council of the preferences of the City constituents with regard to the “Ambitious Density” Scenario recommended by staff, and a No Urban Boundary Expansion scenario.

On November 9, 2021, staff will be presenting the findings of the Land Needs Assessment Peer Review, the final Land Needs Assessment report, and the results of the “How Should Hamilton Grow” evaluation to the General Issues Committee. Staff will be reviewing the input received from public through the Urban Growth Survey in preparation of the November 9, 2021 staff report.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix “A” to Report PED17010(m) - Urban Growth Survey Mail-Out
Appendix “B” to Report PED17010(m) - Survey Results by Postal Code Forward
Sortation Area
Appendix “C-1” to Report PED17010(m) - Option 1 Public Comments – Email
Appendix “C-2” to Report PED17010(m) - Option 1 Public Comments – Mail
Appendix “D-1” to Report PED17010(m) - Option 2 Public Comments – Email
Appendix “D-2” to Report PED17010(m) - Option 2 Public Comments – Mail
Appendix “E-1” to Report PED17010(m) - Option 3 Public Comments – Email
Appendix “E-2” to Report PED17010(m) - Option 3 Public Comments – Mail

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