



HAMILTON COMMUNITY  
BENEFITS NETWORK  
building capacity through building communities

May 2023

## Hamilton LRT Community Benefits Engagement Report



Prepared for



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## Executive Summary

The Hamilton Community Benefits Network (HCBN) is a community-labour coalition formed in response to the opportunities presented by the Hamilton Light Rail Transit project. Inspired by the Toronto Community Benefits Network and the successes of the community benefits movement across North America, it envisions Hamilton as an inclusive, thriving city in which all residents have equitable opportunities to contribute to building healthy communities and a justice prospering economy. Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) are a proven approach to achieving this vision. HCBN is funded by grant donations from the Hamilton Community Foundation, the Atkinson Foundation and the United Way of Hamilton Halton. The organization is dedicated to stakeholder engagement to bring forward residents' aspirations, concerns and hopes for the Hamilton LRT project.

Metrolinx has committed to a community benefits/supports program based on experience with and advocacy by the Toronto Community Benefits Network. Metrolinx has delivered community benefits on other LRT projects, such as the Ellington Crosstown and Finch West LRT. They have formally acknowledged HCBN as a community engagement stakeholder committing to the delivery of community benefits/supports through four pillars: Pillar 1 – Employment Opportunities, Pillar 2 – Local Business Supports, Pillar 3 – Public Realm Improvements and Pillar 4 – Community Improvement Supports. The exact nature of what those pillars will deliver has not been clarified at the time of this report. HCBN, its members and partners expect Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton to develop a Community Benefits Working Group, as they have with other transit projects. This working group should be used to help with the co-development and implementation of the Metrolinx-identified pillars and required plans (with subcommittees for each).

To date, HCBN has conducted 15 community engagement sessions, both virtually and in person. HCBN has also undertaken multiple online surveys with 2317 responses from residents of Hamilton. The engagement results to date are presented in detail in this report and the companion report from McMaster's Research Shop titled **Community Benefits for Hamilton LRT**. The engagement feedback is broken into nine emerging themes and listed in order of priority: Affordable housing, Transportation Connections, Local Employment and Training Opportunities, Environmental Impact, Local Procurement and Business Support, Accessibility, Community Spaces and Public Arts. This continuing engagement is being used to help shape the advocacy undertaken by HCBN.

During engagement sessions and online surveys, respondents provided a wide array of community benefits ideas. "Community Benefits for Hamilton LRT" summarizes that data, including a demographic and equity-seeking data breakdown. The McMaster report was limited in providing context and distinguishing scope to minimize redundancies and create clarity this report breaks down the residents' aspirations and the stakeholders that could be responsible for their delivery.

The Hamilton Light Rail Project (LRT) represents a generational opportunity to reshape 14 kilometres of the lower city. This historic government investment in rapid transit is already spurring massive private sector transit-oriented development (TOD) along the line. Residents engaged with for this report already see properties bought and demolished for new condominiums, rental properties renovated and tenants displaced and boarded-up buildings and shops. This ongoing transformation has left many asking, "What benefits will this project bring?" Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton must commit to hearing resident aspirations for the project, live up to the Hamilton LRT's promise and deliver on as many Community Benefits as possible openly and transparently. This report presents the resident feedback from the first round of HCBN's community engagement.

## Project Background

On May 13th, 2021, the Federal Government and the Government of Ontario came together to announce a \$3.4 billion investment in constructing the Hamilton Light Rail B Line from Eastgate Mall to McMaster University. On June 23rd, 2021, Hamilton City Council directed that staff "meet with Metrolinx, the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) and other governmental entities, as required, to prepare a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Hamilton Light Rail Transit project. On September 8th, 2021, city staff brought the Memorandum of Understanding to the General Issues Committee for debate and a vote. In that report, the City of Hamilton and the Province acknowledge and included in clause G that:

***"The Province continues to recognize the critical importance of building affordable housing near transit stations and maximizing high quality jobs and benefits for communities adjacent to or affected by the Project. The Province will work with the city and community stakeholders to endeavour to determine how best to support these goals of affordable housing and community benefits as part of transit project delivery."***

All parties signed that Memorandum on September 22nd, 2021.

Metrolinx, in a December 19th, 2022, letter to the Hamilton Community Benefits Network laying out their Community Benefits/Support pillars, wrote:

***"We recognize the importance of a robust and holistic approach to maximizing the benefits of our construction projects in communities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe. We will remain engaged with the Hamilton Community Benefits Network as we continue our mission to improve and expand public transit across the region."***

Hamilton's \$3.4 billion LRT system is back on track and will transform the City of Hamilton for a generation. This transit project has the opportunity to be very different from previous Ontario major transit investment projects due to many unique factors in Hamilton. The transit construction area is through the City's most dense and economically challenged portions. It is also one of the last areas of significant affordability in the City of Hamilton, with a high density of tenants living in grandfathered low-rent units. It is home to many immigrant and racialized-owned businesses, contains the highest density of disabled residents in Ontario, and has a high density of urban indigenous peoples. It is imperative that the project delivers not just the words written in Clause G but concrete community benefits that are developed publicly and transparently through a signed Community Benefits Agreement(s).

## Introduction

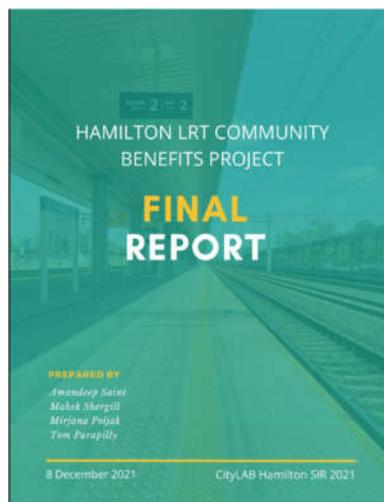
The Hamilton Community Benefits Network (HCBN) was initially established in 2017 as a community-labour coalition. HCBN was developed in response to the opportunities presented by the original announcement of full capital funding from the Ontario Government for the Hamilton Light Rail project. Consisting of 63 members and partners — including unions, not-for-profits, social enterprises, community groups, neighbourhood associations, transit advocates and environmental organizations — HCBN envisions Hamilton as an inclusive, thriving city in which all residents have equitable opportunities to contribute to building healthy communities and a prospering economy. By advocating for Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) in significant city infrastructure projects, HCBN aims to produce positive and equitable outcomes for underserved and disenfranchised communities in the City of Hamilton. CBAs are agreements between governments, developers and coalitions of community organizations that address a range of community concerns and needs, including (but not limited to) ensuring residents benefit from significant developments. In particular, HCBN sees CBAs as an opportunity to help mitigate adverse impacts on local communities due to the construction of large-scale infrastructure projects. For example, CBAs can include advocating for affordable housing and design and neighbourhood improvements for a

project. CBAs can also foster local workforce development by creating job opportunities for the local community and, in tandem, incentivizing training delivery programs to facilitate access to these jobs.

In April 2014, Metrolinx established a Community Benefits Framework and committed to include a community benefits program for the Toronto Transit Projects, including the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, Finch West LRT and Hazel McCallion LRT in Mississauga. Those Community Benefits included commitments to hard targets and monitoring for employment outcomes to provide training and employment opportunities in the unionized trades and professional, administrative and technical positions. They are working with the Islamic Society of Toronto to bring a new Darus Salaam Mosque and community hub to Thorncliffe Park (Hazel McCallion LRT) and with the City of Toronto to donate land for the creation of a Finch Arts and Community Hub (Finch West LRT). Metrolinx incorporated the historic Kodak Building as part of a station (Eglinton Crosstown). They also created a fossil fuel-free green energy backup power facility in the Mount Dennis neighbourhood (Eglinton Crosstown) and a section of green tracks (Eglinton Crosstown). All projects include locally sourced materials and small businesses and social enterprises contracts. Metrolinx also undertook a community-based art project in Hamilton, animating 5 locations along the Corridor. These are some of the many examples the HCBN hopes to build on with Metrolinx and the City for the implementation of a Community Benefits Agreement for the Hamilton LRT project. These examples, and others from other North American CBAs, were presented to residents we engaged with to frame our core question: “What Community Benefits should HCBN advocate for from the Hamilton project?”

## CityLAB Semester in Residence (SIR)

The CityLAB Semester in Residence (SIR) is a social innovation hub that brings together post-secondary students, academics, civic leaders, local community organizations and the City of Hamilton to address real-world challenges facing the city. From September 28th, 2021, to December 8th, 2021, McMaster University students Amandeep Saini, Mahek Shergill, Mirjana Poljak, and Tom Parapilly (referred to as the CityLAB Project Group), worked with HCBN to engage residents in conversations about their needs, concerns and desires for the LRT. The CityLAB project group refined the tools and techniques that HCBN would use to engage in outreach and survey. They provided a toolkit for a comprehensive engagement strategy engagement around community benefits. The project group worked with HCBN to co-host the first two community engagement sessions in November 2021. This work can be reviewed in the 156-page ***City Labs Hamilton LRT Community Benefits Project Final Report***.



## Methods:

To date, HCBN has conducted 15 community engagement sessions, both virtually and in person. HCBN has also undertaken multiple online surveys with 2317 responses from residents of Hamilton. Our first Community Engagement session occurred in 2019 at the Hamilton Public Library before the pandemic and the project's cancellation. It was attended by ~140 residents and provided a foundation for future engagements. Between the cancellation of the project, a reconsideration of funding, the restarting of the project and the pandemic, there was a delay in resuming the engagement process. In November 2021, HCBN re-engaged Hamilton residents and conducted two community dialogue events. While the HCBN typically relies on in-person community dialogue sessions as the optimal method of engaging residents, the sessions in November 2021 had to be conducted virtually due to COVID-19 health directive mandates. The two virtual community dialogue sessions were conducted via scheduled Zoom calls and were attended by 50 Hamilton residents.

Zoom was the chosen virtual platform due to the ease of its accessibility, as attendees only needed to follow a meeting link to attend. Zoom also provided automatic closed captioning, which increased accessibility for persons living with disabilities. The breakout room feature on Zoom helped split attendees into focus groups, allowing us to facilitate small-group conversations. Questions were designed to guide breakout conversations, incorporating elements from the Appreciative Inquiry Model of public participation. To record the contributions of attendees, a platform called Google Jamboard was utilized during breakout sessions. Google Jamboard enabled the designated CityLab student notetaker to use virtual sticky notes and share their screen to display the recorded ideas to attendees — allowing them to engage those ideas and build upon them. This method of virtual community engagement was then utilized in subsequent dialogue sessions with the membership of local non-profit organizations. The aim was to gather input from experts and leaders in their respective work areas. A dialogue session was held with Environment Hamilton on April 6th, 2022, consisting of the HCBN and Environment Hamilton teams and community members. Cycle Hamilton also co-hosted a dialogue session on April 14th, 2022. Another dialogue session was held with Spectrum's newcomer group on May 18th, 2022. On June 13th, 2022, HCBN conducted a dialogue session at the Neighbour to Neighbor's community action workshop, consisting of an HCBN member and organizational clients. Three online sessions were co-hosted online with ACORN at their June meetings of the three ACORN Chapters, Downtown, East-End and the Mountain. Two sessions were conducted with YMCA Hamilton Job seekers online through Zoom. Lastly, the First Unitarian Church and HCBN conducted an in-person dialogue session on June 22nd, 2022, comprised of the HCBN team and community members. The participants' contributions to these virtual dialogue sessions were documented via Google Jamboard and will be detailed in this report's Community Focus Group section.

It is important to note that this report was produced following a recent re-introductory meeting between members of HCBN and the Metrolinx project team, as well as the release of Metrolinx's four (4) pillar community benefits strategy. Metrolinx has not expanded on how it plans, as of this report, to implement those four pillars, so in reviewing community feedback, we broadly interpreted what might fall into those categories. McMaster Research Shop reviewed the survey and community engagement data and created the report **Community Benefits for Hamilton LRT** (attached as Appendix A). That report could not differentiate which feedback was relevant to Community Benefits and which might be out of scope. To provide better clarity, HCBN reviewed all the data gathered and aligned the feedback into categories which may be in scope with Metrolinx's four pillars, a policy or process the City of Hamilton might undertake, opportunities for affordable housing from the project and improvements or capital investments the City of Hamilton could make to the Corridor's built form. This report relies heavily on the online data gathered during our surveys.

## Surveys:

HCBN designed three surveys with similar but slightly different questions and response categories, distributed them, and collected their data between January 2021-March 2022. A combined analysis of these three surveys was conducted for questions with the same or similar wording; however, segregated analyses were conducted for questions with different response categories. This report details the number and percentage of respondents who selected each response option for quantitative questions. For qualitative questions, themes were developed to code each response, which was used to provide a count for the number of times each theme was mentioned. Community Benefits negotiations and processes are not fully formalized. HCBN undertook a reasoned approach to assigning scope based on previous projects, understanding of municipal issues and our expertise. At HCBN, we cannot fully decide what is in scope for whom and hope all parties will, in good faith, implement as many resident aspirations and ideas as possible. A breakdown of the survey results was also undertaken by McMaster's Research Shop and is attached as a compendium report in **Appendix A: Community Benefits for Hamilton LRT**.

## Community Focus Groups:

The HCBN conducted one large focus group in 2019 and community focus groups from November 2021-December 2022. Each focus group was scheduled for 1.5-2 hours and consisted of breakout rooms focusing on community benefits areas, including housing affordability, accessibility, environment, and arts and community. Guided questions were used to prompt attendees. During the online sessions, the team documented the contributions of attendees by recording breakout sessions, preparing transcripts and taking notes on Jamboard during the discussions. During the in-person sessions, notetakers were assigned to document conversations, post-it notes were gathered, and paper surveys were distributed and gathered. Data were categorized based on themes and summarised for accessibility.

## Limitations:

HCBN originally scheduled community focus groups to take place in person; however, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the events were moved online, creating concerns regarding their reach. Several focus groups were cancelled due to low enrollment. The bulk of this report focuses on presenting the survey findings since collecting survey data online surmounted the challenges and safety concerns raised by COVID-19.

## Community Benefits Theme Priorities

Residents were asked to rank their top 5 community benefits priority areas from 9 themes: Affordable Housing, Transportation Connection, Local Employment and Training Opportunities, The Environment, Business Support (Shop Local/Local Procurement), Accessibility (Physical and Economic), Preserving Historic Character, Community Spaces and Public Art. In each of their top 5 community benefits priorities, they were asked to provide examples or ideas they would like to see implemented. We broke these themes down into areas that Metrolinx might support under their four pillar Community Benefits/Supports plan, those that might be City of Hamilton policies, those which might require the City to modify its built form (possible capital investments), and lastly, affordable housing requests which might deal with Metrolinx-owned land.

## Affordable Housing:

[Table 1: Community benefit ideas related to affordable housing](#)

| Idea   | Number of times mentioned |
|--|---------------------------|
| <b>Affordable Housing geared to low income</b> | <b>106</b>                |
| <b>Inclusionary Zoning</b>                     | <b>68</b>                 |
| <b>Variety of housing options</b>              | <b>57</b>                 |
| <b>Housing-related regulations</b>             | <b>44</b>                 |
| <b>Revamping or destroying old buildings</b>   | <b>36</b>                 |
| <b>Building new homes</b>                      | <b>23</b>                 |

Respondents identified affordable housing as the community benefits area of the highest priority. As the national housing crisis intensified over the last five years, Hamilton residents have disproportionately felt the brunt of this issue. The Corridor is already experiencing the natural flow of capital and investment expected from transit-oriented development (TOD) in an area where a rapid transit investment is being made. The LRT should bring transformative change to the city through employment opportunities and connecting communities. However, the TOD along the Corridor has not been equitable so far. As the project progresses, the Hamilton LRT has the potential to further exacerbate the housing crisis by displacing low-income residents and incentivizing landlords and developers to set high rent rates. These impacts can be mitigated with sound policy, investment in affordable housing and regular engagement with the communities most affected. Here are some of the relevant resident requests most commonly mentioned as community benefits related to affordable housing:

### [Community benefits covered in Metrolinx pillars:](#)

- Community Benefits Working Group with a specific Affordable Housing working group to explore how Affordable Housing will be created as part of project delivery (including available and potentially available surplus land).
- Protection of artists from the effects of gentrification in the downtown area, providing them with alternative live/work spaces.

### [Affordable housing within Metrolinx scope:](#)

- Provide tracking and listing of all available land which will be surplus for HCBN and Hamilton is Home.
- Surplus land to be donated to the city and local non-profits for the purpose of building deeply affordable housing units.
- Metrolinx should use any profits from property sales along the route to build affordable and sustainable housing.
- Build affordable Housing above station stops.

- Provide substantial tenant support, including rent subsidies, moving costs, etc. to displaced tenants (establish and advertise a firm policy, not a case-by-case bases).
- Replace twice the number of housing units that must be demolished during construction and take steps to ensure that housing of equal or lower rent is made available to residents.
- Develop a policy for affordable housing as part of project delivery: working with local non-profits to develop mixed-income rental units, in partnership with the provincial and federal government, with funding from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and Infrastructure Ontario (IO).
- Force any developer who buys Metrolinx land to build a % (25+) of the units as market-affordable rentals.

#### City Policies:

- No sale for the private use of any city-owned land on or around the Corridor.
- Surplus land to be designated for affordable housing development.
- Require all new developments within a certain distance from the LRT to have a minimum percentage of affordable housing units (Inclusionary Zoning).
- Policies to prevent renovations and demovictions.
- Vacant home/lot tax.
- Increase city funding for social services with a housing-first model.
- Increase social housing (City Housing Hamilton) investment to build more affordable units along the Corridor.
- Many comments expressed concerns about encampment eviction.

#### City Built Form (Capital):

- Build more supportive and transitional housing.
- Support tiny homes/shed project.
- Buy apartments facing development from private market.



**Indwell Rudy Hulst Commons 47-unit Affordable Accessible Housing Building near Future Kenilworth LRT Station Stop**

## Transportation connections:

[Table 2: Community benefits relating to transportation connections](#)

| Idea  | Number of times mentioned |
|---|---------------------------|
| <b>Infrastructure design (bike lanes, crosswalks, bike locks, bus shelters)</b> | <b>114</b>                |
| <b>Increase access across Hamilton (multiple stops, multiple areas)</b>         | <b>71</b>                 |
| <b>Connect with multiple modes of transportation</b>                            | <b>61</b>                 |
| <b>Safety</b>   | <b>43</b>                 |
| <b>Snow Removal</b>   | <b>27</b>                 |
| <b>Connect to areas outside Hamilton</b>  | <b>11</b>                 |

Through the surveys and community focus groups, the consensus communicated was that the LRT project can only achieve its intended purpose if there is an intentional effort to connect it to other modes of transportation that Hamilton residents currently use. Multi-modal transport in the City of Hamilton will positively impact mobility justice, disability justice, traffic congestion and the environment. Safety was also mentioned frequently in the context of pedestrian protections from automobiles, pedestrian crossings, wider sidewalks and adequate lighting, and snow removal was cited as a pressing concern. Below are some of the most commonly mentioned community benefits ideas for Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton.

### [Transportation connection within Metrolinx scope:](#)

- Community Benefits Working Group to explore how Transportation connections, concerns and enhancement opportunities apply and will be delivered by the Metrolinx Pillars.
- Installing flood lights, traffic calming and other safety measures to make streets around LRT stations and stops more walkable.
- Hamilton Bike Share/SoBi Bike Share Stations at Each stop.
- Must have signal priority.
- Build wider sidewalks.
- Create many more pedestrian crossings over the LRT.
- Easier Connection to Hunter and West Harbour GO Station (minibus for those with luggage, children, or disability).
- Make Dundurn Plaza a GO BUS Hub.
- Make Rapid Transit Connection between Dundas Highway 6 BRT and Hamilton LRT.
- Secure Bicycle Parking at stops.
- Connecting the line to more GO transit stations, east terminus should be confederation GO.

City Built Form (Capital):

- Create the infrastructure to connect the LRT route to bike lanes, bus routes and commuter parking lots.
- Adjust city roads to de-prioritize car traffic and make walking much safer.
- Additional bike lanes separated from cars.
- Re-engineering HSR to properly feed LRT properly, redeploying and expanding HSR services in the suburbs like Stoney Creek and Waterdown.
- Places to sit between station stops (benches, tables at parkettes).

City Policy:

- Initiatives to increase rider education to facilitate easier route planning.
- Coordinated LRT schedules with HSR
- Ability to bring bikes on trains.
- Policies to ensure that bus shelters and areas surrounding LRT stations and stops are adequately shovelled and maintained.
- Free parking at LRT stations, using LRT ticket as a parking ticket.
- Many expressed concern about adequate and frequent snow removal to access the system.

Local training and employment opportunities:

Table 3: Community benefits relating to local employment and training opportunities

| Idea  | Number of times mentioned |
|---|---------------------------|
| <b>Focus on creating job opportunities and hiring individuals and businesses from Hamilton</b>  | <b>65</b>                 |
| <b>Fair employment conditions (permanent, liveable wage, benefits etc.)</b>   | <b>26</b>                 |
| <b>Prioritise inclusion of equity-seeking groups</b>  | <b>25</b>                 |
| <b>Paid Internships and Apprenticeships</b>   | <b>24</b>                 |
| <b>Encourage skilled trades</b>   | <b>23</b>                 |
| <b>Partner with local education institutions to provide training opportunities</b>  | <b>15</b>                 |
| <b>Provide barrier-free opportunities (opportunities that don't reduce ODSP benefit, no age limit, and accommodate different levels of education)</b> | <b>13</b>                 |
| <b>Focus on youth</b>   | <b>9</b>                  |

Metrolinx has a proven track record of providing employment opportunities through transit project construction on the Finch West and Eglinton Crosstown. It is also listed as one of their core Pillars of Community Benefits. Metrolinx is expected to work with HCBN partners and members to build on that success, with increased hard targets and expanded opportunities for our most marginalized to secure employment outcomes from this project. The success of employment outcomes can only be achieved with public reporting and monitoring, as well as the direct inclusion of Workforce Development agencies and Trade Labour unions in Hamilton. The LRT will allow many Hamilton residents to move around the city freely, empowering people to gain employment with fewer geographical barriers. It is an investment in the future of Hamilton and its economy.

Additionally, the construction and operation of the LRT is a source of employment and career opportunities in and of itself. Community members have expressed a keen interest in seeing the employment opportunities and training go toward those who need it most in Hamilton. Metrolinx has a proven track record of providing employment opportunities through transit project construction on the Finch West And Eglinton Crosstown; it is also listed as one of their core Pillars of Community Benefits. Metrolinx is expected to work with HCBN partners and members to build on that success, with increased hard targets and expanded opportunities for our most marginalized to secure employment outcomes from this project. Below are some of the most commonly mentioned community benefits asks for by Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton:

Community benefits asks covered in Metrolinx pillars:

- Prioritize marginalized groups in job opportunities and training
- Set higher targets for project employment of marginalized groups than previous Metrolinx Projects for contractors (more than 15% for Trades and Professional Administrative and Technical jobs)
- Transparency on the exact language and requirements going into the RFPs and contracts
- Community Benefits Working Group with an Employment Subcommittee to manage oversight, monitoring and concerns arising from Metrolinx's pillar commitment.
- Clarity on the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholders and Project Co
- Ensure local contractors are involved
- Use of Social Enterprise businesses
- All jobs produced by LRT construction and operation pay at least a living wage
- Have positions be full-time permanent
- Partnering with workforce development agencies, unions and Mohawk College for training
- Encourage youth to have careers in the LRT
- Offer small businesses support to hire young graduates

City Policy:

- Have the LRT be run by the Hamilton Street Railway with ATU 107 workers
- All other operations needed (snow removal, garbage, street maintenance etc) be kept inhouse and unionized positions with CUPE 5167



**Protestors in Front of City Hall Rallying to Keep Transit Public (Hamilton Community News)**

## Environmental Impacts:

Table 4: Community benefits ideas regarding the environment

| <b>Idea</b>                                  | <b>Number of times mentioned</b> |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <b>Protect and create green spaces</b>       | <b>60</b>                        |
| <b>Renewable/clean energy sources</b>        | <b>38</b>                        |
| <b>Enhance urban canopy</b>                  | <b>36</b>                        |
| <b>Environmentally-friendly construction</b> | <b>35</b>                        |
| <b>Electric LRT cars/ other vehicles</b>     | <b>18</b>                        |
| <b>Promote walking/cycling</b>               | <b>9</b>                         |
| <b>Multi-sort bins</b>                       | <b>8</b>                         |

Hamilton has declared a climate emergency; the effects of more extreme weather are felt across the City every year. One of the most significant positive impacts of the LRT will be its environmental impact by reducing traffic and enabling more people to utilize green electric rapid public transport. An easy Community Benefit for Metrolinx would be using a fossil fuel-free green energy backup power facility as they did on the Eglinton Crosstown. Hamilton residents have clarified that they want this project to be as green as possible. One of the significant concerns we heard was over tree removal and the lack of green space across the Corridor. The destruction of the tree canopy was considered unacceptable to many respondents. Replacing the trees off the Corridor, even at a rate of 3 to 1, does little to prevent the Hamilton LRT corridor from being a concrete desert. Residents identified a need for pollinators, green roofs, green tracks, garden patches, parkettes and more through the Corridor. The construction and dust, noise, stormwater runoff and disruption were also of concern; foresight and intentionality are critical when planning phased construction. The daily operation of the LRT can also present negative environmental repercussions if there is a lack of green infrastructure, separated stormwater, sourcing and amenities.

### Metrolinx Pillars:

- Community Benefits Working Group to explore how Environmental Impacts, concerns and greening opportunities apply and will be delivered by the Metrolinx Pillars.
- Green space and infrastructure along LRT corridor and construction sites.
- Have an accountability process through a "green report card" to grade the environmental impact of each aspect of the LRT project.
- Consultation with community stakeholders and environmental groups.
- Construction should include as many sustainably sourced materials as possible.
- Separation of Storm Water from Combined Sewer.
- Replacement of all green spaces and trees that were removed due to the LRT project, with an accountability process to keep residents updated.
- Redundancy and backup power systems should not run on fossil fuels.

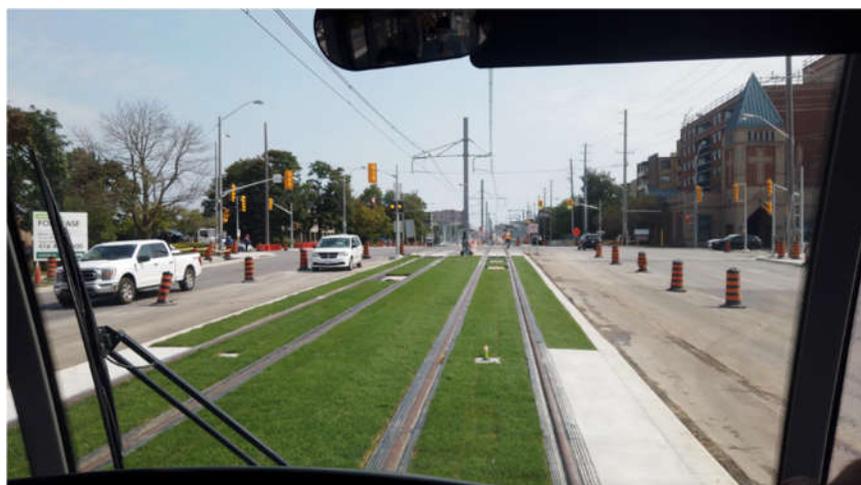
- Transit Shelters that provide full protection from extreme heat and cold (heated and airconditioned).
- Climate-resilient infrastructure that protects from extreme heat and cold.
- Multi-waste disposal bins and water bottle filling stations at every station.
- Protection of existing Trees and enhancement of urban canopy.
- Green tracks where possible.
- Green or solar roofs on stations, transit terminals and O&M facility.
- Small surplus land to be used for parkettes, pollinator gardens.
- Less asphalt and concrete, more permeable and drainage-friendly landscape.
- Deliberate effort to "DePave" cement areas around stations for natural landscaping.

#### City Built Form (Capital):

- Build additional green infrastructure along LRT corridor, urban canopy enhancement as construction opportunities.  
Building recreation parks and community spaces near stations.
- Repurposing empty houses and lots, instead of expanding urban boundary.
- Public washrooms that utilize grey water.
- Less asphalt and concrete, more permeable and drainage friendly landscape.
- Connect Bus stops, bike lanes and walkable streets to LRT stations.
- Terminus lots to encourage car to LRT transportation, with fares discounted with parking receipt.

#### City Policy:

- Prioritize medium and high-density housing, as well as multi-purpose buildings in the downtown core.
- Missing Middle zoning by right up to 3 km either side of Hamilton LRT.
- To maximize the positive environmental impact intended with the LRT project, electric powered buses should be used to bring people to stops and stations.
- Allowing bikes on the LRT.
- Support cycling in the City in policy and by funding SoBi.
- Funding community tree planting campaigns, community gardens, and green spaces in areas in the city that need it.



**Green Tracks on Metrolinx Line 5 Eglinton Crosstown**

## Physical and Economic Accessibility

[Table 5: Community benefits ideas for physical accessibility](#)

| <b>Idea</b>  | <b>Number of times mentioned</b> |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <b>Clearing snow on the roads and sidewalks</b>  | <b>27</b>                        |
| <b>Accessibility features for LRT cars and stations (platform design, curb depressions, ramps)</b> | <b>23</b>                        |
| <b>Greater wheelchair accessibility</b>  | <b>14</b>                        |
| <b>Accessible signage and audio information</b>  | <b>13</b>                        |
| <b>Implementing wider walkways/entrances inside the LRT and sidewalks</b>                          | <b>9</b>                         |
| <b>Concerns about treatment of unhoused, mentally ill</b>  | <b>7</b>                         |
| <b>Public transit connecting to LRT stops</b>  | <b>5</b>                         |

[Table 6: Community benefits ideas for economic accessibility](#)

| <b>Idea</b>  | <b>Number of times mentioned</b> |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <b>Affordable fares and passes</b>                       | <b>70</b>                        |
| <b>Free or discounted fares for specific populations</b> | <b>49</b>                        |
| <b>Free transit for everyone</b>                         | <b>29</b>                        |
| <b>Fares tied to income-level</b>                        | <b>14</b>                        |
| <b>LRT fare comparable to HSR bus fare</b>               | <b>11</b>                        |
| <b>No Fare Enforcement</b>                               | <b>7</b>                         |

Comments around economic and physical accessibility rate high in the minds of those who filled out a survey: 18% of our survey respondents identified as a person with a disability and 22% identified as elderly. Even before operations begin, residents are concerned about how meaningful their mobility needs will be considered during construction. Some comments expressed disappointment at how the City of Hamilton's contractors handle accessibility accommodation during construction, and residents fear this project may trap them in their homes. A meaningful process to address mobility challenges in near real-time with contractors and subcontractors will be necessary. We also commonly heard from respondents was how accessible the LRT would have to be to benefit Hamilton residents meaningfully. Many Hamilton residents face considerable systemic obstacles due to physical or mental disabilities; some expressed that LRT can significantly improve their lives, but only when their issues are given special consideration and consistently consulted. Another concern we heard clearly was around the impact that policing and fare enforcement might have in Hamilton. Residents noted we have little history in Hamilton of having "cops on buses" to police when someone cannot afford to pay or is having a mental health crisis. Hamilton has an opportunity to be a leader in investing in alternative methods of administration of fare payment. In our survey and consultation sessions, some residents argued that having social workers or system navigators would be a better alternative and better use of fare revenue than paid special constables to issue prohibitive fines or "inflict violence on transit riders." Economic accessibility was also a significant concern; some feared the LRT might cost more than standard HSR fare, and others expressed interest in free or low-cost transit.

#### Community benefits asks covered in Metrolinx pillars:

- Community Benefits Working Group to explore how Economic and Physical Accessibility concerns and opportunities apply and will be delivered by the Metrolinx Pillars.
- Having an accessibility coordinator on staff to develop best practices for disability functionality, project and site review with consultation from local disability justice groups such as the Disability Justice Network of Ontario (DJNO).
- App for reporting instances of Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act (AODA) failures by contractors and sub-contractors during construction.
- Process for speedy correction of identified mobility barriers with regular public reporting
- Ensure that the LRT is barrier-free and has a low floor walk-on/off.
- Ramps, elevators, and wide entrances at all LRT platforms and trains.

#### Station design:

- Rest areas and benches at station stop.
- Using curb cuts for mobility devices and baby trolleys.
- Engage in a consultation process with DJNO and other local groups, throughout process to ensure any adjustments needed are possible.
- Disability mobility tours and public education materials.
- Braille signs and guiding sounds for visually impaired.
- No anti-homeless architecture.
- All weather protection.
- Heated sidewalks.

### City Built Form (Capital):

- Public transport infrastructure that supports easy connections for people with physical disabilities to take pedestrian paths and busses to the LRT.
- Building wider sidewalks to allow access for mobility devices.
- Additional accessible pedestrian crosswalks along the LRT route.

### City policy:

- Address the issue of lack of snow removal on sidewalks around the City.
- Ensure that transit signs are made more visible and kept up to date.
- Seating prioritized for the elderly, expecting mothers and those with physical disabilities
- Ensure that mid-road LRT stops are fully accessible.
- LRT transit fares should be consistent with HSR.
- LRT transit should be free.
- Free ridership for seniors, OW or ODSP recipients.
- Discounted/free fares for K-12 and university students.
- No predatory loss prevention/fare evasion tactics.
- No Fare Enforcement/Policing model for non-payment of fare.
- Explore alternative models for social supports on the Hamilton LRT, such as social workers and system navigators vs. Special Constables, violence and massively prohibitive fines (200-300\$+ for a 3\$ missed fare).
- Facilitate easy ticket transfers between HSR and LRT.
- Accepting multiple methods of payment, not only presto.

## Shopping Local and Business Support/Local Procurement

Table 7: Community benefits relating to supporting local businesses

| <b>Idea</b>  | <b>Number of times mentioned</b> |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <b>Financial support for existing or new small businesses along LRT corridor</b> | <b>54</b>                        |
| <b>Allocate more space for local businesses to open or expand</b>                | <b>20</b>                        |
| <b>LRT stops near businesses</b>   | <b>19</b>                        |
| <b>Local procurement for LRT</b>   | <b>14</b>                        |
| <b>Advertise/promote small businesses along Corridor</b>                         | <b>12</b>                        |
| <b>Maintain access to businesses during construction</b>                         | <b>12</b>                        |

Construction of the Hamilton LRT project will significantly impact the businesses located on the Corridor. Metrolinx has shown some interest in addressing these impacts with the LRT Ready 4-part business readiness series hosted by the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce during the previous iteration, which was an excellent first step. However, coming out of the pandemic, businesses on the Corridor will face substantial challenges during construction. Metrolinx and the City must do all they can to provide support, including street performances, public space animation, festivals, and direct business support. Metrolinx must commit to working with not only the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce and BIAs but other organizations supporting black and women-owned businesses, especially businesses that may fall out of the catchment area. Once completed, the LRT project will undoubtedly bring business and tourism to areas surrounding the Corridor, positively impacting the local economy and workforce in Hamilton. However, the construction and operation of the LRT will also adversely affect businesses unless thoroughly accounted for. There were also notable community benefits asks regarding social procurement, the job and training opportunities produced by the LRT project, and how they could be directed to benefit equity-seeking groups.

#### Community benefits asks covered under Metrolinx pillars:

- Community Benefits Working Group to explore how Shopping Local and Business.
- Support/Local Procurement concerns and opportunities will be delivered as part of Metrolinx's Business Support Pillar.
- Consider financial support for local businesses experiencing interruptions due to LRT construction.
- Engage in social procurement, especially with businesses owned by marginalized groups.
- Use not-for-profit social enterprises where possible for project needs.
- Clear communication in advance with businesses about closures and access issues.
- Wayfinding Signs during and after construction.
- A Metrolinx-funded business grant fund where businesses can apply and receive a monthly stipend for construction inconvenience.
- Consider financial compensation for businesses if planned road/services closures go beyond previously stated timeline.
- Provide promotional materials indicating the businesses available at each stop/station.
- Using local labour and resources wherever possible.
- Undertake local procurement as much as possible.
- Work with Project Co subcontractors and local businesses to provide shop local information to workers (to drive business for example to restaurants in the area).

#### City Policy:

- Consider financial support for businesses impacted by LRT construction.
- Consider tax breaks or deferrals for businesses experiencing interruptions during construction.
- Advertising breaks for businesses on HSR busses when they are affected by construction.
- City comprehensive buy local campaigns.
- Consider Planning out districts at different parts of the Corridor to group certain types of businesses (like Hess Village).

## Community Space, Places and Art

[Table 8: Community benefits ideas for community spaces](#)

| Idea  | Number of times mentioned |
|---|---------------------------|
| <b>Greens Spaces and parks</b>                      | <b>64</b>                 |
| <b>Community hubs and recreational centres</b>      | <b>41</b>                 |
| <b>Spaces for people experiencing houselessness</b> | <b>32</b>                 |
| <b>Free community spaces</b>                        | <b>29</b>                 |
| <b>LRT/bus shelters</b>                             | <b>24</b>                 |
| <b>Pedestrian-only streets</b>                      | <b>8</b>                  |
| <b>Public Washrooms</b>                             | <b>7</b>                  |

[Table 9: Community benefits ideas for public art in spaces](#)

| Idea                                      | Number of times mentioned |
|---|---------------------------|
| <b>Commission local artists</b>           | <b>38</b>                 |
| <b>Beautiful the City</b>                 | <b>25</b>                 |
| <b>Take inspiration from other cities</b> | <b>10</b>                 |
| <b>Promote history of Hamilton</b>        | <b>8</b>                  |

A significant area of community benefits that residents shared their ideas around was related to community spaces, places and public art at station stops. Residents often referenced the example of a donation of land towards the Finch Arts and Community Hub as a potential community benefit; for many years, the community and residents have been pushing towards creating a 2SLGBTQIA+ Community Hub in the Lower City. Preserving the City's historic character and telling of Hamilton's history through art and placemaking was very important. Although not included, a whole section on preserving Historical Character emerged as a theme which gave substantial feedback given around the importance of Hamilton's History and Hamilton's historic places. Many wanted to see art installed at station stops and along the Corridor representing the past of those spaces and places. We also heard about the importance of indigenous peoples, and some wondered if art from those groups could appear on the Corridor. The spaces and places that make up the stations and spaces between the stations drew particular interest. Residents imaged custom station design (disliked the idea of "cookie cutter stops"). Public art displaces, parkettes, gathering places, community gardens, adjoining alleyways and additional parkland was frequently mentioned. Many residents see the LRT as an opportunity to connect the city together through community spaces that give children and youth a recreational outlet while housing vital social services for disadvantaged groups. Many residents also expressed concerns about the areas affected by the construction of the LRT and demanded that the spaces be beautified during its construction. The idea of a "hellscape of construction and garbage" weight heavily in the minds of residents' responses received.

### Community benefits asks covered under Metrolinx pillars:

- Land for a 2SLGBTQIIA+ Hub.
- Green outdoor spaces for people to rest and socialize.
- Bike stations and SoBi stations.
- Well lit, climate resilient sheltered stops that can accommodate large numbers.
- Thoughtfully designed community spaces with local public art.
- Stations can be event venues for pop-up food, music, public interest.
- Station tours for kids and other groups that may need it.
- Greening of areas adjacent to stops and between rails.
- Have electrical and phone boxes be painted by local artists.
- No designs should have anti-homelessness (hostile) architecture.
- Ensure that there are public washrooms at stops and stations.
- Water fountains and water bottle filling stations.
- Prioritizing pedestrian spaces over roads and lots for cars.
- Integrating LRT design with historical characteristics of surrounding areas.

### City Built Form (Capital):

- Improve quality of community hubs and recreational centers near LRT stations.
- More bus shelters.
- More public amenities, for example fountains, splash pads, community gardens, benches, public barbecues, gathering areas.
- Develop an Alley use strategy (multi-modal transportation paths, art, and beautification on those adjacent to Hamilton LRT corridor).
- Increase the number of community spaces, libraries, early years centres.
- Creating and improving green spaces along downtown corridor.
- Have better lighting along the mini-park trails that run through residential areas.
- Installing interactive city maps and educational materials at stations to guide people to landmarks and business areas (way finding).
- Parking Spaces near LRT Stops for carshare.
- Building more shelters for houseless residents.

### City policy:

- Facilitate mental health support, youth spaces, and social services along LRT stations.
- Subsidized daycare facilities along LRT for working parents to utilize.
- Parking lots should be built underground, leaving more ground spaces.
- Make the community hubs more accessible and promote their use.
- Ensuring that city architecture is not antagonistic to houseless residents.
- Incorporating Park spaces into mixed-use mid-rise developments.

## Community Focus Groups

This section will describe the results from the online and in-person community focus groups conducted in Hamilton in the East End, Stoney Creek, Mountain and Downtown areas. Included in this section are ideas and emerging themes from:

- A community dialogue session was held on January 16<sup>th</sup> 2019, with an attendance of around 140 Hamilton residents.
- Two virtual community dialogue sessions were held on November 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of 2021, with a total attendance of 50 Hamilton residents.
- Virtual dialogue sessions were conducted with members of ACORN Hamilton, Environment Hamilton, Cycle Hamilton, a Spectrum Newcomer group, Neighbor to Neighbor and the First Unitarian Church between April-June of 2022.

Most dialogue sessions consisted of breakout rooms or tables designated for focused discussions around the following main themes: housing affordability, accessibility, environment, transportation connection, and arts and community. The contributions of virtual participants were documented using Google Jamboard and have been incorporated in the themed sections summarized below.

### [Housing Affordability](#)

Many participants expressed concerns about how the LRT would affect housing affordability. Participants from all focus groups stated that transit-oriented affordable housing developments should be along the LRT corridor. Feedback from two focus groups suggested housing people in vacant homes and prioritizing people experiencing homelessness or from low-income backgrounds for housing. Participants from two focus groups also suggested building high-density affordable housing units and implementing inclusionary zoning policies. One group suggested implementing a vacancy tax for empty buildings. Participants from Environment Hamilton stated that new housing should be built to rigorous green standards to create a climate-resilient, sustainable city. The same group also suggested changing the tax structure to encourage higher-density development along the corridor. Some participants felt that surplus land should be donated to be returned to indigenous communities. Participants from all focus groups suggested consistent consultation with displaced tenants and low-income individuals who may be affected by the LRT project to ensure that they know their housing rights and hear their concerns.

### [Physical and Economic Accessibility](#)

Participants discussed features that could promote physical accessibility on the LRT. Participants from all focus groups indicated that ramps should be installed at all stations. Two groups mentioned having wider doors and designated seating areas for the elderly, pregnant individuals, people using wheelchairs and other people with disabilities. Three groups mentioned that it should be possible to raise and lower the LRT as needed. Participants from two groups stated that there should be audio signals for the visually impaired. One group suggested that service animals and pets should be allowed on the LRT, that there should be charging ports for devices, and that sloping sidewalks should be designed for those with mobility devices.

Participants from three groups raised concerns about the process of LRT construction. These groups expressed that the City should consider how detours will be created during construction, how to communicate these changes to City residents, and how to ensure pathways are accessible during construction. One group suggested that ramps and sidewalks should remain accessible to people during construction.

To promote economic accessibility, participants from all focus groups suggested having affordable fees to accommodate low-income folks. Participants from three focus groups suggested free LRT access for people receiving benefits from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). One group suggested free ridership for seniors and children under 13, while another suggested student discounts. Participants from two focus groups suggested extending the time on transfers. Participants from one group recommended that LRT fares be comparable to the HSR system.

## Environment

Participants from all focus groups suggested that there should be other parks and green spaces along the LRT route. Participants mentioned that creating outdoor, green spaces would be a valuable addition for local businesses. Three groups mentioned putting a street tree replacement plan into place to make up for the lost canopy along the LRT route. There was a consensus that there is a need for planting more trees, while one group suggested that trees should be installed with an underground support system to ensure they last a long time.

One group suggested reducing fumes and particulate matter in the downtown core should be a key priority. Participants from one group mentioned that there should be efforts to reduce the current number of vehicles on the road. Similarly, two groups said the need to increase walkability, while three groups mentioned accommodating cyclists using bike lanes and spaces to store bikes on the LRT. One group discussed implementing a proper garbage and recycling system along the Corridor at LRT stations. Several participants stated that backup generators should not consume diesel or fossil fuels.

## Employment and Training Opportunities

A common theme mentioned by participants was the employment and training opportunities produced by the Hamilton LRT project, with the most significant concern being “Who would get those jobs?” Most participants expressed that they felt that new jobs should go to youth and members of marginalized groups in Hamilton, in addition to training programs to “uplift those on the fringes of society” Concerns were also raised about the nature of the LRT jobs, whether they would be decent work, unionized and pay at a minimum living wage. Participants expressed that these details would be something that must be included in the CBA.

## Transportation connection

Participants discussed ensuring that the LRT route is interconnected with the HSR, bike lanes, walkable spaces and other modes of transportation. Many concerns overlapped with themes of physical and economic accessibility and community spaces. A primary concern was that the LRT needed to be connected to other affordable transportation methods to benefit low-income residents truly. Some participants also mentioned that the LRT should be accessible to people taking DART buses. SoBi bike-share stations should also be coordinated with stops and stations, and the LRT should accommodate

riders who wish to bring their bike on board. Many participants noted that LRT stations should be age-friendly and accessible.

### Arts and Community

Participants from three focus groups suggested that the LRT could offer opportunities for local artists to do community-centred artwork at stations and on buildings along the Corridor. Some people expressed that the art should be meaningful to Hamilton and the surrounding communities. Participants from one focus group recommended licensing buskers to prevent them from being disturbed by authority figures such as the police (Toronto has a similar system). Some participants felt that concerts and cultural performances on block streets would be something they would like to see. A commonly expressed idea was to have wayfinding signage for local art and community hubs at stops and stations and educational materials on the area's history. Participants also expressed that they wanted multi-use areas for communities to be able to book for events and gatherings.

### Additional concerns regarding the LRT project

Participants were asked to list any additional concerns they had about the LRT project that should be communicated to Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton. These concerns are summarized in Table 10.



**Group Photo from January 2019 Engagement Sessions**

## Project Concerns

[Table 10: Concerns regarding the LRT project](#)

| Concerns   | Number of Times Mentioned |
|--|---------------------------|
| High cost/exceeding budget                                   | 80                        |
| Disruption to individuals/ businesses along the LRT corridor | 58                        |
| Traffic congestion   | 42                        |
| Limited reach across Hamilton                                | 28                        |
| Timely completion  | 26                        |

The Hamilton LRT project has undergone many alterations, political debates, a cancellation, renewed funding, and challenges. HCBN asked residents if there were any specific concerns we could pass on to Metrolinx or The City of Hamilton. We heard many. Complete text copies of those responses have been provided to both organizations to review as part of their ongoing engagement/FAQ/public information communication. Below, this report highlights some of the overarching concerns heard during engagement events (online and off) and in the survey data. Much of the HCBN feedback given, either fears about the project or even some suggestions for Community Benefits from the public, indicate that public awareness of the project is deficient. Many residents have misinformation, no information, or a general lack of understanding about how the project will be delivered. HCBN believes that both the City of Hamilton and Metrolinx need to do far more to engage with the broader public about this massive transformative project. Also, aside from our Community Engagement events and online survey, the general public has not had a chance to provide feedback on the project since its cancellation in 2019. Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton must pursue an intensive community engagement strategy to be proactive and ahead of possible project concerns before construction begins. Once the significant project construction begins, City and Metrolinx can only react to the negative feedback from construction. Many project elements will be "set in stone," or at least in design, and difficult to alter.

### 1. [High Cost/Exceeding Budget](#)

Participants expressed that Hamiltonians are worried that LRT will go over budget. Some people have argued that Hamilton "can't afford this," and should be cautious about building an expensive LRT. One individual claimed that the "LRT started as a \$1b grant without much reference to inevitable cost over-run. Now it is already \$2.3b and the cost benefit is getting lower." Metrolinx must communicate publicly that the Province will cover cost overruns, declare how much the City of Hamilton will cover for Operations and Maintenance, and be as transparent as possible with costs.

## 2. Disruption to individuals/businesses along the LRT corridor

Many participants were concerned about how the construction of the LRT would disrupt their neighbourhoods. For example, one respondent mentioned they were concerned about "construction worries, blocking my transportation access to work/out of my neighbourhood, workers taking over (already limited) parking in my area". Others were concerned about local businesses: "Construction can be extraordinarily disruptive to businesses and use of an area. Some form of financial assistance might be needed to keep local businesses alive through the process. Locke St. and Concessions St. were cited as examples of disruption to businesses during a major street reconstruction. "Let's avoid doing that to other areas." Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton should make explicit public declarations of not only the business supports they plan to put into place, but an announcement of precise construction scheduling, work with the Chamber, BIAs and HCBN to develop a concrete plan for a business to contractors communication of issues and support.

## 3. Traffic Congestion

People expressed that they are worried that the construction of the LRT would cause traffic congestion. One individual stated they are "worried about construction and how difficult it will be to get around in the city." Similarly, another individual mentioned that "we have a car culture problem in Hamilton. This needs to be addressed before construction." The previous project did traffic modelling in 2018, which no longer represents the new reality of Two-Way street conversions, the new Truck Route, or traffic calming projects. The City of Hamilton and Metrolinx need to display the new traffic flow patterns for the route, host public information sessions and advertising, and anticipate modal shifts as the Hamilton LRT project moves car trips to transit trips and other transportation modes.

## 4. Limited Reach Across Hamilton

Participants were concerned about the LRT route's limited reach. Respondents were concerned about how it would not service areas such as the Mountain, Stoney Creek, and Ancaster. One individual noted that "it [LRT] is no use to me. I will never use it too far from my residence and is servicing the wrong area. It should run from the farthest point in the East to the farthest point in the West." The new Hamilton Street Railway reimagine project contains many positive route changes, new rapid transit lines, and general transit alignment in Hamilton with the Hamilton LRT. The City once the plan is finalized needs to provide public information advertising the recent changes, conduct outreach and education sessions, and help residents understand how the HSR and LRT will work interactively to connect to points across the City—advertising a clear timeline for the completion of other rapid transit projects (such as the A-Line BRT) or priority signalling and bus lanes for the other proposed rapid transit lines.

## 5. Timely Completion

Many participants had little confidence that the project would be completed in a timely manner. One individual hoped it "does not take an exceptionally long time to build to minimize disruption." The consensus among respondents was that the LRT project needs to be completed quickly. The current project iteration seems "distant" and "like it will never get started". Residents constantly ask, "when will we see shoves in the ground?" Metrolinx needs, as soon as possible, to post and advertise timelines for each stage of the project, broadcasting transparently when each phase of the project will be underway, down to the month. Hamilton residents would like to know when each section of their neighbourhoods will be torn up and for how long.



## Conclusion

These findings should be vital to informing the City of Hamilton LRT sub-committee in the deliberations regarding LRT community benefits. HCBN is committed to serving as a significant community stakeholder throughout the process of working with the City of Hamilton and Metrolinx to develop and implement a community benefits agreement that is equitable, inclusive, and beneficial for all Hamilton residents. Additional community engagement and consultation will be conducted by HCBN in the coming months through in-person sessions and updated online surveys to continue to inform our advocacy and policy work. The organization hopes to refine Hamilton residents' demands through further surveys and engagement. HCBN also plans to hold ward-specific community engagement sessions and outreach to underrepresented groups to ensure that the community benefits asks are holistically presented to the LRT subcommittee. HCBN is conducting engagement as part of its core mandate to help understand resident requests and to shape further and inform our policy and advocacy work. As an organization, however, we are small, with only three full-time staff depending on funding from private foundations: The Hamilton Community Foundation, Atikison and the United Way of Hamilton and Halton. It is important to note for Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton, the HCBN alone cannot be responsible for resident engagement and outreach.

Throughout the project, HCBN will continue to engage with as many residents as possible to help direct our actions and demands from a Community Benefits Agreement and project-specific Community Benefit Asks. As an organization, HCBN is hampered by a lack of clarity on what and how Metrolinx will deliver its four (4) pillar Community Benefits/Supports. There is also a general lack of clarity on the process for responding to the resident ideas and demands provided to HCBN through our engagement. Will the City of Hamilton make additional investments toward Community Benefits in the project? What is the process being undertaken around the use and disposal of Metrolinx-owned land? Who is deciding what affordable housing will be built? Is this process transparent? Clause G of the Memorandum of Understanding lays out the principal importance of Affordable Housing and Community Benefits; however, it does not put forward a transparent public process for how those objectives will be met. This project must commit to more than “community engagement theatre,” as some residents worry, but to concrete community benefits that are developed publicly and transparently delivered through a robust signed Community Benefits Agreement(s).



A large, stylized graphic of a person in shades of pink and grey, positioned on the left side of the page. The person's head is a circle, and their body is a thick, curved shape. The top part of the person is pink, and the bottom part is grey.

# Community Benefits for Hamilton LRT

Prepared for  
Hamilton Community Benefits Network

In  
April 2022

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# Executive Summary

The Hamilton Community Benefits Network (HCBN) advocates for the use of Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) in major city infrastructure projects. CBAs are agreements between governments, developers and coalitions of community organisations that address a range of community concerns and needs, including (but not limited to) ensuring residents benefit from major developments. In particular, the HCBN believes CBAs are a way to mitigate the impact to local communities by large scale infrastructure projects.

The HCBN approached McMaster Research Shop to help conduct community focus groups and to analyse a community survey identifying priority areas and ideas for a CBA for the Hamilton LRT.

Survey respondents indicated that their top four community benefit areas were Affordable Housing, Transportation Connection, Local Employment and Training Opportunities, and The Environment.

Survey respondents provided a variety of community benefits ideas. Some ideas that were mentioned most often are listed below:

- Designing LRT infrastructure to accommodate use of multiple modes of transportation i.e., bike lanes, crosswalks, parking spaces;
- Providing affordable housing geared to income;
- Increasing access to the LRT from across Hamilton;
- Ensuring that fares are affordable;
- Inclusionary zoning (i.e., a percentage of all new developments should be allocated to affordable housing);
- Prioritising job creation for Hamilton residents so that people can live and work in Hamilton; and
- Protecting green spaces

Community focus groups also highlighted potential community benefits ideas:

- *Housing affordability*: Provide affordable housing along the LRT corridor by housing people in vacant homes and building more affordable housing units.
- *Accessibility*: Include accessibility features such as wide ramps and doors, and audio signals for visually impaired people. Accommodate low-income folks with affordable fare, and provide free ridership for those on ODSP and seniors.
- *Environment*: Plant more trees and create green spaces along the LRT route.
- *Arts and Community*: Provide opportunities for local artists to do artwork on stations and buildings along the LRT corridor. Consider licensing buskers.

These findings can be used by the HCBN to inform their CBA for Hamilton LRT and to advocate for community needs at the City of Hamilton and Metrolinx.

# Introduction

The Hamilton Community Benefits Network (HCBN) “envisions Hamilton as an inclusive, thriving city in which all residents have equitable opportunities to contribute to building healthy communities and a prospering economy” (HCBN, n.d.). They do this by advocating for the use of Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) in major city infrastructure projects. CBAs are agreements between governments, developers and coalitions of community organisations that address a range of community concerns and needs, including (but not limited to) ensuring residents benefit from major developments. In particular, the HCBN sees CBAs as an opportunity to help mitigate the impact to local communities by large-scale infrastructure projects. CBAs can include advocating for affordable housing and raising local voices to bring design and neighbourhood improvement additions to the project. CBAs can also foster local workforce development by creating job opportunities for the local community and, in tandem, incentivizing training delivery programs to facilitate access to these jobs.

A major proposed infrastructure project is the planned LRT development in Hamilton. The HCBN is in the process of conducting community consultations around what a CBA would look like for this development project. The HCBN plans to prepare a report for the City of Hamilton and Metrolinx with the results of the consultations and the proposed elements of a CBA. The HCBN approached the McMaster Research shop for support with data collection, distilling community feedback into themes, and writing a report of the findings.

## Methods and Limitations

### Methods

The HCBN conducted a survey and community focus groups with the Hamilton community to identify their community benefit priorities and ideas.

### Survey

The HCBN designed and distributed the survey. The Research Shop team analysed data collected from January – March 2022 and reported the findings. We analysed findings from three versions of the survey with slightly different questions and response categories. We conducted combined analyses of the three survey versions for questions that were the same or similar in wording. However, we segregated analyses for questions that had different response categories. For each question, we reported the number and percentage of respondents who selected each response option. For qualitative questions, we developed themes that we used to code each response and provided a count for the number of times each theme was mentioned.

## Community Focus Groups

The HCBN conducted community focus groups from January – March 2022. Each focus group was scheduled for 1.5 - 2 hours and consisted of 2 breakout rooms focusing on community benefits areas including housing affordability, accessibility, environment, and arts and community. The Research Shop team supported the online focus groups by recording breakout sessions, preparing transcripts, and taking notes on Jamboard during the discussions. We categorised data based on themes and summarised them. The HCBN also provided notes from a community focus group held in 2019 which we included in our analysis.

## Limitations

The HCBN originally scheduled community focus groups to take place in person; however, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the events were moved online and created concerns regarding their reach. Several focus groups were cancelled due to low enrollment. We mainly reported findings from focus groups conducted with different branches of one organisation. While the intent was to analyse transcripts from each community focus group in conjunction with notes taken on Jamboard, we were not able to obtain several recordings and transcripts due to a lack of consent from participants and other technical difficulties, which prevented us from including direct quotations from participants. Instead, we relied primarily on Jamboard notes taken during the session, which summarised each unique community benefits idea that emerged from the group discussions. These notes were limited in detail and we were not able to ensure their completeness where transcripts were missing.

# Findings

## Survey

### Participant Characteristics

There were a total of 2,317 respondents across all 3 versions of the survey.

To provide context around understanding of community benefits, participants were asked about their familiarity with the term “community benefits agreements”. Across all three surveys, most respondents indicated that they were “not so familiar” (29%) or “not at all familiar” (38%) with community benefits agreements (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Familiarity with “community benefits agreements”

| Response           | Count | %  |
|--------------------|-------|----|
| Extremely familiar | 85    | 4% |

|                     |     |     |
|---------------------|-----|-----|
| Very familiar       | 162 | 7%  |
| Somewhat familiar   | 518 | 22% |
| Not so familiar     | 673 | 29% |
| Not at all familiar | 876 | 38% |

Participants were asked to indicate how long they had been Hamilton residents. In Surveys 1 and 2, most respondents (58%) indicated that they have been residents of Hamilton for over 25 years (Table 2a). Similarly, in Survey 3, most respondents (72%) indicated that they had lived in Hamilton for 10 years or longer (Table 2b).

**Table 2:** Amount of time as a Hamilton resident from a) surveys 1 and 2 and b) survey 3

| a) | Time        | Count | %   | b) | Time      | Count | %   |
|----|-------------|-------|-----|----|-----------|-------|-----|
|    | 0-1 years   | 54    | 5%  |    | 1-5 years | 12    | 14% |
|    | 1-5 years   | 143   | 12% |    | 6-9 years | 12    | 14% |
|    | 6-9 years   | 71    | 6%  |    | 10+ years | 61    | 72% |
|    | 10-25 years | 239   | 20% |    |           |       |     |
|    | 25+ years   | 693   | 58% |    |           |       |     |

Across all 3 surveys, 1,015 respondents identified themselves as part of an equity-seeking group (Table 3)<sup>1</sup>.

**Table 3:** Respondents from equity-seeking groups from a) surveys 1 and 2 and b) survey 3

| a) | Response                 | Count | %   | b) | Response                        | Count | %   |
|----|--------------------------|-------|-----|----|---------------------------------|-------|-----|
|    | Person with a disability | 174   | 18% |    | Person with a disability        | 8     | 13% |
|    | Black                    | 19    | 2%  |    | Black or Person of Colour       | 4     | 6%  |
|    | Indigenous               | 17    | 2%  |    | Indigenous                      | 1     | 2%  |
|    | Person of Colour         | 75    | 8%  |    | Women                           | 46    | 73% |
|    | New Immigrant            | 14    | 1%  |    | LGBTQ                           | 6     | 10% |
|    | Women                    | 576   | 61% |    | Elderly Person                  | 15    | 24% |
|    | LGBTQ2S+                 | 111   | 12% |    | Person Living with Homelessness | 1     | 2%  |
|    | Elderly                  | 208   | 22% |    | Low Income/Fixed Income         | 17    | 27% |

<sup>1</sup> Responses add up to more than 100% because participants could select more than 1 response

|  |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|
| Person experiencing houselessness                        | 7   | 1%  |
| Low income/fixed income                                  | 189 | 20% |
| Precarious income/vulnerable employment (e.g., gig work) | 40  | 4%  |
| Single-income family                                     | 199 | 21% |

|          |   |    |
|----------|---|----|
| Newcomer | 1 | 2% |
|----------|---|----|

Participants were also asked about their employment status. Across all 3 surveys, most respondents (54%) indicated that they were gainfully employed (Table 4).

**Table 4:** Employment status

| Employment Status  | Count | %   |
|--------------------|-------|-----|
| Gainfully Employed | 711   | 54% |
| Underemployed      | 72    | 5%  |
| Unemployed         | 31    | 2%  |
| Student            | 34    | 3%  |
| Retired            | 381   | 29% |
| Other              | 98    | 7%  |

### Hamilton Community Needs

Several survey questions were asked to gain an understanding of general concerns affecting the Hamilton community.

Survey results showed that most respondents “strongly agree” (57%) or “agree” (31%) that there is a gap between the rich and poor in the City of Hamilton (Table 5).

**Table 5:** "There is a gap between rich and poor in the city of Hamilton"

| Response                   | Count | %   |
|----------------------------|-------|-----|
| Strongly agree             | 729   | 57% |
| Agree                      | 396   | 31% |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 122   | 10% |
| Disagree                   | 24    | 2%  |
| Strongly disagree          | 12    | 1%  |

Most respondents (98%) believed that there is a need in Hamilton for long term, good, permanent jobs (Table 6).

**Table 6:** "Do you believe there is a need in Hamilton for long term, good, permanent jobs?"

| <b>Response</b> | <b>Count</b> | <b>%</b> |
|-----------------|--------------|----------|
| Yes             | 1265         | 98%      |
| No              | 21           | 2%       |

Most respondents "strongly agree" (69%) or "agree" (21%) that the cost of housing in the city is too high (Table 7).

**Table 7:** "The cost of housing is too high in the city"

| <b>Response</b>            | <b>Count</b> | <b>%</b> |
|----------------------------|--------------|----------|
| Strongly agree             | 888          | 69%      |
| Agree                      | 271          | 21%      |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 93           | 7%       |
| Disagree                   | 29           | 2%       |
| Strongly disagree          | 4            | 0.31%    |

31% of respondents "disagree" and 22% of respondents "strongly disagree" that they have a voice in the growth and development of the city (Table 8).

**Table 8:** "Do you feel you have a voice in the growth and development of the city?"

| <b>Response</b>               | <b>Count</b> | <b>%</b> |
|-------------------------------|--------------|----------|
| Strongly agree I have a voice | 31           | 2%       |
| I agree I have a voice        | 275          | 21%      |
| I neither agree nor disagree  | 298          | 23%      |
| I disagree                    | 398          | 31%      |
| I strongly disagree           | 283          | 22%      |

## Community Benefits Priorities

Participants were asked to rank their top 5 community benefits priority areas, where 1= top priority and 5= lowest priority.<sup>2</sup> In surveys 1 and 2, based on average rank, survey respondent's top priorities were Affordable Housing (1.77), Transportation Connection (2.75) and Local Employment and Training Opportunities (2.97) (Table 9a). On average, survey 3 participants rated Transportation Connection (1.46), The Environment (1.55), and Affordable Housing (1.56) as their top priorities (Table 9b).<sup>3</sup>

**Table 9:** Community benefits priority areas from a) surveys 1 and 2 b) survey 3

| a) Community Benefits Area                            | Average Rank | b) Community Benefits Area                            | Average Rating <sup>4</sup> |
|---|--------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Affordable Housing                                    | 1.77         | Transportation Connection                             | 1.46                        |
| Transportation Connection                             | 2.75         | The Environment                                       | 1.55                        |
| Local Employment and Training Opportunities           | 2.97         | Affordable Housing                                    | 1.56                        |
| The Environment                                       | 2.97         | Accessibility (Physical and Economic)                 | 1.74                        |
| Shopping Local and Business Support/Local Procurement | 3.23         | Local Employment and Training Opportunities           | 1.82                        |
| Physical Accessibility                                | 3.24         | Community Spaces                                      | 1.86                        |
| Economic Accessibility                                | 3.32         | Shopping Local and Business Support/Local Procurement | 2.05                        |
| Preserving Historic Character                         | 3.54         | Preserving Historic Character                         | 2.48                        |
| Community Spaces                                      | 3.59         | Public Arts   | 2.57                        |
| Public Arts   | 4.32         |   |                             |

<sup>2</sup> Participants were asked to rank their top 5 community benefits areas for Survey 1, and all 10 for Survey 2. We took only the top 5 rankings for Survey 2 and combined them with Survey 1 results before calculating the average rankings.

<sup>3</sup> In Survey 3, participants were allowed to rate multiple areas with the same priority level (e.g., participants could choose to rate affordable housing and transportation connections as a 3), whereas for Survey 1 and 2, they had to rank each community benefits area.

<sup>4</sup> Survey 3 asked participants to rate community benefits options on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest priority and 5 being highest. Survey 3 responses were re-coded so that 1=highest priority and 5= lowest priority to ease interpretation alongside Survey 1 and 2 results.

Ideas for Community Benefits

In addition to ranking their priorities, participants were asked to provide their ideas for community benefits for their top priority areas. In the following sections, we elaborate on community benefits ideas that were suggested for each area.

**1. Affordable Housing**

Respondents identified 6 community benefit ideas related to affordable housing (Table 12).

**Table 10:** Community benefit ideas related to affordable housing

| Idea                                    | Number of times mentioned |
|---|---------------------------|
| Affordable Housing geared to low income | 106                       |
| Inclusionary Zoning                     | 68                        |
| Variety of housing options              | 57                        |
| Housing-related regulations             | 44                        |
| Revamping or destroying old buildings   | 36                        |
| Building new homes                      | 23                        |

***Affordable housing geared to low income***

Respondents indicated that housing is expensive and needs to be more affordable. Many commented on the injustice of low-income families and young people being unable to afford housing. Participants suggested that housing should be affordable for those with entry-level jobs and indicated that there are many homeless people who need homes but can't afford them. Respondents suggested that having more subsidised housing available in Hamilton would help the low-income population and decrease homelessness.

***Inclusionary Zoning***

Respondents suggested that a percentage of all new developments should be allocated to affordable housing. One individual said the following on the survey: "A percentage of units (say 20%) in new developments should be affordable (50-60% of market rates); the affordable units need to include housing for singles, couples and families." Another individual suggested that 25% of all new development should be affordable, specifically in the downtown area. Participants emphasised having affordable housing along the LRT route because low-income individuals require access to public transit. One respondent suggested the following: "A maximum number of affordable housing units along the corridor should be secured so that housing on the LRT path is not gobbled up by middle- and high-income people. Working class folks should be able to reap the benefits of renewed transportation infrastructure." Several respondents suggested that there needs to be affordable housing for people displaced by LRT construction.

Respondents indicated that more mixed-income areas should be developed: “Increase subsidised housing and have it within established communities, not separate slums.”

### ***Variety of housing options***

The survey indicated that Hamiltonians want a variety of types of housing available for low-income individuals including additional rental options, multi-dwelling low-rise buildings, and smaller homes. Similarly, respondents suggested creating communal living apartment buildings with smaller private space and more shared areas. Similarly, respondents also suggested having multi-use buildings (e.g., library and apartments) and co-operative/multi-family housing.

### ***Housing-related regulations***

Respondents indicated that there should be a cap and more control on the prices of housing and rent (housing prices and rent should not continue to increase). Respondents suggested that there should be taxes in place on vacant properties, and that there should be funding in place for cooperative housing development. Some respondents disagreed with the legalities of renovations: “Stop "renovictions" from being legal. Give housing security (somehow) to those of us who rent.” Respondents indicated there should be incentives in place for people to buy affordable houses, especially for first time buyers.

### ***Revamping or destroying old buildings***

Respondents indicated that old buildings, warehouses, schools, and homes should either be revamped into new housing units or destroyed to make space for new homes. One respondent said, “Renovate old boarded up/ crumbling buildings into single family units, build community living spaces for single people in their 20s.” Another individual suggested “building homes and apartments in all abandoned properties downtown and inner City.”

### ***Build new homes***

The survey showed that individuals want additional affordable housing to be built. One individual said they wanted “more homes being built in empty city spaces - city density preserves agricultural land and open spaces and helps with clean air.” Another individual commented that they wanted “more 'city housing' (Hamilton housing) units. Entice builders to create high-volume low-cost units.” Another person commented, “Build more housing, more apartments that would support families.”

## **2. Transportation Connection**

Regarding transportation connection, survey respondents identified 5 major ideas (Table 11).

**Table 11:** Community benefits relating to transportation connections

| <b>Idea</b>   | <b>Number of times mentioned</b> |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Infrastructure design (bike lanes, cross walks, bike locks, bus shelters) | 114                              |
| Increase access across Hamilton (multiple stops, multiple areas)          | 71                               |
| Connect with multiple modes of transportation                             | 61                               |
| Safety  | 43                               |
| Connect to areas outside Hamilton   | 11                               |

### ***Infrastructure Design***

Respondents felt that infrastructure design should take multiple modes of transportation into consideration. Respondents suggested building additional bike lanes that are protected from cars. For instance, respondents noted challenges of crossing the bridge across the 403 by bike because of car traffic. Respondents wanted the city to have separate bike lanes similar to Ottawa street. Respondents stated there should be more bike stations to store bikes safely near transit stations throughout the city. Respondents noted that infrastructure should be created to promote walking by creating additional sidewalks, lighting up walking spaces, and having clearly marked pedestrian lanes. Respondents also recommended building more parking lots for commuters who use public transportation to reduce street parking. Respondents want vehicles to be able to drive along LRT rails, similar to the rails in the Toronto area.

### ***Increase Access Across Hamilton***

Participants indicated that public transit should include stops and stations across the city to facilitate transportation for all Hamiltonians without needing a personal vehicle. Respondents stated that there should be an emphasis on transportation in rural areas and in underprivileged communities who have the most need for public transportation. Respondents suggested that there should be more transportation available from areas such as Binbrook, Winona Barton Hannon, Caledonia, Upper Centennial, Ancaster and Dundas to popular areas such as Jackson Square and Limeridge mall. Similarly, respondents suggested adding transit connections from the mountain and other suburban areas in Hamilton. Respondents also stated that there needs to be more frequent transit available at busy areas such as at Hamilton Go Station, Centennial Parkway Go Station, and West Harbour. An individual stated: “We need lots of trains that run at all times of the day and night, weekends and holidays included. I shouldn't need to check a schedule; I should just know it'll be there.”

### ***Connect with multiple modes of transportation***

Respondents stated that the LRT needs to connect with multiple modes of transportation, including buses, bicycles, and walking. Respondents suggested having bike stations at all stations. Participants stated that it should be possible to walk from

one transit station to the next. Respondents indicated the need for connectivity between GO transit, HSR and the LRT throughout Hamilton with a particular emphasis on ensuring connections to get across the mountain.

**Safety**

Respondents indicated the need for safety when taking the bus or LRT, particularly when exiting trains and finding connections with other modes of transportation. Respondents indicated that having more sidewalks and barriers separating them from vehicles could promote safety for cyclists and pedestrians. Respondents noted that King & Queen is not a safe intersection for pedestrians.

**Connect to areas outside of Hamilton**

Survey respondents emphasised that the LRT should provide easy connection from Hamilton to other regions including the Greater Toronto area, Waterdown, Grimsby, and Niagara. Similarly, participants suggested improving connections from LRT to areas such as Dundas, Burlington, and Ancaster.

**3. Local Employment and Training Opportunities**

Survey respondents identified 8 community benefits ideas regarding local employment and training (Table 12).

**Table 12:** Community benefits relating to local employment and training opportunities

| Idea   | Number of times mentioned |
|--|---------------------------|
| Focus on creating job opportunities and hiring individuals and businesses from Hamilton  | 65                        |
| Fair employment conditions (permanent, liveable wage, benefits etc.)   | 26                        |
| Prioritise inclusion of equity-seeking groups  | 25                        |
| Paid Internships and Apprenticeships   | 24                        |
| Encourage skilled trades   | 23                        |
| Partner with local education institutions to provide training opportunities  | 15                        |
| Provide barrier-free opportunities (opportunities that don't reduce ODSP benefit, no age limit, accommodate different levels of education) | 13                        |
| Focus on youth   | 9                         |

**Focus on creating job opportunities and hiring individuals and businesses from Hamilton**

Respondents felt that these new opportunities should prioritise hiring of Hamilton residents and businesses i.e., that employment opportunities should enable Hamilton residents to live and work in Hamilton. One respondent suggested that “a number of available positions should be set aside for individuals who have lived in the city for a

certain time period (10 to 20yrs)". Similarly, someone suggested that there should be a "policy to hire 70% local".

### ***Fair working conditions***

Respondents identified the need for employment opportunities to have fair working conditions. Respondents noted that jobs should provide a living wage that allows people to pay for rent, groceries, and other essential needs, and provide benefits. They indicated that new job opportunities should be full-time, permanent positions and that contract or part-time positions should be limited in number.

### ***Prioritise inclusion of equity-seeking groups***

Respondents noted that members of equity-seeking groups should be prioritised for training and employment opportunities. Respondents suggested that Indigenous peoples, newcomers, people with severe mental illness and physical disabilities, low income people, single parents, or people who are unemployed or underemployed should be prioritised for these opportunities.

### ***Paid internships and apprenticeships***

Respondents noted that there should be more paid internships and apprenticeships. Specifically, respondents felt that these opportunities should be used to engage local employers in training and ultimately hiring individuals.

### ***Encourage skilled trades***

Survey respondents suggested that opportunities should focus on encouraging people to take up skilled trades (welding, carpentry, plumbing, manufacturing etc.) and that these opportunities should focus especially on recruiting more youth and women.

### ***Partner with local education institutions to provide training opportunities***

Respondents suggested that training opportunities should be offered in partnership with local educational institutions including McMaster University, Mohawk College, and local secondary schools. Respondents suggested that training programs offered through these institutions could be focused on LRT maintenance, skilled trades, and green technology.

### ***Provide barrier-free opportunities***

Respondents noted that new training and employment opportunities should reduce barriers associated with them. Respondents noted that there should be entry-level opportunities that have fewer requirements around education and experience. One respondent stated that opportunities should "allow people with EI, OW, and ODSP to continue to be paid their benefits..." Some participants also noted that opportunities should not just be reserved for youth, believing that they should allow people of all ages to benefit from opportunities. Respondents also indicated that training opportunities should be free or low-cost.

### ***Focus on youth***

Some respondents felt that training and employment opportunities should focus on youth to ensure that they can develop skills, network, and contribute to the local economy.

## **4. The Environment**

Respondents identified 7 major ideas relating to the environment (Table 13).

**Table 13:** Community benefits ideas regarding the environment

| <b>Idea</b>                           | <b>Number of times mentioned</b> |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Protect and create green spaces       | 60                               |
| Renewable/clean energy sources        | 38                               |
| Enhance urban canopy                  | 36                               |
| Environmentally-friendly construction | 35                               |
| Electric LRT cars/ other vehicles     | 18                               |
| Promote walking/cycling               | 9                                |
| Multi-sort bins                       | 8                                |

### ***Protect and create green spaces***

Respondents noted that existing green spaces such as the greenbelt, conservation areas, and parks should be protected. Respondents indicated that they do not want developments to destroy green spaces and wanted additional green space to be created along the corridor.

### ***Renewable/clean energy sources***

Respondents indicated that they do not want fossil fuels to be used for the LRT. Respondents also suggested that solar panels should be installed at LRT stops and shelters where possible.

### ***Environmentally-friendly construction***

Respondents indicated that they want environmentally friendly construction practices used for the LRT. Respondents indicated that recycled or recyclable materials should be used to build the LRT and that construction should minimise greenhouse gas emissions and pollution as much as possible.

### ***Enhance urban canopy***

Respondents indicated that they wanted to improve the urban canopy in Hamilton. Respondents suggested implementing green roofs at transit stops and bus shelters and planting more trees along the LRT route.

**Electric LRT cars/ other vehicles**

Respondents suggested that the LRT cars should use electric power. They also recommended using electric buses to connect people across the city to the LRT. Some respondents indicated that there should be electric car charging ports installed across the city.

**Promote walking/cycling**

Respondents noted that the LRT should be used to reduce the use of cars and promote active transport such as walking or cycling. Respondents indicated that there should be more bike lanes and pedestrian zones along the LRT corridor.

**Multi-sort bins (garbage, recycling, etc.)**

Respondents stated that the LRT route should have multi-sort bins for recycling and garbage to reduce litter and promote recycling.

**5. Shopping Local and Business Support/Local Procurement**

Survey respondents identified 6 community benefits ideas regarding supporting local businesses (Table 14).

**Table 14:** Community benefits relating to supporting local businesses

| Idea  | Number of times mentioned |
|---|---------------------------|
| Financial support for existing or new small businesses along LRT corridor | 54                        |
| Allocate more space for local businesses to open or expand                | 20                        |
| LRT stops near businesses   | 19                        |
| Local procurement for LRT   | 14                        |
| Advertise/promote small businesses along corridor                         | 12                        |
| Maintain access to businesses during construction                         | 12                        |

**Financial support for existing or new small businesses along LRT corridor**

Many respondents indicated that there should be financial support for small businesses along the LRT corridor. Respondents suggested several ideas for support such as providing tax breaks or reducing taxes, implementing rent control for commercial spaces, and providing rent subsidies for small businesses to open near the LRT. Respondents also suggested providing grants to support small businesses, in addition to financial support reserved for businesses owned by women, racialized people, Indigenous people, or people with disabilities.

***Allocate more space for local businesses to open or expand***

Respondents stated that there should be space along the LRT corridor reserved for local businesses to open or expand. Specifically, one respondent suggested “rezoning to allow for more retail business, restaurants etc”. Some respondents suggested reserving vacant buildings for businesses or requiring that new developments include retail and grocery stores.

***LRT stops near businesses***

Survey respondents indicated that they want LRT stops to be within walking distance of retail, local cafes, restaurants, personal care services, and other businesses. Respondents felt that having LRT stops nearby could make businesses more accessible to patrons and consequently increase their revenue.

***Local procurement for LRT***

Respondents suggested that raw construction materials for the LRT project should be obtained from local Hamilton companies. They also suggested recruiting local consultants, engineers, and contractors for the project.

***Advertise/promote small businesses along LRT corridor***

Respondents indicated that small businesses should be supported with advertising. They suggested that the LRT cars or bus shelters should provide free advertising for small businesses to help them compete with larger corporations.

***Maintain access to businesses during construction***

Respondents stated that businesses should remain accessible during construction. One respondent suggested that: “... closures/access issues [should be] communicated to all businesses well in advance so they can plan.... [S]mall access routes [should be kept] open for maintaining community pickup windows for some businesses that may be harder to access at times ....”

**6. Physical Accessibility**

Survey respondents identified 6 community benefits ideas relating to physical accessibility (Table 15).

**Table 15:** Community benefits ideas for physical accessibility

| <b>Idea</b>   | <b>Number of times mentioned</b> |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Clearing snow on the roads and sidewalks  | 27                               |
| Accessibility features for LRT cars and stations (platform design, curb depressions, ramps) | 23                               |
| Greater wheelchair accessibility  | 14                               |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Accessible signage and audio information                           | 13 |
| Implementing wider walkways/entrances inside the LRT and sidewalks | 9  |
| Public transit connecting to LRT stops                             | 5  |

***Clearing snow on the roads and sidewalks***

Respondents highlighted snow removal as a key concern. Many respondents suggested that snow should be cleared at LRT stations and surrounding walkways and roads to ensure accessibility for the elderly and individuals with disabilities.

***Accessibility features for LRT cars and stations (platform design, curb depressions, ramps)***

Respondents emphasised the importance of accessibility features for LRT cars and stations, with some explicitly stating that compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) should be prioritised. Respondents recommended the use of curb depressions, ramps, and railings. Respondents also suggested including space to store collapsed strollers on the LRT.

***Greater wheelchair accessibility***

Respondents suggested that new developments including commercial or residential spaces should increase accessibility for wheelchairs, which could entail building wide doorways, hallways, and open spaces. Respondents also suggested ramps or lifts wherever there are stairs.

***Accessible signage and audio information***

Respondents suggested that there should be auditory signals at crosswalks, announcements at stations, and the use of braille for people who are visually impaired. Respondents also suggested signage that is clear and uncluttered. For example, respondents recommended ensuring that route schedules are easy to read.

***Implementing wider walkways/entrances inside the LRT and sidewalks***

Survey respondents recommended having wider walkways for people who use wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility devices, and to accommodate people with strollers.

***Public Transit connecting to LRT stops***

Respondents noted that public transit should connect to LRT stops. One individual stated: “There should be public transit available between LRT stops (e.g. King St bus)... many with physical disabilities would find it difficult to walk long distances to get to and from the LRT stops.”

## 7. Economic Accessibility

Survey respondents identified 5 community benefits ideas relating to economic accessibility (Table 16).

**Table 16:** Community benefits ideas for economic accessibility

| Idea  | Number of times mentioned |
|---|---------------------------|
| Affordable fares and passes                     | 70                        |
| Free or discounted fare for certain populations | 49                        |
| Free transit for everyone                       | 29                        |
| Fares tied to income-level                      | 14                        |
| LRT fare comparable to HSR bus fare             | 11                        |

### ***Affordable fares and passes***

Respondents highlighted the importance of affordable fares and passes to ensure that individuals from all income levels can access the LRT service. Some respondents suggested that fares should not be greater than \$3.

### ***Free or discounted fare for certain populations***

Many respondents suggested that fares should be discounted for certain populations including low-income individuals, children, seniors, students, and recipients of Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). Some respondents also suggested that discounted fares should be available for frequent riders.

### ***Free transit for everyone***

Many respondents suggested that public transport should be free for everyone to discourage the use of cars. One respondent suggested following Calgary's example: "...Calgary light rail offered a downtown section free of charge to commuters ... and very high parking rates to discourage cars, ensure use of LRT through 10 blocks downtown where all condos [are] being built."

### ***Fares tied to income-level***

Some respondents suggested that the fares should be tied to income level: "Fare rates according to income tax brackets, allowing people in the lower income bracket [to] pay less for public transit...."

### ***LRT fare comparable to HSR fare***

Some residents proposed that the LRT fare should be comparable to the current HSR bus fare.

## 8. Preserve Historic Character

Respondents identified 4 community benefits ideas to preserve Hamilton’s historic character (Table 17).

**Table 17:** Community benefits ideas to preserve historic character

| Idea   | Number of times mentioned |
|--|---------------------------|
| Do not demolish historic buildings   | 68                        |
| Maintain existing building facades/ build around existing character                                    | 39                        |
| Historic/aesthetic requirements or rules to protect old structures or for new buildings and structures | 17                        |

### ***Do not demolish historic buildings***

Respondents overwhelmingly did not want historic buildings to be demolished. Instead, they wanted historic buildings to be preserved, maintained, or converted for other uses such as “interesting living spaces”.

### ***Maintain existing building facades/build around existing character***

Respondents wished for building facades to be maintained and for new development to be done around existing structures. One respondent noted: “Some historical storefronts are worth preserving, even if everything behind the facade is new. Other buildings should try to fit with the local character rather than bring a jarring new look, e.g. glass and metal when existing buildings have stonework.”

### ***Historic/aesthetic requirements or rules to protect old structures or for new buildings and structures***

Survey respondents felt that there should be requirements to ensure protection of historic structures. One respondent suggested implementing “...urban design guidelines that either outright preserve or subtly replicate older buildings....”

## 9. Community Spaces

Respondents identified 7 key ideas for community spaces (Table 18).

**Table 18:** Community benefits ideas for community spaces

| Idea   | Number of times mentioned |
|--|---------------------------|
| Greens Spaces and parks                      | 64                        |
| Community hubs and recreational centres      | 41                        |
| Spaces for people experiencing houselessness | 32                        |
| Free community spaces                        | 29                        |

|                         |    |
|-------------------------|----|
| LRT/bus shelters        | 24 |
| Pedestrian-only streets | 8  |
| Public Washrooms        | 7  |

***Greenspaces and parks***

Green spaces and parks were mentioned by respondents as an important community space, overlapping with the environmental community benefits section.

One respondent noted a lack of green spaces along the LRT route: “Green areas are important. The LRT route has very few green spaces, especially starting at Main and Dundurn Street: I think the first one east of Dundurn is Gage Park then Montgomery Park.” Respondents also mentioned a need for parks and playgrounds for children and for pets, in addition to more hiking and bike trails.

***Community hubs and recreational centres***

Respondents also suggested that community hubs and recreation centres should be integrated with the LRT station and connect people to community organisations and services. Other recommendations for recreation included having event halls, arenas, sports facilities, community fridges and pantries, daycares, and pop-up markets.

***Spaces for people experiencing homelessness***

Respondents felt that community spaces should be welcoming for people experiencing homelessness and be used to link people to services. One respondent suggested “creating a designated area for encampments so [people experiencing homelessness] can be safe and stable even if they aren’t ready for shelters (or shelters aren’t appropriate for them).”

***Free community spaces***

Respondents identified the need for community spaces where people are not required to spend money. One respondent suggested having “early years centres, libraries, [and] drop-in spaces...” which do not charge people to enter.

***LRT/Bus Shelters***

Respondents stated there should be shelters at all stops, and that they should be enclosed and heated to protect people against variable weather conditions. They also suggested that shelters should have sufficient capacity to accommodate a large number of people and that they should provide seating. Respondents noted that there should be open areas for wheelchairs, walkers, and strollers and that shelters should be well-lit to ensure safety.

***Pedestrian-only streets***

Some respondents wanted “more pedestrian-only streets”. They also felt there should be pedestrian areas surrounding parks and stores along the LRT corridor.

***Public Washrooms***

Respondents also suggested that public washrooms be available at LRT stops. One respondent suggested that the public washrooms should have 24-hour availability.

## 10. Public Arts

Regarding public arts, survey respondents identified 4 community benefits ideas (Table 19).

**Table 19:** Community benefits ideas relating to public arts

| Idea                               | Number of times mentioned |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Commission local artists           | 38                        |
| Beautify the city                  | 25                        |
| Take inspiration from other cities | 10                        |
| Promote history of Hamilton        | 8                         |

### ***Commission local artists***

Survey respondents indicated that local artists should be commissioned to create art for transit stations, parks, and other public spaces. Respondents stated that there should be a focus on hiring local artists who come from marginalised communities such as Indigenous, black, and other racialized communities. They also indicated that young people and local schools should be engaged in creating the artwork. Respondents suggested encouraging performing arts (e.g., buskers) at LRT stops.

### ***Beautify the city***

Respondents indicated that artwork would beautify the city, attract new life and business, and make the city more welcoming overall. Specifically, respondents stated there should be more artwork in the downtown area, which could include designing creative transit stops and making infrastructure look aesthetically pleasing (e.g., streetlights and benches). Respondents indicated they want artists to develop murals—one respondent suggested that artists could create murals of the various waterfalls in the city.

### ***Take inspiration from other cities***

Respondents suggested that Hamilton should take inspiration from other cities that have incorporated art into their urban landscape. Respondents indicated that every new building should have a piece of artwork on its property, like Montreal's new buildings. Similarly, Montreal's metro stations are creative and unique, and respondents indicated that Hamilton should follow their example. Respondents suggested allowing graffiti in Hamilton via graffiti contests, similar to areas in the United Kingdom.

### ***Promote history of Hamilton***

Respondents indicated that the artwork should represent the history of Hamilton and showcase the diversity and various cultures in the city, including Indigenous peoples. Respondents noted that the artwork should capture the uniqueness of each community in Hamilton. Respondents also suggested that the artwork could reflect the past and present, or communicate the envisioned future of Hamilton.

## Community Concerns Regarding the LRT project

Participants were asked to list any additional concerns they had about the LRT project that should be communicated to Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton. These concerns are summarized in Table 20. We elaborate on each concern below.

**Table 20: Concerns regarding the LRT project**

| Concerns   | Number of Times Mentioned |
|--|---------------------------|
| High cost/ Exceeding budget                              | 80                        |
| Disruption to individuals/ businesses along LRT corridor | 58                        |
| Traffic congestion                                       | 42                        |
| Limited reach across Hamilton                            | 28                        |
| Timely completion  | 26                        |

### **1. High Cost/Exceeding Budget**

The survey indicated that Hamiltonians are worried that LRT will go over budget. Some people have argued that Hamilton “can’t afford this,” and should be cautious on building an expensive LRT. One individual claimed that the “LRT started as a \$1b grant without much reference to inevitable cost over-run. Now it is already \$2.3b and the cost benefit is getting lower.”

### **2. Disruption to individuals/businesses along the LRT corridor**

Survey respondents were concerned about how the construction of the LRT would disrupt their neighbourhoods. For example, one respondent mentioned they were concerned about “construction worries, blocking my transportation access to work/out of my neighbourhood, workers taking over (already limited) parking in my area”. Others were concerned about local businesses: “Construction can be extraordinarily disruptive to businesses and use of an area. Some form of financial assistance to keep local businesses alive through the process might be needed. Locke St. was an example of how to harm an area during major street reconstruction. Let’s avoid doing that to other areas.”

### **3. Traffic Congestion**

The survey indicated that people are worried that the construction of the LRT would cause traffic congestion. One individual stated that they are “worried about construction and how difficult it will be to get around in the city.” Similarly, another individual mentioned that “we have a car culture problem in Hamilton. This needs to be addressed before construction.”

### **4. Limited Reach Across Hamilton**

Respondents were concerned about the LRT route’s limited reach. Respondents were concerned about how it would not service areas such as the Mountain, Stoney Creek, and Ancaster. One individual noted that “it [LRT] is no use to me. I will never use it too

far from my residence and is servicing the wrong area. It should run from the farthest point in the East to the farthest point in the West.”

### **5. Timely Completion**

Many respondents had little confidence that the project would be completed in a timely manner. One individual hoped that it “does not take an exceptionally long time to build to minimise disruption.” The consensus among respondents was that the LRT project needs to be completed quickly.

## Community Focus Groups

This section will describe the results from four community focus groups at the following ACORN meetings: East End, Stoney Creek, Mountain, and Downtown. We also included ideas from a focus group held in 2019. Each focus group consisted of breakout rooms which covered the following themes: housing affordability, accessibility, environment, and arts and community.

### **Housing Affordability**

Participants expressed concerns about how the LRT would affect housing affordability. Participants from all focus groups stated that there should be affordable housing along the LRT corridor. Feedback from two focus groups suggested housing people in vacant homes and prioritising people experiencing homelessness or from low-income backgrounds for housing. Participants from two focus groups also suggested building additional affordable housing units and implementing inclusionary zoning policies. One group suggested implementing a vacancy tax for empty buildings. Participants from all focus groups suggested meeting with displaced tenants and low-income individuals who may be affected by the LRT project to ensure that they are aware of their housing rights and to hear their concerns.

### **Accessibility**

Participants discussed features that could promote physical accessibility on the LRT. Participants from all focus groups indicated that ramps should be installed. Two groups mentioned having wider doors and designated seating areas for the elderly, pregnant individuals, people using wheelchairs and other people with disabilities. Three groups mentioned that it should be possible to raise and lower the LRT as needed. Participants from two groups stated that there should be audio signals for blind folks. One group suggested that service animals and pets should be allowed on the LRT, that there should be charging ports for devices, and that sloping sidewalks should be designed for those with mobility devices.

Participants from three groups raised concerns about the process of LRT construction. These groups expressed that the city should consider how detours will be created during construction, how to communicate these changes to City residents, and how to ensure pathways are accessible during construction. One group suggested that ramps and sidewalks should remain accessible to people during construction.

To promote economic accessibility, participants from all focus groups suggested having affordable fees to accommodate low-income folks. Participants from three focus groups suggested free LRT access for people receiving benefits from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). One group suggested free ridership for seniors and children under 13, while another suggested student discounts. Participants from two focus groups suggested extending the time on transfers. Participants from one group recommended that LRT fare should be comparable to the HSR system.

### ***Environment***

Participants from all focus groups suggested that there should be additional parks and green space along the LRT route. Participants mentioned that creating outdoor, green spaces would be a valuable addition for local businesses. Three groups mentioned planting more trees, while one group suggested that trees should be installed with an underground support system to ensure they last a long time.

One group suggested that reducing fumes and particulate matter in the downtown core should be a key priority. Participants from one group mentioned that there should be efforts to reduce the current number of vehicles on the road. Similarly, two groups mentioned the need to increase walkability, while three groups mentioned accommodating cyclists using bike lanes and spaces to store bikes on the LRT. One group discussed implementing a proper garbage and recycling system along the corridor at LRT stations.

### ***Arts and Community***

Participants from three focus groups suggested that the LRT could offer opportunities for local artists to do community-centred artwork at stations and on buildings along the corridor. Participants from one focus group recommended licensing buskers to prevent them from being disturbed by authority figures such as the police (Toronto has a similar system).

### ***Additional concerns regarding the LRT project***

One group raised additional concerns such as going over budget, construction delays, and disruptions to the community (e.g., noise and negative effects on local businesses).

## **Key Takeaways and Next Steps**

This research aimed to identify community benefits priorities of Hamilton residents to inform a community benefits agreement (CBA) for the Hamilton LRT project. Survey respondents indicated that their top four priority areas for a CBA are Affordable Housing, Transportation Connection, Local Employment and Training Opportunities, and The Environment.

Survey respondents provided a variety of community benefits ideas. Some of these ideas, ordered by the number of times they were mentioned by respondents, include:

- Designing LRT infrastructure to accommodate use of multiple modes of transportation i.e., bike lanes, crosswalks, parking spaces;
- Providing affordable housing geared to income;
- Increasing access to the LRT from across Hamilton;
- Ensuring that fares are affordable;
- Inclusionary zoning (i.e., a percentage of all new developments should be allocated to affordable housing);
- Prioritising job creation for Hamilton residents so that people can live and work in Hamilton; and
- Protecting green spaces

Respondents indicated several concerns regarding the LRT construction including its high cost and potential budget overruns, disruption to individuals and businesses along the LRT corridor, and traffic congestion.

Community focus groups also highlighted several potential community benefits ideas across 4 themes: housing affordability, accessibility, environment, and arts and community. Participants recommended providing affordable housing along the LRT corridor by housing people in vacant homes and building more affordable housing units. Participants also suggested that the LRT should include accessibility features such as wide ramps and doors, audio signals for visually impaired people, and allow service animals and pets to ride the LRT. Participants also indicated that the LRT service should have an affordable fare to accommodate low-income people and provide free ridership for children, seniors, and individuals on ODSP. Participants suggested planting more trees and creating green spaces along the LRT route. Participants felt that the LRT construction should provide opportunities for local artists to do artwork on stations and buildings along the LRT corridor and that the city should consider licensing buskers.

There are some limitations to this research. Where and how the survey was distributed, as well as its contents, could have influenced who filled it out. The vast majority of respondents were long-term residents (>10 years) and a large proportion also self-identified as belonging to an equity-seeking group. Most who filled out the survey indicated they were gainfully employed. Observing these patterns, we are unable to conclude that the results are representative of all Hamiltonians; rather, the results may reflect the views of a politically and socially engaged subpopulation. Similarly, the community focus groups were conducted mainly with individuals from one organisation. While the original intention was to conduct community focus groups with more members of the Hamilton community, many of these focus groups were cancelled during the study period due to low enrolment. It is therefore unclear whether the focus groups were representative of the broader Hamilton community.

These findings can be used by the HCBN to inform their CBA for Hamilton LRT and to advocate for community needs at the City of Hamilton and Metrolinx. The large survey sample size and demographic information collected opens up the opportunity for further subgroup analyses (e.g., to investigate the concerns of racialized, LGBTQ+, and/or

Indigenous people independently). Future community consultation processes could involve partner organisations and advertising across diverse demographics to widen the perspectives involved in the research.

## Bibliography

HCBN. (n.d.). *About Community Benefits*. HCBN. Retrieved May 16, 2022, from <https://hcbn.ca/about-community-benefits>





## **Community Conversation:**

# LRT, Employment, Community Benefits and Shaping Hamilton's Future

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## ***Event Summary***

HAMILTON COMMUNITY BENEFITS NETWORK

Karl Andrus

1/18/2019

**About HCBN:** For almost three years, the Hamilton Community Benefits Network (HCBN) has built a broad, city-wide coalition of labour, community groups/hubs and social enterprises, residents, and marginalized groups to help bring Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) to Hamilton’s government and private development projects. HCBN is a collective made up of representatives from the Hamilton Building Trades, the Immigrant Working Centre, the Hamilton District Labour Council, the YWCA, Hamilton Food Share, Environment Hamilton, and many more organizations in Hamilton that envision Hamilton as an inclusive, thriving city in which all residents have equitable opportunities to contribute to building healthy communities and a prospering economy. HCBN sees Community Benefits Agreements as a proven approach to achieving this vision. With a mandate from Hamilton City Council and the Province of Ontario, we have begun discussions with Metrolinx and City of Hamilton staff about a Community Benefits framework for the Hamilton Light Rail project. Our organization is looking to build on the success of the Toronto Community Benefits Network with a “made in Hamilton” agreement that is tailored to our city’s needs.

**The Project:** The Hamilton Light Rail Transit project proposes to construct 14 km of rapid transit service down existing streets in Hamilton’s urban core. Passing along King Street and Main Street from McMaster University in the West End of the city to Eastgate Mall in the East End of the city. It will connect some of the highest-density areas in the city with an east-to-west Rapid Transit system. Travelling down the center of the road for most of the length, the system will be curb separated — with a separate bridge over the 403 — to provide 6-minute peak time service much faster than existing transit options. The line itself stretches through some of the most challenging neighbourhoods in the city. The project will require the procurement of up to 91 properties along the line. Unlike other LRT/Metrolinx projects, land acquisition has been a significant requirement for construction. The neighbourhoods and their residents along the line represent high densities of marginalized residents. The increased challenge of rising property rates is already seeing the displacement of low-income renters along the corridor. Coupled with the existing challenges of gentrification, the potential for Community Benefits to directly improve the lives of those living on the corridor is very high. Although the project brings with it challenges, the HCBN believes only a strong community-based Community Benefits Agreement will maximize the benefits of this project for residents along the corridor and in the city as a whole.

**Outreach and Accommodation:** To make the general public and interested residents aware of the community conversation event, extensive advertising was used in social media. The event posting on Facebook garnered 60 “going” participants, and over 375 “interested” persons. Tickets were also available free through Eventbrite. Moreover, the event was widely shared across many local Facebook and Twitter groups. A \$50 advertising budget was also utilized to reach followers of HCBN’s Facebook page. With help from volunteers from Acorn Hamilton, approximately 500 posters were placed along the LRT corridor and downtown. We also contacted our partner organizations and members, requesting they share the event with their networks. The Hamilton Public Library Central Branch was used to hold the event due to its close proximity to major public transit lines and accommodation facilities (washrooms, doors, etc.). Childcare was

also provided with a pre-written request and Childcare coverage was donated by the Immigrant Working Center (IWC) for approximately 12 children. Light snacks, coffee and water were provided.

**The Event:** The event was very well attended despite the cold weather. There were approximately 140 or so people at the event. 105 email addresses were gathered from those interested in volunteering or being added to our distribution lists. Attendees were seated in tables of 6 to facilitate a more relaxed and intimate environment conducive to the sharing of information. Members of the HCBN board and other volunteers were seated at each table to observe the conversations and record feedback. Feedback forms were available for all attendees. The structure of the event was divided into two stages: presentations from invited guests and a moderated workshop with each of the tables. The workshop prompt was to “frame a vision for the city, community benefits and specific asks for the Hamilton LRT project.”

### **Matthew Green, Former City Councillor Ward 3, Executive Director, Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion**

“When I was a city councillor, I would witness the most vulnerable, while we were doing billion-dollar development permits...  
living in tents.”

Matthew Green led the group in a land acknowledgement and gave a brief summary of the importance of CBAs in the creation of “a playing field between power structures and community members.” Green gave a good background of community benefits beyond the LRT and took aim at every single development project across the city. He touched on some themes that were to later emerge in discussion groups: local employment, inclusionary zoning, sage neighbourhoods, green infrastructure, and opportunities for small businesses so that money that comes to Hamilton stays in Hamilton. He stressed the significance of organizing in the demand for a seat at the table. The collaboration between governments, stakeholders, and residents is a way to assert community power and to ensure what happens in the community *is what we want to happen*.

“Anger can paralyze us, let us do something with it today for a better future.”

### **Jennifer Miller, Director of Social Investment, Atkinson Foundation**

“Community Benefits has a particular approach: it’s not just about going to lobby government, it’s about generating power in communities”

Jennifer Miller from the Atkinson foundation introduced the group to the broad history and concept behind Community Benefits Agreements. She spoke about making sure we have economic and democratic power for those that have historically been left out of decision making. She discussed the different facets of Community Organizations and Benefits, looking at the hard shift towards becoming an actual part of the development process. Some groups, residents, and members of a Community Benefits group might be occupying buildings or engaged in protest, others in negotiations; Miller states that “it is important to hold space for both within an organization.” Miller looked at the idea of Community Benefits in the United States within the context of the beating of Rodney King and the LA Riots exploding afterwards. People were energized to act. Local unions worked *with* community members, and said things needed to change. They

created the first living wage ordinance, the gold standard for Community Benefits Agreements, including jobs, community assets, parks, chapters, and access to affordable housing — including its construction. Miller emphasized that local campaigns utilize laws, policies, and agreements, while requiring the building of coalitions.

“We are...working with people on the inside, putting pressure on the outside, to ensure economic development needs meet community needs.”

**Kumsa Baker, Campaign Manager, Toronto Community Benefits Network and  
Troy Moussa, Community Organizer, Toronto Community Benefits Network/Rexdale Rising!**

“The movement for community benefits in Toronto started in a room like this one, with community members, organizations, labour, all coming together to talk about opportunities in Rexdale”

Kumsa Baker and Troy Moussa took turns taking the group through the struggles of various Community Benefit projects they had worked on with the Toronto Community Benefits Network and the Rexdale Rising Campaigns: The Finch West LRT, the Woodbine Casino, the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, and the Parkdale People’s Economy movement. Each of these successful community projects built on each other. While the Eglinton LRT had only aspirational targets, harder targets were set out for Woodbine Casino. Community Support and resident engagement was needed for all projects, but especially for the Woodbine Casino, where political will in support of CBAs was necessary. Wins included commitments from between 10% (Crosstown LRT) and up to 40% in the Woodbine Casino for employment targets. Considerations such as childcare, community spaces, and affordable housing were also discussed around the various organization campaigns. The key message was for the need to create a critical body and mass support to influence the outcomes to more favourable CBAs. Organization, communication, and framing the “good planning possibilities” require equity-seeking communities and having them at the table. Decent work, affordable commercial spaces, affordable housing, and community access are some of the desired outcomes of CBAs.

“How can we ensure that the community can hold the City and developers accountable to agreements forged? ...[one method is] quarterly meetings, with regular updates to the community and CBAs oversight.”

**Mike Wood, Chair, Hamilton ACORN, Downtown Branch**

“Fighting for change creates better living.”

Mike Wood discussed some of the challenges residents along the Hamilton LRT corridor are feeling, with increased interest from development groups and displacement pressures. They talked about some of ACORN’s successes in building community power door-by-door — by speaking to individuals and families around Hamilton about the issues they face, like unaffordable rents, unreliable transit, lack of community spaces. Mike believes CBAs are an important tool for an affordable city, not a tent city. He also discussed some of ACORN’s community organizing success around inclusionary zoning and meeting with ministers to fight for change.

“By building power within the community, we can get things done!”

## **Resident Workshop, Moderated by Alejandra Bravo, Director of Leadership and Training at the Broadbent Institute**

Each table was asked to consider the example Community Benefits models and consider the problems they were trying to take on:

- What are our benefits, not the projected benefits?
- What do we see as benefits as individuals and as a community?
- What challenges may be generated by the project?
- Who do we need to consider as this project moves forward?
- What are the concerns that could be generated in the communities and with residents on the line?

Each table was asked to discuss these points with assistance and moderation from HCBN Board of Directors facilitation and other volunteers.

Next the group was asked:

- What is our vision for Hamilton?
- How do we see the Hamilton LRT in that vision for Hamilton's future?
- What Community Benefits will help shape you and your communities' vision of the city of Hamilton?
- What can we do with the opportunities of this project to help shape that vision?
- How do we make sure no one is left behind?

Each table took about 20 minutes or more on each of these key discussion topics to unpack views of the city and the future of Community Benefits in Hamilton especially around the LRT. Discussions were very respectful and quite lively. Each group generated a mountain of feedback, recorded by notetakers at the table, with general specific priorities mounted to post-IT Notes.

The groups then submitted all this feedback, as well as feedback forms available on every table, back to the Hamilton Community Benefits Network team for review. General themes emerged with a great deal of overlap at all tables. The information was condensed into the following general themes:

**Affordable Housing (32 comments):** Affordable housing was by far the largest concern and request around CBAs at the event. Many of the feedback comments touched on affordable housing and concerns around affordability and displacement. Every table agreed that the cost of housing in the city was leading to displacement. Thoughts were shared about who mitigates the risk of a project that is gentrifying the area. Concerns were raised about *who* is benefiting from the development in the city. Rent-geared apartments, stronger and more connected neighbourhoods, and zero displacement policies were considered priorities for the assembled group. The use of parking lots for housing, higher density housing, inclusionary zoning tools, enforced property standards, and increased shelter beds and social service supports all came out as themes. Transit-oriented development and hard goals on the building of true affordable housing along the LRT corridor was clearly loud demand from the group for a CBA. New units and making sure that all the

city's most vulnerable groups, especially on the LRT corridor had access to safe, acceptable, and deeply affordable accommodation was loudly proclaimed by the group.

**Community Spaces: (Stations, stops, Shelters, Parks, Community Hubs, etc.) (24 comments):** From the event, the theme of community spaces was the second largest consideration around CBAs. There was some overlap with comments in this section with affordable housing, the environment, and other CBA themes. There were suggestions for community hubs, plazas with affordable activities, and other public assets that would improve quality of life and create healthy, resilient communities emerged as trends. Free indoor/outdoor spaces, local destinations, sports, entertainment industry, and local theatre were all seen as needed in a CBA around infrastructure to improve the city. The need for community-based hubs, and spaces along the LRT corridor was the most commonly discussed benefit but some concerns appeared in this topic around traffic flow, as well as complete and safe streets during and after construction. Finally, each group made a small note around station stops, making sure the transit hubs are safe, warm, and welcoming.

**The Environment (21 comments):** This category also saw overlap with community spaces and affordable housing, as well as other topics. Traffic concerns, less cars, more bike lanes, more trees, and the loss of trees on the LRT corridor appeared to cross most discussions at the community tables. Sustainable, locally sourced goods, roof-top gardens, rain gardens at stations, interlocking pavement, greenspaces, and less cars emerged as conversation points around CBAs, and the Hamilton LRT specifically. Many comments asked for complete streets, improved traffic flow, and the need to look at the entirety of city traffic flow as opposed to neighbourhood by neighbourhood. The possibility of more community garden spaces, flowers, and less pavement also emerged. The need for cycling, walkability, and better transit crossed into this topic as well. The need for Complete Streets and more trees was agreed by every table to be a Community Benefit requirement.

**Accessibility (17 comments):** This category talked not just about physical AODA compliance, but all forms of accessibility, including economic accessibility. Comments around fares/discounted Presto cards and passes topped the list, as did stop distances, and engagement and project involvement of Indigenous peoples and culture. This theme included an overarching vision of equality for everyone regardless of income. Accessibility concerns around affordable housing, and the system itself, were overlapping themes.

**Shop Local and Business Support (11 comments):** It was generally agreed by the tables that revenue from development in Hamilton should stay in Hamilton. Most tables listed local business support as an ask for a CBA. Several tables also discussed having as much local procurement as possible, as well as procurement that is inclusive and environmentally friendly. Some overlap with the environment and accessible areas was mentioned in concerns about business owners being displaced. Losing businesses due to construction restrictions was the top concern among the tables.

**Employment (11):** Jobs topped the list at every table for feedback. Concerns about who would get those jobs, including thoughts they should go to young adults (youth) and marginalised adults. The inclusion of local training programs to drive decent work and uplift “those on the fringes of society” was a top priority. Financial investment in education, job readiness, and training and employment opportunities was listed.

Concerns were raised about the LRT jobs themselves, if they would be unionized, decent work, and not just more low paying gig jobs. Hamilton Living or Fair Wage is a must in any employment considerations from CBAs.

**Transportation Connection (9 comments):** In some form or another, each table discussed making sure the system interconnected with HSR, Sobi Bike Share, Walkability, and other transit systems. Concerns mirrored those within the accessibility theme. Would the LRT be affordable for youth? Low-income residents? Students? Older adults? Many noted that the station design must be age-friendly and accessible. These overlapped with concerns from the community spaces theme. The biggest concern in this category was how the LRT system specifically (and other development projects broadly) would integrate with the vision of Complete Streets for the City of Hamilton — connect to existing systems and be affordable.

**Public Arts: (7 comments)** At the event, seven people indicated that local artwork at each stop should be included in the CBA. They wanted that art to be meaningful to Hamilton and its history. Concerts on blocked streets, cultural activities in communities and community feedback on the types of public art to be selected also were discussed. Finally, the general trend seemed to be that arts and arts support from CBAs was an important topic — overlapping with employment (artists and a precarious career). Hamilton Arts for and by Hamiltonians was an important theme in this topic group.

The Hamilton Community Benefits Network  
is funded by contributions from:

**HAMILTON**  
**COMMUNITY**  
**FOUNDATION**  
**ATKINSON**

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**United Way**  
**Halton & Hamilton**