

## Employment Area Review – Consultation and Engagement Plan

### Background:

The Employment Area Review arises due to changes to the *Planning Act* and the implementation of the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) on October 20, 2024. The definition of “Area of Employment” in the *Planning Act* was amended to specifically exclude institutional and stand-alone commercial uses in designated Areas of Employment. This is different from the previous definition, which provided property owners with much more latitude for permitted uses. The changes also included the introduction of two new transition provisions which permit municipalities to establish Official Plan policies which recognize lawfully established uses in employment areas which do not meet the new definition to continue, and to create policies confirming that parcels containing the excluded land use remain and form part of a designated Area of Employment. While municipalities are not required to remove lawfully established uses which do not comply with the definition, new uses which do not comply cannot be established.

The Provincial Planning Statement (PPS 2024) introduced policy changes related to employment areas and permitted uses. The introduction of the PPS also included an updated designation for employment areas which aligns with and expands upon the definition in the *Planning Act* and further prohibits public service facilities from locating within employment areas. The PPS also introduced policies permitting privately initiated official plan amendment applications to remove lands from employment areas to be submitted at any time, whereas requests were previously only permitted at the time of a Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR).

To address provincial legislative and policy changes, city staff have initiated an Official Plan Amendment (OPA) under Section 26 of the *Planning Act*. This process includes a requirement to hold a minimum of one statutory open house and one statutory public meeting prior to submission of the OPA to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) for approval. The purpose of an open house is to provide the public with an opportunity to review and provide comments on the draft OPA, supporting materials, and proposed mapping. A statutory public meeting is a formal meeting held at Planning Committee where a staff recommendation is presented for consideration by Committee. At the statutory public meeting residents are presented an opportunity to provide feedback on the amendments before Committee makes a decision on the proposal. The consultation process must include thorough and comprehensive engagement and consultation with interested, involved, impacted, and affected audiences to ensure public awareness and participation in the review.

Employment Areas are critical to the function of the City of Hamilton and play a role in how the city grows and remains economically competitive. The unintentional loss and fragmentation of employment lands may result in the introduction of sensitive land uses that could impact the long-term economic viability of existing, planned, and future employment uses and lands. Strong official plan policies reinforce the importance of

designated employment areas within the city to maintain and sustain existing and future jobs and skilled work base.

**Context:**

The City of Hamilton employment lands were previously reviewed through the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) and the Growth-Related Integrated Development Strategy (GRIDS 2) processes. The Urban Hamilton Official Plan employment policies were updated at that time to plan for an increase of 119,00 jobs for a total of 360,000 jobs by 2051. The Land Needs Assessment (LNA) prepared for the MCR and GRIDS 2 process in 2021 determined that there was a small surplus of 60 net hectares of employment lands, of which 59 hectares were converted for non-employment uses. Urban Hamilton Official Plan Amendment No. 167 was approved by the Province in 2022 and implemented policy direction from the GRIDS 2 process, and included policies which promote the continuance of a strong economy by protecting, preserving, and increasing employment lands over the long-term.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this engagement and consultation plan is to outline the City’s strategy for seeking community input on the Employment Area Review, and to better inform the community and interested, involved, impacted, and affected audiences on the recent provincial planning changes and their impacts on long-term employment growth.

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
<p>INFORM the community about recent provincial planning changes that impact the City of Hamilton.</p> <p>INFORM the community about the role of Employment Areas and why they are valuable to the city.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline the recent provincial changes in the <i>Planning Act</i> and Provincial Planning Statement that impact planning decisions for employment areas within the City of Hamilton.</li> <li>• Explain how the legislative and policy changes impact existing land use permissions for employment areas in the Urban Hamilton Official Plan.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for engagement as per the regulations in the <i>Planning Act</i>. This includes a minimum of one open house and one statutory public meeting.</li> <li>• Highlight the importance of employment areas and how they are essential to the function of the city and tax base.</li> </ul>

<p>CONSULT with the community to determine how the existing policy framework for employment areas is functioning within the City.</p> <p>CONSULT with the community on which uses currently permitted in employment areas may be compatible in strategic growth areas.</p> <p>CONSULT on the role of employment areas and the importance of their presence in the city.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly promote opportunities to engage with staff on the project.</li> <li>• Seek input from the community on how existing employment policies are functioning within the existing framework in the Urban Hamilton Official Plan.</li> <li>• Seek input on which employment uses are compatible within strategic growth areas. For information purposes, strategic growth areas are located within urban areas, nodes, corridors, and other areas that have been identified by the city of the Province to be the focus for accommodating intensification and higher-density mixed uses in a more compact urban form.</li> <li>• Seek input on specific policies and regulations for uses in employment areas to determine if changes are required.</li> </ul>
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**Scope:**

The Consultation and Engagement Plan is focused on gathering input on the employment area review as staff work to implement the provincial changes. The Employment Area Review is focused on all existing employment areas within the urban and rural areas of the city. The review will consider the change in definition of ‘employment areas’ from the Province and the impact to current and future permitted uses in these areas.

In Scope:

Input on the Employment Area Review related to:

1. How the existing policy framework for employment areas in the Urban Hamilton Official Plan and Rural Hamilton Official Plan function.
2. Review of the designated employment area boundaries to determine if they should be refined by removing lands to permit or recognize land uses that no longer meet the new provincial definition of ‘employment areas.’
3. A new ‘employment area’ official plan designation that may include land use permissions for uses which are now prohibited from locating within employment areas, including office, commercial and retail uses.

4. Changes to permitted uses within employment areas throughout the Urban Area in Zoning By-law No. 05-200.

Out of Scope:

1. Requests to prohibit heavy manufacturing and industrial use in designated employment areas within Hamilton.
2. Requests to permit sensitive uses (e.g., residential, etc.) on land within designated employment areas.
3. Removal of designated Employment Lands without alternative locations within the City to accommodate the required lands to achieve growth targets.
4. Issues related to the Growth Related Integrated Development Strategy (GRIDS 2) or any questions related to a future GRIDS 3 process.
5. Requests, concerns, or issues related to Urban Boundary Expansion.
6. Requests to not implement the new provincial definitions for 'Area of Employment' and 'Employment Area' within the City of Hamilton.
7. Amending legislative requirements under the *Planning Act* or Provincial Planning Statement for Employment Areas.

**Engagement Methods & Audiences**

Inform Activity: Audiences and Tools

<b>Decision: What will the community influence through participation?</b>	<b>Target Audience: Who will influence the decision?</b>	<b>Engagement Method(s) and Tool(s)</b>
<p>Inform audiences about land use planning, what employment areas are, and why they are important.</p> <p>Inform the community about recent provincial legislative and policy changes to employment areas that impact Hamilton.</p> <p>Inform the community about the required changes to employment designations, permitted uses in employment areas, and impacts on uses now</p>	<p><b>General Public:</b> Interested, involved, impacted, and affected audiences.</p> <p><b>Landowners and/or Business Operators:</b> The same audience as identified above.</p> <p><b>External Review Agencies and Government Agencies:</b> The same audience as identified in Consult Level Engagement: Audiences and tools below.</p>	<p><b>Engage Hamilton Questions Tool:</b> Provide an opportunity for the public to ask questions and receive answers publicly. The project lead can provide answers and provide additional resources in a moderated process.</p> <p><b>Engage Hamilton Mapping:</b> Mapping and infographics from the Employment Area Inventory that demonstrates what uses are currently located within employment areas</p>

<p>excluded as a result of provincial changes.</p>		<p>and uses which are now permitted within/outside of employment areas.</p> <p><b>Engage Hamilton Links:</b> Provide links to information that provides high-level summary of important information and background documents for the project.</p> <p><b>Engage Hamilton FAQ:</b> Ensures that the public has the right information to be able to participate in a meaningful way.</p> <p><b>In-person and virtual open houses:</b> The format of an open house will allow the community to understand the background and scope of engagement for the project.</p> <p>Mapping of employment areas and infographics showing what uses are permitted to be located within and outside of designated employment areas should be planned for these events.</p> <p>Scoped discussions with Policy Planning and Economic Development staff.</p>
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<b>Decision: What will the community influence through participation?</b>	<b>Target Audience: Who will influence the decision?</b>	<b>Engagement Level</b>	<b>Engagement Method(s) and Tool(s)</b>
<p>Consult with audiences on uses permitted in the employment area designation.</p> <p>Consult with audiences on uses prohibited from locating in the Employment Area designation.</p> <p>Consult on the location criteria for strategic growth areas in the official plan.</p> <p>Where employment uses which are now excluded from being located within employment areas may be located within the Urban Area (i.e., strategic growth areas).</p>	<p><b>General Public:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Landowners within and near designated employment lands</li> <li>- Individuals on the enhanced GRIDS 2 email list</li> <li>- Interested community partners and organizations</li> <li>- Neighbourhood Associations</li> </ul> <p><b>External Review Agencies and Government Agencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hamilton Oshawa Port Authority (HOPA)</li> <li>- Conservation Authorities</li> <li>- Ministry of Transportation (MTO)</li> <li>- Canadian National Railway (CN)</li> <li>- John C. Munro Hamilton International Airport</li> <li>- Niagara Escarpment</li> </ul>	Consult	<p><b>Engage Hamilton Ideas Tool:</b> Allow the community to post their ideas in a creative way. Interactive Mapping to provide comments on a site-specific level.</p> <p><b>In-person and virtual open houses:</b> The format of an open house will allow the community to understand the background and scope of engagement and provide comments directly to staff. In-person events will be strategically located in existing employment areas.</p> <p><b>Focus Groups:</b> Scoped to provide affected landowners an opportunity to clarify questions related to permitted land uses.</p> <p><b>Individual Agency Outreach:</b> Input requested through direct contact.</p> <p><b>Internal Departmental Consultation:</b> Input requested through direct contact.</p>

	<p>Commission (NEC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Indigenous Communities</li> <li>- Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Agribusiness (OMAFRA)</li> <li>- Chambers of Commerce</li> </ul> <p><b>Internal City Departments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Economic Development</li> <li>- Planning</li> <li>- Growth Management</li> <li>- Facility Management</li> <li>- Real Estate</li> </ul> <p><b>Other:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Environmental Groups</li> </ul>		<p><b>Planning Committee Workshop:</b> Opportunity for City Council members to discuss the Employment Area Review in-depth.</p>
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**Public Engagement and Communication Deliverables:**

Communication

- It is a goal of this plan to promote public engagement opportunities via direct and indirect communication channels.
- Improved awareness and understanding of recent provincial legislative and policy changes that impact Hamilton’s Employment Areas.

Public Engagement

- Implementation of multiple engagement methods that support meaningful engagement opportunities:
  - Engage Hamilton project page which incorporates multiple Engagement Tools.
  - In-person open house style meetings and focus groups.
- Reduced barriers to community participation, supporting an engagement process that incorporates the principles of IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility) and results in meaningful engagement on the Employment Area Review.

- Engagement of the Indigenous Communities that is specifically designed to better meet the needs of the Indigenous Communities in contributing to the Employment Area Review and to foster and build improved relationships for ongoing and future projects.
- Report back to the community by developing and sharing a “What We Heard Summary Report” that outlined the engagement process, the input received, and how engagement contributed to the Employment Area Review and development of final official plan amendments.
- Meaningful engagement results that will inform City-initiated amendments to the Urban Hamilton Official Plan, and the Rural Hamilton Official Plan, if applicable.

**Risks and Alternatives:**

The following summarizes the risks and alternatives that may arise from the consultation process.

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Alternatives</b>
Participants requesting to prohibit heavy manufacturing and industrial uses in designated employment areas.	<p>Inform community of the importance traditional employment uses have within the city.</p> <p>Provide clear communication on where these uses are permitted to be located.</p>
Participants requesting to permit sensitive land uses, such as residential, on lands within designated employment areas.	Inform community members of the impacts of sensitive land uses on the long-term growth and success of employment uses within the City and the requirement to mitigate negative impacts.
Participants wanting to express their opposition to the policy and legislative changes made by the province in 2024.	<p>Provide clear and proactive communication in advance of public engagement on why staff must undertake the review.</p> <p>Retain a consultant to support and facilitate the in-person engagement activities.</p> <p>Provide community members with a list of contacts with whom to direct their concerns about the impacts of recent provincial decisions.</p> <p>Leverage Engage Hamilton tools that allow for interactive questions and</p>

	answers prior to attending in-person engagement event(s).
Community perception that their participation will not be utilized to inform the Employment Area Review.	Report back on how input was used to inform the Employment Area Review and why specific input was not/could not be incorporated.  Outline the scope of the project in a clear manner through proactive communication and timely communication throughout the project.
Individual requests submitted to remove lands from designated employment areas.	Report back on each removal request to clearly demonstrate the applicability of the conversion criteria for each parcel of land.

**Timeline:**

The following provides an overview of specific actions required to complete the Employment Area Review, the status of each action, and anticipated timeline for completion.

Action	Status	Timeline
Present Phase 1 Recommendation report to Planning Committee seeking direction to begin Phase 2 of the Employment Area Review	On Track	Q1 2026
Complete background reports and studies required to initiate the Employment Area Review	Not initiated	Q1-Q3 2026
Activate the Engage Hamilton Webpage to begin allowing on-line engagement	Not Initiated	Q1 2026
Initiate initial in-person engagement to gain an understanding of the efficacy of existing employment area policies and designations	Not Initiated	Q1-Q3 2026
Report back to community through a “What We Heard Summary Report”	Not Initiated	Q4 2026
Draft Urban Hamilton Official Plan Amendment(s) based on input received through the public participation process and ensures	Not Initiated	Q1 2027

conformity with the <i>Planning Act</i> and Provincial Planning Statement		
Conduct in-person and virtual engagement to receive public input on the proposed draft Urban Hamilton Official Plan Amendment	Not Initiated	Q1-Q2 2027
Conduct the legislated statutory Open House on the draft OPA(s)	Not Initiated	Q2 2027
Refine draft OPA(s) based on the comments received from the public and MMAH	Not Initiated	Q2 2027
Bring Recommendation Report to Planning Committee and hold statutory public meeting	Not Initiated	Q3 2027

**Additional Opportunities for Engagement:**

- Phone Call with a Planner
  - o Offer opportunities for community members to register for a 15 minute 'Phone Call with a Planner' to ask questions, gain insight, and discuss project details. Registration would be required and opportunities for meetings could be offered on a weekly basis for 1-2 months.
- Focus group meetings
  - o Opportunities for gathering qualitative insights and in-depth narratives and opinions that go beyond short informal discussions. Participants would ideally be those landowners and businesses directly impacted by the review project. Dialogue at the meetings
- Social media posts
  - o Social media posts have the ability to expand the Employment Area Review project visibility beyond the landowners receiving direct property mailouts. Promotion of the project online via multiple platforms may attract additional participants to provide valuable feedback.
- Planning Committee workshop
  - o A Committee workshop provides opportunities for staff and elected City Council members to discuss complex issues, such as the employment area review, and allows for more in-depth conversations than during a regular committee meeting. Workshops do not include decision making but rather are utilized for training land use planning and legislative requirements.

**Who's Listening:**

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