# INFORMATION REPORT

**Hamilton**

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<th>To:</th>
<th>Members of the Public Works Committee</th>
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<tr>
<td>From:</td>
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<td>Date:</td>
<td>October 1, 2007</td>
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<td>Re:</td>
<td>Gore Park Pedestrian Plaza</td>
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**Information:**

I would like to propose an idea to be included as part of the current update of the downtown transportation master plan. Downtown renewal efforts have had a measure of success, but we require a rethinking of how we approach downtown - its strengths and potential, if we are to take renewal to the next level.

We need to create a truly unique environment that has a clear identity that citizens can understand and relate to. For downtown Hamilton, that identity historically has been Gore Park. The Gore was a popular social gathering place, a hub of retail and commerce. We need to re-establish the Gore as a hub once again. A place where all citizens will point with pride when they think of downtown.

I would like for us to consider the idea of pedestrianizing the Gore – closing it off to through traffic and creating a public plaza. This idea has been brought up before but I believe the time to take this innovative step is now. Other North American cities have implemented similar pedestrian projects such as Sparks Street in Ottawa, Scarth Street Mall in Regina, and Prince Arthur Street in Montreal, as well as the innovative city of Paramount California.

Earlier this year I received a delegation from the City of Debrecen, the second largest city in Hungary. They were having similar issues with their downtown, and I was able to hear first hand how the creation of a pedestrian plaza in their core completely changed the fortunes of the area – particularly increases in land values and development activity. The concept was initially met with some resistance, but it has become a huge success and now businesses are lobbying to have the pedestrian plaza expanded to include their storefronts.

In the Hamilton context, various forms of this idea can be considered:

- Closing off one side to traffic, or both.
- Continuing to allow public transit and delivery vehicles to pass through.
- Seasonal/Time of Day closures.
Why Hamilton, Why Now?

Few other cities in Canada have the opportunity we have — to create a genuine civic plaza at the heart of their city. No other city has our ‘Gore Park’ which is ideally suited to becoming a nationally recognized urban public space along the lines of Sparks Street in Ottawa or Dundas Square in Toronto.

On the local front I see the stars aligning to move forward on a project like this:

- There is a greater understanding of the need to reduce our reliance on the automobile and to encourage more sustainable forms of transportation. These values are outlined in our city-wide transportation master plan.

- Part of the rationale of building the Red Hill Creek Expressway was to reduce traffic through the central city, including the core. With the expressway opening this fall, we can make use of this massive investment to help revitalize the core.

- We are in the process of moving the bus terminal off of Gore Park which will make it a more inviting public place.

- We are developing a rapid transit system which has been given a tremendous boost from the provincial government in recent months. Rapid transit will provide an efficient alternative means to access many part of the city, including the Gore.

Of course, when bringing forward an idea such as this, we need to engage the relevant stakeholders, such as the Downtown BIA. However, in order to have this issue properly debated, we need to have it considered in our official planning processes. With the downtown transportation master plan being updated, I would like to see how this option can be explored and how we can engage the public on this idea.

Fred Eisenberger
Mayor