Council Direction:

At its meeting of November 24, 2005, Council approved the staff recommendation that the draft Growth Related Integrated Development Strategy Growth Options be received by Council, that the draft growth options be presented to the public for review and comment, and that staff report back to Council on the results of the public consultation.

Information:

The Growth Related Integrated Development Strategy (GRIDS) study design was developed based on an extensive public consultation program as part of the Building A Strong Foundation (BASF) process. There is on-going public consultation, both formal and informal, throughout the GRIDS process. In November, 2005, draft growth options were presented to Council and Council authorized staff to consult with the public on the growth options.

Attached is the November/December Public Consultation Report. The report is in 2 volumes: a summary of the comments/issues/feedback provided by the public on the GRIDS growth options (volume 1, attached as Appendix “A”) and a copy of all submissions received (volume 2) (due to the size of volume 2, the report has not been attached but will be made available for public inspection in the Clerk’s office and on the GRIDS website).

Public consultation occurred in November, 2005 and December, 2005. Three open houses were held and a stakeholder workshop was also held. Notice of the Public Information Sessions were advertised in the Hamilton Spectator and Brabant newspapers and notice was also sent in the form of a 2 page bulletin to approximately 3,000 contacts on the project mailing list. Approximately 150 of those on the mailing list
received an invitation to the stakeholder workshop. A total of 26 people attended the workshop on the morning of December 1, 2005 and a total of 176 signed in at the Public Information Sessions (38 people on Nov. 28th, 35 people on Nov. 30th and 103 people on Dec. 5th). Not all participants at the open houses signed in for a variety of reasons (eg only one member of a family or group signed in).

Written submissions were requested by December 21, 2005. One hundred and thirty nine (139) people submitted comment forms, letters and e-mail messages including those dropped off at the Public Information Centre (6 forms dropped off at Nov 28 session; 6 at Nov 30 session; and 35 at Dec 7 session). In addition, the public were invited to provide written comments directly on the growth option display panels at the open houses.

It is noted that throughout the GRIDS process, written submissions are accepted and reviewed by staff. However, for the purpose of this report only those submissions received within the requested timeframe are included.

The results of the public consultation is presented around the following thematic areas:

1. Residential intensification;
2. The GRIDS growth options;
3. The criteria for assessing the growth options;
4. Employment;
5. Infrastructure; and,
6. Other issues.

**Residential Intensification:** The revitalization of the City of Hamilton’s existing built-up area through intensification was strongly supported and the benefits of intensification were noted (e.g. revitalizing core urban areas, fulfilling the principles of Vision 2020, supporting transit and mixed use communities). Support for intensification was qualified in that the public identified the need for the City develop a set of guiding principles for intensification, such as:

- the need for new development to maintain existing community character;
- building height, both existing and proposed must be considered;
- the importance of sufficient greenspace/open space and maintaining trees and attractive streetscapes;
- the allowance or even promotion of more varied uses (e.g. granny flats);
- the desire to protect public spaces for long term public use (e.g. redevelopment of school property into private residential use was given as an example of what not to allow);
- the need for more affordable housing and rental units;
- the importance of a strong and traceable planning process, community participation in the planning process and recognition of the importance of addressing the interests of the local community;
- infrastructure upgrades can be addressed when infill/redevelopment occurs. Stormwater management must be planned for as part of the intensification strategy; and,
• promoting pedestrian and transit friendly development to help improve quality of life.

For the GRIDS process, there is general support for intensification, which is important given the Provincial direction in the draft Places to Grow plan that municipalities adopt a strategy to accommodate 40% of the planned growth through intensification. However, the public have qualified their support in that redevelopment must be sensitive to the neighbourhood context. The issues and comments submitted will be utilized in the development of the City of Hamilton’s residential intensification strategy.

**GRIDS Growth Options:** Five growth options were presented: no urban boundary expansion (option 1); appropriately distributed development (options 2, 3 & 4); and, nodes and corridors (option 5).

The concept of no urban boundary expansion was supported as this option was viewed as the best in terms of protecting greenspace, agriculture lands and was seen as not requiring any additional infrastructure. The key reason put forward for not supporting Option 1 was that it may not provide for the City’s long term needs and was therefore seen as being unrealistic or would not comply with Provincial requirements such as the Provincial Policy Statement.

Generally, the public commented that although Options 2, 3 and 4 would accommodate projected growth, these options were viewed as having the potential to result in “more of the same”. The identification of new residential growth in the Pleasantview area (option 3) generated significant discussion and written submissions both in support of, and opposition to, development occurring in this area.

The reasons cited for supporting development in Pleasantview were:

- It is easily serviced with water and sewer (some areas were identified as already serviced or partially serviced);
- The land has been identified as heavy clay and therefore not good for agriculture. It was also noted that Option 3 has the least impact on agricultural land;
- It is strategically located close to major highways, downtown Hamilton, the new Airport Business Park, major employers in Dundas and the business area in Dundas; and,
- The beauty of the area will be attractive to those looking to live in Hamilton.

Many submissions were received on why this area should be excluded from any further consideration for development. Participants felt that given the history of the ‘development or no development’ issues in Pleasantview, which has included an OMB hearing, this area should not be considered for any future growth. Specifically, arguments for keeping development out of the Pleasantview area included:

- The Pleasantview area has been studied for decades and has been considered for protection by the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Parkway Belt West Plan and the Greenbelt Plan. Pleasantview is suppose to be a protected area;
Pleasantview receives a lack of municipal service now ("How do you expect to service a larger population? Development in Pleasantview would be expensive and difficult to service");

The area has been conclusively determined to have biologically significant flora. It is used extensively by wildlife and the fields serve as a vital link and safe passage for wildlife as they travel between different conservation lands. Suburban development would result in a loss of wildlife habitat and developing in Pleasantview could impact the fragile area of Cootes Paradise which has world recognition (National Geographic). The Pleasantview area affords a buffer to Cootes Paradise and preserving and sustaining this resource is paramount;

Pleasantview has been found to be a challenging place for the construction and maintenance of homes and infrastructure. The water run-off from the Niagara Escarpment has caused significant damage to existing homes and has been the reason for costly and difficult to solve road maintenance issues. Patterson and Valley Roads have been rebuilt more than once due to extensive water damage.

Although the agriculture lands in Pleasantview have been identified as a Class 7, they were productively farmed (soybeans, feed corn) yearly before being purchased by speculators. Also many fruit trees in the area. This is an indication of their good agricultural value;

City should pursue inclusion of Pleasantview with the NEC jurisdiction. The concept of a National Park from Escarpment to Cootes Paradise is very positive and would increase the profile of Hamilton; and,

Greenspace such as Pleasantview should be protected by the City to help counter the pollution created by urbanization and vehicles.

Although the Pleasantview area is within the Greenbelt Plan area, the Greenbelt Plan has retained the Parkway Belt West Plan. In this regard, an application could be brought forward to permit limited residential development in this area. As such, inclusion of the Pleasantview area in the growth options will allow for an assessment of the implications of permitting limited development to occur in this area and that this information will be presented to Council.

The 'nodes and corridors’ option (Option 5) was also supported. Participants liked the idea of focusing growth in specific areas and transit supportive development. A number of participants suggested that the nodes and corridors approach is appropriate for all the growth options including the no expansion option.

Participants suggested that the City take the lead in fostering a new kind of 'greenfield' development that encourages a greater mix of uses and social diversity, as well as providing for transit and walkable communities. The development of principles for new subdivisions was suggested including:

- minimum density rates to foster transit usage and discourage multi-car households;
- a principle that transit be provided immediately upon arrival of the first resident;
- defensible space and public amenity requirements; and
- progressive/creative stormwater standards and polices to allow for more infiltration, at source controls and stormwater treatment.
Generally participants were quite supportive that the City is undertaking a planning process that will consider the cost and infrastructure implications of growth. Consistently raised was the suggestion that the City develop its brownfields and underutilized lands prior to looking outside the current urban boundary. It was also suggested that any growth outside the current urban boundary should not take place until there is both jobs and infrastructure in place which is consistent with the GRIDS study design and 9-Strategic Directions in that the final GRIDS report will include a phasing strategy.

**GRIDS Evaluation Criteria:** The public highlighted the importance of creating liveable and complete communities (both within the existing urban area and any new greenfield development areas) when assessing the growth options. In this regard, quality of life issues such as air quality, alternative modes of transportation and job:housing balance were identified as being important.

The concept of 3 bottom lines (community well being, ecological well being and economic well being) was supported and as previously noted the participants were quite supportive that the City is undertaking an integrated planning process.

**Employment:** Generally participants seemed to be in agreement that employment and employment lands were important to the viability of the City helping to ensure that Hamilton does not become just another bedroom community for the GTA. In this regard, the need for additional employment lands on the mountain to keep a balance between where people live and work and thus reduce the demand on the transportation system was raised and support was expressed for the City’s decision to reserve the Highway 6-airport business park area for future employment lands. Alternatively, it was suggested that if the City of Hamilton cannot create additional employment opportunities, then the population and household growth should be limited to maintain a balance between jobs and housing.

**Infrastructure:** Information on the stormwater, transportation and water and wastewater master plans was presented at the GRIDS open houses and workshops. The public commented development should not be approved/allowed to occur unless the infrastructure is in place to accommodate the development. Many people commented on transportation related matters, especially public transit, and in particular the need for enhancements to public transit. Specific suggestions included:

- consistent and expanded HSR routes;
- more transit frequency beyond the old city;
- need for more frequent N/S service;
- change bus to 2-way on James and John Streets;
- McMaster should serve as a hub for buses;
- transit service in Dundas needs to be improved with a stronger transit connection between McMaster and the airport;
- the lower city east-west transit corridor should be extended into Dundas;
- should partner with Burlington to service Waterdown with transit; and,
• Transit needs to be both affordable and accessible - it was suggested that taxes pay for free public transit.

The need for improvements to the road network were suggested as well as the importance of goods movement (including rail system improvements).

Additional Comments: GRIDS is an integrated, multi-disciplinary planning process. The public were generally positive that land use, infrastructure, economic development and social development/quality of life considerations are being dealt with in a comprehensive fashion. However, by the very nature of having an integrated planning process, a significant amount of information has been and is being created as part of the GRIDS process. While the public provided positive comments on the integrated nature of GRIDS, comments were made that too much information was being presented. The GRIDS project team will review this matter in developing the public consultation plan for the preferred growth option, infrastructure master plans and Official Plan policies.

Next Steps

The information, comments and feedback provided by the public will be incorporated into the review and evaluation of the GRIDS growth options and the development of the GRIDS growth strategy. A preliminary review of the comments indicates that as a result of Provincial requirements, public education will be required on specific growth related issues such as why the City of Hamilton must plan for the projected levels of growth (i.e. 660,000 people by 2031). Furthermore, there is public support for intensification, transit supportive development and the importance of maintaining and/or revitalizing the existing communities/neighbourhoods within the City of Hamilton.

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Glen Peace
City Manager

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Attachment 1