CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS IN HAMILTON MAY LEAVE THE KIDS BEHIND

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the stark geographic disparity that youth in Hamilton face when trying to access services. There is a high number of youth services concentrated in the inner and lower city, but this does not seem poised to meet the changing demographics and needs of the city of Hamilton. Gentrification and community uplift have started in the lower city, and as such, having a majority of youth services located in the downtown presents a major form of disconnection. This is especially shown as youths living in poverty begin to be pushed out of the lower city and into the inner suburbs on top of the Niagara Escarpment—a place that is geographically cut off from the rest of the city. This paper examines these issues and presents recommendations, to help youth and the City of Hamilton address this disconnection as Hamilton experiences unprecedented growth and development, which may leave the youth behind.

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"To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully."- City of Hamilton Vision Statement

Chapter 1: Introduction

This research project is about making a case for better distribution of youth programming and services in the city of Hamilton, addressing geographic disparities in available services for young people in the city. Currently, youth services in Hamilton are primarily located within the downtown and lower city areas. Based on a map of available youth recreation resources, produced by the City of Hamilton, a clustering of services, programs and amenities can be seen below the Hamilton escarpment, with thirty-three resources below the escarpment and thirteen above (Youth Recreation Resources Map, 2015). This paper discusses whether this spatial allocation of services is appropriate, and what can be done about ensuring young residents have access to the services they need to ensure they are given the opportunity to grow and develop in a healthy and safe manner.

Without a doubt, there is a reason there are an abundance of youth resources below the escarpment, as compared to the rest of the city. Historically this had very good logic behind it, as the income levels in the lower city of Hamilton have been comparatively lower than the average for the rest of the city. While wealthier parents can afford to enroll their children in specialized paid programs, and drive their children to further dispersed locations, it is more likely that inner city parents were not able to afford to do so. In 2010, the Hamilton Spectator released a mapping project called Code Red that showed the stark disparities in health outcomes between some of the city's poorest neighbourhoods and its wealthiest neighbourhoods (Buist, DeLuca, & Johnston, 2010; Great Divide of Extremes and Disparity, 2010). Since then, the City of Hamilton has partnered with "community agencies to address the inequities across [their]

neighbourhoods," and created the Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS), to help address this problem (Hamilton.ca, 2018). By most accounts, the NAS has had a tremendous amount of success at fostering both engagement and social development within some of the poorest communities in the city. There have been dramatic increases in services provided within NAS neighbourhoods, including those for children and youth. The areas targeted for the NAS are communities with high child and family poverty rates. Thus, it is a good thing these neighbourhoods are being targeted. However, looking forward, community uplift in those areas is beginning, and pressures from outside the city are increasing on the lower city housing market. Therefore, it is likely that this concentration of poverty will move into other areas throughout the city. It is important to plan ahead with regards to where resources are allocated. With a deficit of resources throughout the rest of the city, this will present major equity issues when it comes to youth.

In the data from the 2010 Code Red Mapping project, there is already evidence of pockets of poverty in the upper city, on the escarpment. This can be seen especially in the code red map of children under the age of 18 living below the poverty line, which is shown in the mapping analysis section of this paper. While a concentration of poverty is shown in the lower city (based on 2006 census data), along the Lincoln Alexander Parkway, on the escarpment, there appears to be a concentration of children living below the poverty line as well. Given this, even though services have been designated to serve the lower city, where there is the highest concentration of poverty, it appears there are other areas of the city that also need targeted investment. This is especially

important, given that the demographics of the lower city appear to be shifting substantially.

Recently, wealth has been flowing into the Neighbourhood Action Strategy neighbourhoods, to the point where there are concerns about whether or not the NAS itself has led to gentrification (Neighbourhood Action Strategy 2017 Annual Report, 2017, 26). Gentrification, generally, is defined as the influx of wealthier residents into historically lower income neighbourhoods, and has become a hot-button issue for the lower city of Hamilton. There are a series of benefits to gentrification—as it allows for investment being made in neighbourhoods that have historically been left to deteriorate, and can lead to neighbourhood turnaround that can have positive impacts on youth in those communities—but it also comes with a set of concerns about displacement. As displacement concerns grow, one issue faced by the City of Hamilton is, with the exception of the neighbourhoods targeted by the NAS, there is almost no youth specific programming throughout the rest of the city, especially seen on top of the escarpment, or anywhere outside of the lower city (Youth Recreation Resources Map, 2015). Within Hamilton, as seen in other cities, after the process of gentrification of the urban core begins, a movement of poverty will likely be seen moving to the inner suburbs. The problem that is unique to Hamilton's geography, is that most of Hamilton's inner suburbs are cut off from the central city by limited access up and down the escarpment, especially by public transit.

If Hamilton's current trend of gentrification in the inner city continues, poverty concentration will likely move to the inner suburbs, mainly upon the escarpment. This is where housing values are rising as well, but not as fast as other areas of the city. The

lower city near the central business district, and along the incoming LRT route are two great examples of how targeted urban renewal programs are increasing the amount of community uplift, but also the values of the surrounding properties. While the city cannot control property values or the real estate market, it is important to be aware of changes in affordability that will affect all of the city's current residents. Looking forward to the next twenty-five years is crucial, as it enables the City of Hamilton to avoid the problems that the lower city faced, with years of disinvestment and a lack of attention to income inequalities until the 2010 Code Red Spectator series was released. When thinking of the next twenty-five years, strategic investment in the city's youth should be a major priority.

Since targeted investment, primarily in the lower city (with the exception of the Rolston neighbourhood on the Hamilton escarpment) has resulted in a concentration of youth programming downtown—an area that is geographically cut off from the upper half of the city—it is important that research be done to understand what the implications are. Currently, the city is experiencing a surge in wealthier homebuyers (in comparison with historic Hamilton buyers), purchasing and renovating old housing stock in the lower city. This paper seeks to provide a rational and vision for the future of youth programing across the City of Hamilton for the next twenty-five years, as investment into the lower city displaces residents to areas further from the core. This is a forward thinking paper which seeks to address a problem which is likely to occur over the next couple decades, and that data suggests will occur, but does not yet pose as great of a problem.

It is also important to note, that as a vulnerable population with very little political voice, the youth population has been historically left out of the conversation. This must not be the case if Hamilton wishes to be true to its motto of being "the best place to raise a child and age successfully" (City of Hamilton Vision Statement, 2015-2025). Given the primacy of this vision statement, more work needs to be done addressing better distribution of youth programming and services throughout the entire city of Hamilton.

Chapter 2: Methods

The methodology for this study is based on a few different studies of gentrification and neighbourhood change.

In the literature review, a scan of local news organizations and independent journalists provides the foundation for the reasons behind conducting this work in the city of Hamilton. This scan shows the landscape in which gentrification and population change is taking place. It reflects the concerns the community has about displacement in the lower city, and the speed at which change is taking place in the population as a whole. When it comes to a focus on youth, looking to local independent journalist Joey Coleman's article *A History of City Hall's Failure to Create a Meaningful Youth Advisory Committee* is important as well. Although the article is highly critical of the City of Hamilton's investment in youth, this article is also part of the reason that local politicians were galvanized into taking action on how to better support youth in the community. Additionally, when it comes to chronicling a history of youth engagement at City Hall, there does not seem to be a better source to pull information from.

A large portion of this work is also based on a series of maps. The most important map is that of available youth recreation resources. What this map shows is a clustering of recreation resources in the lower city, and a scarcity of resources available to youth throughout the upper section of the city, in the inner suburbs. While this map is only based on recreation opportunities for youth, the City of Hamilton, through their Youth Engagement Strategy is currently working on building a database of all youth services in the city. For the purposes of this paper, it is assumed that this data will mirror the same geographic disparity shown in the recreation map. While there may be

a few differences, it is likely that inner city targeted investment has been the focus of a majority of youth programming, not just recreation services.

The study also contains mapping based on Code Red, which was a very influential study in garnering the attention of people and organisations across the city. The Code Red project used mapping to show severe discrepancies between neighbourhoods in the city of Hamilton. This study echoes their methods, in order to provide an update on two of the statistics which might affect youth outcomes at the neighbourhood level. These maps include data on median family income, and percentage of youth living below the poverty line. This mapping is done to determine if neighbourhood and population change is occurring in Hamilton. This mapping is also reinforced by a study done out of the University of Toronto, which looks at neighbourhood change in the city of Hamilton since the 1970's, which also appears to conclude that more recent displacement out of the center of the city is pushing poverty onto the Hamilton Escarpment, a place which would be considered Hamilton's inner suburbs.

Once the fact that neighbourhood change is occurring in Hamilton is established, some research is done on the impact of gentrification on urban children's wellbeing. The paper then goes on to examine what solutions there can be, to the lack of geographically distributed services for youth which Hamilton is facing. An issue that is further exacerbated by the fact that gentrification is occurring within the lower city of Hamilton, which can be defined as the "in-migration of affluent neighbours and the displacement of low-income residents" (Formoso, Weber, & Atkins, 2010, 396). Since it appears this trend has begun happening now, it is crucial to begin to address it before

adding in a focus on youth services across the city becomes a Band-Aid fix to social

problems that arise from a lack of investment in youth.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

This literature review contains: a selection of relevant academic works to childhood wellbeing, Code Red, population studies, projects undertaken by the City of Hamilton, and news media that is regularly consumed by city of Hamilton residents.

Joey Coleman Chronicles Youth Engagement at City Hall

In March of 2017, a local independent journalist, Joey Coleman, released an article detailing what he sees as the city's "failure to create a meaningful youth strategy". Having been a part of a youth advisory committee prior to the amalgamation of the city in 2000, he notes that a focus on youth had been absent from the city's priorities after amalgamation. There had previously been youth advisory committees for the former municipalities, but upon amalgamation they ceased to be relevant (Coleman, 2017). Coleman notes that it was not until 2006, six years after amalgamation that the lack of a youth specific advisory committee became a council priority.

Supported by the Emergency and Community Services department, the Youth Advisory Committee had the goal of being a space where there are "opportunities for youth to participate in municipal government and decision making, and perhaps more importantly, for Council and municipal staff to listen to youth" (Report to Social Services Committee, October 17, 2006). The committee began with large aspirations, and was focused on addressing issues faced by youth city wide. Many of the issues the youth who attended the first advisory committee meeting identified twelve years ago (2007) are still seen as a pressing issues faced by youth today (Youth Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes, November 13, 2007). These issues included a lack of youth

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opportunity, poor voter turnout, and a need for more emphasis on youth homelessness, career and financial planning help, as well as substance use issues. However, it can be argued that while the best of intentions were there in the creation of the youth advisory committee, the model was not sustainable.

By 2010, the youth advisory committee struggled to maintain attendance, and as Coleman writes "its agendas turned into an endless exercise of asking youth to define their own role in the City and trying to get them to organize events" (Coleman, 2017). The committee was no longer a political priority, and in its stead a variety of 'new' youth committees were set up, including a separate youth advisory body to the mayor, and a new organization called Hamilton Hive, born out of the city's economic development department, which focused on networking and young professional development. There were a few attempts at revival of the advisory committee, but largely the body could not sustain membership, and eventually in 2015 ceased to exist.

In 2017, the city publicly launched its youth engagement strategy. The project goal is to:

> understand the successes and challenges youth in Hamilton face,
> learn and showcase great stories of youth and partners supporting
> youth 14 to 29 in our city, identify partnerships to create new
> opportunities for youth, and showcase our youth and partners and
> look for opportunities to enhance services with better city support
> (City of Hamilton Youth Strategy).

They are in the process of creating a youth engagement strategy which hopes to address some of the failures of previous committees while building on the success of other youth serving agencies in the city as a whole.

<u>Current Resources Available to Youth</u>

As the city is now in the process of conducting a city-wide services scan—as part of developing and implementing the youth engagement strategy—a full picture of services which are available to youth is not available. For the context of this report some assumptions are made based of the distribution of recreation resources available to youth, as seen below.

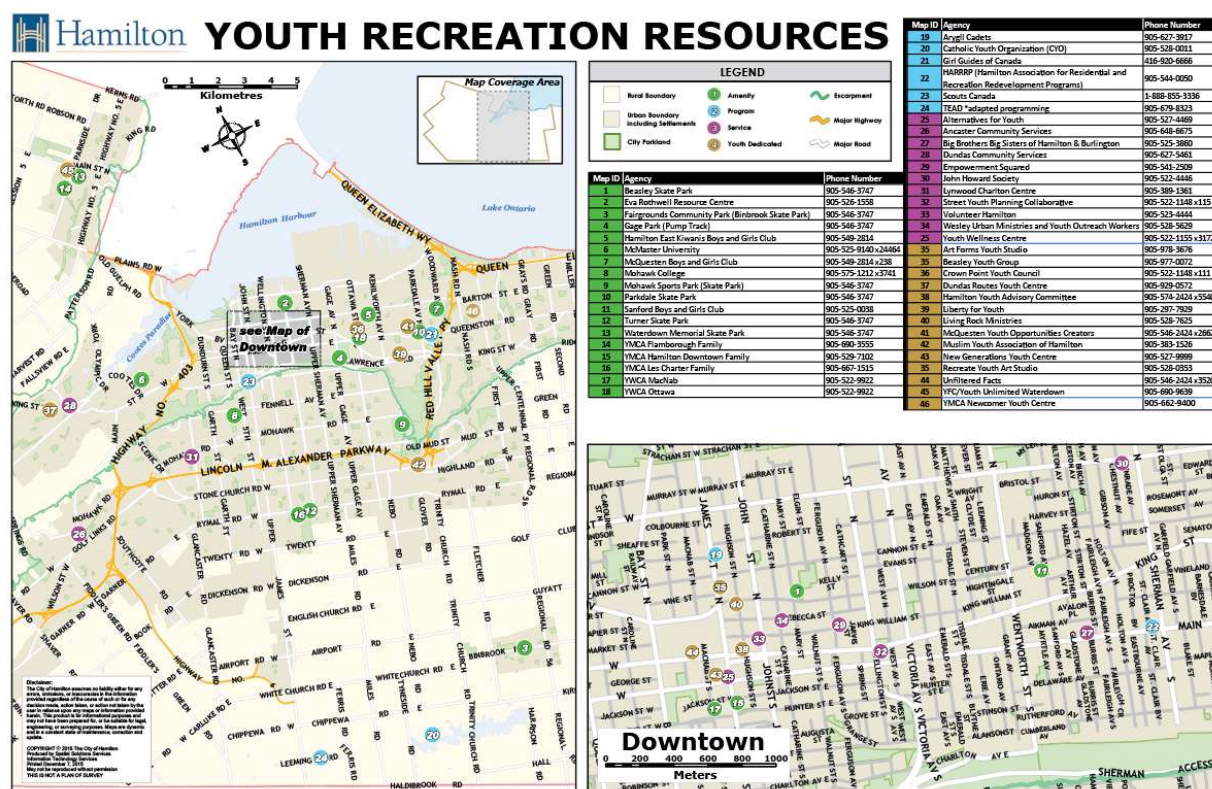*Figure 1 Youth Recreation Resources in the City of Hamilton, 2015.*

Briefly, the map of Youth Recreation Resources shows a concentration of youth serving (recreational) agencies within the downtown sector of the city. The bulk of the resources are located between Bay St. to Sherman Ave., and Cannon St. to Jackson St. In fact, 18 of all youth recreation opportunities are located in this concentrated

downtown area, whereas there are only 26 opportunities throughout the rest of the entire city. Furthermore, when adjusting for what is below and above the escarpment, the picture becomes even bleaker. There are a total of 32 opportunities in the lower city, and only 12 throughout the rest of the city's inner suburban and suburban areas. This is the discrepancy which drew my attention to the need for work to be done on this project. Since currently much of the youth serving organizations are located throughout the lower city, they seem to be inaccessible to many members of the city's young population. Hamilton is a split level city with the Niagara Escarpment creating a geographic break throughout the lower and upper city. Movement between upper and lower neighbourhoods is severely restricted without access to a vehicle—something all youth under the age of 16 do not have complete access to. Additionally, public transit issues throughout the city have exacerbated this problem, and also limit access to services for residents who live on top of the 'mountain' and do not possess a driver's licence (HSR Eyes New Service Amid No-Show Bus Crisis, Matthew Dongen, 2018). The demographics affected most by this service gap include low income residents on the mountain, as well as all young people without a driver's license.

As previously mentioned, the Youth Engagement Strategy is in the process of mapping out all services for youth within the city, as well as consulting with youth about what the city is doing well, and not well for their young constituents. This report—paired with the data which emerges from the work the Youth Engagement Strategy is doing—seeks to provide robust recommendations for how the city should move forward. Getting this strategy right and taking action is exceedingly important given that all youth

opportunities for recreation, and potentially all other services is concentrated in the downtown and lower city—an area that is seeing unprecedented population shifts.

Is gentrification happening in Hamilton?

A popular narrative is dominating Hamilton's media-scape, and as such, it is public discourse. This is especially seen in the context of higher income residents moving from Toronto to Hamilton, in order to take advantage of more affordable housing options. The idea of gentrification is abundant, as both CBC Hamilton, the Hamilton Spectator, as well as several other independent news sources report (The Gentrification of Hamilton, Harris, 2018; Hamilton Creatives Rally Against Gentrification, Carter, 2019; Gentrification in Hamilton, Moran, 2017). Determining the veracity of these claims is necessary and will be examined further, with a specific look towards statistics regarding where demographic change is occurring in Hamilton. This paper specifically examines two maps from the Code Red project, which used census data from 2006, as well as updated information for these two maps using 2016 data to paint a picture of where we are at today in terms of median family income and children under the age of 18 living in poverty.

While the municipality cannot control whether or not the values of land increase, it will eventually be responsible for the social problems that could arise as a result of displacement. These maps will be able to paint a picture of how point-in-time populations are changing within the city. Looking at the 2006 census data, and then updating it with data that is closer to present day will help to expand upon whether or

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not poverty in the city is moving, and if gentrification is having an impact on the lower city's demographics.

Talking about Code Red

As Code Red has been mentioned throughout this paper already, it is important to take a closer look at how this influential work has influenced Hamilton's social geography. The report was published as a "seven-day special investigative series in the Hamilton Spectator" (Buist, Johnston, & DeLuca, 2012, p. 317). Pulled together by Steve Buist, Neil Johnston and Patrick DeLuca, Code Red was a project which contained "[s]imple statistics, maps of the City's neighbourhoods, interviews and stories" which examined health disparities between census tracts within the city (2012, p. 317). The biggest finding of this report is that there is "a 21-year difference in average age at death across Hamilton neighbourhoods" with most of the lower city surrounding downtown being hit the hardest (p. 321). When other demographic data was examined it painted a fairly consistent picture of poverty within the downtown census tracts, with the bottom 20% of each statistic usually residing in the lower city. There were some census tracts containing poverty elsewhere, but nowhere near as concentrated as it was in the lower city. The objective of their report was in part "to stimulate a community debate about the variation of both the determinants of health and health status between neighbourhoods and what could be done to alleviate them" (p. 318). As such, the findings of their research project were published in the community newspaper, as opposed to traditional academic mediums. This garnered the attention of a huge swath of the city, including "planners and political leaders" (p. 318). The City created a

Neighbourhood Development Strategy specifically to address some of the issues raised by the study. It also changed the course of development in the city as well. McMaster University cited Code Red as a reason for relocating a few new healthcare and campus developments to the downtown area (p. 326). This is just one example of one of the city's major institutional partners trying to reshape the social geography of Hamilton.

The publication of this data led to the creation of "a new staff position specifically in response to Code Red to implement a neighbourhood development strategy to address some of the issues raised by the series' findings" (p. 324-325). This is now known as the Neighbourhood Action Strategy, which is housed in the Healthy and Safe Communities Department.

An Inner Ring of Suburban Poverty?

There is a documented trend of areas within cities where poverty is beginning to spread to the inner suburbs of cities, from the inner core. This process has occurred in places like Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal (Ades, Apparicio, & Séguin, 2016), and looks like it is currently occurring within the city of Hamilton. In a report by Josefina Ades, Philippe Apparicio, and Anne-Marie Séguin (2016) the authors investigate whether or not poverty concentration is expanding to the suburbs of Canada's major cities. In their conclusions, they highlight that yes, poverty is expanding to the suburban communities in these Canadian contexts. They also highlight that "living in the suburbs could represent an additional struggle for those in need due to the shortage of suburban resources and services oriented toward the poor" (Ades, Apparicio, & Séguin, p. 35). This notion is key, especially as downtown cores of cities experience "gentrification and

condo-fication of their central cities" (Moos & Mendez, 2015, p. 1878). This renewed investment in downtown or inner city sites is a result of targeted urban renewal programs, seeking to address the sprawl issues of suburban expansion. Based on the 2016 census looking at median family income and the youth poverty levels in the city, as well as the current media talk about the influx of Greater Toronto Area buyers saturating the Hamilton market, this is occurring in Hamilton. How the City manages to address the issue of poverty migrating to the inner suburban areas is going to play a key part in having healthy outcomes for the children who live in those neighbourhoods.

These issues were also examined in the Hamilton context by Richard Harris, Jim Dunn and Sarah Wakefield, in June 2015. They talk about how in the early 1970's a number of Canadian cities had begun to show "signs of incipient gentrification" but Hamilton had not followed these trends (Harris, Dunn, & Wakefield, 2015, p. 17). Instead, Hamilton's inner city had experienced decline in conjunction with a decline in available manufacturing jobs. Having done a very thorough job of examining census data in Hamilton since the 1970's, Richard Harris et al. have traced the growth of poverty in the historically working class neighbourhoods. They also conclude that the city's escarpment draws a hard line between the city's neighbourhood, which appears to be economic as well as physical. In general, since the 1970's, there has been a divide where the lower city is predominantly low income, whereas the upper city has predominantly not been.

It is not until the year 2000 that signs of low income census tracts began to emerge on the escarpment. By 2010, a trend of relative inner suburban decline on the mountain seems to be established along the Lincoln M. Alexander parkway (p. 21). This

data is also reflective of the trends which will be observed in the next chapter of this report. Their report also addresses a major concern, they recognize that the inner suburban areas in Hamilton that are experiencing neighbourhood decline are also poorly served by public transit (p. 26). The neighbourhoods of the lower city of Hamilton are experiencing pressures from commuters moving into them, as well as some steep redevelopment pressures (p.28). The authors conclude that the inner city of Hamilton has "belatedly…joined the trend of gentrification that has been reshaping Canadian cities" (p. 28). How the city begins to address these issues then becomes crucial to avoiding the movement of the past problem of inner city decline into a form of inner suburban decline. This is especially important given that Hamilton's inner suburbs are poorly serviced by public transit, but also lack youth friendly services. Besides just looking at neighbourhoods that look projected to become places where poverty is moving, or has already moved, it is also worthwhile to look at the spaces in the city that are currently undergoing gentrification.

Gentrification and children's wellbeing

By most media reports, gentrification—or at least neighbourhood and demographic change—has begun taking place in Hamilton (Buist, 2015; Buist, 2016). This was discussed in the above section. Since it appears gentrification is taking place, it is important to take note of how this trend of population change is likely to affect youth. This is especially true given the lack of youth amenities in anywhere but the lower city.

A paper entitled Gentrification and Urban Children's Wellbeing examines how "gentrification changes the neighbourhood and family contexts in which children are

socialized-for better and worse"(Formoso, Weber & Atkins, 2010, p. 395). The paper purports that gentrification is a means to deconcentrate poverty by mixing households with differing income levels, and distribute neighbourhood disadvantage. The writers believe that this "is ideal from a policy perspective because it motivates individuals, and not governments to shoulder the costs of neighbourhood upgrading" (p. 396). So if the goal of the City of Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy is to generate community uplift, which it has in part done, perhaps a trend of gentrification combined with it is not a bad thing? Youth in neighbourhoods that have historically been low on the economic spectrum often do benefit from community investment and uplift within their neighbourhoods. In theory, having affluent residents move into a neighbourhood increases the political clout of the residents and allows all children to "allows poor children to take advantage of the beneficial features associated with both wealthier places and affluent neighbourhoods" (p. 396). This can include improvement in school systems, park systems, and other after school activities. However, what happens to the youth who live in—yet are forced to move out of—gentrifying areas is important to consider, especially if it turns out that youth services are required to move to address poverty concerns in other parts of Hamilton, on the mountain for example.

<u>Youth Inclusion in Decision Making</u>

A key part to providing services for youth is including them in the decision making process. The reason that the Neighbourhood Action Strategy is so successful is that it has been built off of taking residents voices seriously, in helping them to implement change within their own communities. This has taken the form of community planning

teams for eleven different neighbourhoods. In order to build on the success of this

model, youth must be included in the decisions made about them. In terms of how youth

have been historically involved in government decision making, tokenism has played a

strong role (Bernard, 2016, p. 116). This can result in "methods of youth inclusion that

alienate and deter adult civic engagement" (p. 116). In order to avoid this occurrence,

we can look to Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation.

Developed in the 1980's Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation became an

influential tool in the world of child and youth development. Depicted as a ladder, the

bottom rungs include manipulation, decoration, and tokenism, whereas the top rungs

include child initiated shared decision making with adults, child initiated and directed

decision making, as well as adult initiated and shared decision making with children. If

the goal of meaningful inclusion of youth is to go beyond tokenism, reaching a point

where youth are involved at the level of sharing decisions about themselves with adults

is important.

Fitting youth engagement work undertaken by the City of Hamilton into the

provincial framework is also important. In 2013, the Government of Ontario released its

Stepping Up Framework which "articulates the government's sustained commitment to

supporting the well-being of Ontario's youth". The framework outlines a variety of ways

in which the province will "support all young people to become healthy, safe, hopeful,

engaged, educated, and contributing members of their communities and our province".

By working within existing provincial guidelines, and building upon organizational

successes of other youth serving agencies throughout the city of Hamilton, the City can find a way to bolster and celebrate its youth population.

Building Integrated Neighbourhoods

So how are children in poorer families who are able to remain in gentrifying neighbourhoods benefiting? Presumably the influx of wealth into a neighbourhood comes with a higher degree of financial means for better programming and services in the neighbourhood. Especially since deconcentrating poverty "allows poor children to take advantage of the beneficial features associated with both wealthier places and affluent neighbourhoods" (Formoso, Weber & Atkins, 2010, p. 396). However, for this to work there must be a certain degree of integration between the two population groups. Integration allows for collective socialization and while more affluent residents have "political clout to demand improved institutional resources […], and information about accessing educational and occupational opportunities for children" (Formoso, Weber & Atkins, 2010, p. 404). Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy has been quite successful at fostering neighbourhood integration (which is sometimes a messy process), which will hopefully allow for resilience when it comes to populations experiencing rapid neighbourhood change. This type of gentrification is definitely beginning to address the deconcentration of poverty in the city, but it is also necessary to ensure that changes provide benefits to all residents in the city. The model which the Neighbourhood Action Strategy has used to foster neighbourhood integration may also be applicable to fostering youth integration in the city as a whole.

Neighbourhood Action Strategy

The Neighbourhood Action Strategy is at least in part the reason why there are better youth opportunities within what are considered 'priority neighbourhoods'. After Code Red exposed the stark differences between these communities, the Hamilton Community Foundation and the City of Hamilton chose 11 target neighbourhoods to address, with specific neighbourhood development strategies. These neighbourhoods were targeted because they had the greatest amount of poverty and inequity in the city. At the time of its inception and due to the high profile of the Code Red neighbourhoods, a larger amount of grants and financial capital became available from both the City of Hamilton and the Hamilton Community Foundation to use for these neighbourhoods. This has allowed youth programming to flourish in areas which otherwise would not have received services. However, now Hamilton's demographics are beginning to change. The downtown areas of Hamilton are beginning to be on the receiving end of planned community uplift and regeneration.

In a report titled (Re)Imagine by the Hamilton Community Foundation evaluating the past 5 years of the Neighbourhood Action Strategy, they recommend looking at new ways in which to "to consider how [neighbourhoods] enter and exit the NAS" (2018, p. 10)., Other than focusing on the high school dropout rate, there does not seem to be a big focus on youth in the NAS, but there is opportunity for them to do more. They are an important part of the puzzle. Neighbourhoods being targeted by the NAS are experiencing what is thought to be good investments and community uplift which will bring higher quality amenities. However, it is important to consider that even as a community experiences change, not all residents will benefit from these changes. As

populations are displaced it is important to recognize that Hamilton will need to focus on

where these populations are moving.

Chapter 4: Population Data Analysis

For the purposes of this paper, due to time and project constraints a focus will be made on two of the maps created in the Code Red Project. I will look at median family income, as well as children under 18 living in poverty. This is because these datasets are readily accessible through the 2016 census, and because providing updated values is crucial to understanding the population changes that may be occurring in Hamilton as it pertains to income, but also to the youth poverty levels. I will examine what the data said in 2006, and then look into 2016 maps. From here I go on to explore demographic trend changes seen in Hamilton. To begin with, I will introduce a map of Hamilton pointing out all of the former municipalities included in the present city, the Hamilton/Burlington Bay, and each of the wards in the city labelled as well. It is hoped that this map will assist the reader in understanding the layout of the city, given the context of the next maps that follow.
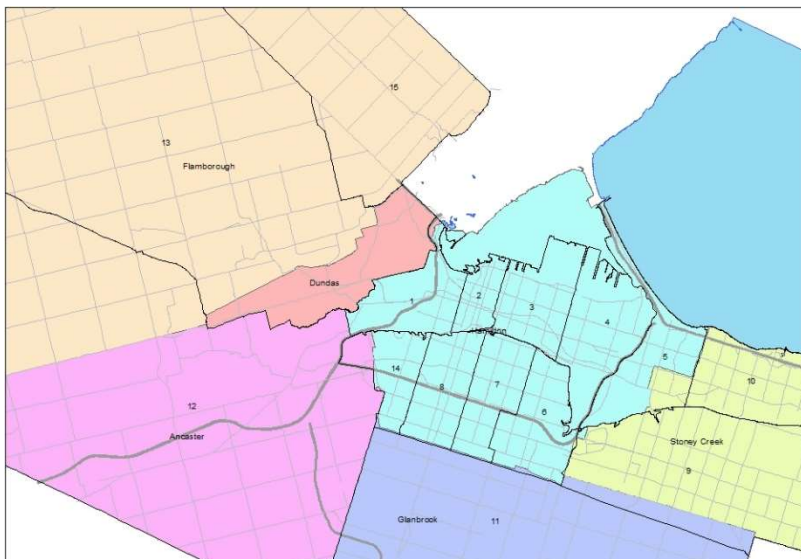

Figure 2 A context map showing the former municipalities of Hamilton.

<u>Median Family Income</u>

Looking at median family income is an important way to tell how populations and incomes are shifting within the city. The maps produced in Code Red divide the data into quintiles, showing the most well off in the city as green, and the least well off in red. The median is a cream colour. This is shown in the figure below.
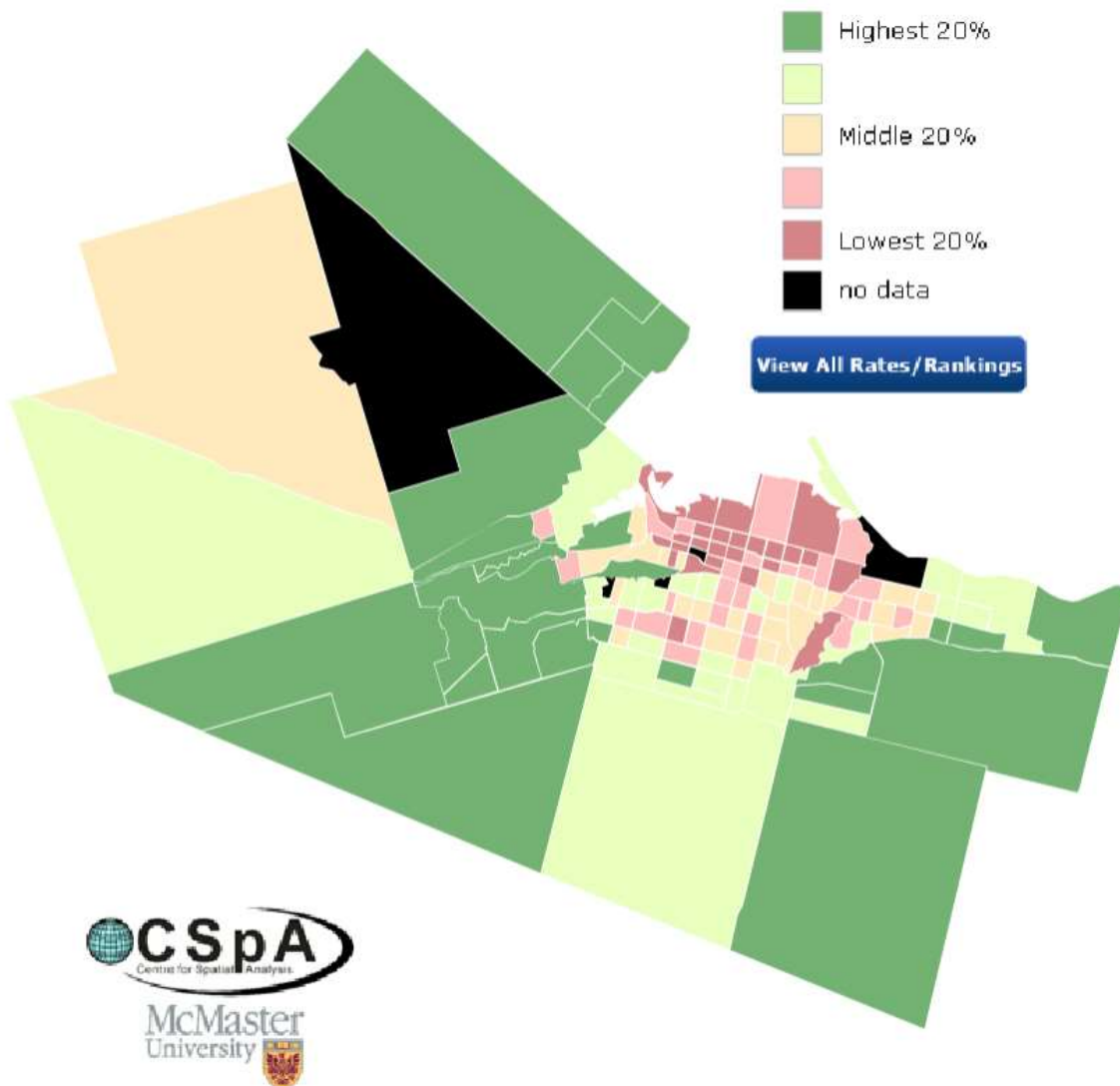

Figure 3 A map of Median Family Income from the year 2006.

In 2006, it is clear that the lowest median family incomes are overly concentrated in the lower city, with some red areas above the mountain and located in Stoney Creek. Presumably then, families and children with the highest needs in the city exist within the lower city. Targeting these areas for specific programming and resources is the logical choice to make use of limited city resources. The center of the city, as exposed by Code Red, suffers from the highest concentration of poverty, and along with that poverty comes the social and physical impacts on the population. Code Red explained that highschool drop out, teen pregnancy rates as well as the incidence of hospital visits were all higher in the areas of the city with higher than average poverty levels (DeLuca, Buist & Johnston, 2012). This can be seen in the map above, the areas of the lower city where the family incomes are distinctly lower than the rest of the city. When updating the mapping for this project to 2016 values, we can see that the city's income distribution is beginning to shift.
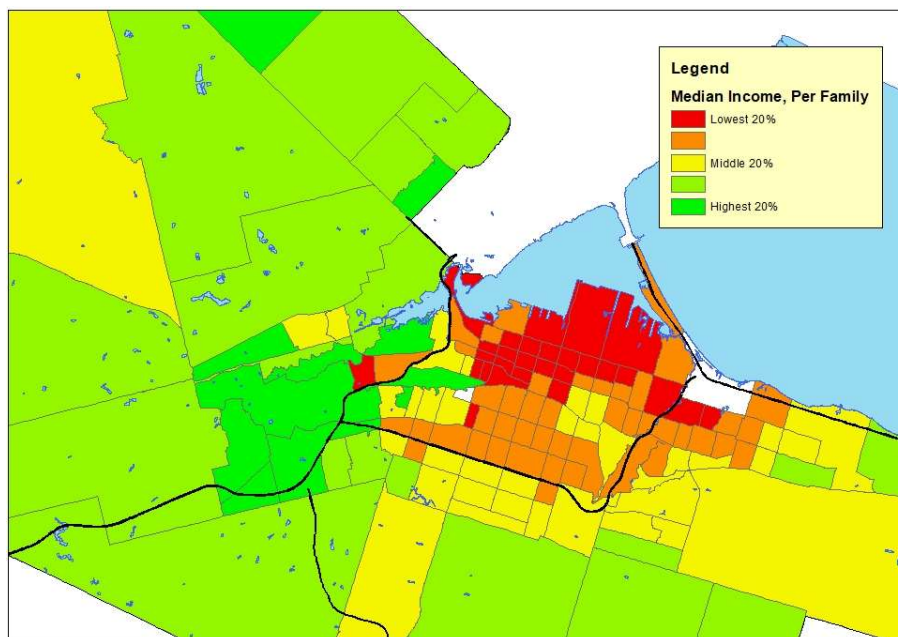

Figure 4 A map of Median Family Income from 2015.

In the map on the previous page, the Code Red data has been updated using 2016 census data. There are a few items that are worthy of noting when it comes to the difference between the two maps. In the lower section of the city it appears that there is still a substantial portion of the population in the lowest quintile of the city's income distribution. However, in the census tract in the North End, they are now part of the lowest 40% of the population and not just the lowest 20% as previously shown in 2006. The north end has been a hotbed of new development and neighbourhood change, where it once was at the core of the Code Red project, residents in the neighbourhood are experiencing significant change. This is shown in this jump in the quintile of the project, but also can be seen in the number of development appications in the area, as well as the amount of population changeover which can be seen in the influx of new higher profile neighbours (City of Hamilton Open Data Portal, 2018).

What is most striking about the map above is how the population on the mountain has changed significantly. Areas along the escarpment which were in 2006 in the highest 40% of income earners are now members of the lowest 40% of income earners. In fact, there is less green across the mountain area now, and a great deal more red. In 2006 there were some signs about an incidence of poverty on the mountain, but now it is explicit that incomes relative to other parts of the city is in decline. If this proves to be a trend, which could be evidenced in the 2020 census, new neighbourhoods will likely need to be the focus of the targeted grants and programs.

<u>Poverty under the age of 18</u>

When it comes to a showing of Poverty under the age of 18, in 2006 there already appears to be a strong showing of poverty for youth across the mountain. Of course the disparity is not as striking as it is below the mountain, which has been the focus of many youth targeted projects. However, poverty does exist on the mountain, and also in the former municipality of Stoney Creek, but these areas do not receive as much attention, or indeed programming. Indeed, even just by looking at the Code Red data, there looks to be a high population of poverty concentrating along the Lincoln Alexander Parkway, in the suburbs above the Niagara escarpment, and down the area surrounding the Red Hill Expressway. This can be seen in the map below.
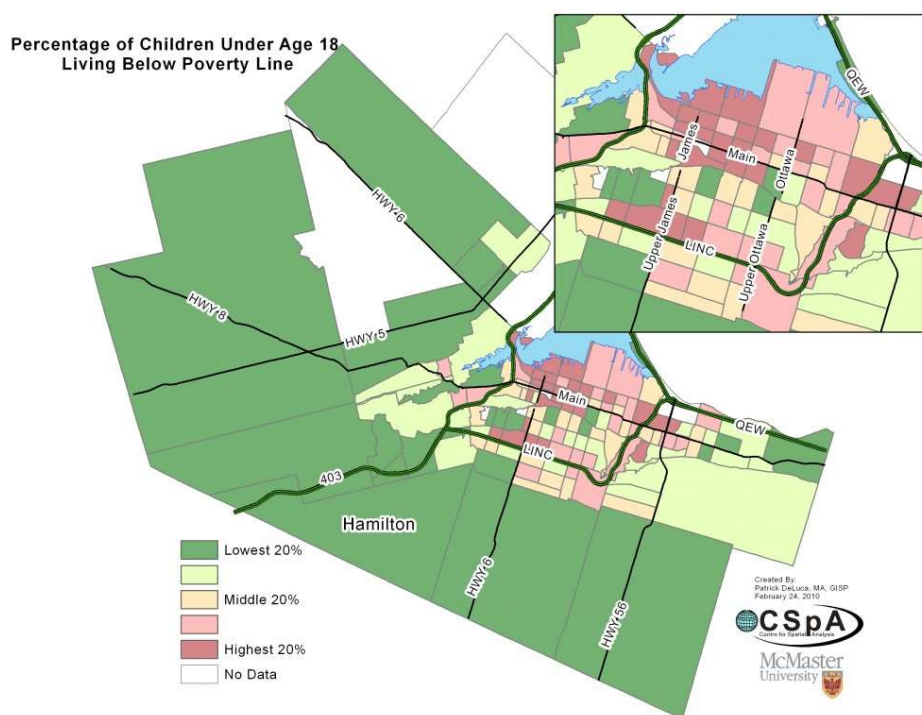

Figure 5 A 2006 map showing the percentage of children living below the poverty line.

In 2006, most children living below the poverty line are in the lower city; however there appear to be patches of census tracts showing the highest 20% of children living in poverty along the major roadways outside of the downtown core as well. The Code Red mapping drew attention to the areas of the city which were hardest hit by their low income status, but did not focus on how change might occur. Given that there has been a huge amount of housing stock turnover in the lower city, and that building permits to permit new residential towers is also clustered in this area, it seems that we do need to be concerned about how displacement may be affecting Hamilton's youth population (Development Permits, City of Hamilton Open Data Portal, 2018). Hamilton as a whole is a city which is considered as a lower socioeconomic status, especially compared with Toronto, and displacement may be a concern throughout all areas of the city.
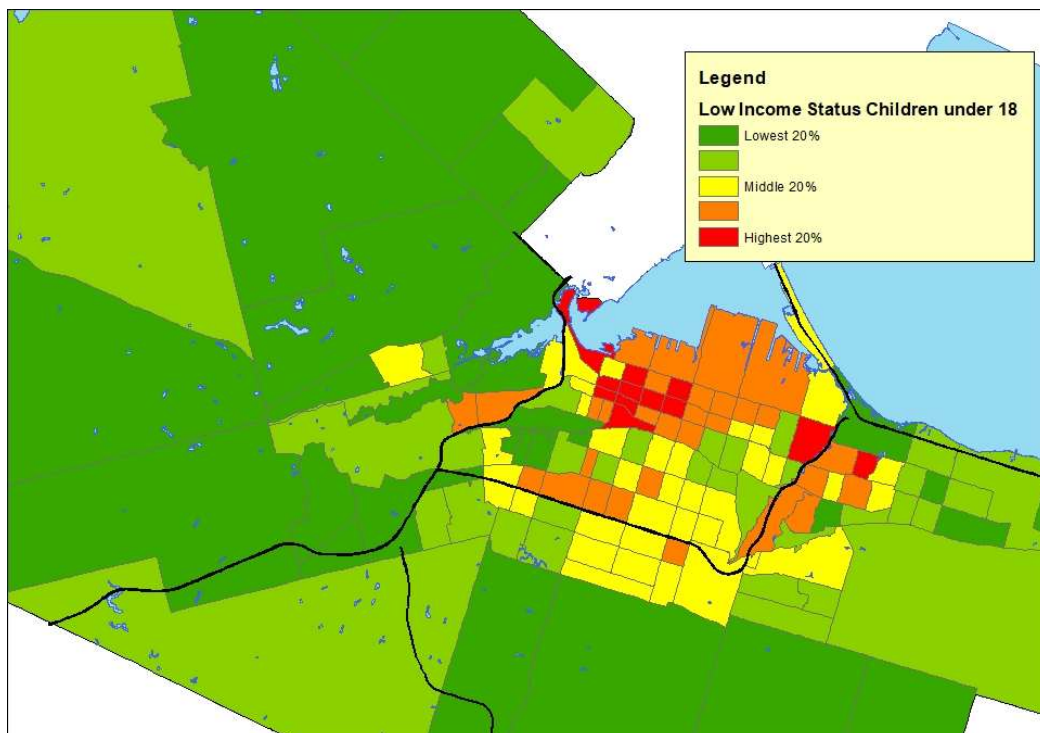

Figure 6 A 2016 map showing the percentage of low income children living in Hamilton.

According to the updated census data looking at how children's poverty has changed in the city it appears there has been some progress made when it comes to the lower city. Overall there are less census tracts showing the highest 20% of poverty existing. This can mean that poverty has been concentrated even further into the neighbourhoods shown in red, but given the higher prevalence of the highest 40% and middle 20% showing throughout the city, especially in the former City of Hamilton boundaries (predominantly yellow tiles) it is more likely that the poverty amongst child populations has become more evenly distributed throughout the city. This could likely also be a symptom of gentrification within the lower city. The city's core has had investment directed into it through the economic development department, aiming to revitalize an economy that had been long left languishing. As the development pressures increase, it is likely we may see this disbursment of poverty throughout the city, as opposed to the historic concentration within the lower center.

Data conclusions

Given the analysis of the maps in the last section of the report, it appears that income mixing is occurring within the former municipality of Hamilton, and Stoney Creek, however it has not reached some of the outer suburban communities like Ancaster, Dundas, and Flamborough-Glanbrook. It is very important to note that while there is still a strong showing of poverty in the lower city, there is a higher mix of incomes and poverty levels showing on the Hamilton Mountain, as compared with 2006 data. This could be showing a trend of displacement of lower city residents to the upper mountain part of the former City of Hamilton, indeed all indications point to this being

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the case. However, even if high needs populations are not shifting from outside of the

lower city, providing services throughout the entire city is an issue of access and equity

beyond only servicing the most high needs youth populations.

Chapter 5: Recommendations

In Hamilton, based on the research garnered in this report, there has been a chronic lack of meaningful investment in youth in the city of Hamilton. Targeting only the most high needs youth out of the entire population is not a reasonable solution to the problem, and can lead to a lack of youth engagement opportunities throughout the rest of the city. While there are still high needs throughout the lower city of Hamilton, it is worth examining distributing resources throughout the city. Young people in the outer lying areas of the city, like Ancaster, and Stoney Creek, but also on the mountain in the inner suburbs, do not have good public transit services, and are more likely to have two parents working. This means that despite having higher family incomes, youth which are old enough to stay at home alone also have less access to programming after school.

The most substantial recommendation that this report can produce is that youth must become a political priority for the City of Hamilton. This is in order to attract and secure investment and attention from the City, but also to attract and secure investment from the creative and innovative potential within existing youth populations in the city— many of whom are already hard at work building the future of the city. The city may also wish to consider reaching beyond targeting the most high needs neighbourhoods when it comes to funding youth programs. This is so that youth in all neighbourhoods will have an equal opportunity to access programing, despite whether or not their neighbourhood is considered disadvantaged. This can lead to a loss of stigma associated with accessing services and programs in the city, as well as to foster neighbourhood integration, especially in neighbourhoods that are experiencing rapid change.

This can be done in a variety of ways. As the part of the development of the City of Hamilton's Youth Engagement Strategy, a scan of services is being completed, as well as a broad consultation with youth throughout the city. This project is crucial to understanding which youth serving agencies are doing great work in the city, and how the city can best position themselves to support the work these agencies are doing. Knowing where all agencies are located within the city, and who the youth they serve are will also help the City address any existing service gaps. Once complete, the city should look at providing incentives, such as grants to help existing programs expand their reach into—at the very least—the inner Hamilton suburbs.

Since it appears that the Neighbourhood Action Strategy is being somewhat successful in deconcentrating poverty, and targeted support to youth in those neighbourhoods has led to the of several launch youth-led projects (McQuesten Youth Opportunity Creators; Eva Youth Opportunity Creators). There are other youth programs that are youth led that exist within the downtown and include NGen, Speqtrum, Centre3, and YouthCan. It is worth expanding support for youth led initiatives to reach youth throughout the rest of the city. The concentration of programming in the lower city does not address the needs of the entire youth population in Hamilton. It likely sees young people being forced to travel for long periods of times from all areas of the city to access programs and services that will support their development. Many agencies located in the lower city likely see residents from all over the city, and it would certainly help to move resources up onto the escarpment to expand the reach of programming. This is especially important given how it appears that income demographics and youth poverty look to be moving out of the lower city and into the

inner suburbs. This can take the form of rotating programming in existing city owned community centers and libraries. This will in turn lead to higher engagement and participation amongst youth in the entire city. It is especially important given the trend of gentrification happening in the lower city. While expanding youth opportunities to the inner suburbs of Hamilton reaches a larger demographic in the city, it may also be helpful to address the needs of the changing populations in that area, as lower income residents seem to be displaced out of the city core. More information about the return on investment from youth engagement will be addressed in Chapter 6, which examines why the City of Hamilton should act on this issue now.

Hamilton has had great success with its current Youth Xperience Annex, which is located downtown in the Central Library. The Xperience Annex is a youth community navigator borne out of resident engagement on how to make their communities better, especially in the Neighbourhood Action Strategy Areas. It is "a partnership initiative between the City of Hamilton and community partners, with funding from the Local Poverty Reduction Fund" (City of Hamilton Website, Youth Xperience Annex). The community navigator connects youth with employment, education and other social services that they may be in need of when they first access the Xperience Annex. Since the only location is currently downtown, there would be benefit from a rotating schedule between all neighbourhood libraries and community centers.

As the data from the Youth Engagement Strategy team becomes available for public use, it will provide more detail about how youth are accessing and using services throughout the city. This report, combined with that data could provide a more in depth

picture of where services are needed. But for now, focusing on neighbourhoods with higher numbers of children under 18 living in poverty—throughout the entire city—would be recommended. Combining the Youth Xperience Annex with other career focused networking groups in the city might also be a helpful way to integrate differing populations.

Mentioned at the beginning of this report, Hamilton Hive is a group run out of the City of Hamilton's Economic Development Department. While it seems they primarily focus on an older demographic—often educated young professionals—it is likely that both programs could benefit from a stronger relationship to other youth in the city as well, where older youth can also function as mentors. This is just one example of how bringing separate programs together can work toward mutual benefit. Without a doubt, there are other programs in the city that will work together and complement each other well.

Despite there not being as stark of a showing of youth poverty on the mountain as opposed to the lower city in Hamilton, there still is a significant number of youth living in need. As gentrification fuels population changes in the city it is likely this number will increase. The City should plan now for the eventuality of having a young, impoverished population living outside of the reach of current programs available to them. However, moving beyond focusing just on the youth in highest need, and focusing on creating programs that encourage youth collaboration from a mix of incomes can also help to build a sustainable, productive and engaged population for the future of the city.

One of the easiest ways in which this can be done is through empowering youth to pursue the ideas they have to build a better Hamilton. Where the previous set up of the Hamilton Youth Advisory Committee failed, implementing a different, but more meaningful way for youth to effect change in the city is recommended. Youth are the experts in their own issues, and finding them support in which they can build solutions to the problems they face is probably the best way to build upon youth engagement. The Youth Engagement Strategy is an important first step to empowering youth, but the initiative must grow to be able to support all youth in Hamilton.

Since part of what has made the Neighbourhood Action Strategy so successful in building community amongst residents, the same concept should be applied to Hamilton youth. By offering youth the opportunity to build community and plan for their own generation, it helps to enhance collective ownership over the project. Building in space and funding for these types of youth initiatives can be seen as a way to enhance services youth see the most value in. When thinking about Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation, this kind of model (where youth become agents of change in their own community) would be considered to be in the top rungs of youth engagement. This would see youth in positions to share decision making with adults acting in a supporting role. This will help the city to ensure that all actions done in support of Hamilton youth move beyond tokenism into a space where youth are actively participating and shaping their city.

Chapter 6: Why Do This Now?

There are many benefits for the City of Hamilton to have better funding of youth opportunities throughout the city. One of the most pressing issues, specifically for the municipality—which has not been previously mentioned—is they are going to need to replace the talent they are losing, since the work force population is rapidly reaching retirement age (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2015, p. 1). A way that the Canadian Federation of Municipalities has proposed doing this is through engaging the youth who already live within the cites. The report entitled *The Youth Engagement Handbook* provides the reason municipalities must take action in engaging their young people:

> Currently, young Canadians do not perceive their interests to be represented by the democratic institutions they have at their disposal. This is clear from the declining youth voter turnout that communities across Canada have experienced at all levels of government. Many young Canadians simply do not envision themselves working for institutions in which they perceive do not represent their interest. Municipal leaders have the tools, resources, and the responsibility to challenge this perception (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2015, p. 3).

Engaging youth in their cities from a young age is crucial to being able to build a sustainable talent base from the residents already residing in the city. It is also important in order to be able to sustain our democratic institutions.

While many youth are able to access services not provided by the city, the most pressing concern is for those who are unable to afford good quality services. While the city has tried to bridge this gap by targeting specific neighbourhoods for good recreation and youth opportunities, this becomes an issue of fairness when those residents are displaced. Currently the prime opportunities for youth are located where there is

potential for gentrification, especially as people with more capital begin to move into the city as a whole.

The Code Red project has shown that high needs populations can place a higher burden on health care and social services institutions. The same is true of youth populations in the city. With youth and millennial mental health and job security becoming more and more of a challenge in Hamilton (Martin and Lewchuk, 2018, p. 85), the opportunity for early intervention presents itself well for targeted youth programming across the city. Rather than waiting until youth are in crisis situations, building the foundation for strong youth led programs and interventions seems poised to help save public dollars across the unemployment and public health sectors.

Additionally, younger demographics—including Millennials have overtaken the Baby Boomers in terms of Hamilton's population (Buist, 2016). This means, that in terms of voting power, the younger demographic has the opportunity to begin shaping political decision making. Having historically been left out of decision making processes that affect them, this has the potential to seriously change the status quo of our current government structures. It is important for the city to stay on top of the changing demographics, in order to provide services where they are needed. Younger demographics become a political priority now, in order to enhance the forward thinking sustainability of our city, Hamilton.

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