

Environment Hamilton Delegation to City of Hamilton Planning Committee – October 5, 2020

Delivered by: Lynda Lukasik, Executive Director

Good morning/afternoon Chairperson and members of the Planning Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this application today.

I want to begin by saying that **AT THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL LEVEL** we can **BLAME** the Ford Government for harmful regional planning policy changes made over the last several years. I have said this at this committee before and will say it again. This provincial government is actively and aggressively dismantling the core policies in the Growth Plan For the Greater Golden Horseshoe – policies that were designed to **CURB URBAN SPRAWL**. This is profoundly dangerous in light of the climate emergency we face – a threat that is aptly described as a looming tsunami. It's simple – under current scenarios here in Hamilton – outward growth means big fat increases to the city's **CARBON FOOTPRINT**. Right now we now that ghg emissions are **INCREASING** in one area – **TRANSPORTATION**. Cities with larger geographic areas – more kms travelled per capita. We cannot afford to go backwards where growth planning is concerned – but this is precisely what the provincial government is doing here.

The Ford Government has empowered landowners to pursue private boundary expansions. The Ford Government has expanded the Planning Horizon to the year 2051. The Ford Government has reduced the minimum targets for urban intensification and greenfield density.

The Ford Government's changes are what has opened the door to the planning applications we are discussing today and the three private boundary expansion applications that are flowing out of the changes being pursued. We do not support these policies and the outward urban expansion they promote. Make no mistake – these changes are **NOT** about housing affordability. There are other, far more effective ways to achieve this goal – and the city is pursuing a number of these already – including the recently released proposal to change zoning to accommodate secondary units in existing residential neighbourhoods.

But it is also fair to say, in this instance, that the Ford Government alone is not to blame. The application before you is a reaction to a flawed municipal process that dates waaaay back to 2006. The planning agent for the proponent confirms this in their written submissions.

Your job is to plan for the **PUBLIC GOOD** – in that sense, we agree with city planning staff and their assertion that it is not appropriate for a conformity exercise to be initiated by a private interest. That private interest is not driven by and beholden to the broader community – and the public good. But the municipality must be!

AT THE SAME TIME – we do agree with John Corbett - the planning agent for the Upper West Side Land Owners Group when he states that **‘The staff report indicates that Elfrida remains as the city’s next area to accommodate growth despite no MCR having ever been completed to implement this direction.’**

This reality is unfair to land speculators (although we will always concede that speculation is a gamble) and it is unfair to the public and, therefore, it does not serve the greater public good. We have not had the opportunity to weigh in, in any comprehensive manner, about IF and WHERE, as Hamiltonians, we want to see our urban area expand. This is because there never was a full MCR process to determine that the Elfrida lands are the best priority choice if and when urban expansion is required.

I would also like to note that the planning agent indicates that the Upper West Side Landowners Group **‘.....has no objection to the consideration of other growth areas through an objective MCR process but all areas should be evaluated and considered fairly and objectively through current and most relevant provincial planning policy.’**

So – we would like to recommend a resolution to what appears to be an impasse. Do what we have asked you to do – **HIT THE RESET BUTTON ON ELFRIDA** – and undertake a full and proper MCR process that everyone can participate in – including all land speculators – but, more importantly, ALL HAMILTONIANS because **NOW MORE THAN EVER BEFORE, DECISIONS REGARDING WHERE AND HOW OUR CITY GROWS HAVE PROFOUND IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR FUTURE.**

And we would add that, after the reset button is hit, the city’s municipal comprehensive review and associated land needs assessment process must also include a thorough assessment of **PATHWAYS FORWARD UTILIZING A CLIMATE LENS.** Remember – we are now 14 years beyond the 2006 council decision/direction to bookmark Elfrida as the preferred growth area for Hamilton. The process to get there in the past was flawed in our opinion and it happened 14 years ago! So much has changed since that time **INCLUDING THE FACT THAT HAMILTON CITY COUNCIL UNANIMOUSLY DECLARED A CLIMATE EMERGENCY.** That was just in March of last year. This means that **TOP PRIORITY MUST BE PLACED ON ASSESSING CITY DECISIONS USING A CLIMATE LENS.** And if you are serious about it – and you do it right – this approach will have profound impacts on urban growth and the physical form that urban growth takes. Serious consideration of climate impacts will unavoidably lead to halting urban growth outward in favour of other ways to accommodate growth (urban intensification, increased density in greenfield areas, gentle density, etc). **THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY IS REAL. PLEASE PLAN AS THOUGH OUR FUTURE DEPENDS ON IT – BECAUSE IT DOES!**