



SOPHIE Geffros

for Ward 1 Councillor

Working for everyone

Every morning as I wait for the bus, I am reminded of how remarkable Ward One is. We come from every corner of the world and work in every kind of industry. We are the young professionals commuting to work in the downtown core, we are the blue-collar workers who make our city run. We are the students, educators, and staff at McMaster University. We are the kids going to school and the seniors whose volunteer work keeps our community strong. I'm running for city council to protect and improve our public services. I'm running to make sure pedestrians and cyclists can commute in safety. I'm running because it's time for a ward that works for everyone.

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DEAR NEIGHBOUR,

My name is Sophie Geffros, and I am running to be your Ward One Councillor.

I've spent my entire life trying to change things from the outside. I have made delegations to council, I have consulted on policy, and I have organised rallies. I have stayed up until 3 am making banners, and I have quietly stood beside people when they have needed support in their fights for justice.

I believe that every single person has the right to safe and affordable housing. I believe that nobody should die in a preventable traffic accident. I believe that nobody should ever live in fear of retribution for a complaint against their landlord. I believe that we must build our society intentionally, with a focus on building communities up and elevating the voices of those traditionally ignored.

I believe that seniors have the right to safe and affordable housing, the ability to age in place, access to community services, and seniors' housing that is clean, safe, and accessible.

I believe that every child should be able to walk, cycle, or take the bus to school -- without the fear that they will be killed in a preventable traffic accident, and without worrying about whether or not their scheduled bus will get them to school on time.

I believe that hate must be abolished in our communities, and that we must amplify the voices of those fighting it.

I believe that together, we can build a ward -- and a world -- where this is the case. We can work together for a sustainable transit system. We can increase the amount of affordable housing and improve the conditions of existing stock. Together we can build a community that works for everyone.

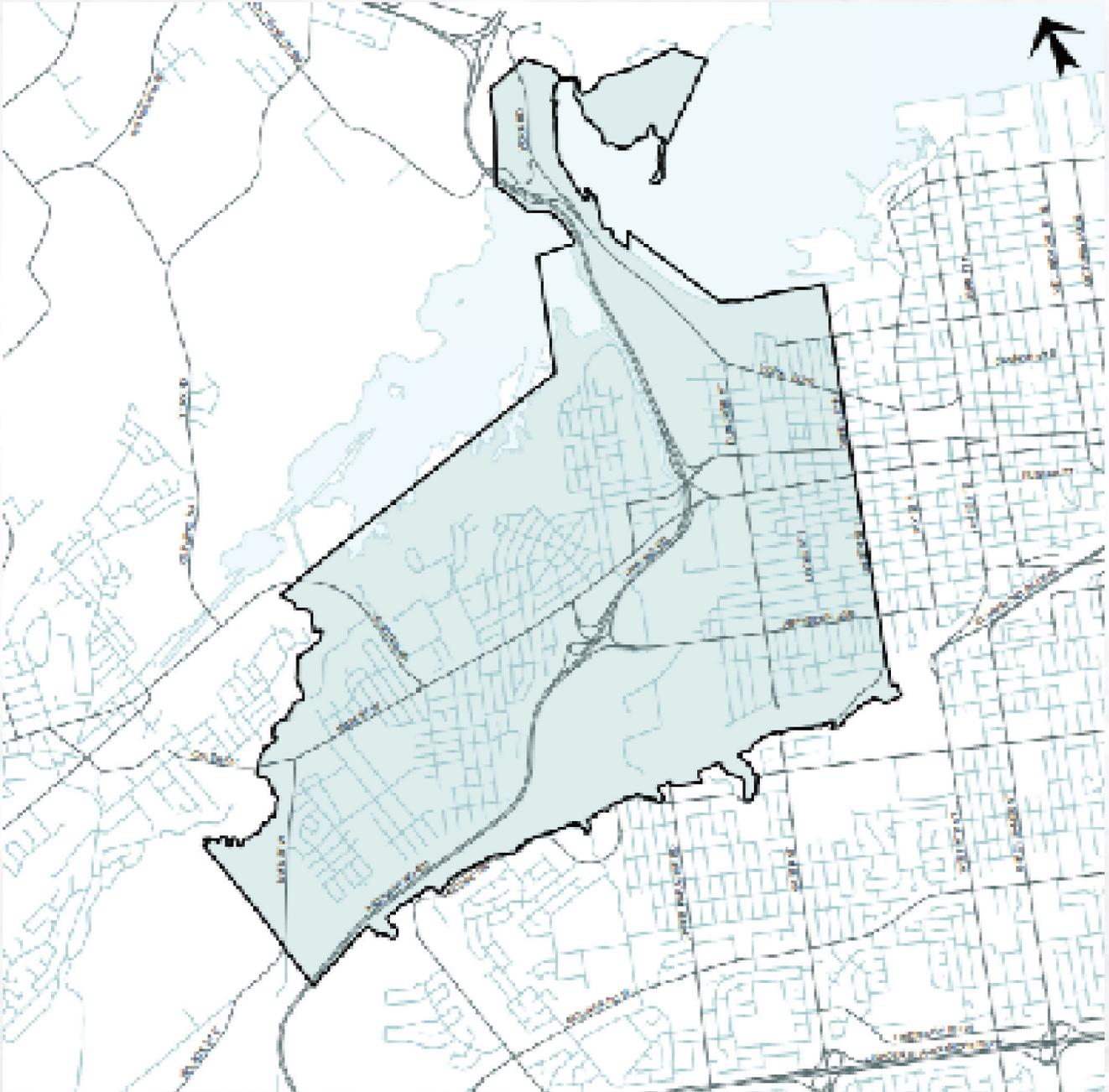
I reject the politics of cynicism. I reject the idea that nothing can be done about injustice. I reject the idea that municipal government must be ineffective, unaccountable, and irrelevant.

Please join me. Together we can build a ward that works for everyone.

Sincerely,

Sophie Geffros

WHO IS WARD ONE



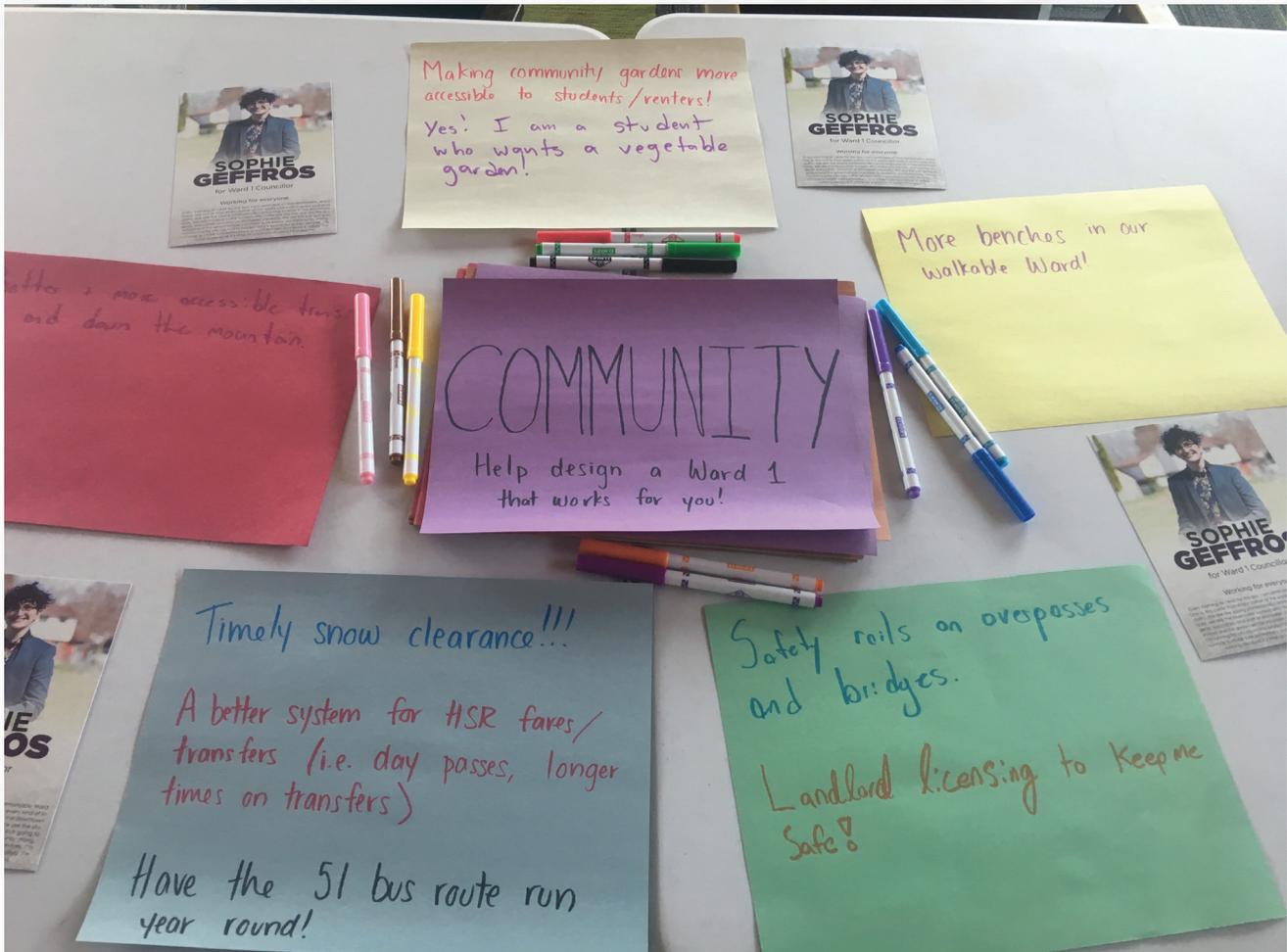
Ward One stretches between Main & Osler in the West and Queen St in the East, from the escarpment to the water. We are made up of the neighbourhoods of Ainslie Wood, Kirkendall, Strathcona, Westdale, and the McMaster University campus. The majority of our residents are either under 30 or over 60, with a growing population of seniors, young families, and children. We use public transit 1.5 times more and active transit times more than the rest of the city. What brings us together is that collectively, just under half of us rent our homes. This is why housing is such an integral part of why I am running.



LET'S C.H.A.T

The first step to any change is conversation. Our campaign is built upon neighbour-to-neighbour conversations to address the issues that matter to you. We've knocked on over 4000 doors so far and have had hundreds of conversations with residents across Ward One. In all of these conversations the same priorities keep coming up. We need to focus on **Community**. We're committed to building up communities where everyone feels safe, can get where they need to be, and can age in place. We need safer and more affordable **Housing**. Housing is a human right but absentee and predatory landlords and developers more concerned with profit than affordability are forcing people to leave their homes. We need **Accountability**, for our elected representatives to represent all of us and to move beyond bureaucracy to listen to us and get things done. We need **Transit**, transit that is public, predictable, and affordable to get us where we need to be when we need to be there. We need a Ward One that works for everyone.

COMMUNITY



Ward One is a remarkable place. Just under a third of our community is under 18, and just over a third is over 65. It is vital that the City of Hamilton commit to making Ward One a place that serves us all, and where each and every one of us can age in place. That means a commitment to ending all preventable traffic deaths, creating communities of support that stand up to hate, and working collaboratively on student community relations.

VISION ZERO

Vision Zero is a global movement transforming the way we use, interact, and travel on our roads. It has a simple and clear goal: **ZERO fatalities or serious injuries on roadways**. Vision Zero aims for safer streets through improved education, enforcement, engineering, evaluation and engagement. Many cities around the world have adopted or are considering the Vision Zero approach, and it is part of Canada's Road Safety Strategy 2025 and the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario Vision. Currently, Hamilton is exploring Vision Zero and asking the community for their opinions about road safety in Hamilton¹. In addition to the ongoing consultation and feedback the **following changes must be implemented to ensure safety**:

1. Any pedestrian crossing by a bus stop, school, park or community hub must be a four-way stop.
2. The City of Hamilton should encourage cycling as a method of transportation. All high-traffic routes must have designated bike lanes.
3. In 2016, 279 pedestrian collisions took place in Hamilton, resulting in 257 injuries and 4 fatalities². Council must fund a pedestrian audit of the city, with particular emphasis on the needs of those with mobility concerns.
4. We must consult with road users, residents, and drivers in order to develop a new policy regarding transport trucks on our streets. Trucking routes, whenever possible, must be re-routed away from residential streets and school zones³.
5. An "urban highway" has no place in the core of a modern city. Steps must be taken to limit the amount and speed of traffic using Main St. and King St. W., and consideration should be given to making Main St a 2-way street.

STANDING UP TO HATE

In a time where racism, white supremacy, and other bigotry seems to have found new and greater platforms, it is vital that we protect our communities from hatred. Hamilton has the **highest rate of police-reported hate crimes in the country** with a incidence rate of 12.5 per 100,000 population; this is over three times the Canadian average (3.9 per 100,000) and twice that of Toronto (5.2 per 100,000). These crimes range from anti-semitic and white supremacist vandalism to physical and verbal assault. In Hamilton, of the hate crimes reported in 2016, **26% targeted the Black population** and **27% the Jewish population**⁴. **Islamophobic hate crimes are also on the rise**. The City must support, in whatever way possible, initiatives like Hamilton's new Anti-Racism Resource, the coming Disability Justice Network of Ontario based here in Hamilton, the Hamilton InterFaith Council and other grassroots anti-racism and anti-hate projects. The City should also offer bystander intervention training. **We all belong in Hamilton: it is time for the City to put its money where its mouth is and stand up against hatred.**

1 <https://www.hamilton.ca/streets-transportation/driving-traffic/vision-zero>

2 <https://www.hamilton.ca/streets-transportation/driving-traffic/vision-zero>

3 <https://www.hamilton.ca/streets-transportation/driving-traffic/hamiltons-truck-route-network>

4 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54915-eng.htm>

RIGHT TO PUBLIC SPACE

All residents should have access to public spaces and community infrastructure. However, inaccessibility and booking fees create barriers for residents. The largest of these barriers is snow removal. For many people with mobility impairments, late or improper snow clearance prevents them from leaving their home. **This is an equity issue: the City of Hamilton should be responsible for sidewalk snow clearance along bus routes.** Additionally, Ward One has very few benches, making it difficult for older adults and people with mobility concerns to walk to where they need to go. The City of Hamilton should partner with local schools, businesses, and religious and community groups to **build benches throughout the Ward**, and should encourage these institutions to "adopt" a bench and decorate it. Lastly, in order to build up community and increase the number of events happening in the Ward, we need to **lower the cost of booking public spaces such as parks** for community events.

PROTECTING SAFE INJECTION SITES

As the province threatens the existence of safe injection sites, it is vital that we listen to and amplify the voices of those most affected. The evidence is clear: **safe injection sites save lives** and do not lead to any increase in injection drug usage⁵. They are also vital portals to healthcare and community resources for the most vulnerable among us. As a councillor, I pledge to **protect the current site from provincial attacks** and to investigate the possibility of expanding the number of sites. As a social scientist and as a citizen, I believe strongly that safe injection sites have "merit" and will put forward a motion to council directing that we **oppose any provincial efforts to defund current sites** and advocate for **increased funding** for their expansion.

SAVING OUR STREET TREES

As we proceed with the creation of our Urban Forest Strategy⁶ we must not wait to take action. From pedestrian safety to urban cooling to stormwater drainage to beauty, **street trees provide immense benefits to our city and our communities.** While many areas of Ward One are filled with street trees this is not equal everywhere in our Ward. For example, in Strathcona, especially along Main and King streets there is an **absence of trees for large stretches.** Street trees benefit us from a public health, economic, social, and an environmental perspective: it's time we got serious about planting and conservation. Looking ahead we need to raise awareness and **usage of Hamilton's Street Tree Planting Program**⁷ modelling best practices from OPIRG's Hamilton Street Tree Project⁸. Additionally we must address the **gaps along major arteries like Main street and King Street** and ensure legislation prevents developers from removing more street trees needlessly.

5 Zlotorzynska, M., PhD., Wood, Evan, M.D., PhD., Montaner, J. S., M.D., & Kerr, T., PhD. (2013). Supervised injection sites: Prejudice should not trump evidence of benefit. Canadian Medical Association Journal, 185(15), 1303-4.

6 <https://www.hamilton.ca/city-initiatives/strategies-actions/urban-forest-strategy>

7 <https://www.hamilton.ca/home-property-and-development/property-gardens-trees/street-tree-planting-program>

8 https://issuu.com/rrrandy/docs/2016_street_tree_project_report

BEYOND TOWN AND GOWN

One thing is abundantly clear when it comes to relationships between McMaster students and non student residents, **what we are doing right now isn't working**. The Town and Gown framework limits us and creates a false division between two overlapping communities. It posits students are only here for their degrees and will be leaving when they graduate and that they are separate from the workings of the city. This is not true.

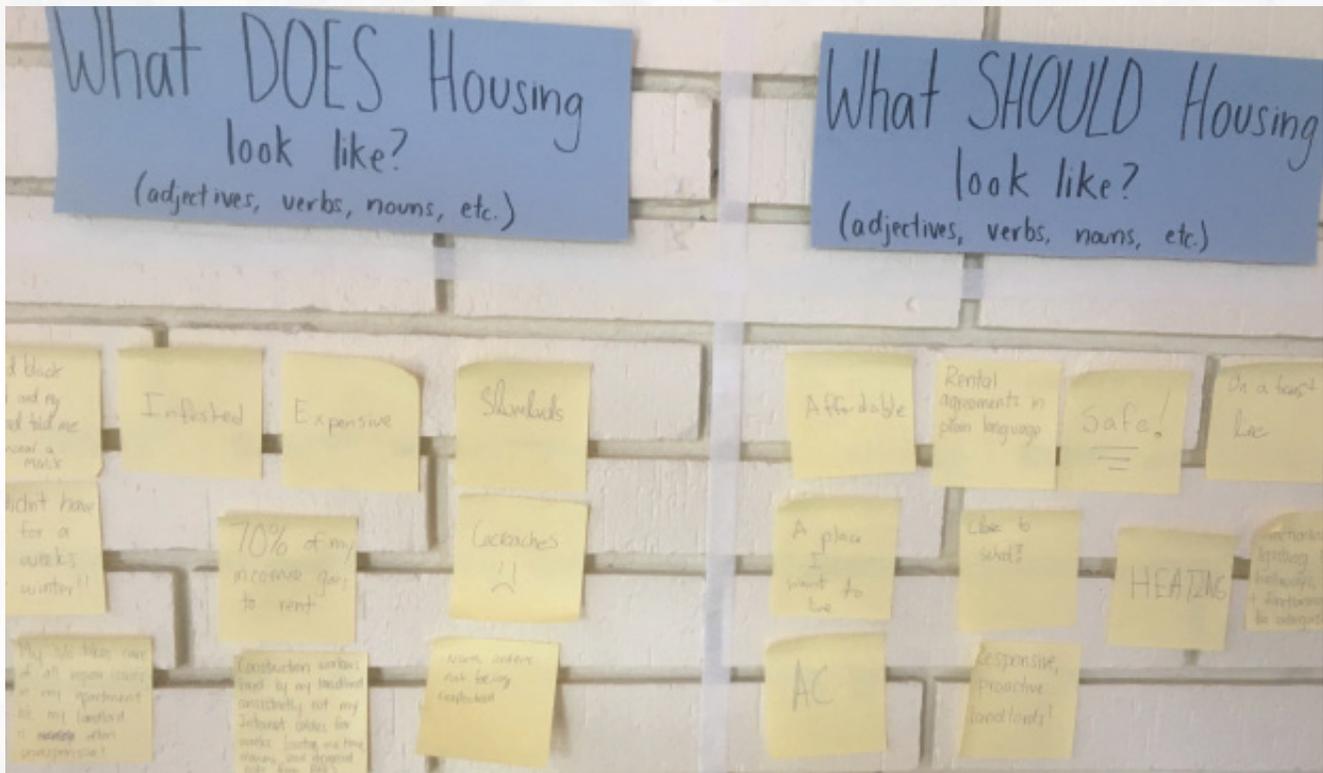
Students are **active contributors to this city economically, socially, and politically**. This past year student advocacy produced the #YesLRT letter campaign, led to a delegation at the Ontario Municipal Board that spoke against splitting up Ainslie Wood in the Ward Boundary review process, and students currently fund over 12% of the HSR budget through their bus pass.

However, this is by no means a perfect relationship. The high proportion of year-to-year renters in a concentrated area creates unique challenges. Having a large population of first time renters has allowed **absentee landlords to thrive**, and property standard violations resultantly go unchecked. Additionally, large scale celebrations like Homecoming or Saint Patrick's Day lack venues and are **spilling into the community**.

Pitting students and non student residents against each other hasn't been working and we must work together to solve the problems within our community. Working with the McMaster Students' Union (MSU) we can re-imagine the Student Community Support Network to create a program that truly works for everyone. With joint funding from McMaster, the MSU and the city we can develop a **pro-active bylaw education and enforcement system that prioritizes education and peer to peer outreach** to solve problems before they are in violation of a bylaw. Under this model fewer property standard violations will occur and problems can be reported before they reach the criteria laid out in the bylaws. Additionally, we can better **educate and inform students** of their rights and responsibilities as tenants and **hold absentee landlords accountable**. This program can also explore non financial **restorative justice based solutions** that are proven to reduce recidivism and build up communities.

The underlying principle of this solution is that we can achieve more **working together and focusing on relationship building**. These relationships are essential in proactively and collaboratively solving other problems. For example, we know students are safer and there are fewer bylaw violations when large scale events like **Homecoming are held on campus** than off campus. Over the next four years I'm excited to work with students and neighbours to ensure that large scale events happen in the **safest way for everyone**. From property standards to block parties the solution is having honest, ongoing, and early conversations neighbour to neighbour and **I'm committed to developing the infrastructure to make that happen**.

HOUSING



Ward One has the highest degree of income disparity in the City, and a plurality of residents spend more than 33% of their income on housing costs. Many residents are renters who have been left behind as property values have skyrocketed in West Hamilton. The large and largely transient student population is exploited by predatory landlords, who rent units that are unsafe or overcrowded while charging exorbitant rates. This is also a public safety issue, as many of these units are not compliant with the fire code. Language can create additional barriers and many non english speakers sign leases without knowledge of their rights.

ADDRESSING ABSENTEE LANDLORDS

It is unacceptable that residents continue to live in situations that are unsafe, and in many cases, illegal. In recent years, Hamiltonians have **died in illegally zoned rooming houses** -- many of whose conditions are commonly seen in student rentals -- numerous bedrooms rented out in "single-family" homes, often without fire escapes, working fire extinguishers, and other hazards. Indeed, there are several units currently being advertised to students that are windowless basement units -- a violation of the fire code. **Predatory landlords take advantage of first-time renters** and international students in particular, often acting in flagrant violation of the law.

I will approach this through education on tenant rights and via **landlord licensing**. In order to rent out a unit, the landlord will pay a nominal fee -- in other cities, the fee ranges from \$10 to \$50 -- that will cover the cost of the program. In return, they must submit all units to inspection from the city, who will ensure that basic life-saving infrastructure like **fire exits and smoke detectors** are present and up to code. Conversations of Landlord Licensing are not new to Ward One, which is why I will bring a motion forward calling for **landlord licensing by the end of 2019**.

STANDING UP FOR RENTERS' RIGHTS

In addition to Landlord Licensing we must better recognize our duty to educate renters on their rights as tenants. To do this I will introduce legislation to ensure every rental agreement must include a **plain-language explanation** of the rights of a tenant and how to **bring forward a complaint**. This explanation must be in a **language spoken fluently by the renter**. Landlords will be able to download this document from the **City of Hamilton website**, where it will be available in multiple languages. Furthermore we must revisit the **structure of the Rental Housing Subcommittee** to ensure that the voices of tenants and tenant advocacy organizations like Hamilton ACORN are prioritized.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Cities around the world are currently struggling with depleted stocks of affordable housing as wages stagnate and house prices increase. The City has the power to **mandate that developers include affordable and geared-to-income units** in their proposals in order to receive planning permission. This has been tried and proven to be effective in many cities, most notably Paris, France⁹. In consultation with Hamilton ACORN and residents, I propose that **all new developments must have between 15 and 25% affordable and geared-to-income units**. In order to mitigate displacement along the LRT line, **30% of units in new developments along the line must be affordable or geared-to-income**. Seniors and people with disabilities are particularly marginalized in our housing market: therefore, **30% of new affordable housing must be earmarked for seniors and those with disabilities**.

CITYHOUSING

At present, only one fifth of CityHousing in Ward One is barrier-free for residents with mobility concerns. When I have spoken with CityHousing residents in Ward One, they have listed a staggering array of concerns -- from units infested with cockroaches and bedbugs, to elevators that are left broken for weeks, to units where the walls are literally crumbling due to water-damage. **All new CityHousing units must be barrier-free, and existing CityHousing must be audited for accessibility and health and safety concerns**. There have recently been electrical fires in CityHousing units with wiring that is several decades old. All CityHousing needs to be inspected and retrofitted with modern electricity-saving appliances and wiring in compliance with modern standards.

9 Kogan, Millay. Planning for Socially-Mixed Housing and its Implications for Neighbourhood Development in Paris, France. Columbia University Press. https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/download/fedora_content/download/ac:207410/content/FINALTHESIS_MILLAYKOGAN.pdf

ACCOUNTABILITY



Serving as a city councillor is not just an honour: it is also a job, and the constituents are your employers. The job of a councillor is to advocate strongly for their constituents, to be available for all of their concerns, and to help the community thrive. I believe strongly that municipal government must be transparent, available, and accountable. We must end loopholes that allow for unsafe labour and need to better recognize our duty to becoming fully accessible by 2025.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Contacting your councillor shouldn't be difficult. Your emails and phone calls shouldn't go unanswered. In addition to being available and accountable via phone and email and in my City Hall office, **I will hold neighbourhood office hours in the community every week.** This will make it easier for residents to share their experiences and concerns, and will cut down on the confusion that can often occur when trying to contact an elected official.

ONLINE OUTREACH

Many of us live huge parts of our lives online -- but politicians rarely make meaningful attempts at digital outreach. **I pledge to have weekly livestreams on Facebook and Twitter to update community members on projects and to speak directly with you about your concerns.**

TERM LIMITS

Being an elected official is an honour and a huge responsibility -- and it should never be a "job for life". The longer a councillor serves, the more likely it is that they will become out-of-touch with the communities that they represent. **If elected, I pledge to only seek re-election once, and will bring a motion forward limiting all councillors to two consecutive terms.**

ACHIEVING ACCESS

The Access for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) states that by 2025, all institutions must be in full compliance with AODA accessibility guidelines¹⁰. As it stands, many City facilities do not meet these standards: City-run properties continue to lack many basic accessibility features such as accessible washrooms and braille signage. If the City is not in full compliance by 2025, it opens itself up to significant fines from the provincial government and the possibility of lawsuits from residents¹¹. It isn't optional: **the City of Hamilton must be in full AODA compliance by 2025.**

FAIR WAGES POLICY

The City of Hamilton must use and enforce our Fair Wages and Procurement policies. These policies are designed to ensure that city projects are only given to businesses which pay fair wages to their employees, provide benefits, operate safely, and provide apprenticeship and training opportunities to beginner tradespeople. **We must fully utilise and enforce this policy, and we must do spot-checks for compliance before accidents occur, not just after a complaint is filed.**

PLANNING WITH PURPOSE

As our city grows, we will continue to see a rise in new developments. Our current development process isn't working: residents don't feel consulted, and community organisations feel that the city and the developers have already made up their minds before presenting to them. Residents and neighbourhood associations must be involved from the beginning of the development process, not as an afterthought. Every development proposal must also include a **communication plan** that indicates how and when residents will be engaged with about the project, and **residents must be notified by mail and in writing** when there is a proposed development project in their community.

Beyond this, we need to develop a long term vision for development within our communities. Ainslie Wood lacks a much needed and much asked for community centre and McMaster is in constant need for more housing options for its increasing student base. Working together as a community, we need to **develop whole community solutions** to these problems proactively so residents feel informed and heard before plans are finalized. We should entertain conversations **a long term development plan** for the Ward with extensive community engagement at all stages to develop and create community directed solutions to the needs of our Ward.

10 <https://www.ontario.ca/page/path-2025-ontarios-accessibility-action-plan>

11 <https://www.ontario.ca/page/path-2025-ontarios-accessibility-action-plan>

TRANSIT



As a daily transit user, and as someone who worked on the campaign to #FixTheHSR, I know the frustrations that come with being a transit user or operator in this city. In November of 2017 it was reported that some HSR operators were working 60 + hours a week, which is dangerous for passengers and terrible working conditions for drivers. This cannot continue: residents of Ward One should be able to rely on their transit, and transit operators shouldn't have to tolerate unsafe working conditions.

KEEP TRANSIT PUBLIC

To me there is no question, we must keep transit public and I am firmly committed to keeping our transit publicly funded and run. We have seen Public-Private Partnerships result in disastrous changes and **cuts to services, unsafe working conditions**, and ultimately be **more costly** than running the services publicly. I believe that all operations related to public transit in Hamilton must be publicly funded, including the proposed LRT.

#FIXTHEHSR

Council has consistently starved the HSR to the point that it is unable to perform many of its vital services, which has led to declining ridership, which council has then used to justify their lack of investment. This past year we lost thousands of hours of service and in just October, the HSR cancelled 589 buses on 28 routes¹². When people feel as if they cannot depend on transit they avoid using it. We know that properly investing in our transit system will **increase ridership, improve working conditions** for operators, and **decrease missed service** and delays. In addition to the investment laid out in the 10-year transit plan, I will also advocate for **an increase in the operating budget of HSR and ongoing capital investment**.

Additionally, while it is true that sometimes routes must be delayed or cancelled, **school extras must run as scheduled so your children get to school on time**. Children cannot be casualties of the transit crisis in our city. Furthermore, for many residents in Ward One, especially those of us in Ainslie Wood, the 51 University Route provides necessary access to the downtown core and the associated social, medical, and legal resources. Cancelling the 51 between May and September puts undue strain and overcrowds the 5A / 5C routes. **The 51 University Route must run year-round**. Finally, the City of Hamilton must consult with residents about **bus stop location and safety**, with an eye to **increasing the number of bus shelters available**.

YES LRT

Hamilton needs Light Rail Transit. With a promised one billion dollars in provincial funding this is a well researched investment in mass transit we cannot afford to pass by. We need to increase our capacity for mass transit. Beyond this, I believe that if implemented correctly, **LRT can be used to develop equity in our city**. As an example, I believe that all developments built along the proposed line must include affordable and geared-to-income units alongside market rate units. LRT is also the only fully accessible transit option currently available to us: as a wheelchair user, I am very familiar with the experience of waiting for much longer than those without mobility devices because HSR busses can only accommodate two wheelchair, scooter users, or strollers at a time.

TRANSIT MASTER PLAN

I support fully funding the 10-year transit strategy, especially at this crucial point in the plan where capital investment is required by council. I also believe that the plan, while providing significant funding, is still insufficient regarding **fully funding the HSR**. As we implement LRT, we must ensure that we provide increasing amounts of capital investment in HSR in order to **improve North-South and Mountain service**. This should always be a priority, but it is even more important as we take on a major east-west transit project. For the LRT to work, we must have a **well-funded and robust bus system** so that people are able to access the line.

In order to increase the funding available for HSR, **we must end area rating**. I also believe that funding our transit system must be a priority as any capital investment in our transit system will pay off in the long term: a well-funded transit system will require significantly **less expenditure on repairs and patchwork solutions**, and studies have shown that ridership increases as the reliability and reach of a transit system increases. Short term capital investment will result in long-term rewards.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

A strong, reliable, and comprehensive public transit system allows for the development of community. Whether it's getting to your local library, your job, or one of Hamilton's amazing parks, **transit often acts as the backbone to community**. Many City institutions (Libraries, Recreation Centres, etc.) have to cancel programming due to lack of enrollment. At the same time, many residents are unable to access these programmes due to a lack of personal transit. Participants in all City programming must have **free bus tickets** provided to them each day they participate in the programming. Additionally, HSR service needs to better prepare for **large events such as McMaster Residence Move-In, holiday celebrations and festivals**.

WORKING FOR EVERYONE

I put my name forward on May 1st with a single goal in mind: to improve the lives of my friends and neighbours, and to ensure that we are able to lift each other up so that everyone can succeed in Hamilton, regardless of our circumstances. It wasn't about who I was running against: it was about who and what I'm running for. One withdrawal and twelve new nominations later, that remains true.

I'm running because I believe in courageous and principled politics. Because I believe when neighbours and communities come together we can get amazing things done.

I'm running because as life continues to become more and more unaffordable we need to fight to protect public services, fight to ensure everyone has a home, and work hard so that everyone feels safe in the community they live in.

Working together, we can build a Ward One that truly works for everyone.

So join us,

Let's work together to build up our communities and make spaces where everyone feels safe to age, work, and play.

Let's stand up for housing as a human right and ensure that no one is forced into unsafe housing or has to decide between groceries and paying their rent.

Let's talk about what accountability looks like and how our elected representatives can serve the people and our neighbourhoods not just developers.

Let's demand a transit system that's reliable, public, and affordable. Where we know we can get where we need to go regardless of the weather or if we have a stroller or mobility device with us.

Let's chat about what a Ward One that works for everyone looks like, and how working together as neighbours we can build that future.

So please grab a sign, tell a friend, join us on a canvass, make a donation, and vote for change that works for everyone this October.