

# PLANNING

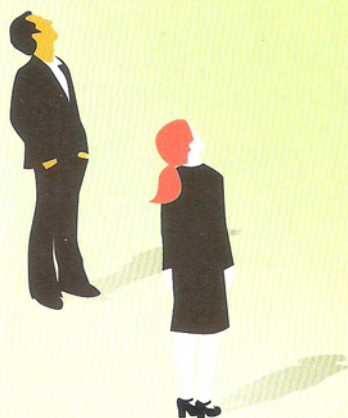
FALL/AUTOMNE 2012

# CANADA

# PLANNING

Planning  
with  
Uncertainty

Planifier pour  
faire face à  
l'incertitude



# WALKABILITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## How Pedestrian and Transit-Oriented Environments Attract Creative Jobs to Hamilton

BY PAUL SHAKER, MCIP, RPP

**SUMMARY** This article summarizes the outcomes of the report "Walkability and Economic Development" by CCS Urban Research, commissioned by the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce. The report investigated how pedestrian and transit-oriented environments attract creative industries in the City of Hamilton. This was done through a spatial analysis to see where clusters of creative economic activity are located relative to the areas of the city where walkability and transit accessibility are at their greatest. The report puts the results into a broader context of other relevant research as well as local policy goals to show how community planning efforts can help create urban environments that are fertile ground for the development of certain economic sectors.

**RÉSUMÉ** Cet article résume les conclusions de l'étude « Walkability and Economic Development » (L'accessibilité piétonne et le développement économique) réalisée par la CCS Urban Research à la demande de la Hamilton Chamber of Commerce. L'étude s'est penchée sur les différentes façons dont les environnements qui favorisent les piétons et le transport en commun attirent les industries de la création vers la Ville de Hamilton. Fondée sur une analyse spatiale, l'étude détermine l'emplacement des grappes d'activité économique créative par rapport aux zones urbaines qui offrent une très grande accessibilité aux piétons et au transport en commun. De plus, elle examine les résultats obtenus dans le contexte plus large d'autres études pertinentes et d'objectifs politiques locaux afin de montrer comment les efforts de planification communautaire peuvent contribuer à créer des environnements urbains propices au développement de certains secteurs économiques.

**A**lthough it is understood that pedestrian friendly and transit-oriented environments are elements of good planning, they are not necessarily understood as good business by the broader municipal decision-making community. However, the increased focus on the importance of Quality of Life (QOL) is beginning to make this link.

More and more, QOL is recognized as a key driver of economic development for cities. The US-based Progressive Policy Institute's comprehensive study of American urban centres called The Metropolitan New Economy Index, highlights QOL as a key factor in attracting the knowledge workers of the new economy.<sup>1</sup> In the City of Hamilton, this understanding is

embedded in the municipal Economic Development Strategy which devotes a section to how QOL and livable communities, help attract workers, and makes Hamilton a good place to invest in. However, while these over-arching goals sound good, what does this mean on a practical level?

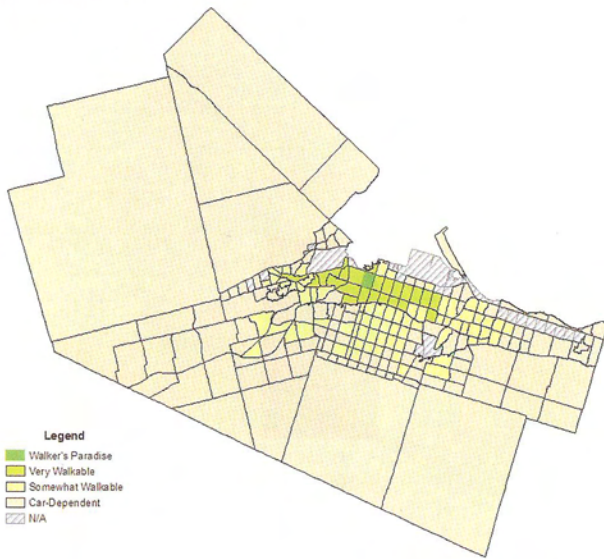
As the Metropolitan New Economy Index outlines, QOL goes beyond "high culture" to include elements like walkability, how well workers and residents can navigate the urban environment on foot, congregate and network, without the need for a vehicle. Another dimension is how accessible certain areas are by transit. This understanding hasn't always been the case as these elements were long seen as secondary factors, compared to vehicular access, in creating fertile economic environments.

However, with the more contemporary view of economic development gaining traction, a central question is what is the impact of walkable and transit accessible environments on jobs and economic development. Just as certain economic sectors require robust road and rail links to make locations attractive for business, what is the link between a hive of economic activity, and the level of walkability and transit access.

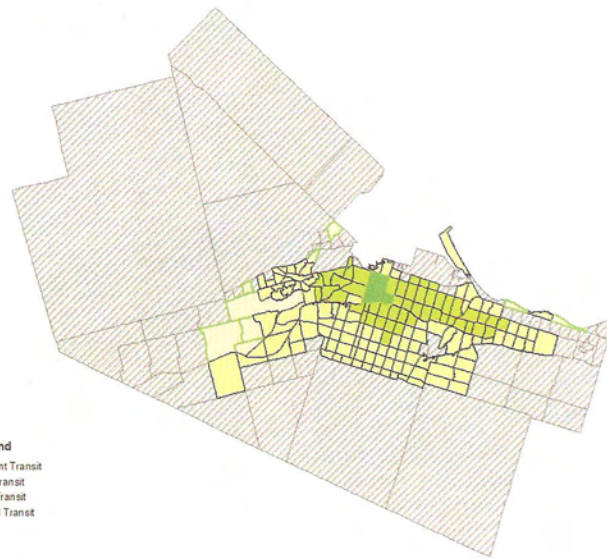
As an organization with a mandate to promote local business, the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce commissioned CCS Urban Research to conduct a study on this issue in Hamilton, with a focus on creative industries, and the results were quite informative.

First, why creative industries? From previous research we have conducted, we know there is a high concentration of creative

**Figure 1: The Walkability of Hamilton's Neighbourhoods.**  
SOURCE: CCS URBAN RESEARCH



**Figure 2: Transit Score of Hamilton's Neighbourhoods**  
SOURCE: CCS URBAN RESEARCH



industries in the downtown core.<sup>2</sup> We also know about the significant growth in creative industry jobs downtown over the last few years. Finally, we know that the core is one of the more walkable environments in the local urban structure. From this basis, a number of questions can be posed:

- > What is the measured level of walkability in the downtown?
- > Where else in the city can we see these levels of walkability?
- > What is the geography of transit access in Hamilton?
- > Is there a spatial relationship between walkability, transit accessibility and creative industry jobs city-wide?

In answering these questions, we can begin by looking at the overall issue of walkability, economic development, and job creation in Hamilton.

### MEASURING WALKABILITY AND TRANSIT ACCESSIBILITY

To measure walkability in Hamilton, the on-line tool Walk Score was utilized. Walk Score uses a special procedure to measure the walkability of an address. The Walk Score algorithm awards points based on the distance to amenities in each category. Amenities [e.g., grocery stores, restaurants, shops, banks, parks, schools] within .25 miles receive maximum points and no points are awarded for amenities further

than one mile. Walk Score uses a variety of data sources including Google Earth and Open Street Map.<sup>3</sup>

The Walk Score was measured in the centre of all of Hamilton's neighbourhoods and the results were mapped according to a scale of walkability (Figure 1). Most of the highly walkable neighbourhoods are located in the lower city between the Niagara Escarpment and Hamilton Harbour and encompass downtown Dundas through Westdale and Downtown, to Strathearne Avenue in the east.

Along with the Walk Score, a Transit Score was measured for Hamilton's neighbourhood planning units using a similar methodology. Transit Score is a measure of how well a location is served by public transit. Transit Score is based on data released in a standard format by public transit agencies. To calculate a Transit Score, a "usefulness" value is assigned to nearby transit routes based on the frequency, type of route (rail, bus, etc.), and distance to the nearest stop on the route. The "usefulness" of all nearby routes is summed and normalized to give a score between 0-100.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 2 shows Hamilton's neighbourhoods categorized by Transit Score. Five neighbourhoods ranked as having Excellent Transit surround the downtown. A number of neighbourhoods ranked as having Good Transit spanning much of the lower city from Westdale past the Red Hill Valley to Green Road in the east as well as extending onto the escarpment to include

13 neighbourhoods north of the Lincoln Alexander Expressway.

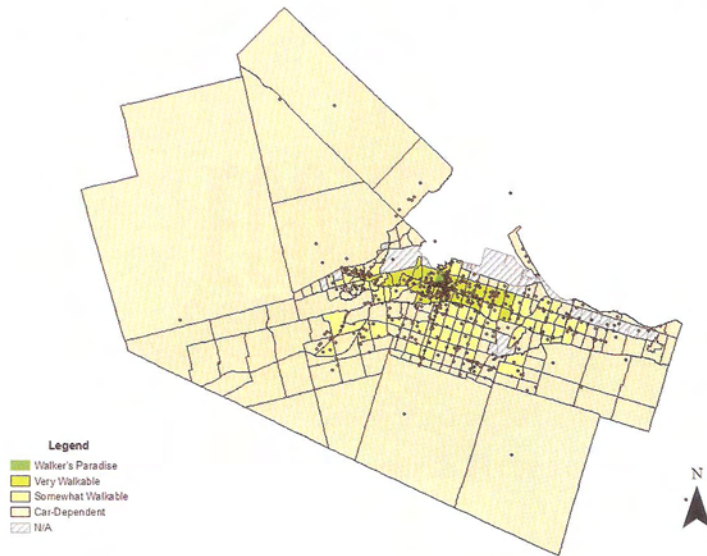
### CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND WALKABILITY

Creative industries can be found throughout Hamilton, but they tend to cluster in certain areas. Figure 3 shows a city-wide scan of creative industries overlaid on the Walk Score map. The analysis shows a strong spatial relationship between areas of higher Walk Score and creative businesses with almost half (Figure 4) being located in neighbourhoods ranked as the top two categories of Walk Score ("Walker's Paradise" and "Very Walkable"). Particular clusters of note include the neighbourhoods in and around downtown Hamilton (Central, Beasley, Durand, Corktown), the south-west (Strathcona, and Kirkendall North), as well as downtown Dundas.

### CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND TRANSIT

Figure 5 shows creative industries overlaid on the Transit Score map. The analysis once again shows a strong spatial relationship between areas of higher Transit Score and creative businesses with over half (Figure 6) being located in neighbourhoods ranked in the top two categories of Transit Score ("Excellent Transit" and "Good Transit"). In the "Excellent Transit" category alone, the neighbourhoods of Central, Beasley, Durand,

Figure 3: Creative Industries and Walkability SOURCES: WALKSCORE.COM; CCS URBAN RESEARCH



and Corktown have a significant cluster (25%) of all creative industries. Further, about 40% are within a 500 metre zone along King Street from Highway 403 to the Red Hill Valley Expressway, which is one of the designated rapid transit corridors for future Light Rail Transit (LRT).

### CONCLUSIONS/OBSERVATIONS

The analysis reveals a number of interesting trends. There is a clear spatial relationship between creative industries and neighbourhoods in Hamilton that rank higher in walk and transit scores. Additionally, there is distinct clustering of businesses in areas close to or within the neighbourhoods that rank the highest on both scores. Further, we know from recent survey data that creative industries are a fast growing sector in Hamilton and this relationship points to a link between walkable and transit accessible environments and areas of job growth.<sup>5</sup>

Why does this link exist? Recent work by urban researchers and professionals such as Christopher Leinberger and his study of Washington D.C., show that several factors contribute to more walkable places that perform better economically:<sup>6</sup>

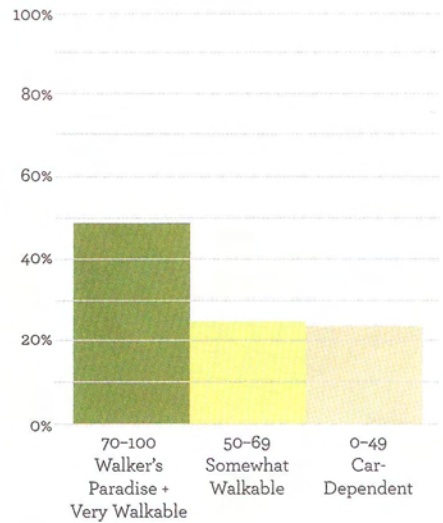
- > Walkable places benefit from being near other walkable places. In Hamilton, more walkable neighbourhoods tend to be adjacent to one another, creating natural clustered districts on the urban landscape that can help create a critical

mass of economic activity, as has been observed with creative industries. This is the case with the creative clusters located on James Street North, James Street South, Locke Street and Downtown Dundas.

- > Residents of more walkable places have lower transportation costs and higher transit access. In Hamilton, the areas with higher walk and transit scores have many more options for mobility, creating economic flexibility in transportation. In addition, the different clusters of creative industries are well connected to one another with public transit, because they are located along the major east-west and north-south transit corridors.
- > Residents of places with poor walkability are generally less affluent and have lower educational attainment than places with good walkability. While this is not uniformly the case in Hamilton, many of the clustered locations of creative industries which score higher on walk and transit scores are located in more affluent areas of Hamilton. Areas where this isn't the case, such as the creative district of James Street North are undergoing some gentrification and the local creative workforce, rather than the residential population, is more affluent than the average.

Moving forward, these factors can help inform local efforts at job creation. More specifically, walkable environments should

Figure 4: Creative Industries by Walk Score\*  
SOURCES: WALKSCORE.COM; CCS URBAN RESEARCH  
\*Does not include all categories and thus does not total 100%



be viewed as economic infrastructure that attract employment and should be invested in accordingly. This means that just as investments are made to ensure suburban business parks have the required infrastructure to make them centres of private investment, walkable environments need to be created, enhanced, and maintained in order to attract jobs for other sectors. Practically speaking, this points to a whole host of planning issues, ranging from pedestrian-friendly urban design to intensification. The same can be said for transit-accessible environments and this links directly to efforts at establishing LRT across the lower city of Hamilton.

Strengthening the link between walkability, transit accessibility and jobs will be important for Hamilton to effectively build a strong and diverse economy moving

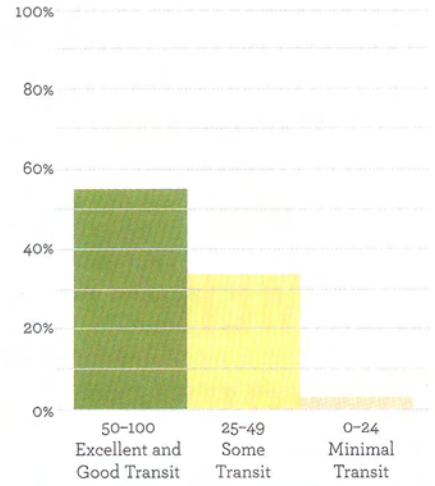
### REFERENCES

1. Atkinson RD, Gottlieb PD. The Metropolitan New Economy Index, Progressive Policy Institute, 2001. Available at: <http://www.neweconomyindex.org/metro/part6.html>
2. Working in the Core: Downtown Hamilton Employment Analysis. Available at: [http://www.hamilton.ca/NR/rdonlyres/BC74BE57-A016-4093-BFD1-F1AE3AFFE33/0/JAN10EDRMS\\_n112407\\_v1\\_7\\_1\\_PED11009.pdf](http://www.hamilton.ca/NR/rdonlyres/BC74BE57-A016-4093-BFD1-F1AE3AFFE33/0/JAN10EDRMS_n112407_v1_7_1_PED11009.pdf)
3. Walk Score Methodology. Available at: <http://www.walkscore.com/methodology.shtml>
4. Transit Score Methodology. Available at: <http://www.walkscore.com/transit-score-methodology.shtml>
5. 2011 Downtown Employment Statistics. Available at: <http://www.investinhamilton.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/2011-Downtown-Employment-Stats2.pdf>
6. Walk this Way: The Economic Promise of Walkable Places in Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Available at: <http://www.brookings.edu/-/media/research/files/papers/2012/5/25%20walkable%20places%20leinberger/25%20walkable%20places%20leinberger.pdf>

Figure 5: Creative Industries and Transit SOURCES: WALKSCORE.COM; CCS URBAN RESEARCH



Figure 6: Creative Industries by Transit Score\* SOURCES: WALKSCORE.COM; CCS URBAN RESEARCH \*Does not include all categories and thus does not total 100%



forward. With limited resources to spend on economic development, decision makers need to ensure they are investing in parts of the city that will provide a sustained return-on-investment, and create jobs that

will attract and retain mobile talent. The growth of creative industries, the talent they attract, and the geographic clustering they exhibit, point to the types of locations that achieve this goal in Hamilton. ■

**PAUL SHAKER, MCIP, RPP**, is Executive Director and Senior Planner with CCS Urban Research. He can be reached at: [paul@communitystudy.ca](mailto:paul@communitystudy.ca)

**Sometimes it doesn't fit...**

**... and sometimes it's just right!**

A partnership that serves you well with exclusive savings, personalized coverage and service.

**GET A QUOTE**  
**1-888-476-8737**  
[thepersonal.com/cip](http://thepersonal.com/cip)  
 Your exclusive group rate in as little as 10 minutes.

10 min

CANADIAN INSTITUTE OF PLANNERS  
 Shaping Our Communities  
 Sustaining Canada's Future

**thePersonal**  
 Home and Auto Group Insurer

Certain conditions apply. Auto insurance is not available in Manitoba, Saskatchewan or British Columbia due to government-run plans.

The right fit.