

Community Benefits for Hamilton LRT

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Hamilton Community Benefits Network

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Executive Summary

The Hamilton Community Benefits Network (HCBN) advocates for the use of Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) in major city infrastructure projects. CBAs are agreements between governments, developers and coalitions of community organisations that address a range of community concerns and needs, including (but not limited to) ensuring residents benefit from major developments. In particular, the HCBN believes CBAs are a way to mitigate the impact to local communities by large scale infrastructure projects.

The HCBN approached McMaster Research Shop to help conduct community focus groups and to analyse a community survey identifying priority areas and ideas for a CBA for the Hamilton LRT.

Survey respondents indicated that their top four community benefit areas were Affordable Housing, Transportation Connection, Local Employment and Training Opportunities, and The Environment.

Survey respondents provided a variety of community benefits ideas. Some ideas that were mentioned most often are listed below:

- Designing LRT infrastructure to accommodate use of multiple modes of transportation i.e., bike lanes, crosswalks, parking spaces;
- Providing affordable housing geared to income;
- Increasing access to the LRT from across Hamilton;
- Ensuring that fares are affordable;
- Inclusionary zoning (i.e., a percentage of all new developments should be allocated to affordable housing);
- Prioritising job creation for Hamilton residents so that people can live and work in Hamilton; and
- Protecting green spaces

Community focus groups also highlighted potential community benefits ideas:

- *Housing affordability*: Provide affordable housing along the LRT corridor by housing people in vacant homes and building more affordable housing units.
- *Accessibility*: Include accessibility features such as wide ramps and doors, and audio signals for visually impaired people. Accommodate low-income folks with affordable fare, and provide free ridership for those on ODSP and seniors.
- *Environment*: Plant more trees and create green spaces along the LRT route.
- *Arts and Community*: Provide opportunities for local artists to do artwork on stations and buildings along the LRT corridor. Consider licensing buskers.

These findings can be used by the HCBN to inform their CBA for Hamilton LRT and to advocate for community needs at the City of Hamilton and Metrolinx.

Introduction

The Hamilton Community Benefits Network (HCBN) “envisions Hamilton as an inclusive, thriving city in which all residents have equitable opportunities to contribute to building healthy communities and a prospering economy” (HCBN, n.d.). They do this by advocating for the use of Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) in major city infrastructure projects. CBAs are agreements between governments, developers and coalitions of community organisations that address a range of community concerns and needs, including (but not limited to) ensuring residents benefit from major developments. In particular, the HCBN sees CBAs as an opportunity to help mitigate the impact to local communities by large-scale infrastructure projects. CBAs can include advocating for affordable housing and raising local voices to bring design and neighbourhood improvement additions to the project. CBAs can also foster local workforce development by creating job opportunities for the local community and, in tandem, incentivizing training delivery programs to facilitate access to these jobs.

A major proposed infrastructure project is the planned LRT development in Hamilton. The HCBN is in the process of conducting community consultations around what a CBA would look like for this development project. The HCBN plans to prepare a report for the City of Hamilton and Metrolinx with the results of the consultations and the proposed elements of a CBA. The HCBN approached the McMaster Research shop for support with data collection, distilling community feedback into themes, and writing a report of the findings.

Methods and Limitations

Methods

The HCBN conducted a survey and community focus groups with the Hamilton community to identify their community benefit priorities and ideas.

Survey

The HCBN designed and distributed the survey. The Research Shop team analysed data collected from January – March 2022 and reported the findings. We analysed findings from three versions of the survey with slightly different questions and response categories. We conducted combined analyses of the three survey versions for questions that were the same or similar in wording. However, we segregated analyses for questions that had different response categories. For each question, we reported the number and percentage of respondents who selected each response option. For qualitative questions, we developed themes that we used to code each response and provided a count for the number of times each theme was mentioned.

Community Focus Groups

The HCBN conducted community focus groups from January – March 2022. Each focus group was scheduled for 1.5 - 2 hours and consisted of 2 breakout rooms focusing on community benefits areas including housing affordability, accessibility, environment, and arts and community. The Research Shop team supported the online focus groups by recording breakout sessions, preparing transcripts, and taking notes on Jamboard during the discussions. We categorised data based on themes and summarised them. The HCBN also provided notes from a community focus group held in 2019 which we included in our analysis.

Limitations

The HCBN originally scheduled community focus groups to take place in person; however, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the events were moved online and created concerns regarding their reach. Several focus groups were cancelled due to low enrollment. We mainly reported findings from focus groups conducted with different branches of one organisation. While the intent was to analyse transcripts from each community focus group in conjunction with notes taken on Jamboard, we were not able to obtain several recordings and transcripts due to a lack of consent from participants and other technical difficulties, which prevented us from including direct quotations from participants. Instead, we relied primarily on Jamboard notes taken during the session, which summarised each unique community benefits idea that emerged from the group discussions. These notes were limited in detail and we were not able to ensure their completeness where transcripts were missing.

Findings

Survey

Participant Characteristics

There were a total of 2,317 respondents across all 3 versions of the survey.

To provide context around understanding of community benefits, participants were asked about their familiarity with the term “community benefits agreements”. Across all three surveys, most respondents indicated that they were “not so familiar” (29%) or “not at all familiar” (38%) with community benefits agreements (Table 1).

Table 1: Familiarity with “community benefits agreements”

Response	Count	%
Extremely familiar	85	4%

Very familiar	162	7%
Somewhat familiar	518	22%
Not so familiar	673	29%
Not at all familiar	876	38%

Participants were asked to indicate how long they had been Hamilton residents. In Surveys 1 and 2, most respondents (58%) indicated that they have been residents of Hamilton for over 25 years (Table 2a). Similarly, in Survey 3, most respondents (72%) indicated that they had lived in Hamilton for 10 years or longer (Table 2b).

Table 2: Amount of time as a Hamilton resident from a) surveys 1 and 2 and b) survey 3

a)	Time	Count	%	b)	Time	Count	%
	0-1 years	54	5%		1-5 years	12	14%
	1-5 years	143	12%		6-9 years	12	14%
	6-9 years	71	6%		10+ years	61	72%
	10-25 years	239	20%				
	25+ years	693	58%				

Across all 3 surveys, 1,015 respondents identified themselves as part of an equity-seeking group (Table 3)¹.

Table 3: Respondents from equity-seeking groups from a) surveys 1 and 2 and b) survey 3

a)	Response	Count	%	b)	Response	Count	%
	Person with a disability	174	18%		Person with a disability	8	13%
	Black	19	2%		Black or Person of Colour	4	6%
	Indigenous	17	2%		Indigenous	1	2%
	Person of Colour	75	8%		Women	46	73%
	New Immigrant	14	1%		LGBTQ	6	10%
	Women	576	61%		Elderly Person	15	24%
	LGBTQ2S+	111	12%		Person Living with Homelessness	1	2%
	Elderly	208	22%		Low Income/Fixed Income	17	27%

¹ Responses add up to more than 100% because participants could select more than 1 response

Person experiencing houselessness	7	1%
Low income/fixed income	189	20%
Precarious income/vulnerable employment (e.g., gig work)	40	4%
Single-income family	199	21%

Newcomer	1	2%
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Participants were also asked about their employment status. Across all 3 surveys, most respondents (54%) indicated that they were gainfully employed (Table 4).

Table 4: Employment status

Employment Status	Count	%
Gainfully Employed	711	54%
Underemployed	72	5%
Unemployed	31	2%
Student	34	3%
Retired	381	29%
Other	98	7%

Hamilton Community Needs

Several survey questions were asked to gain an understanding of general concerns affecting the Hamilton community.

Survey results showed that most respondents “strongly agree” (57%) or “agree” (31%) that there is a gap between the rich and poor in the City of Hamilton (Table 5).

Table 5: "There is a gap between rich and poor in the city of Hamilton"

Response	Count	%
Strongly agree	729	57%
Agree	396	31%
Neither agree nor disagree	122	10%
Disagree	24	2%
Strongly disagree	12	1%

Most respondents (98%) believed that there is a need in Hamilton for long term, good, permanent jobs (Table 6).

Table 6: "Do you believe there is a need in Hamilton for long term, good, permanent jobs?"

Response	Count	%
Yes	1265	98%
No	21	2%

Most respondents "strongly agree" (69%) or "agree" (21%) that the cost of housing in the city is too high (Table 7).

Table 7: "The cost of housing is too high in the city"

Response	Count	%
Strongly agree	888	69%
Agree	271	21%
Neither agree nor disagree	93	7%
Disagree	29	2%
Strongly disagree	4	0.31%

31% of respondents "disagree" and 22% of respondents "strongly disagree" that they have a voice in the growth and development of the city (Table 8).

Table 8: "Do you feel you have a voice in the growth and development of the city?"

Response	Count	%
Strongly agree I have a voice	31	2%
I agree I have a voice	275	21%
I neither agree nor disagree	298	23%
I disagree	398	31%
I strongly disagree	283	22%

Community Benefits Priorities

Participants were asked to rank their top 5 community benefits priority areas, where 1= top priority and 5= lowest priority.² In surveys 1 and 2, based on average rank, survey respondent's top priorities were Affordable Housing (1.77), Transportation Connection (2.75) and Local Employment and Training Opportunities (2.97) (Table 9a). On average, survey 3 participants rated Transportation Connection (1.46), The Environment (1.55), and Affordable Housing (1.56) as their top priorities (Table 9b).³

Table 9: Community benefits priority areas from a) surveys 1 and 2 b) survey 3

a) Community Benefits Area	Average Rank	b) Community Benefits Area	Average Rating ⁴
Affordable Housing	1.77	Transportation Connection	1.46
Transportation Connection	2.75	The Environment	1.55
Local Employment and Training Opportunities	2.97	Affordable Housing	1.56
The Environment	2.97	Accessibility (Physical and Economic)	1.74
Shopping Local and Business Support/Local Procurement	3.23	Local Employment and Training Opportunities	1.82
Physical Accessibility	3.24	Community Spaces	1.86
Economic Accessibility	3.32	Shopping Local and Business Support/Local Procurement	2.05
Preserving Historic Character	3.54	Preserving Historic Character	2.48
Community Spaces	3.59	Public Arts	2.57
Public Arts	4.32		

² Participants were asked to rank their top 5 community benefits areas for Survey 1, and all 10 for Survey 2. We took only the top 5 rankings for Survey 2 and combined them with Survey 1 results before calculating the average rankings.

³ In Survey 3, participants were allowed to rate multiple areas with the same priority level (e.g., participants could choose to rate affordable housing and transportation connections as a 3), whereas for Survey 1 and 2, they had to rank each community benefits area.

⁴ Survey 3 asked participants to rate community benefits options on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest priority and 5 being highest. Survey 3 responses were re-coded so that 1=highest priority and 5= lowest priority to ease interpretation alongside Survey 1 and 2 results.

Ideas for Community Benefits

In addition to ranking their priorities, participants were asked to provide their ideas for community benefits for their top priority areas. In the following sections, we elaborate on community benefits ideas that were suggested for each area.

1. Affordable Housing

Respondents identified 6 community benefit ideas related to affordable housing (Table 12).

Table 10: Community benefit ideas related to affordable housing

Idea	Number of times mentioned
Affordable Housing geared to low income	106
Inclusionary Zoning	68
Variety of housing options	57
Housing-related regulations	44
Revamping or destroying old buildings	36
Building new homes	23

Affordable housing geared to low income

Respondents indicated that housing is expensive and needs to be more affordable. Many commented on the injustice of low-income families and young people being unable to afford housing. Participants suggested that housing should be affordable for those with entry-level jobs and indicated that there are many homeless people who need homes but can't afford them. Respondents suggested that having more subsidised housing available in Hamilton would help the low-income population and decrease homelessness.

Inclusionary Zoning

Respondents suggested that a percentage of all new developments should be allocated to affordable housing. One individual said the following on the survey: "A percentage of units (say 20%) in new developments should be affordable (50-60% of market rates); the affordable units need to include housing for singles, couples and families." Another individual suggested that 25% of all new development should be affordable, specifically in the downtown area. Participants emphasised having affordable housing along the LRT route because low-income individuals require access to public transit. One respondent suggested the following: "A maximum number of affordable housing units along the corridor should be secured so that housing on the LRT path is not gobbled up by middle- and high-income people. Working class folks should be able to reap the benefits of renewed transportation infrastructure." Several respondents suggested that there needs to be affordable housing for people displaced by LRT construction.

Respondents indicated that more mixed-income areas should be developed: “Increase subsidised housing and have it within established communities, not separate slums.”

Variety of housing options

The survey indicated that Hamiltonians want a variety of types of housing available for low-income individuals including additional rental options, multi-dwelling low-rise buildings, and smaller homes. Similarly, respondents suggested creating communal living apartment buildings with smaller private space and more shared areas. Similarly, respondents also suggested having multi-use buildings (e.g., library and apartments) and co-operative/multi-family housing.

Housing-related regulations

Respondents indicated that there should be a cap and more control on the prices of housing and rent (housing prices and rent should not continue to increase). Respondents suggested that there should be taxes in place on vacant properties, and that there should be funding in place for cooperative housing development. Some respondents disagreed with the legalities of renovations: “Stop "renovictions" from being legal. Give housing security (somehow) to those of us who rent.” Respondents indicated there should be incentives in place for people to buy affordable houses, especially for first time buyers.

Revamping or destroying old buildings

Respondents indicated that old buildings, warehouses, schools, and homes should either be revamped into new housing units or destroyed to make space for new homes. One respondent said, “Renovate old boarded up/ crumbling buildings into single family units, build community living spaces for single people in their 20s.” Another individual suggested “building homes and apartments in all abandoned properties downtown and inner City.”

Build new homes

The survey showed that individuals want additional affordable housing to be built. One individual said they wanted “more homes being built in empty city spaces - city density preserves agricultural land and open spaces and helps with clean air.” Another individual commented that they wanted “more 'city housing' (Hamilton housing) units. Entice builders to create high-volume low-cost units.” Another person commented, “Build more housing, more apartments that would support families.”

2. Transportation Connection

Regarding transportation connection, survey respondents identified 5 major ideas (Table 11).

Table 11: Community benefits relating to transportation connections

Idea	Number of times mentioned
Infrastructure design (bike lanes, cross walks, bike locks, bus shelters)	114
Increase access across Hamilton (multiple stops, multiple areas)	71
Connect with multiple modes of transportation	61
Safety	43
Connect to areas outside Hamilton	11

Infrastructure Design

Respondents felt that infrastructure design should take multiple modes of transportation into consideration. Respondents suggested building additional bike lanes that are protected from cars. For instance, respondents noted challenges of crossing the bridge across the 403 by bike because of car traffic. Respondents wanted the city to have separate bike lanes similar to Ottawa street. Respondents stated there should be more bike stations to store bikes safely near transit stations throughout the city. Respondents noted that infrastructure should be created to promote walking by creating additional sidewalks, lighting up walking spaces, and having clearly marked pedestrian lanes. Respondents also recommended building more parking lots for commuters who use public transportation to reduce street parking. Respondents want vehicles to be able to drive along LRT rails, similar to the rails in the Toronto area.

Increase Access Across Hamilton

Participants indicated that public transit should include stops and stations across the city to facilitate transportation for all Hamiltonians without needing a personal vehicle. Respondents stated that there should be an emphasis on transportation in rural areas and in underprivileged communities who have the most need for public transportation. Respondents suggested that there should be more transportation available from areas such as Binbrook, Winona Barton Hannon, Caledonia, Upper Centennial, Ancaster and Dundas to popular areas such as Jackson Square and Limeridge mall. Similarly, respondents suggested adding transit connections from the mountain and other suburban areas in Hamilton. Respondents also stated that there needs to be more frequent transit available at busy areas such as at Hamilton Go Station, Centennial Parkway Go Station, and West Harbour. An individual stated: “We need lots of trains that run at all times of the day and night, weekends and holidays included. I shouldn't need to check a schedule; I should just know it'll be there.”

Connect with multiple modes of transportation

Respondents stated that the LRT needs to connect with multiple modes of transportation, including buses, bicycles, and walking. Respondents suggested having bike stations at all stations. Participants stated that it should be possible to walk from

one transit station to the next. Respondents indicated the need for connectivity between GO transit, HSR and the LRT throughout Hamilton with a particular emphasis on ensuring connections to get across the mountain.

Safety

Respondents indicated the need for safety when taking the bus or LRT, particularly when exiting trains and finding connections with other modes of transportation. Respondents indicated that having more sidewalks and barriers separating them from vehicles could promote safety for cyclists and pedestrians. Respondents noted that King & Queen is not a safe intersection for pedestrians.

Connect to areas outside of Hamilton

Survey respondents emphasised that the LRT should provide easy connection from Hamilton to other regions including the Greater Toronto area, Waterdown, Grimsby, and Niagara. Similarly, participants suggested improving connections from LRT to areas such as Dundas, Burlington, and Ancaster.

3. Local Employment and Training Opportunities

Survey respondents identified 8 community benefits ideas regarding local employment and training (Table 12).

Table 12: Community benefits relating to local employment and training opportunities

Idea	Number of times mentioned
Focus on creating job opportunities and hiring individuals and businesses from Hamilton	65
Fair employment conditions (permanent, liveable wage, benefits etc.)	26
Prioritise inclusion of equity-seeking groups	25
Paid Internships and Apprenticeships	24
Encourage skilled trades	23
Partner with local education institutions to provide training opportunities	15
Provide barrier-free opportunities (opportunities that don't reduce ODSP benefit, no age limit, accommodate different levels of education)	13
Focus on youth	9

Focus on creating job opportunities and hiring individuals and businesses from Hamilton

Respondents felt that these new opportunities should prioritise hiring of Hamilton residents and businesses i.e., that employment opportunities should enable Hamilton residents to live and work in Hamilton. One respondent suggested that “a number of available positions should be set aside for individuals who have lived in the city for a

certain time period (10 to 20yrs)". Similarly, someone suggested that there should be a "policy to hire 70% local".

Fair working conditions

Respondents identified the need for employment opportunities to have fair working conditions. Respondents noted that jobs should provide a living wage that allows people to pay for rent, groceries, and other essential needs, and provide benefits. They indicated that new job opportunities should be full-time, permanent positions and that contract or part-time positions should be limited in number.

Prioritise inclusion of equity-seeking groups

Respondents noted that members of equity-seeking groups should be prioritised for training and employment opportunities. Respondents suggested that Indigenous peoples, newcomers, people with severe mental illness and physical disabilities, low income people, single parents, or people who are unemployed or underemployed should be prioritised for these opportunities.

Paid internships and apprenticeships

Respondents noted that there should be more paid internships and apprenticeships. Specifically, respondents felt that these opportunities should be used to engage local employers in training and ultimately hiring individuals.

Encourage skilled trades

Survey respondents suggested that opportunities should focus on encouraging people to take up skilled trades (welding, carpentry, plumbing, manufacturing etc.) and that these opportunities should focus especially on recruiting more youth and women.

Partner with local education institutions to provide training opportunities

Respondents suggested that training opportunities should be offered in partnership with local educational institutions including McMaster University, Mohawk College, and local secondary schools. Respondents suggested that training programs offered through these institutions could be focused on LRT maintenance, skilled trades, and green technology.

Provide barrier-free opportunities

Respondents noted that new training and employment opportunities should reduce barriers associated with them. Respondents noted that there should be entry-level opportunities that have fewer requirements around education and experience. One respondent stated that opportunities should "allow people with EI, OW, and ODSP to continue to be paid their benefits..." Some participants also noted that opportunities should not just be reserved for youth, believing that they should allow people of all ages to benefit from opportunities. Respondents also indicated that training opportunities should be free or low-cost.

Focus on youth

Some respondents felt that training and employment opportunities should focus on youth to ensure that they can develop skills, network, and contribute to the local economy.

4. The Environment

Respondents identified 7 major ideas relating to the environment (Table 13).

Table 13: Community benefits ideas regarding the environment

Idea	Number of times mentioned
Protect and create green spaces	60
Renewable/clean energy sources	38
Enhance urban canopy	36
Environmentally-friendly construction	35
Electric LRT cars/ other vehicles	18
Promote walking/cycling	9
Multi-sort bins	8

Protect and create green spaces

Respondents noted that existing green spaces such as the greenbelt, conservation areas, and parks should be protected. Respondents indicated that they do not want developments to destroy green spaces and wanted additional green space to be created along the corridor.

Renewable/clean energy sources

Respondents indicated that they do not want fossil fuels to be used for the LRT. Respondents also suggested that solar panels should be installed at LRT stops and shelters where possible.

Environmentally-friendly construction

Respondents indicated that they want environmentally friendly construction practices used for the LRT. Respondents indicated that recycled or recyclable materials should be used to build the LRT and that construction should minimise greenhouse gas emissions and pollution as much as possible.

Enhance urban canopy

Respondents indicated that they wanted to improve the urban canopy in Hamilton. Respondents suggested implementing green roofs at transit stops and bus shelters and planting more trees along the LRT route.

Electric LRT cars/ other vehicles

Respondents suggested that the LRT cars should use electric power. They also recommended using electric buses to connect people across the city to the LRT. Some respondents indicated that there should be electric car charging ports installed across the city.

Promote walking/cycling

Respondents noted that the LRT should be used to reduce the use of cars and promote active transport such as walking or cycling. Respondents indicated that there should be more bike lanes and pedestrian zones along the LRT corridor.

Multi-sort bins (garbage, recycling, etc.)

Respondents stated that the LRT route should have multi-sort bins for recycling and garbage to reduce litter and promote recycling.

5. Shopping Local and Business Support/Local Procurement

Survey respondents identified 6 community benefits ideas regarding supporting local businesses (Table 14).

Table 14: Community benefits relating to supporting local businesses

Idea	Number of times mentioned
Financial support for existing or new small businesses along LRT corridor	54
Allocate more space for local businesses to open or expand	20
LRT stops near businesses	19
Local procurement for LRT	14
Advertise/promote small businesses along corridor	12
Maintain access to businesses during construction	12

Financial support for existing or new small businesses along LRT corridor

Many respondents indicated that there should be financial support for small businesses along the LRT corridor. Respondents suggested several ideas for support such as providing tax breaks or reducing taxes, implementing rent control for commercial spaces, and providing rent subsidies for small businesses to open near the LRT. Respondents also suggested providing grants to support small businesses, in addition to financial support reserved for businesses owned by women, racialized people, Indigenous people, or people with disabilities.

Allocate more space for local businesses to open or expand

Respondents stated that there should be space along the LRT corridor reserved for local businesses to open or expand. Specifically, one respondent suggested “rezoning to allow for more retail business, restaurants etc”. Some respondents suggested reserving vacant buildings for businesses or requiring that new developments include retail and grocery stores.

LRT stops near businesses

Survey respondents indicated that they want LRT stops to be within walking distance of retail, local cafes, restaurants, personal care services, and other businesses. Respondents felt that having LRT stops nearby could make businesses more accessible to patrons and consequently increase their revenue.

Local procurement for LRT

Respondents suggested that raw construction materials for the LRT project should be obtained from local Hamilton companies. They also suggested recruiting local consultants, engineers, and contractors for the project.

Advertise/promote small businesses along LRT corridor

Respondents indicated that small businesses should be supported with advertising. They suggested that the LRT cars or bus shelters should provide free advertising for small businesses to help them compete with larger corporations.

Maintain access to businesses during construction

Respondents stated that businesses should remain accessible during construction. One respondent suggested that: “... closures/access issues [should be] communicated to all businesses well in advance so they can plan.... [S]mall access routes [should be kept] open for maintaining community pickup windows for some businesses that may be harder to access at times”

6. Physical Accessibility

Survey respondents identified 6 community benefits ideas relating to physical accessibility (Table 15).

Table 15: Community benefits ideas for physical accessibility

Idea	Number of times mentioned
Clearing snow on the roads and sidewalks	27
Accessibility features for LRT cars and stations (platform design, curb depressions, ramps)	23
Greater wheelchair accessibility	14

Accessible signage and audio information	13
Implementing wider walkways/entrances inside the LRT and sidewalks	9
Public transit connecting to LRT stops	5

Clearing snow on the roads and sidewalks

Respondents highlighted snow removal as a key concern. Many respondents suggested that snow should be cleared at LRT stations and surrounding walkways and roads to ensure accessibility for the elderly and individuals with disabilities.

Accessibility features for LRT cars and stations (platform design, curb depressions, ramps)

Respondents emphasised the importance of accessibility features for LRT cars and stations, with some explicitly stating that compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) should be prioritised. Respondents recommended the use of curb depressions, ramps, and railings. Respondents also suggested including space to store collapsed strollers on the LRT.

Greater wheelchair accessibility

Respondents suggested that new developments including commercial or residential spaces should increase accessibility for wheelchairs, which could entail building wide doorways, hallways, and open spaces. Respondents also suggested ramps or lifts wherever there are stairs.

Accessible signage and audio information

Respondents suggested that there should be auditory signals at crosswalks, announcements at stations, and the use of braille for people who are visually impaired. Respondents also suggested signage that is clear and uncluttered. For example, respondents recommended ensuring that route schedules are easy to read.

Implementing wider walkways/entrances inside the LRT and sidewalks

Survey respondents recommended having wider walkways for people who use wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility devices, and to accommodate people with strollers.

Public Transit connecting to LRT stops

Respondents noted that public transit should connect to LRT stops. One individual stated: “There should be public transit available between LRT stops (e.g. King St bus)... many with physical disabilities would find it difficult to walk long distances to get to and from the LRT stops.”

7. Economic Accessibility

Survey respondents identified 5 community benefits ideas relating to economic accessibility (Table 16).

Table 16: Community benefits ideas for economic accessibility

Idea	Number of times mentioned
Affordable fares and passes	70
Free or discounted fare for certain populations	49
Free transit for everyone	29
Fares tied to income-level	14
LRT fare comparable to HSR bus fare	11

Affordable fares and passes

Respondents highlighted the importance of affordable fares and passes to ensure that individuals from all income levels can access the LRT service. Some respondents suggested that fares should not be greater than \$3.

Free or discounted fare for certain populations

Many respondents suggested that fares should be discounted for certain populations including low-income individuals, children, seniors, students, and recipients of Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). Some respondents also suggested that discounted fares should be available for frequent riders.

Free transit for everyone

Many respondents suggested that public transport should be free for everyone to discourage the use of cars. One respondent suggested following Calgary's example: "...Calgary light rail offered a downtown section free of charge to commuters ... and very high parking rates to discourage cars, ensure use of LRT through 10 blocks downtown where all condos [are] being built."

Fares tied to income-level

Some respondents suggested that the fares should be tied to income level: "Fare rates according to income tax brackets, allowing people in the lower income bracket [to] pay less for public transit...."

LRT fare comparable to HSR fare

Some residents proposed that the LRT fare should be comparable to the current HSR bus fare.

8. Preserve Historic Character

Respondents identified 4 community benefits ideas to preserve Hamilton’s historic character (Table 17).

Table 17: Community benefits ideas to preserve historic character

Idea	Number of times mentioned
Do not demolish historic buildings	68
Maintain existing building facades/ build around existing character	39
Historic/aesthetic requirements or rules to protect old structures or for new buildings and structures	17

Do not demolish historic buildings

Respondents overwhelmingly did not want historic buildings to be demolished. Instead, they wanted historic buildings to be preserved, maintained, or converted for other uses such as “interesting living spaces”.

Maintain existing building facades/build around existing character

Respondents wished for building facades to be maintained and for new development to be done around existing structures. One respondent noted: “Some historical storefronts are worth preserving, even if everything behind the facade is new. Other buildings should try to fit with the local character rather than bring a jarring new look, e.g. glass and metal when existing buildings have stonework.”

Historic/aesthetic requirements or rules to protect old structures or for new buildings and structures

Survey respondents felt that there should be requirements to ensure protection of historic structures. One respondent suggested implementing “...urban design guidelines that either outright preserve or subtly replicate older buildings....”

9. Community Spaces

Respondents identified 7 key ideas for community spaces (Table 18).

Table 18: Community benefits ideas for community spaces

Idea	Number of times mentioned
Greens Spaces and parks	64
Community hubs and recreational centres	41
Spaces for people experiencing houselessness	32
Free community spaces	29

LRT/bus shelters	24
Pedestrian-only streets	8
Public Washrooms	7

Greenspaces and parks

Green spaces and parks were mentioned by respondents as an important community space, overlapping with the environmental community benefits section.

One respondent noted a lack of green spaces along the LRT route: “Green areas are important. The LRT route has very few green spaces, especially starting at Main and Dundurn Street: I think the first one east of Dundurn is Gage Park then Montgomery Park.” Respondents also mentioned a need for parks and playgrounds for children and for pets, in addition to more hiking and bike trails.

Community hubs and recreational centres

Respondents also suggested that community hubs and recreation centres should be integrated with the LRT station and connect people to community organisations and services. Other recommendations for recreation included having event halls, arenas, sports facilities, community fridges and pantries, daycares, and pop-up markets.

Spaces for people experiencing homelessness

Respondents felt that community spaces should be welcoming for people experiencing homelessness and be used to link people to services. One respondent suggested “creating a designated area for encampments so [people experiencing homelessness] can be safe and stable even if they aren't ready for shelters (or shelters aren't appropriate for them).”

Free community spaces

Respondents identified the need for community spaces where people are not required to spend money. One respondent suggested having “early years centres, libraries, [and] drop-in spaces...” which do not charge people to enter.

LRT/Bus Shelters

Respondents stated there should be shelters at all stops, and that they should be enclosed and heated to protect people against variable weather conditions. They also suggested that shelters should have sufficient capacity to accommodate a large number of people and that they should provide seating. Respondents noted that there should be open areas for wheelchairs, walkers, and strollers and that shelters should be well-lit to ensure safety.

Pedestrian-only streets

Some respondents wanted “more pedestrian-only streets”. They also felt there should be pedestrian areas surrounding parks and stores along the LRT corridor.

Public Washrooms

Respondents also suggested that public washrooms be available at LRT stops. One respondent suggested that the public washrooms should have 24-hour availability.

10. Public Arts

Regarding public arts, survey respondents identified 4 community benefits ideas (Table 19).

Table 19: Community benefits ideas relating to public arts

Idea	Number of times mentioned
Commission local artists	38
Beautify the city	25
Take inspiration from other cities	10
Promote history of Hamilton	8

Commission local artists

Survey respondents indicated that local artists should be commissioned to create art for transit stations, parks, and other public spaces. Respondents stated that there should be a focus on hiring local artists who come from marginalised communities such as Indigenous, black, and other racialized communities. They also indicated that young people and local schools should be engaged in creating the artwork. Respondents suggested encouraging performing arts (e.g., buskers) at LRT stops.

Beautify the city

Respondents indicated that artwork would beautify the city, attract new life and business, and make the city more welcoming overall. Specifically, respondents stated there should be more artwork in the downtown area, which could include designing creative transit stops and making infrastructure look aesthetically pleasing (e.g., streetlights and benches). Respondents indicated they want artists to develop murals—one respondent suggested that artists could create murals of the various waterfalls in the city.

Take inspiration from other cities

Respondents suggested that Hamilton should take inspiration from other cities that have incorporated art into their urban landscape. Respondents indicated that every new building should have a piece of artwork on its property, like Montreal's new buildings. Similarly, Montreal's metro stations are creative and unique, and respondents indicated that Hamilton should follow their example. Respondents suggested allowing graffiti in Hamilton via graffiti contests, similar to areas in the United Kingdom.

Promote history of Hamilton

Respondents indicated that the artwork should represent the history of Hamilton and showcase the diversity and various cultures in the city, including Indigenous peoples. Respondents noted that the artwork should capture the uniqueness of each community in Hamilton. Respondents also suggested that the artwork could reflect the past and present, or communicate the envisioned future of Hamilton.

Community Concerns Regarding the LRT project

Participants were asked to list any additional concerns they had about the LRT project that should be communicated to Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton. These concerns are summarized in Table 20. We elaborate on each concern below.

Table 20: Concerns regarding the LRT project

Concerns	Number of Times Mentioned
High cost/ Exceeding budget	80
Disruption to individuals/ businesses along LRT corridor	58
Traffic congestion	42
Limited reach across Hamilton	28
Timely completion	26

1. High Cost/Exceeding Budget

The survey indicated that Hamiltonians are worried that LRT will go over budget. Some people have argued that Hamilton “can’t afford this,” and should be cautious on building an expensive LRT. One individual claimed that the “LRT started as a \$1b grant without much reference to inevitable cost over-run. Now it is already \$2.3b and the cost benefit is getting lower.”

2. Disruption to individuals/businesses along the LRT corridor

Survey respondents were concerned about how the construction of the LRT would disrupt their neighbourhoods. For example, one respondent mentioned they were concerned about “construction worries, blocking my transportation access to work/out of my neighbourhood, workers taking over (already limited) parking in my area”. Others were concerned about local businesses: “Construction can be extraordinarily disruptive to businesses and use of an area. Some form of financial assistance to keep local businesses alive through the process might be needed. Locke St. was an example of how to harm an area during major street reconstruction. Let’s avoid doing that to other areas.”

3. Traffic Congestion

The survey indicated that people are worried that the construction of the LRT would cause traffic congestion. One individual stated that they are “worried about construction and how difficult it will be to get around in the city.” Similarly, another individual mentioned that “we have a car culture problem in Hamilton. This needs to be addressed before construction.”

4. Limited Reach Across Hamilton

Respondents were concerned about the LRT route’s limited reach. Respondents were concerned about how it would not service areas such as the Mountain, Stoney Creek, and Ancaster. One individual noted that “it [LRT] is no use to me. I will never use it too

far from my residence and is servicing the wrong area. It should run from the farthest point in the East to the farthest point in the West.”

5. Timely Completion

Many respondents had little confidence that the project would be completed in a timely manner. One individual hoped that it “does not take an exceptionally long time to build to minimise disruption.” The consensus among respondents was that the LRT project needs to be completed quickly.

Community Focus Groups

This section will describe the results from four community focus groups at the following ACORN meetings: East End, Stoney Creek, Mountain, and Downtown. We also included ideas from a focus group held in 2019. Each focus group consisted of breakout rooms which covered the following themes: housing affordability, accessibility, environment, and arts and community.

Housing Affordability

Participants expressed concerns about how the LRT would affect housing affordability. Participants from all focus groups stated that there should be affordable housing along the LRT corridor. Feedback from two focus groups suggested housing people in vacant homes and prioritising people experiencing homelessness or from low-income backgrounds for housing. Participants from two focus groups also suggested building additional affordable housing units and implementing inclusionary zoning policies. One group suggested implementing a vacancy tax for empty buildings. Participants from all focus groups suggested meeting with displaced tenants and low-income individuals who may be affected by the LRT project to ensure that they are aware of their housing rights and to hear their concerns.

Accessibility

Participants discussed features that could promote physical accessibility on the LRT. Participants from all focus groups indicated that ramps should be installed. Two groups mentioned having wider doors and designated seating areas for the elderly, pregnant individuals, people using wheelchairs and other people with disabilities. Three groups mentioned that it should be possible to raise and lower the LRT as needed. Participants from two groups stated that there should be audio signals for blind folks. One group suggested that service animals and pets should be allowed on the LRT, that there should be charging ports for devices, and that sloping sidewalks should be designed for those with mobility devices.

Participants from three groups raised concerns about the process of LRT construction. These groups expressed that the city should consider how detours will be created during construction, how to communicate these changes to City residents, and how to ensure pathways are accessible during construction. One group suggested that ramps and sidewalks should remain accessible to people during construction.

To promote economic accessibility, participants from all focus groups suggested having affordable fees to accommodate low-income folks. Participants from three focus groups suggested free LRT access for people receiving benefits from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). One group suggested free ridership for seniors and children under 13, while another suggested student discounts. Participants from two focus groups suggested extending the time on transfers. Participants from one group recommended that LRT fare should be comparable to the HSR system.

Environment

Participants from all focus groups suggested that there should be additional parks and green space along the LRT route. Participants mentioned that creating outdoor, green spaces would be a valuable addition for local businesses. Three groups mentioned planting more trees, while one group suggested that trees should be installed with an underground support system to ensure they last a long time.

One group suggested that reducing fumes and particulate matter in the downtown core should be a key priority. Participants from one group mentioned that there should be efforts to reduce the current number of vehicles on the road. Similarly, two groups mentioned the need to increase walkability, while three groups mentioned accommodating cyclists using bike lanes and spaces to store bikes on the LRT. One group discussed implementing a proper garbage and recycling system along the corridor at LRT stations.

Arts and Community

Participants from three focus groups suggested that the LRT could offer opportunities for local artists to do community-centred artwork at stations and on buildings along the corridor. Participants from one focus group recommended licensing buskers to prevent them from being disturbed by authority figures such as the police (Toronto has a similar system).

Additional concerns regarding the LRT project

One group raised additional concerns such as going over budget, construction delays, and disruptions to the community (e.g., noise and negative effects on local businesses).

Key Takeaways and Next Steps

This research aimed to identify community benefits priorities of Hamilton residents to inform a community benefits agreement (CBA) for the Hamilton LRT project. Survey respondents indicated that their top four priority areas for a CBA are Affordable Housing, Transportation Connection, Local Employment and Training Opportunities, and The Environment.

Survey respondents provided a variety of community benefits ideas. Some of these ideas, ordered by the number of times they were mentioned by respondents, include:

- Designing LRT infrastructure to accommodate use of multiple modes of transportation i.e., bike lanes, crosswalks, parking spaces;
- Providing affordable housing geared to income;
- Increasing access to the LRT from across Hamilton;
- Ensuring that fares are affordable;
- Inclusionary zoning (i.e., a percentage of all new developments should be allocated to affordable housing);
- Prioritising job creation for Hamilton residents so that people can live and work in Hamilton; and
- Protecting green spaces

Respondents indicated several concerns regarding the LRT construction including its high cost and potential budget overruns, disruption to individuals and businesses along the LRT corridor, and traffic congestion.

Community focus groups also highlighted several potential community benefits ideas across 4 themes: housing affordability, accessibility, environment, and arts and community. Participants recommended providing affordable housing along the LRT corridor by housing people in vacant homes and building more affordable housing units. Participants also suggested that the LRT should include accessibility features such as wide ramps and doors, audio signals for visually impaired people, and allow service animals and pets to ride the LRT. Participants also indicated that the LRT service should have an affordable fare to accommodate low-income people and provide free ridership for children, seniors, and individuals on ODSP. Participants suggested planting more trees and creating green spaces along the LRT route. Participants felt that the LRT construction should provide opportunities for local artists to do artwork on stations and buildings along the LRT corridor and that the city should consider licensing buskers.

There are some limitations to this research. Where and how the survey was distributed, as well as its contents, could have influenced who filled it out. The vast majority of respondents were long-term residents (>10 years) and a large proportion also self-identified as belonging to an equity-seeking group. Most who filled out the survey indicated they were gainfully employed. Observing these patterns, we are unable to conclude that the results are representative of all Hamiltonians; rather, the results may reflect the views of a politically and socially engaged subpopulation. Similarly, the community focus groups were conducted mainly with individuals from one organisation. While the original intention was to conduct community focus groups with more members of the Hamilton community, many of these focus groups were cancelled during the study period due to low enrolment. It is therefore unclear whether the focus groups were representative of the broader Hamilton community.

These findings can be used by the HCBN to inform their CBA for Hamilton LRT and to advocate for community needs at the City of Hamilton and Metrolinx. The large survey sample size and demographic information collected opens up the opportunity for further subgroup analyses (e.g., to investigate the concerns of racialized, LGTBQ+, and/or

Indigenous people independently). Future community consultation processes could involve partner organisations and advertising across diverse demographics to widen the perspectives involved in the research.

Bibliography

HCBN. (n.d.). *About Community Benefits*. HCBN. Retrieved May 16, 2022, from <https://hcbn.ca/about-community-benefits>