

Complete Streets in Hamilton: Re-envision Your Street Event Summary

October 1, 2015 - 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM
Art Gallery of Hamilton, 123 King St. W



The Community-based Leadership in Sustainability (CLS) series is an initiative of the Hamilton Sustainability Professionals Network, in collaboration with McMaster's Academic Sustainability Programs Office, and with support from a number of sponsors and collaborators from across the city. This event was made possible with the hard work and dedication of over 35 volunteers, including students and young professionals, City staff, university faculty, and engaged citizens.

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Overview

“Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.” – Jane Jacobs

We live in an increasingly urban world and where we live affects our health, environment and economy. Complete Streets help to develop vibrant and diverse places that people will want to live and stay in; healthier and more sustainable cities for future generations to enjoy.

On October 1st, 2015, over 100 people from across the city of Hamilton (and beyond) came together to learn more about Complete Streets, and to participate in a hands-on and interactive workshop of urban planning and design.

The event began with an introduction by the City of Hamilton’s General Manager of Planning and Economic Development, followed by a keynote address by the Editor of Raise the Hammer. Two students from McMaster University’s W. Booth School of Engineering Practice presented information on funding strategies for complete streets. The interactive portion of the evening engaged event attendees in an interactive workshop on urban planning and design. Participants were able to re-envision streets in the following five Hamilton neighbourhoods through the use of maps and street elements such as bike lanes, green spaces, and park benches:

- Mary Street West & Cannon Street East
- Barton Street East & William Street
- Queen Street South & Herkimer Street
- Main Street West & Dundurn Street South
- Bay Street South & Bold

These streets were chosen by a general call out to neighbourhood associations and community hubs who submitted their streets of interest. This was important because it directly engaged citizens in the complete streets re-envisioning process. Many of the groups that took part in the planning process also attended the event to take part in the process.

Engagement Strategies

Consistent with the Hamilton Engagement Committee’s list of engagement strategies, the following were employed:

- Group-based round table discussions;
- Facilitated group work;
- Tactile mapping and building;
- Presentation with question and answer;

- Public, free, and accessible event;
- Guest/motivational speakers
- Information sharing, through social media, post-cards, and mailing lists; and
- Networking.

These techniques and description of how they were applied during this event, are included in the summary below. Event details, including the full agenda can be found in Appendix A.

The venue included ten tables that were each identified with one neighbourhood location. As such, each location was discussed at two companion tables. Both neighbourhood tables had tactile map elements, and additionally, one of the two tables had a virtual map component developed by [Virtual Hamilton](#). The virtual map consisted of a 3D interactive environment that enabled participants to experience their re-envisioned street in a virtual world. City of Hamilton transportation planners and table facilitators were available to provide support to each table.

During the event, participants at each of the ten tables were asked to first re-envision the current neighbourhood as a complete street, without constraints. Participants were encouraged to dream big! Through the use of tactile mapping elements, a new and complete street was created. The second phase of the activity was to prioritize their goals for the street based on three constraints: environment, health, and economics. With these considerations in mind, participants were asked to revise their street design. Both street designs were captured through photo image as well as written notes taken by the table facilitator. Furthermore, five tables also included a Virtual Hamilton team member who was able to develop a virtual representation of the street design in real-time using a laptop connected to the virtual world. Companion tables that did not have a Virtual Hamilton team member present had their street designs created after the event. Street designs from all ten tables were uploaded to the virtual world and online by Virtual Hamilton.

In addition to having the visual representations, participants took away key ideas and proposed actions on how to implement complete streets in their community and help make Hamilton a more vibrant place to live, work, and play.

More information on the outcomes of the re-envisioning exercise can be found in the Reporting section below.

Speakers

The following speakers represent the diverse backgrounds on the topic of Complete Streets, as can be seen from their biographical descriptions below, found in Appendix B.

Jason Thorne,

General Manager of Planning and Economic Development, City of Hamilton

Jason Thorne introduced the topic of Complete Streets and their importance in Hamilton. As the city is planned and developed complete communities and streets are necessary for more healthy and livable places.

Ryan McGreal,

Editor, Raise the Hammer

Ryan delved into the details of complete streets and provided key visual examples of various projects throughout Canada, North America and the world. He also cited examples from Hamilton which incorporate complete streets elements into new street designs successfully. In contrast, he provided examples in Hamilton where a more complete streets oriented design philosophy is required to improve quality of life in various neighbourhoods. The talk was informative, entertaining and a call to action. Participants and the City were encouraged to design streets that are livable no matter where they happen to be located.

Catherine Burrows,

Project Facilitator, Planning and Redevelopment Department, St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton

Kamran Khurshid,

Masters of Engineering Design Candidate, McMaster University

Catherine and Kamran presented research they undertook focused on innovative funding strategies for complete streets, as seen in various communities across the globe.

Maria Topalovic,

Environmental Specialist, CRH Canada

Liz Nield,

CEO, LURA Consulting

Maria and Liz facilitated the session and explained the importance of community engagement events. They presented the SPN's mandate which is to connect like-minded sustainability groups and individuals, promote sustainability, provide opportunities for people to learn about and participate in sustainability projects, and develop a healthier and more sustainable Hamilton. The CLS initiative helps to satisfy this mandate and provides engagement opportunities for professionals who wish to further explore sustainability concepts and projects.

Virtual Hamilton

Virtual Hamilton is a joint City of Hamilton, McMaster University, and Ryerson University research collaboration that aims to develop, assess, and implement a participatory urban planning system that utilizes an online 3D virtual world with integrated social media to facilitate stakeholder visualization, multi-user content contribution, and communication.

This cutting edge application of 3D virtual world media to urban planning processes will benefit Hamilton urban planning stakeholders by providing a collaborative planning system that allows participants access to planning data and visualization of planning options.

Re-envisioning Activity Results

The facilitators were asked to take notes of the discussion during the workshop and provide responses in the following areas: criteria ranking process; differences between the idealistic and constrained complete street; differences between companion table designs; and workshop challenges. A summary of the results are provided below.

Criteria Ranking Process

After designing their idealistic complete street, the participants were introduced to the idea of constraints to understand challenges that exist in implementing their changes. They were asked to rank the importance of health, environment, and economy for their design. With the exception of one table, all tables ranked health as the most important criteria to use in designing their complete street. Environment was the second most common criteria chosen (it was ranked second at 60% of the tables) and economy was typically ranked third. None of the tables ranked economy first.

Many participants felt that health is the most important especially in regards to health and safety of children and the overall neighbourhood, as well as having access to all modes of transport to choose healthy options (such as cycling and walking). Some tables felt that health and environment were very closely related so it was difficult to rank the two as they were equal. Many participants felt that costs associated with designing streets focused on social and environmental health would be prohibitive when considering the current funding model. As such, participants suggested innovative funding strategies, such as social impact bonds or crowd funding, to ensure these aspects maintain priority in the design process. Conversely, while still cognizant of the trade-off between cost and feasibility, the table that ranked economy as second focused on lower-cost design as they felt that they would have a better chance for implementation.

The facilitators all indicated that the majority of the participants worked well together in reaching consensus on both the ranking and the resulting designs. In few cases, strong opinions and emotional connection to an individual's community had potential to inhibit

progress. The facilitator's role was proven to be integral to ensuring that discussions and input remained constructive.

Differences Between Idealistic & Constrained Complete Streets

There were varying degrees of differences between the idealistic and constrained street, which depended on the scale of the "dream" design as well as the rank order of the specific criteria (health, environment, and economy).

Some of the key differences/similarities identified were:

- Physical street capacity (ie. width) used for the ideal design was difficult to implement in the constrained design phase
- Prior to being prompted to prioritize health, environment, and economy, many tables had already focused on creating their ideal streets with health in mind; therefore, only minor changes were made in phase two once prompted as health remained a priority.
- Designs changed more radically in cases where the economic factors were prioritized higher. As a result, designs were modified to meet financial constraints, rather than employing innovative funding strategies to meet design needs.
- In cases where designs were similar in both the ideal and constrained phase, participants utilized the challenge as an opportunity to focus on detailed elements such as pedestrian signals and boulevards.

Differences Between Companion Table Designs

Following the design activity, participants of each companion table (one tactile and one virtual table focused on the same street) switched tables to view each other's designs. While commonalities existed, no two designs were exactly alike. The table switching exercise exposed participants to diverse perspectives and designs. This facilitated discussion around differing and complementary values, priorities, challenges, and solutions. Furthermore, participants were encouraged to consider the complexities involved in the street-design process, prompting reflection on the challenges and opportunities that exist.

Workshop Challenges

Overall, the facilitators indicated that the workshop was well received by all participants and there was a high level of engagement. Many participants were quite passionate about their neighbourhoods and/or their views. As a result, strong opinions were challenging for some tables. The current design of some of the intersections made the discussion complicated. Some found it quite difficult to fit their plans within the defined space of the street. Some tables felt that they needed more time for planning their designs. For some participants, not knowing the intersection or neighbourhood well was a

challenge. Also, some participants felt it difficult to understand the economics constraints, especially in regards to understanding the real costs of the designs.

Additional Resources

As an outcome of this event, a number of additional resources have been developed and shared publicly:

- [Complete Streets Presentation for SPN Workshop](#), Ryan McGreal: This article is adapted from Ryan's speaking notes for the event.
- [Twitter timeline](#), Hamilton SPN created a story timeline from the event's twitter activity.
- [Audio Recording of presentation on Innovative Funding Strategies](#), courtesy of Hamilton Chamber of Commerce.
- Blog post by [Virtual Hamilton](#).

Sponsors & Collaborators

Virtual Hamilton was the key collaborator on the development and implementation of this initiative. The Virtual Hamilton team members include: David Harris Smith, Lead Researcher; Frauke Zeller, Co-Investigator; John Eyles, Co-Investigator; Emily Eyles, Research Assistant; Karin Fish, Research Assistant; Dwayne Ali, Web Design; Dominik Kraukinen, Research Assistant; and Hanna Smith, Research Assistant.

The CLS initiative fosters innovation in the community with support from the We Are Cities grant. Generous financial support for this event was also provided by:

- McMaster's Network for Community-Campus Partnerships
- City of Hamilton's Economic Development Department
- Hamilton Chamber of Commerce and W. Booth School of Engineering Practice collaboration funded by the Network for Community-Campus Partnerships

Additional in-kind support was provided by:

- Art Gallery of Hamilton
- UPS Westdale
- Grand & Toy
- OPIRG McMaster
- McMaster University
- Sustainable Hamilton

Survey Results

In a follow-up survey sent to event participants, the highest percentage of attendees (31.3%) identified themselves as *community members*, followed by *undergraduate students* and *City of Hamilton staff* at 15.6% each. The lowest percentages consisted of *business owners/representatives* and *graduate students* at 3.1% each.

A total of 93.8% of event attendees described themselves as *Hamiltonians*.

When asked which aspects of the event attendees found most appealing, the aspects selected most were *community engagement* (46%) followed by *speakers* (30%). The least appealing aspects of the event were *networking* and *personal and/or professional development*.

When asked about their overall satisfaction with the event, 54% answered that they were *very satisfied*, 39% were *somewhat satisfied*, 6.1% were *neither satisfied nor dissatisfied*. There were not any answers for the categories of *somewhat dissatisfied*, *very dissatisfied*, and *no opinion*.

Participants were asked to rate elements of the event on a five-point Likert scale. The following table summarizes the results.

	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Communication of event	0%	0%	12.5%	59.4%	28.1%
Quality of Speakers	0%	0%	6.3%	28.1%	65.6%
Relevance of content	0%	0%	3.2%	29.0%	67.7%
Value of discussion /activity	0%	0%	12.5%	40.6%	46.9%
Opportunity for networking	0%	3.2%	19.4%	48.4%	29.0%
Accessibility of location	0%	0%	0%	25.0%	75.0%
Promotion of event	0%	0%	25%	37.5%	37.5%
Quality of food	0%	1.0%	20.0%	46.7%	30.0%

Participants were also asked to provide general feedback and comments on the event, the following were some of the comments given:

“Great work!!!! Thanks for organizing and continuing this important discussion. Especially appreciate that outcomes will be shared with the City going forward”

“This was a complex exercise with lots of moving parts (literally!) and it went extremely well. It’s clear a lot of careful organization went into putting it together. Bravo!”

“Great energy in the room with participants and organizers. Excellent discussion at the tables”

“It was a pleasure to participate in something like this. I look forward to going to more SPN events in future!”

When asked if they were interested in attending another CLS event in the future, 96.8% of participants selected *yes*.

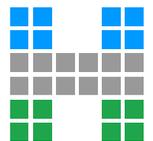
Event Photographs



Mary Street: from Wilson to Cannon

Before

After



Appendix A

Event Details

The Complete Streets in Hamilton: Re-envision Your Streets event was held on the evening of Thursday, October 1, 2015 at the Art Gallery of Hamilton.

The evening's agenda was scheduled as follows:

6:30 – 6:55: Registration and Networking

7:00 – 7:10: Opening Remarks

7:10 – 7:15: Introduction by Jason Thorne on the importance of Complete Streets in Hamilton

7:10 – 7:30: Keynote Presentation on Complete Streets by Ryan McGreal

7:30 – 7:40: Best Practice on Innovative Funding Models for Complete Streets, Presented by Catherine Burrows & Kamran Khurshid from McMaster University's School of Engineering Practice Presentation

7:40 – 8:00: Workshop Description provided by Maria Topalovic and Liz Nield

8:00 – 8:55: Complete Streets Re-envisioning Activity

8:55 – 9:00: Closing Remarks

9:00 – 9:30: Networking

Appendix B

Speaker Biographies

Jason Thorne joined the in May 2014. Born and raised in Hamilton, Jason has been working in planning and community development his entire career. As a Manager with the Ontario Growth Secretariat, Jason was one of the key architects of the Places to Grow initiative and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. As Director of Policy and Planning for Metrolinx, Jason was one of the lead authors of the Big Move, the regional transportation plan for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. For the past five years, Jason has worked as a planning consultant for communities across Canada and in Africa and Latin America as a Principal with the Toronto-based planning, architecture, and design firm planningAlliance. Jason has also worked for a wide range of non-governmental organizations including the Bay Area Restoration Council, Bruce Trail Association, and Coalition on the Niagara Escarpment. Jason is a passionate advocate of community-based planning, sustainable and inclusive development, and the creation of complete, vibrant cities. Most importantly, he is a proud Hamiltonian who is excited to be returning to work in his hometown.

Ryan McGreal is the editor of Raise the Hammer and lives in Hamilton with his family and works as a programmer, writer and consultant. Ryan volunteers with [Hamilton Light Rail](#), a citizen group dedicated to bringing light rail transit to Hamilton. Several of his articles have been published in the [Hamilton Spectator](#). He also maintains a [personal website](#) and has been known to post passing thoughts on Twitter [@RyanMcGreal](#).

Catherine Burrows was born and raised in Hamilton and has a genuine interest in seeing this city become the best community it can be. She is currently working as a project facilitator in the Planning and Redevelopment Department with St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton. She is also a recent graduate from McMaster University's W Booth School of Engineering Practice where she completed the Masters of Engineering Design program in Sustainable Community Infrastructure. During her time in the program she became involved with complete streets through courses as well as community events. The program has a local focus and considers Hamilton a "living lab", which was incorporated into design challenges and studies. Courses Catherine took include design and development of community infrastructure, which includes accessible, user friendly complete streets. Catherine also took a transportation engineering course which focused on the more technical aspects of street design. She participated as a note taker in a "Complete Streets Deliberative Dialogue" event hosted by McMaster's Network for Community-Campus Partnerships in January, 2015. The event brought together stakeholders to provide input into policy development and building a business case for the citywide implementation of complete streets. She also attended the "Love your streets: Hamilton's changing transportation network" event held by the Sustainable Professionals

Network where she gained an understanding of the importance of this issue to Hamilton residents.

Kamran Khurshid wants to live in the world where people respect life, care for the planet, and learn to live together while always trying to work towards a better future. As an Engineer, he never thought that he would speak these words outside his realm of equations and graphs, but his recent endeavour as a Design Graduate from the W Booth School with specialization in Sustainable Community Infrastructure has changed his perspective. With a strong passion for educating people on sustainable practices, he has done research on aspects of complete streets, taken courses on transportation, and loves reading on innovation and ideas. Kamran loves interacting with people and talking about sports, videos games, super-heroes, and the future of the world.

Maria Topalovic is an Environmental Specialist at CRH Canada and the Chair of the SPN. She is an environmental professional with experience in sustainability awareness, environmental compliance, community and stakeholder engagement, and policy analysis. She is passionate about promoting healthy and sustainable lifestyles and wants to work toward shaping policy that enhances and sustains the world's built, natural and social environments. Maria pursued her studies at McMaster University, where she received a Bachelor of Chemical Engineering & Management and a Master of Engineering & Public Policy. She has always called Hamilton home and enjoys working towards making it a more resilient city!

Liz Nield specializes in organizational design, training, and collaborative planning – especially in developing community based plans. Her approach focuses on empowering people to discover, dream, design, and deliver. Liz is a creative and strategic systems-thinker and uses appreciative inquiry methods to establish integrity and trust in process participants. She is a strong and respected integrator, ensuring that community values and ideas are synthesized and embedded into public policy. Liz has an MBA from Royal Roads University, and is also an accomplished speaker, facilitator, trainer and proponent of “Guided Learning”. Liz is the CEO of Lura Consulting and on the SPN Executive Committee.