

City of Hamilton Ward Boundary Review

Project Progress Report

In association with:

Dr. Robert J. Williams



May 4, 2016



Plaza Three
101-2000 Argentia Rd.
Mississauga, Ontario
Canada L5N 1V9

Phone: (905) 272-3600

Fax: (905) 272-3602

e-mail: info@watson-econ.ca

www.watson-econ.ca

 **Planning for growth**

1. Study Context

1.1 Terms of Reference

Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., in association with Robert J. Williams, Trust Learning Solutions and ICA Associates Inc., has been retained to undertake a comprehensive Ward Boundary Review (W.B.R.) for Hamilton. The consultants are operating independently from Council and City staff as they confer with residents and stakeholders to evaluate the existing ward structure and design possible alternative ward boundary configurations.

1.2 What is a Ward Boundary Review?

A ward boundary review is designed to inform decisions of the municipal council about how to develop units of representation that reflect the distribution of the inhabitants of a municipality for electoral purposes. Since municipalities experience population growth and population changes by ward, electoral arrangements need to be reviewed periodically to ensure that representation remains effective and equitable.

Municipal councils have the legal right to create, change and even eliminate ward boundaries for the purpose of electing municipal councillors. As standard practice, municipalities review their ward structure periodically – ideally every 10-15 years. Any review is premised on the legitimate democratic expectation that municipal representation will be:

- Effective;
- Equitable; and
- An accurate reflection of the contemporary distribution of communities and people across the City.

1.3 Why a Ward Boundary Review in Hamilton?

The existing ward boundary structure dates from the time of amalgamation in 2001 – 15 years ago. At amalgamation, the system of representation maintained the eight existing wards in the former City of Hamilton which were established in 1985, and relied on the municipal boundaries of pre-amalgamation municipalities – Ancaster, Dundas, Glanbrook, Flamborough, Hamilton and Stoney Creek – to determine most of the other wards. Ultimately, the electoral arrangements were established by Ontario Regulation 448/00 without a dedicated local review.

Since 2001, Hamilton's population has increased by more than 30,000. In 2015, Hamilton had an estimated population of 565,000.¹ The City is expected to experience moderately strong population growth and shifts over the next decade. By 2026, Hamilton's population is expected to reach approximately 633,000,¹ an increase of 12% (68,000 people). The highest population growth is expected in wards 11, 9 and 15. It is important that the ward boundary structure reflects the changing nature of the City.

One of the basic premises of representative democracy in Canada is the belief that the geographic areas used to elect a representative should be reasonably balanced with one another in terms of population. Since, however, there will inevitably be variations in the densities and characteristics of residential neighbourhoods across the City, some flexibility in terms of representation by ward is acceptable. In the absence of guidance on this question in the *Municipal Act*, population variations of up to 25% above or below the average size is generally considered acceptable, consistent with past ward boundary reviews undertaken in Ontario and with legislated federal redistribution provisions.

Population data shows that a number of the wards, including wards 7, 8, 10, 13 and 14, vary by more than 25% above or below the average population for a ward in Hamilton, as shown in the table below. Over time, this disparity is expected to widen to include ward 11, as well as wards 7, 8, 10, 13 and 14.

¹ Includes Census undercount of approximately 3.8% and the City's post-secondary student population.

City of Hamilton Population, 2015 (Estimate) and 2026 (Forecast)

Ward	2015		2026	
	Population	Variance	Population	Variance
1	41,340	1.10	43,900	1.04
2	40,635	1.08	45,225	1.07
3	40,365	1.07	40,125	0.95
4	36,040	0.96	35,325	0.84
5	39,835	1.06	40,625	0.96
6	41,025	1.09	38,850	0.92
7	62,435	1.66	63,000	1.49
8	53,875	1.43	55,100	1.31
9	29,980	0.80	41,700	0.99
10	25,130	0.67	24,825	0.59
11	43,690	1.16	78,850	1.87
12	39,510	1.05	45,075	1.07
13	25,310	0.67	24,350	0.58
14	16,640	0.44	16,075	0.38
15	29,460	0.78	39,850	0.94
Total	565,270		632,875	
Ward Average	37,685	1.00	42,190	1.00

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.

Note: Population includes post-secondary student population and Census undercount of approximately 3.8%.

1.4 Study Objectives

The primary purpose of the W.B.R. is to inform and equip Hamilton City Council to make decisions about whether to maintain the existing ward structure or to adopt an alternative arrangement.

The project has a number of key objectives in accordance with the project terms of reference:

- Develop a clear understanding of the present ward system, including its origins and operations as a system of representation;
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the present ward system on the basis of the identified guiding principles;
- Conduct an appropriate consultation process to ensure community support for the review and its outcome;
- Identify plausible modifications to the present ward structure;

- Deliver a report that will set out recommended alternative ward boundaries to ensure effective and equitable electoral arrangements for the City of Hamilton, based on the principles identified.

1.5 Guiding Principles

Hamilton's W.B.R. is framed by six principles (presented to the General Issues Committee (G.I.C.) – Clerk's Report CM15004, March 30, 2015) established for evaluating the existing ward boundary structure and potential alternative options. The principles are guidelines and do not preclude additional contributing factors being considered. The six principles are:

- **Representation by Population** – Ensure that every Councillor generally represents an equal number of constituents while allowing for some variation;
- **Population and Electoral Trends** – Look at future changes in population to keep wards as balanced as possible;
- **Means of Communication and Accessibility** – Group neighbourhoods into wards that reflect current transportation and communication patterns;
- **Geographical and Topographical Features** – Use natural features as ward boundaries while keeping wards as compact as possible;
- **Community or Diversity of Interests** – Draw ward boundary lines around recognized settlement areas, traditional neighbourhoods, and community groupings; and
- **Effective Representation** – Evaluate the capacity of each ward to give residents an effective voice in decision-making.

2. Project Timelines and Status Update

2.1 Project Structure and Timeline

The W.B.R. commenced in October, 2015 and is expected to be completed by October, 2016.

The study has several main phases:

Phase 1 – Review background data and technical analysis, develop public engagement strategy and initiate the consultation process with City staff and elected officials to gather insights into the present ward system.

Phase 2 – Hold public information and engagement sessions concentrating on the existing ward structure and guiding principles (Round 1 Consultation).

Phase 3 – Prepare an interim report on options and hold public consultations on preliminary options (Round 2 Consultation).

Phase 4 – Finalize alternatives and prepare a final report for Council.

2.2 Tasks Completed to Date

The Consultant Team has completed Phases 1 and 2 of the study including:

- Research and data compilation;
- Development and implementation of the Public Engagement Strategy;
- Interviews with Councillors, the Mayor and municipal staff;
- Consultation with representatives of school boards;
- Population and growth forecasting and data modelling to 2026;
- Round 1 of Public Consultation; and
- In collaboration with Communications staff at the City:
 - A project web page was set up – see <http://hamilton.ca/wardboundaryreview>;
 - A video of the research findings and context of the review was recorded and posted on the website;
 - Other maps and findings were posted on the City website;
 - Social media comments were tracked; and
 - Local media were invited to attend and report.

2.3 Public Consultation in Round 1

Overview

Through the public consultation meetings in Round 1 and the project web page, the public was provided with information and context on the study, including the study process, existing ward structure and its origins, the guiding principles and a current snapshot of Hamilton with respect to population and growth trends.

The first round of public consultation was completed during the period of February 3 to March 3, 2016.

Public Participation

Public participation/input in Round 1 of consultation was solicited through the following means:

- Nine public consultation meetings held throughout Hamilton in 3-hour sessions comprised of an open house, PowerPoint presentation about the research findings and background, and interactive workshop/discussion components;
- Online comment/feedback form provided through the project web page; and
- Dedicated email address for general comments/input from the public.

Round 1 of consultation achieved a moderate level of public engagement.

- Approximately 190 people attended the public meetings;
- 62 online submissions were received using the feedback/comment form; and
- Numerous emails from the public continue to be received.

What Did We Ask?

In Round 1 of consultation, the views of residents were sought on the continued suitability of the present ward structure and on the guiding principles. Through the public consultation meetings and through the project website online comment/feedback form, participants were invited to provide their input/opinions on:

- What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of the current ward system?
- What do the given “principles” mean to you and which principles should be given the highest priority in the evaluation of the existing ward structure and development of ward boundary options?

What Did We Hear?

Public input from Round 1 of consultation provided the Consultant Team with valuable information to help inform the development of the evaluation framework utilizing the guiding principles and the existing ward boundary evaluation. The following highlights what we heard from the public:

- While the existing ward boundary structure has some strengths, the weaknesses identified are significant and outweigh the identified strengths;
- There is a strong interest from the public to see the existing ward structure changed to address identified shortcomings in the current system; and

- While it is important to consider all the guiding principles in the evaluation process, the highest priority principles seem to be:
 - Population and Electoral Trends, Representation by Population;
 - Effective Representation; and
 - Communities of Interest.

2.4 Next Steps in Study Process

Development of Preliminary Alternatives (in progress). Based on input received from Round 1 of consultation, the evaluation of the existing ward system, and the guiding principles, a number of preliminary ward boundary alternative configurations are being developed.

Prepare an Interim Report that will be released to the public in early June, 2016 which will present an evaluation of the existing ward structure and a series of preliminary alternatives based on the guiding principles.

Round 2 Consultation on Preliminary Alternatives (June, 2016). Residents will be asked to evaluate the preliminary alternative ward models for Hamilton through a series of public outreach initiatives:

- Nine public consultation meetings to be held throughout Hamilton that will present the preliminary alternatives, along with the issues being addressed in each option, through a series of display boards and a PowerPoint presentation;
- Project display boards illustrating preliminary options, along with the issues being addressed in each option, to be exhibited at City Hall; and
- Project materials, including all project display boards, a PowerPoint presentation and the interim report, will be made available through the project website, along with an online comment/feedback form.

Finalize Alternatives (July-August, 2016). The Consultant Team will finalize a number of ward boundary alternatives based on input received from Round 2 of the public consultations.

Final Report and Recommendations (September-October, 2016) – The Consultant Team will prepare a final report with recommended alternatives which will be presented to the G.I.C. in October, 2016 and will be subject to the City's standard procedures for public comment before Council takes action. Under provincial legislation, Council's decision on the alternatives presented in the report is open to appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board.