

## City of Hamilton needs bold moves to stay viable

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Hamilton's planning committee needs to be willing to think big and make mistakes.

That means thinking outside the box when moving to mould Hamilton into a 21<sup>st</sup> century city, well-known author and commentator Gord Hume told his audience at the third PED (Planning Economic Development) talk.

"Your attractiveness will have a direct impact on your economic viability as a city," Hume said, noting the ease with which jobs are starting to move between cities internationally. "They can work anywhere from Beijing to Boston."

Hume painted a picture of fierce international competition in the coming decades as he expects billions of people to migrate from rural settings to urban centres in this "century of the city."

A vibrant downtown is the key for those choosing a city to call home, even when they live in the suburbs, said the former Hamilton resident.

On his drive in, the four-time London, Ont. councillor and renowned author on urban issues made sure to reacquaint himself with the city's condition.

Hume said he felt disengaged through much of the downtown, where multi-lane, one-way streets are geared to moving cars through the area quickly. He stressed solutions such as expanding sidewalks, narrowing streets and changing zoning for shops and restaurants so they can spill onto sidewalks.

Citing his extensive interviews with city planners around the world, Hume focused on what he calls the most livable city — Melbourne, Australia, where they plant 3,000 new trees a year, and have increased foot traffic to the point where more than half of the journeys to the city's core are by pedestrians.

"You have a choice: do you build a city for cars or a city for people?"

Hume is hopeful Canada's prime minister can ramp up federal spending for cities, which has dropped considerably over the years. Cities are not capable of becoming world class without all the levels of government contributing, argued Hume.

Hume would also do away with property tax, which he calls a "17th century tax" and have cities participate in some sort of sales tax.

Jason Thorne, Hamilton's general manager of planning and economic development, said the city has already made big steps echoing Hume's ideas with the implementation of its cultural development plan in 2013.

Hamilton will also see a major reshaping through the implementation of LRT, added Thorne, who is hopeful the new federal government will commit to a city agenda.

"Our guys need to be at the federal table for affordable housing and transit."

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"You have a choice: do you build a city for cars or a city for people?" said author Gord Hume at the Art Gallery on Thursday evening.